

Religious and Identity Trajectories Among the *Ebrié* of Anono and Blockhaus (Ivory Coast)

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In the villages of Anono and Blockhaus, inserted in the district of Abidjan, three religious communities, notably Harrist, Catholic, and Methodist are socially accepted and recognized in the village space. These churches are adopted because they allow religious, cultural, and Christianized practices to coexist within their religious spaces. Social rules and sanctions operate there as a control mechanism for their sustainability. However, several faithful of these local churches are swarming for the benefit of the so-called "Evangelical" churches. This break is regarded by the collective memory as an act of deviance which involves stigma. We try to explore in what follows, 20 biographical journeys of the faithful who abandon locally recognized churches. It is from the life story, the main data collection tool that we will first demonstrate the social situations of their affiliation to these churches (past experiences). Secondly, we will describe the social conditions of their disaffiliation (lived experiences) and thirdly, we will identify identity reconstruction strategies (experiences to be lived). They constitute an adaptive response to the process of social stigmatization maintained by the local chieftdom and large families.

Keywords: religion, deviance, biography, identity reconstruction, *Ebrié*

Introduction

The study carried out relates to religious disaffiliation within certain areas of the villages inserted in the district of Abidjan. It is the Anono and Blockhaus' towns. These are two villages belonging to the *Ebrié* ethnic group, built socially and historically as the first occupants of the city of Abidjan (Terrier, 1997). These villages are increasingly suffering the perverse effects of modernity, because the accelerated urbanization of the city of Abidjan tends to swallow them up and reclassify them as relic villages of the economic capital (Gnabeli & Lognon, 2011). It follows by ricochet, a recomposition of the socio-cultural, political, and religious organization. Indeed, a retrospective analysis of the relationship of these local communities to the sacred shows that the practices were centered around the worship of socially and spatially named gods, *Tanon* for the village of Anono and *Moutcho* for the village of Blockhaus. These practices were characterized by libations, incantations, festivities including dances, songs, and gifts offered to these deities. Speaking of festivity, the

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emphasis is on the generation feast, which is a cultural practice of extreme importance among the *Atchan* people. Apart from its religious dimension, it embodies the social, cultural, organizational, and political identity of these villages, through the system of age groups.

With the advent of so-called revealed religions (Christianity, Islam) in these villages, new religious practices built on the doctrine of a new symbolic actor of the name of *Jesus Christ*, appear. Socially anchored in worship and cultural practices, local communities adopt Christianized practices. The faithful alternate the feasts of generations and the different Christian feasts. Denoting the practices of the Christian life, such as holiness, I have faith, prayer, Bible reading and evangelism are stowed on traditional practices such as libations and ancestor worship at village ceremonies. This situation demonstrates a coexistence of Christian, cultural and ancestral practices in the religious habits of the *Atchan* people of the villages of Anono and Blockhaus. This is the basis for the social construction of the religious identity of the said villages. Churches Harristes, Catholics and Methodists are accepted in these villages because they participate in the rooting of this religious identity locally established (Lida & Fofana, 2014, p. 7). This is why local chiefdoms have established a rule and sanction mechanism to maintain the citizen *Ébrié* in these three churches.

However religious doctrine church called “Evangelical” based on sanctification and the salvation of souls through Jesus Christ built as the true God, devotes a radical separation from the principle of coexistence, where their rejection to the spaces villagers *Ébrié*. However, empirical evidence shows that many followers of these churches established locally turn away adhere and persist in *evangelical’s* churches in spite of consequences of sanctions, namely, the loss for favors related to the enjoyment of the citizenship *Ébrié* (land inheritance, the right to burial in the village cemetery, the right to participate in meetings of large families *Amando*, among others). In such cases, we are led to ask ourselves the fundamental question of knowing: Why do certain faithful *Ébrié* of the Harrist, Methodist, and Catholic churches of the villages of Anono and Blockhaus swarm for the benefit of the so-called evangelical churches? To answer this central question, we mobilized the biographical approach.

