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The Media Landscape

One of the themes of this book has been how prohibition and mediation create a fabric of religious practice that is deeply embedded in environmental, embodied, and material life, while also maintaining relations with an encompassing divine realm. The mediations I have discussed have operated through sacrifice, through eating in the company of divine others, and through the careful management of bodily and environmental states and relations. This is mediation in the broad sense (Debray 1991, Boyer 2012), the study of the networked, material relations and extensions of the temporal and the sacred.

Media in the more familiar, narrow sense, as the technologies of communication, remain a relevant part of this story. We have seen (chapter 3) how written text has been integral to the operation of the church in Zege, but in a quite restricted way, available to those trained in Ge'ez. Writing was a means of sanctifying as much as transmitting information (Orlowska 2006); a key function of the book of the Acts of Betre Maryam was to be walked around the peninsula and so to reaffirm the saint's protection. Recording or producing information (and, as we will see in the next chapter, making images) required a person to fast and pray to become a vessel for the creative power of God.

The media landscape of Zege is changing rapidly, especially due to mobile phones, 3G internet, stereo systems, televisions, radios, and loudspeakers. As will become clear, this alters how information flows through society. But it also has significant ambient, environmental effects.

This chapter asks how Zege Orthodox Christians' sense of their relation to wider global and religious spheres is transforming with the spread of mass media.

As we will see, flesh and food remain central concerns in Orthodox engagements with the Internet and with religious audio and visual materials.

The literature of religion and media over the past two decades has often amounted to an exploration of what happens when we collapse together our concepts of "technological" and "religious" communication into a single sphere of theo-techno-politics (e.g., Debray 1991, Vries 2001, Stolow 2012, Eisenlohr 2012). As productive as I have found this, I have wanted to preserve a sense of the special status of organic mediation—hospitality, sacrifice, food, work bodies, and blood—that has been the focus of much of this book so far. Or, at least, I have wanted to recognize that the organic has a special problematic status in Zege's Orthodoxy and, I suspect, in most ritual systems.

And yet, the divide between the organic and the technological, like that between the religious and the technological, is nowhere clear-cut. Better to think, perhaps, of the interface between human body (or self) and world not as an obvious fact but as a focal problem that religious action tries to work through. But there is no doubt that the possibilities for engaging with the world are changing, with significant ramifications for every other mode of connection and imagination. In particular I want to focus on Debray's (1996: 28) "properly mediative functions of territoriality." The environmental, spatial, and temporal aspects of religious mediation have been demonstrated throughout this book, but I have not yet explored how this territoriality relates to the claims of other groups sharing the same space, in this case the Muslim community living in Afaf and Fure. It is through this territorial dimension that we need to understand recent changes in interreligious relations.

Regular electricity came to Afaf three or four years before the start of my fieldwork. By the time I arrived, every bar-hotel was in possession of a refrigerator, television, and sound system, and many private homes had radios at the very least. As we will see, local churches and the mosque had also begun to use electric amplification, with a major impact on the shared experience of public space. These changes drastically altered Afaf's soundscapes and sightscapes, while increasing the amount of information coming in to Zege, much of it of a religious nature. On my return visits after 2009, I have found many younger people using the Internet via 3G networks, mainly to access Facebook. This chapter examines the specifically religious aspects of the new media technologies, especially as they affect the sense of spatial connection and political belonging of Orthodox Christians in Zege. The next chapter will turn to other forms of world imagination and aspiration among young people in Zege as they attempt to mobilize the resources that the world around them affords. In each case, it will quickly become clear that the interface between human bodies and the world—in a recognizably Orthodox idiom—remains a critical concern even as its imaginative and technological parameters are shifting.

CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN LOCAL, NATIONAL, AND CYBER SPACE

The local Muslim community lives in the town of Afaf and in Fure, a forested area on the mainland that abuts Afaf, just southwest of the peninsula itself. The pattern of Christians inhabiting the countryside and Muslims mainly living in towns conforms to a broad normative association of Christians with farming and Muslims with trade, and in local Christian understandings the peninsula proper, as a land of monasteries, is for Orthodox inhabitation only. The dominant narrative of the area as a whole has long been that it is an Orthodox heartland, a land of monasteries, whose Muslim population was depicted as largely incidental and secondary.