Biographies can be understood as the deployment of a basic schema in which past and lived experiences are also constantly reconstructed. It is the relationship of biography to identity. The bearer of the biography recognizes himself as the person he was, is and will be, in his relations with others who in turn act in the same way towards themselves and the bearer of the biography. (Reiner, 2017, p. 3)

With regard to this definition, we note that this approach is characterized by three specific stages: past experiences, lived experiences, and experiences to be lived. To account for this in the context of this present, the following specific questions are structured in proportion to these three epistemological principles: How do the former *Ebrié* faithful explain their parentage (past experiences) to the Harrist, Protestant Methodist, and Catholic churches in their village? How do the former *Ebrié* faithful relate their disaffiliation (lived experiences) to the Harrist, Protestant Methodist, and Catholic churches in their village? How do these *Ebrié* faithful who have been reconverted in so-called evangelical churches adapt (experiences to be lived) to the process of social disqualification constructed by those around them?

Disaffiliation to churches Harrists, Methodists, and Catholics in favor of a re-affiliation in the evangelical churches is considered as a deviant act by village political bodies (local chiefs, big families, classes forages). This act is a behavior of transgression of the norms as well as socially accepted sanctions. Given the function social spaces as fabricator of different types of religiosity (Racine, 2003, p. 17) and changing biographical

trajectories due to the deviant norms and stigma that arises (Sissoko, 2003, cited by Diomandé, 2013, pp. 16-17), this study is part of the interdisciplinary approach. It mobilizes for this purpose, the sociology of space, and criminal sociology finally to give an account of it.

Because of the complexity of biographies, they must be studied from different aspects and perspectives. It is necessary to integrate the approaches of different disciplines and disciplinary orientations. This multidimensionality implies that, for practical reasons, we can only treat a small number of cases within the framework of a research. (Reiner, 2017, p. 3)

In this regard, this article first describes the social situations of their filiation (past experiences) to these churches, then it determines the social conditions (lived experiences) of disenchantment and disaffiliation with these churches and third, it identifies adaptation strategies (identity reconstruction) in the face of the social disqualification of which they are the object. These three processes help to explain the causes of the swarming of these churches.

Methodology

Study Area

The work took place in the period from July 5, 2019 to August 17, 2019 in two *Ebrié* villages of Abidjan which are Blockhaus and Anono. The village of Anono is located in the center of Cocody in the Riviera 2 district opposite the Golf residences and limited to the north of Abidjan by the village of M'pouto while the village of Blockhaus is limited to the south of Abidjan, by the Ebrié lagoon on the side of the municipalities of Treichville and Marcory; it is framed by the Sofitel hotel and the embassy district, north of the city of Abidjan. These villages were chosen because, during the negotiation of access to land, several letters were sent to the courier services of the local chiefdoms of the various Ebrié villages inserted in the district of Abidjan which are Abobo-Baoule, M'pouto, M'badon, Akouédo. However, these two villages were favorable for the study while the others tried to bypass for reasons of lack of time and taking vacations from the chiefdom¹.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study is essentially qualitative. She had resort to the biographical approach as information collection method (Bertaux, 1976). The goal is to identify the direction that gives players at break of church attendance and adoption locally established churches *evangelical*. Because,

this method is, moreover, supposed to base its own scientific competence: that of giving access to what, in the history of a society or of a group, concerns the irreducible singularity of its actors and the meaning they give to their practices. (Pendaries, 1991, p. 45)

In biographical interviews, the interviewer must create an atmosphere conducive to the story. In this context, we relied on the life story as the main technique for collecting information.

When the story gets lost or stops, the interviewer should ask open-ended questions. When the story comes to its conclusion, it can ask so-called immanent questions, that is, questions emerging from the story itself, and then continue with so-called exmanent questions, linked to the research questions. (Reiner, 2017, p. 3)

In accordance with these epistemological requirements illustrated above, the ethnographic interview guide

¹ The local leadership is the essential link to the social organization of villages *Ébrié*. It is the bridge between the native administration and local administration (town, district). It is therefore the body which is empowered to validate or invalidate research authorizations in the village.

has been structured. As for the outstanding questions, it is structured around themes relating to religious affiliations, the conditions of ruptures and religious repositioning strategies. Concerning the immanent questions, we insisted on the reminders in order to bring the respondents to enrich their speech.