While relations between Orthodoxy and Islam in Ethiopia have been experiencing a moment of increasing tension (Abbink 2011, Samson 2015), there is also a well-established and much-touted tradition of mutual tolerance and cooperation. As we have seen, Christians and Muslims do not share meat (some have told me, significantly, that this is because different prayers are said during the slaughter). However, they will always make sure to serve some nonmeat dishes at feasts, so as to be able to host their neighbors. Personal relations among Christians and Muslims in town have generally been cordial and cooperative, accompanied by mutual recognition of the meat separation as proper on both sides.

I have not conducted extensive research with Muslims in Afaf, but have relied mainly on informal conversations with friends in Afaf. The Muslim community traces its presence in Zege to the reign of Emperor Yohannes IV (1871–89), and have historically had a large degree of autonomy through their community head, the *negedras* (chief of trade; Binayew 2014: 16). My Muslim friends would generally uphold the public narrative of tolerance and cooperation between Christians and Muslims, and highlight the importance of shared hospitality without meat or alcohol. Chewing *khat* was an important site of interreligious sociality among young men; while traditionally associated with Islam, social and recreational *khat* use has become increasingly popular among young Orthodox men. As a result, *khat* has become an important local cash crop, though Abebe told me that farmers with an eye to propriety would usually hide their *khat* fields among taller, more respectable crops.

I am told by older Christians that *khat* used to be part of a reciprocal arrangement in Zege: farmers would supply the plant to the Muslim community, who had no land, while Muslims would weave clothes for the Orthodox. Older Muslims, on the other hand, might point to the fact that they were not allowed to hold land (Binayew 2014: 57). But today young men who chew *khat* in bars and teahouses are part of the daily social scene in Afaf. Shared schooling, too, means that Christian and Muslim children grow up together, while Christian-Muslim business relations in the marketplace are also normal. Nonetheless there are occasional signs

that the Muslim community feels its historic disadvantage quite strongly, and that Orthodox Christians worry about increasing Muslim influence in the country.

In 2008, when I began fieldwork, there were occasional signs of unacknowledged tension. Most surrounded the small mosque that lay in the center of town. It had a rather powerful loudspeaker, and would broadcast the call to prayer at a volume that would often wake the whole town in the small hours of the night. I would occasionally hear Christian friends complain of tiredness, but there was never any open acknowledgment of a problem: ethics of neighborly respect for religious activity, combined with an aversion to provoking conflict, meant that nobody wanted to speak out. Most people actively denied that anything was wrong. That this was not entirely true became clear when, about a year into my fieldwork, somebody stole the mosque's amplifier.

The traditional rural-urban divide between Christians and Muslims is significant here. At this time there were seven churches in Zege to one small mosque, and most had amplifiers of their own. But all were situated outside of town, as is usual, to maintain proper separation between worldly and sacred space. For those living in town, the churches just weren't very loud, if they could be heard at all. Nonetheless, aside from the theft of the amplifier, things were peaceful when I left the field in 2009.

Village religious politics would become much more fraught over the next few years (my most recent visit was in December 2014). The most obvious point of contention was the reconstruction of the mosque, from a nondescript mud house to a vast painted concrete structure with a minaret tower that dwarfs any other building in the area. In a town of one-storey houses of mud and straw with corrugated iron roofs, the new mosque stands out.

From a Muslim perspective, this was an assertion of legitimate and long-standing presence; many had clearly felt unrecognized and unrepresented for some time. The mosque was one of many similar construction projects across the country, as Ethiopian Muslims are seeking to assert their equal status in the Federal era. Chatting to Christians, on the other hand, I heard two sorts of responses. In public they once again downplayed any kind of tension, saying that there was "no problem." But privately I heard complaints that the construction was inappropriate in a place of such historic Christian importance, and that local officials had been bribed.

At the same time, local Christian organizations moved to counter the mosque construction in kind, and so reestablish their claims to primacy on the peninsula. Raising money from their own national connections, they built two new churches in the peninsula: Medhane Alem, in the forest close to Afaf, and Rufael, near the northern shore of the peninsula on the site of a previous church that had been dismantled during the Italian occupation, its stones used to make a military camp whose remains are still visible. Neither of these churches has anything like the

visual presence of the mosque. They are low single-storey buildings situated in the forest, not like the much larger and more elaborate structures now found in towns. This is in line with established practice: churches have not traditionally been built to dominate space; they are supposed to be sheltered, in line with their role as refuges. The monasteries of Zege are known for their murals, the treasures they house, their histories, and the power of their holy water, not for their architectural majesty. By comparison, Orthodox churches in cities have become much more visually imposing in the last century, and in the last two years the façade of St. George's church in Bahir Dar has been renovated to include a vast and eye-catching bas-relief of George and the dragon. These developments seem to derive initially from the influence of European architectural styles, and lately from the need to produce structures that match the Islamic occupation of space (Boylston 2014).