The sample was built around 20 peoples surveyed. It is structured as follows: 6 formers faithful of the Ebrié Harrist churches, 7 formers faithful of the Protestant Methodist church of the *Ebrié* community, and 7 formers *Ebrié* faithful of the Catholic Church. This figure was obtained following the saturation of the information collected during the interviews. It is a sample that was built from the mobilization of the social network and subsequently turned into a snowball, because, the first respondents of the network were asked to give us the address of their acquaintances, specifically, those who had had the same experiences. And so on until the information is saturated. The data thus collected were the subject of a thematic content analysis (Blanchet & Gotman, 1992, p. 97) which made it possible to grasp the different lived experiences and the strategies of identity reconstruction of the former faithful of these churches on which the presentation of the results is based.

Results

The Kinship as Producer of Affiliation to Local Churches

The biographical journey of the former *Ebrié* faithful of Methodist, Harrist, and Catholic churches lifts a corner of the veil on the aspects of affiliation with local churches. These aspects are part of the reporting relationship, fabricators past experiences. To the question of knowing: “What motivated membership in these locally recognized churches?”, the answers given suggested the existence of social constraints. In fact, in the life stories of these faithful, it emerged that attachment to these churches, from the outset, was consubstantial with maternal or paternal filiation. The pieces of texts emanating from the speeches of certain respondents indicate that they were there by constraint or family obligation and by imitation of relatives. “My father and great-father are Harrists, so, my father informed me that I must remain Harrist. I was leaving therefore”, exclaimed an old faithful of Harrist church in the village of Anono.

In *Ebrié* societies, religious affiliations or relation to the sacred are made within a framework of social coercion. They arise from parentage relationships. The family unit exerts a pressure on the offspring so that the sanction and the family reprobation operate as a mechanism of adhesion and maintenance. This relational structure functions as symbolic violence in religious choice. It is maintained through the ideology of the “churches of our ancestors”. This ideology opacities the balance of power and domination between ascendants and descendants in the religious orientation. Therefore, these reports strengthen the roots of the last in the churches established locally. Through the process of socialization, families manage to instill norms and values relating to ancestral customs in their offspring. The local religious framework embodied by these three churches then becomes a privileged social space for the transmission of collective and family identities. As the verbatim of a former faithful of the Methodist church in the village of Blockhaus attests: “With us *Ebrié*, where the father goes, it is there that the children go, my father was baptized there down, me too”.

About the Disaffiliation Churches Local

From the “dematerialization” of the dogma of sanctification in the religious universe. One of the experiences characteristic of the lived experience of former faithful of Harrist, Methodist, and Catholic churches resides in the observation of the “dematerialization” of the relationship to the sacred in the local

religious universe. Given the experiences, old faithful say that these churches were able to empty the whole meaning of religious dogma structured around sanctification. This sense is an immaterial resource which influences the behavior of the faithful to adopt the doctrine of holiness in accordance with the life of Jesus Christ.

Indeed, according to them, the purified Christianity supposes restrictive behaviors which proscribe certain practices of the company such as adultery, fornication, sexual immorality, alcohol, tobacco, cohabitation, abortion, lying, theft, cheating etc. However, according to these faithful, the observed practices of certain spiritual authorities (preachers, apostles, priests, the deans of the church, etc.) are at odds with this religious dogma. Their behavior tends to dematerialize the relationship with the sacred and to swallow up the meaning of the dogma of sanctification. This has the consequence, according to the interviewees, of impacting the behavior of the faithful towards those deemed illegitimate by this dogma. As evidenced by the accounts of some former faithful of the Harrist and Catholic churches of the villages of Anono and Blockhauss:

In the Harrist Church, those who were supposed to preach you to quit sin, were the very ones who encouraged you in sin. The apostles are going to hit on you while they are married. “(...)” The priests drink everything, liquor, beer, wine. They go from bars to bars. When I was at the Catholic Church, I went out with loaners, we went to clubs to have fun and when I had pregnancies, they would tell me to remove. In these churches, we talk about Jesus but sin is freed.

In the same vein, these former *Ebrié* faithful have observed, within locally recognized churches, the production of discourse which consists in giving meaning and significance to the practices described as worldly by Christianity. In fact, these socially accepted practices, but repressed by the dogma of sanctification, are recreated and reproduced in the local religious framework. This process of production of meaning legitimizes the practices delegitimized by the dogma of sanctification. It consists of moving them from what is perceived as abnormal to normality within said churches. The pieces of text of a former faithful of the Methodist church in blockhouse are most illustrative:

For example, in these churches, they will teach you that you can have a girlfriend or a boyfriend, you can live together until marriage just long enough to study each other in order to achieve a lasting marriage, while it is cohabitation is a sin and God does not accept that. “(...)” I was in the Methodist church while I smoked, I drank, I fornicated, I was a don juan, I did not understand anything, I was veiled, I knew that it was not those what God called me to.

The representation of tutelary deities as “dead gods”. The old faithful *Ebrié* will represent tutelary deities of locals churches (Harrist, Methodist, and Catholic) as “gods dead”. This mental production of the local religious universe is a consequence of the experiences lived within the three churches. These experiences are based on observation of the practices of religious authorities and the practice of dogmas taught in these churches. Indeed, according to some former faithful of the Harrist church, the teachings and the lyrics of the songs were much more focused on the person of the founder prophet William Wade Harris than that of Jesus Christ. In the Catholic Church, other former faithful note that the emphasis is on worshipping the Virgin Mary and praying with the Rosary. Regarding the Methodist church, some indicate that only the pastors hold the bible and read some passages during worship; the faithful sing, dance, and go home.

With regard to all of these three churches, the respondents note that pastors or preachers do not preach *true* repentance as recommended by the bible: that of confessing all sins from birth until the moment when we decide to take the act of repentance, in front of a spiritual authority and to decide to renounce it definitively. For them, these churches do not insist on biblical reading among the faithful and even less on fraternal communion.

Prayer vigils hardly exist as well as the gifts of visions among the faithful, speaking in tongues and the formation of disciples. For the latter, the practice and the manifestation of these different aspects bear witness to the existence of the “living god” incarnated in the person of Jesus Christ. These practices are seen as the result of building an intimate relationship with God. Suddenly, in view of their absence in socially recognized churches, these are now considered as “dead” churches. The words of a former faithful of the Harrist church in Blockhaus attest to this:

There is no life in these churches, the gifts of visions, the devil rules. We sing, we dance and we come to the house. I was more attached to the life of the choir but not to my relationship with God. Religious life was limited to the celebration of wedding, baptism and maternity feasts. We don't know the bible. These churches are spiritual prisons. There is no Jesus there, it's just a closed circle of witchcraft.

From disenchantment to the quest for the improvement of physical and spiritual life. Analyzes of the interviews from the life story of respondents dice show that several reasons are the basis of the relational break with the churches locally recognized in the village area. These reasons can be structured around five points. It emerges from it, the case of the occurrence of diseases considered extreme of which these churches cannot find the solution. Then, the recurrence of spiritual problems linked to demonic oppressions, early death, cases of accusation of the faithful of witchcraft and the lack of a remedy. Indeed, an *ecstatic* social imagination consists in saying that one cannot be cured of witchcraft, also, the will to come out of *sin* and live according to the dogma of sanctification. Then, the persistence of statutory instability linked to the social precariousness of the faithful despite their membership in these churches supposed to improve their living conditions. Finally, the desire to fill a void linked to the dissatisfaction of soul and spirit.