The churches in Zege do other than compete for visual presence. For one thing, they emphasize the Christian argument that the peninsula is Orthodox: there are now nine churches rather than seven to the one mosque. But perhaps more importantly, the Orthodox demonstrated that they could call on their own support networks in the form of Christian voluntary associations *(mahber)* that are supporting church construction across the country (Ancel & Ficquet 2015). These associations support church building but also provide funds for the training of church students, in an age of great concern that their numbers are diminishing. By 2013 Zege hosted a number of boys entering church training, with new robes and books to work with and some support for food. Building the churches includes making investments in the future of the church as a whole and so combats perceived threats to Orthodoxy's preeminence.

The wranglings over religious construction have led to a sharply increased consciousness that the local churches and mosque are instances of a highly politicized struggle of national and international proportions. Both the mosque regeneration and the new churches were realized by calling upon large-scale support networks, whose financial support had direct and tangible effects in Afaf town and on the peninsula. The presence of the new buildings and the political wrangles that surround them supply evidence of the broader interests behind them—the churches and the mosques are understood to stand for something much bigger that lies just out of sight. People feel these developments acutely because they entail massive transformations in the experience of sensory space, due to both the visual and tangible presence of religious buildings and the greatly enhanced sonic range of religious ritual.

We have already seen how informal but well-established local traditions such as *fel* sacrifice and *yebered tebaqí* have been abandoned (see chapter 3), partly as a response to a concern that such nonstandard practice did not provide a firm bulwark against Islamic attempts, real or imagined, to gain ground on the peninsula. The mosque construction brought many of these concerns to a head. One of the

more disheartening signs of this development was a handwritten sign on the gate of Fure Maryam church (which lies in an area where many Muslims live) that read: "Orthodox Christians only." I was told that this was due to fear that Muslims might try to desecrate the church in some way, possibly as part of some wider national plot. But, as seen in chapter 6, the importance of shared funeral attendance as the very basis of mutual cohabitation and the suggestion that Muslims may not attend Christian funerals suggest the possibility of deep local ruptures quite contrary to the sentiments of shared belonging that both Christians and Muslims had expressed to me at funerals in the past.

Another key development that has changed local Christian and Muslim conceptions of their interrelationships has been the spread of polemical discourse through public media (Abbink 2011). As Samson Bezabeh (2015) shows, sermons from both Christian and Muslim speakers, which circulate on CDs and video, draw heavily on international discourses of religious conflict, invoking a clash of global forces of Christianity, Islam, and secular modernity. These circulations may not reflect the subtler realities of coexistence and cooperation on the ground, but they are powerful enough to gain a reality of their own, and begin to produce the conflict they describe. It seems at the moment that the rapid development of media technology for circulating religious material has intensified a sense of conflict rather than cooperation. We will see, however, that religious conflict is not the only register of discourse, and that strong notions of a shared Ethiopian national identity frequently take precedence.

The rapid growth of Facebook use among young people in Zege has provided a striking instance of this phenomenon, particularly potent because of the way that Facebook allows users to share images and slogans at the press of a button. In 2008 nobody in Zege had a Facebook profile (or much use for the Internet at all); by 2010 I had a couple dozen "friends" from Zege, and the number has continued to grow. When I returned to the field, I happened to ask some friends about a mutual Muslim acquaintance. My friend told me that they didn't really talk anymore—the man had moved to Bahir Dar, and now "he only posts about Islam." I did not remember him having discussed Islam much at all when I had known him, but through Facebook there was suddenly a steady stream of prayers, exhortations, and macros (images with text edited in) that he could "share" simply with a click and so declare his agreement with them and develop a new kind of public identity, one that some of his Christian friends found irksome—although they were doing much the same thing with the sharing of Christian images and slogans, and perhaps more so. Most of his posts were fairly innocuous statements like "I am a Sufi and I love my prophet," written on a football shirt, or a picture of the Quran that said, "We love Al-Quran," along with pictures of cute children in Muslim garb.