The quest for improvement in physical and spiritual life will cause these former faithful to turn away from local churches in favor of evangelical churches. They therefore reconstruct their religious itinerary by activating relational and emotional social capital or accepting the gospel preached by a stranger through street corners or in homes. Through the advice of strong ties for some and weak ties for others, most often they abandon themselves to these evangelical churches in order to have a satisfactory response to their various lacks. In this respect, most of these former faithful indicate an improvement in their former situation. They maintain that their spiritual life would bode well for a better future because of the belief in acquiring the salvation taught in these host churches. As shown by the speech of a former devotee, reporting being accused of witchcraft in a Harrist church in the village of Anono:

The evangelists came to the village and they started to preach. I did not believe in the resurrection because it was not taught in the Harrist church. For me I was born Harrist, this is my church and it is there that I will die. This evangelical pastor opened my eyes to deliverance from witchcraft. With him I bought a bible, he taught me to read it and I knew how to read it. I have been in Harrist for several years and have never seen the power of deliverance and pray.

Also, note that the abandonment of churches locales is considered a social deviance. This is defined by the village political authorities who and how as a failure to obey the norms of the group, because swarming is perceived as threatening the social system defined in its entirety (membership of large family groups, the generation celebration, the age class system). In fact, the true deviants undergo a process of nomination or stigmatization. It is a form of latent intra and inter-family conflict that materializes through practices of social disqualification. The intra-family conflict lies in the banishment of the reconverted from the siblings. This manifests itself in the interruption of health assistance, food, even school fees by parents, although he still has

access to the family court. In some cases, blackmail between uncles and nephews has been observed, indicating renunciation of family ties. Interfamily conflict is structured around three specific points. The interviews resulting from the life story mention, among other things, the refusal of burial in the cemetery of the village space, the suspension of favors linked to the organization of funeral ceremonies (contribution of age groups² for financial support for the bereaved family, the suspension of certain religious and local rites marking the social recognition of the remains, and an estimate of the bereaved family, etc.), the loss of rights to village land.

Identity Reconstruction as a Strategy of Social Repositioning

Once rejected by birth parents, this section shows how former faithful of Harrist, Methodist, and Catholic churches are rebuilding their identities. Identity is seen here as a process of social and historical construction. It is a relational phenomenon that is built in the interaction of the faithful with social and religious structures. The *Ebrie* are designated and recognized socially by their belonging to religious communities local and not by their family or generational affiliation. Suddenly, the disaffiliation of these local churches leads to stigmatization by the chiefdom, large families, and age groups. Stigma is a process of disapproval from which social death results. In this measure, the latter have to rebuild themselves with a view to social repositioning. In the first part, it will be a question of focusing on the activation of religious sociability. The second part will focus on making a celestial identity based on the assurance of spiritual salvation.

The Mobilization of Religious Sociability as a Strategy of Identity Reconstruction

The life story of the former faithful of Harrist, Methodist, and Catholic churches has allowed us to discover their repositioning within the so-called evangelical churches. In their eyes, this new host religious group represents the best strategy for adapting to social marginalization. Their citizenship *Ebrié* being questioned after making a social space rejection because of disenchantment with tutelary deities local, these ancient faithful reinvent a new identity from their integration into the new religious field. This is explained by a prioritization of the divine relationship over the relationship with “others”: family, age group, pagan friends. Thus, there is a detachment from the social identity built on the possession of material goods, the relationship to the biological family and belonging to the age class system, and the attachment to a constructed spiritual identity by belonging to a new “family in Christ” and sharing religious sociability.

In fact, the biological kinship naturally acquired by the links of consanguinity and called into question is reconstructed and reoriented by this new framework of sociability. In this perspective, religious sociability constitutes the catalyst for the construction of a theoretical kinship by which these former faithful recognize each other, identify themselves, and orient their daily actions and practices. Indeed, in this new religious framework, they have the opportunity to meet new parents. These are called “brother” or “sister” depending on whether it is new acquaintances encountered in church or “father” or “mother” depending on whether these people are established as spiritual supervisors.

The stigmata granted within the family and social framework are repressed in the new religious framework through their insertion into youth subgroups embedded within the church. These restricted frameworks, apart from their function of producing the close relationship with the symbolic actor designated by the name of Jesus Christ, are social spaces for the reproduction of solidarity, trust, conviviality, reciprocity, mutual aid, the

² They are actors of the same generation classified in four age categories (*Tchagba*, *Dougbo*, *Woundoué*, and *Assoukrou*). Each age group, after the generation festival whose social function lies in the detection of maturity and ability of the class to manage the goods, people, and security of the village, takes turns in the governance of the village in a time interval not exceeding 15 years.

primary socialities between the faithful. They are considered by the former faithful reconverted as a “new family in Christ”. These relational aspects offered religious sociability “assemblies youth” and they belong to the great family of the Church which are repositioning resources and social acquisition esteem per se in the village area. They allow them to minimize the social sanctions developed against them. Evidenced by the verbatim of a former faithful of the Catholic Church in the village of Anono,

I now have a family and I experience their love every day. When you rely on God, he raises up a family to help you. When there is a wedding or anniversary or death, each brother mobilizes and covers the expenses: I take the cake, the other says I take the food. You see, since 2017 that I do not work, my disciple maker received me at his home and takes care of me, his wife sends me money every end of the month. I have never seen this in all the communities where I have been. So, if I die, I know my spiritual family is going to bury me.

The Making of a Celestial Identity Based on the Assurance of Spiritual Salvation

One of the social sanctions introduced by the *Ébrié* villages is the refusal of burial in the village in the event of death for those considered to be *retrograde*. This sanction is perceived as a social death in the whole village and discredits the family of the reconverted. The results show that the former faithful of the Harrist, Methodist, and Catholic churches fabricate a celestial identity based on the assurance of salvation after physical death. This identity is a resource of resistance to social rejection.

From this angle, social death is relieved of its significant content, because these former faithful reconverted are now constructed as “celestial citizens”, “born of new”, “having no spiritual part with the world of the living”. Hence, within their new “family in Christ”, there is statutory mobility. This statutory mobility is linked to the desacralization of the ministries of religious life. Thus, a simple believer after his conversion and his integration into the social structures of the Church can exercise the pastoral ministry; the ministry of the Holy Communion becomes a spiritual leader in his capacity to win new souls to God, etc. The representation that these actors exercise the functions assigned to statutory mobility is illustrated by the fact that it gives access to salvation and to the riches of heaven. In this perspective, they create again a new social space which they make dominate over the village social space. This results in a denial of benefits attached to the enjoyment of citizenship *Ebrie*, the meaning given to social death and the relationship to the physical body. This new space links them to a celestial citizenship and updates their relationship to the spiritual world through attachment to the spirit and to the salvation of the soul. Evidenced by the words of a former faithful of the Methodist church in Blockhaus and reconverted as a faithful of the church in an evangelical church in Abidjan,

In the world, they have their goods, but we in Jesus have life. It is not because they are going to bury me here (local cemetery) that I am going to see the sky. I am a disciple of Jesus, I have heaven. If I am not rich here I will be rich in heaven. The priority is to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness in order to have salvation. I have heaven’s salvation and I will be rich in heaven. I no longer seek the favor of men because everything is vanity.

Discussion

Three main results constitute the fundamental framework of this study and are the subject of discussion in this part of the work. The first uses the methodological perspective of the study: the biographical approach. This same approach is used by Henry (1998) with a view to analyzing accounts of conversion to Celestial Christianity of certain faithful formerly affiliated with traditional practices such as voodoo in Benin. It shows that beyond the diversity of the biographical adventures related, the speaker, however banally introduced to Celestial Christians by a close relative (relative or friend), presents himself as the miraculous hero of a fight

against the forces of evil. Through this approach, it highlights the inclusion of the faithful in new religious practices. In this mind, it noted that “[...] attendance of worship, listening to sermons, reading the Bible may then introduce another reflection which sometimes pushes the faithful to churches practicing a more purified Christianity” (Henry, 1998, p. 171).