The most recent and shocking example of Christian outrage at the time of writing has been the response to the Islamic State releasing a video purporting to

show the beheading and shooting of some thirty Ethiopian Orthodox Christians in Libya. Images from the video, some extremely graphic, have been shared by many of my Zege friends on Facebook (which, of course, is exactly the purpose of releasing such videos) alongside expressions of outrage and prayers for the victims, for example, "To die in the name of the cross is an honour," "They will know my faith by the cross around my neck," each accompanied with a gruesome picture of a beheaded man. My friends now feel personally, viscerally affected by world political events in a way that was not evident before, and galvanized to affirm their Christian loyalty, though they often do so not in their own words but in those provided along with the images that are circulating. In another example of a polarizing event that could never have happened in the pre-Facebook era, one of my friends shared a Photoshopped image of a giant Caucasian woman defecating on the Mecca Kaaba. It is hard to think of a more inflammatory gesture, but I do not think this person harbors any significant anti-Islamic feelings beyond a certain reactionary Facebook tribalism. He would certainly never show such an image to anybody face to face, or make any other similarly outrageous statement. But on Facebook it was easy, something you could click on as a joke, and end up causing extreme anger, which of course it did. An on-screen shouting match predictably broke out, though I do not know of any further ramifications.

A number of things are happening here. First, Facebook blurs lines between what is public and what is among friends and even what it means to say something publicly, resulting in statements that one would never make face to face (boyd 2007). Second, the ability to circulate posts made by others makes it much easier to repeat a discourse originating elsewhere. This means both that the user feels connected to a much wider debate—they know the things they post come from a wider group of people who share some interest—and that they may publicly make statements that they would not in other circumstances have even formulated.

It is tempting to draw a comparison between the graphic photos of murdered Christians and the paintings of the martyrs that adorn the inner walls of Zege's churches. These, too, show people being burned, beheaded, and otherwise brutally mutilated and bathed in blood. In the process of re-presenting and re-mediating images of violent deaths, a new story emerges in which their blood and their deaths are meaningful for the wider body (religious) politic (Shenoda 2013, Heo 2015: 53). Similar processes are familiar from the anthropologies of sacrifice and nationhood (e.g., Bloch & Parry 1982, Verdery 2000, Lomnitz 2005). The spread of saints' legends and of the Libya images works in radically different temporalities, but it reminds us that the imagery of warfare and suffering, and of the murderous nature of Christianity's enemies, is hardly a new story, but one to which people have always made periodic recourse.

The online response to the Libya and South Africa killings did not only take the form of Christian-Muslim opposition, however. Many of the image macros

and statements that people were sharing appealed instead to a shared national identity, opposing the Ethiopian tradition of interreligious cooperation to the foreign organization of extremist Islam. Abebe also shared a picture of Muslims in Egypt linking hands to protect a Coptic church. In this same week, Ethiopians had been killed in xenophobic mob violence in South Africa, spurring more general declarations of Ethiopian solidarity on Facebook. Some people responded to all of these events simply with prayers and petitions to Mary to protect the country. John Dulin (2016, 2017) has shown how Christians and Muslims in Gondar responded to the same event with avowals of peaceful solidarity, and not just with mistrust.

Add to this the public connections that Facebook enables with those outside the country. Selam, a woman in her early twenties who has been working as a maid in Saudi Arabia for the last two years, posts a steady stream of macros containing either prayers or laments about missing Ethiopia. In the week of the Libya and South Africa killings, she posted even more prayers, some in very topical forms. In one example, a photo of a man being burned in front of South African police officers is superimposed with an Amharic prayer that reads:

> My heart bleeds
> And my eyes cry
> When my brother burns
> While the police laugh.
> To whom shall I say it?
> Who will hear me?
> Best if I talk to
> Omnipotent God:
> Creator, please
> Say enough of
> My brothers' blood
> And my sisters' tears.
> Please, if not by our sins
> Then by your mercy
> Guide us, Amen.

Selam had shared this from another friend, and forty people have commented beneath at the time of writing, most simply saying, "Amen amen amen," or adding macros with further prayers and images.

The combination of righteous anger, mutual support, and public prayer (along with a fair amount of spurious gossip) that met the Libyan and South African episodes epitomizes much of the circulation of image macros on Facebook among young people in Zege. It is not all anger and conflict; pictures of icons and prayer slogans are equally easy to share, and quite popular. And while nobody would

mistake a digitally shared photo of a picture of Mary for a spiritually empowered icon, that is no reason for them not to act as personal reminders and public indicators of deference and allegiance.