The second results mention that the former faithful of the Harrist, Catholic, and Methodist churches in the Anono, Blauckauss villages are turning away from their local religious habits in favor of the evangelical churches. This is explained by the disenchantment with worshiping locally recognized churches. The results show that the main causes of social estrangement from these locally instituted churches relate to the quest for the improvement of social, physical, and spiritual life, both embodied by the social precariousness of the faithful and the desire to fill a void linked to the dissatisfaction of soul and spirit. These results as mentioned corroborate the studies by Z. Zadi and S. Lida (2014).

They worked on the conversion of former employees of the administration in the profession “man of God” in Abidjan. They note that, the former employees, starting from a deep situation of “malaise” (loss of identity benchmarks, self-esteem, feeling of loneliness and abandonment, etc.) despite their belonging to certain previous denominations, find individual comfort and appeasement and a pacification of social relations in their new foster family. Along the same lines, C. H. Perrot notes that:

[...] If a tutelary deity no longer manages to provide men with what they expect, they turn away; no more prayers or sacrifices are addressed to her and she is relegated to the shadows, as if there had been a breach of contract. We must therefore look elsewhere; other remedies are needed to find a way out of the difficulties we are going through. (1993, cited by Gadou, 2001 p. 32)

The results confirm the work of R. G. Blé (2013). This asks the question of knowing: Why believers decide to break with their own confessional community in order to adhere to a new structure? He analyzes the question from two angles: the increase in poverty and the reactions of the faithful to ecclesial orientations perceived as too demanding and not very open to social questions and to modern day practices. According to the author, this explains, in some cases, the estrangement of certain believers, won over by doubt in the interpretation and practice of the word of God by the dignitaries of their churches. In this context, he writes, the message of Jesus recognized as liberator then becomes in their eyes distorted and elusive by the fault of only religious leaders whose sectarianism and dogmatism no longer allow openly living the word of God.

The third result of this paper focuses on the reconstruction of the identity of the former faithful of the Harrist, Catholic, and Methodist churches of the villages of Anono and Blauckauss. These are based on the religious sociabilities manifested in their new “family in Christ” and the fabrication of a “heavenly” identity based on the assurance of salvation after physical death as strategies of adaptation to the marginalization created by the village framework. Thus, in order to escape this framework, these former faithful detach themselves from the social identity built on the basis of the possession of material goods. They are based on a system of social representation of the functions assigned to statutory mobility within their “family in Christ”.

This is illustrated by the fact that the exercise of these functions gives access to salvation. What represents for the Christian a celestial wealth, suddenly, for them paradise is not on earth but in heaven. In the context of conflicts related to religious citizenship in connection with the integration of social spaces (Parazzeli, 2017), these results agree with those of K. Dagou (2017). This falls within the scope of research on the theology of prosperity or the gospel of prosperity. Based on this theory Dagou (2017) asserts that the three dimensions of

the concept of prosperity theology, namely health, wealth, and liberation from demonic influences, would be at the basis of the quest for happiness of the faithful Christian. In fact, he would seek on earth practical and concrete solutions to the failures and other unfortunate events that follow one another in his daily life.

Conclusion

This study worked on the biographical journey of the former faithful who left Harrist, Methodist, and Catholic churches and reconverted into evangelical churches. Through an account of reconversion, she shows that these faithful, when they leave these churches, are victims of social disqualification. In these circumstances, the latter resort to religious sociability in the new churches and they fabricate a “heavenly” identity based on the assurance of spiritual salvation as strategies of social repositioning. This communication demonstrates how, starting from religious adhesion, local societies in contact with the values of modernity try to recompose their religious heritage. In doing so, they indirectly participate in creating contexts of discrimination and symbolic violence in relation to the sacred. Moreover, it is important to reflect on the current strategic, socio-political, and cultural issues facing certain villages in Abidjan to the detriment of the emancipation and empowerment of their local communities.

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