The growth of Facebook and the construction of the Afaf mosque happened at around the same time. For people in Zege, especially the young, these two factors combined to produce a vastly increased sense of being part of translocal religious-political factions. This developing sense has clear material foundations: the building of the mosque and churches, but also the networks of money that funded them, and the improving Internet infrastructure that allowed people from Zege to access the Internet, first in the regional capital nearby, and then from their phones in Zege. This does not mean that developing media technology always increases factional conflict. It does show, however, that changes in the media of public prayer have significant effects on how people experience their religious allegiances, connections, and claims to shared space. Public religious activity, I have argued, has always involved a division of labor and the formation of public allegiances under the divine aegis through shared media of prayer. And while these changes in the mediation of religion, whether through buildings, loudspeakers, or the Internet, are enabling rapid transformations in the fabric of that allegiance, they are doing so within a recognizably Orthodox idiom.

NEW AFFORDANCES OF SPACE AND BODY

The circulation of Facebook prayers gives an indication of new possibilities afforded by media technologies, and the consciousness of new kinds of connection that they may provide. But Facebook emerged at a time when mass media technologies had already begun to have significant effects on the contours of religious practice in Zege, since electricity came to Afaf town a decade ago. We have already seen an indication of this in the theft of the mosque's amplifier, and I now turn my attention to the broader ramifications of the electrified religious soundscape, produced by loudspeakers but also by radio and, especially, the circulation of recorded preaching and religious music on CD and Video CD. In particular, we will see how these technologies are leading to a refiguring of the religious experience of space.

Loudspeakers have been used to broadcast the call to prayer in the Muslim world since at least the 1950s, and have been regarded with ambivalence and controversy, by Muslims and non-Muslims alike, for just as long (Khan 2011). In Ethiopia churches and mosques now use loudspeakers as a matter of course. While debates within Islam revolved around the propriety of mediating the voice in prayer, and so stripping it of its sacred status (Khan 2011: 576), Orthodox Christians have been concerned about the projection of the sacred liturgy beyond the walls of the church, where it is heard by Christians who have not fasted and

are not in the proper reflective state. One theologian in Addis Ababa told me that, while he saw the value of loudspeakers in the city, he was concerned about the consequences of hearing the holy liturgy while sitting outside the church, perhaps in a cafe, not having fasted, perhaps while quarrelling. The projection of the liturgy over distance was causing problems for him precisely because the grounds of church services are supposed to be restricted, attended only by those in proper bodily states.

But as we have seen, if the liturgy is restricted, Ethiopian Orthodox Christians have always found other means of engagement when unable to attend church. This is especially important for junior women, who are often kept from going to church by housekeeping duties, especially the servant women who work in Afaf's bars, most of whom hail from poorer and more rural areas than Zege. These women tend to stay in Zege for a few months to a year before moving on to work in hotels in Bahir Dar, returning home, or heading to other employers in the countryside.

One of the more significant restrictions on serving women, as they see it, is their inability to attend church on anything like a regular basis. One classic way for servants to engage with their religion is to fast, and they can arrange with their soul fathers to observe extra fasts in lieu of going to church. What media make possible is for servant women, via recorded hymns, to make their spaces of work into temporary religious zones.

The availability of Amharic hymns in digital formats adds a whole new dimension to domestic religious life, especially in the bars. It allows serving women, and others too, to use their employers' stereo systems to play religious music from the moment they wake and start work until the first customers arrive. The place of business becomes a devotional space, at least for a while.

The vernacular Amharic hymns are of recent composition (they were produced after 1991) but use only traditional instruments. However, unlike the traditional classical Geʽez hymns of the church, they are often performed by women (Shelemay 2012), as well as in a language everyone can understand. They are slow, devotional songs of reflection and penitence, particularly suitable for the morning, before one has breakfasted or done other worldly things. I remember a friend once scolding her husband for singing a vernacular hymn while eating, showing that here, as with official church ceremony, a proper separation was necessary.

The slow, irregular drumbeat and sparse traditional instrumentation set the hymns clearly apart from any other kind of music. This is not music you can dance to, although the singers in the accompanying video perform a slow swaying of upturned hands—video versions of the songs are as easily available as audio versions, copied and distributed by vendors near churches in Bahir Dar.

It is not just servants, and not just women, who listen to hymns in the morning. Anyone with the requisite technology can do so, but it is especially important for the servants given the restrictions on their movement and the nature of the space

they inhabit. As they cook the day's food and clean the premises, they can assert a form of control over their surroundings and develop their devotional lives in ways that would not otherwise be possible. When I ask women why they listen to the hymns, they almost always answer quite simply that it makes them happy to do so.

If fasting has always enabled people to engage in devotion no matter where they were—in the space of their bodies, as it were—recorded hymns allow for the creation of new kinds of devotional spaces in homes and places of business, which for servants are the same thing. They also enable new partitions of time, in which each day starts in a religious mode until breakfast is eaten, and this time is clearly differentiated from the rest of the day and its worldly affairs. Since hymns are usually played loud enough to be audible beyond the building's walls, these listening practices begin to shape the shared soundscape of the town, especially in the early mornings. In cities, it has become common to hear hymns played in cafes during the day (under the control of the waitresses), especially during fasting times, further pushing devotional sound into the public, shared sphere.

There are other ways of bringing religiosity into the home, many based on print. While icons do not have quite the prominence of other Orthodox traditions, and most icons are to be found inside the church, many people at least hang a religious picture or two on their walls. The most common are an image of Gabriel saving the three boys from the fires of Nebuchadnezzar and printed posters of Christ or of the virgin and child from Greece or Russia that many people hang across corners of their house (where demons are known to hide), perhaps shrouded with a lacy veil.

These are not consecrated and so are not technically icons, but I do know of cases of them being used for personal prayer. Prayer books are also becoming more common, available cheaply from the same vendors who sell the recorded hymns. Especially in cities, large parts of the congregation may now be found reading in the churchyard during the liturgy. But prayer books also facilitate prayer in the home. In Afaf, too, a man called Temesgen told me about how he liked to start each day reading a section of the Widdasé Maryam, the Praises of Mary, before breakfast. With printed posters and books as with audio recordings, mass reproduction allows people to bring a certain Orthodox sensibility into the home, at least as a way to begin the day, which is important for those whose work lives make churchgoing difficult.

The significance of aural media and religious soundscapes for creating spaces of ethical formation and deliberation has been widely discussed (Hirschkind 2006, Schulz 2008, Oosterbaan 2008). Part of this is due to transportability of media, which "move practices and experiences related to the aural perception of spiritual presence into new arenas of daily life, beyond the immediate sphere of ritual action to which these aural forms of spiritual experience used to be restricted" (Schulz 2008: 175). But just as much has to do with the capacity of sound to cross boundaries in ways that more solid modes of mediation do not (although large

buildings may have similar effects, to the extent that they dominate lines of sight, as in the case of the Afaf mosque). A soundscape, as Oosterbaan shows, is a shared living space inhabited by multiple overlapping noise sources. Sound is integral to creating ethically charged environments but, because of its quality of being shared whether we like it or not, a soundscape always has political and territorial dimensions at the same time.

THE AUTHORITY QUESTION

Religious sound and information have become more pervasive in Zege, and Facebook and recorded hymns have opened up new sites for religious engagement. Yet this does not seem to have led to a reduction in the authority of the clergy, as the traditional managers of religious information. Instead, increased engagement by Orthodox Christians in the public sphere brings with it a reaffirmation of the importance of the priesthood and the institutional Church. In this case it seems that new media channels do not necessarily circumvent and undercut established religious authority (Eickelman & Anderson 2003).

One reason for this might be that Orthodox Christians already possess a developed and fairly explicit "theology of mediation" (Eisenlohr 2012) that helps to shape how new media affordances will be taken up—through public prayer, modes of repetition, and the sharing of various icon-like digital images, for example. Furthermore, as we have seen, the institutional recognizability of the church makes it an effective rallying point for appeals to collective Orthodox belonging.

The new importance of church construction and the use of loudspeakers serve to amplify, quite literally, the voice of priests. *Abba* S'om, for example, uses a microphone and loudspeakers to preach to the public on major festival days, and so makes interpretations of ritual activity much more widely available than they had been before.

The emphasis, evident all over Ethiopia, on larger and more numerous churches and mosques indicates a reaffirmation of the importance of traditional authority, bolstered by technologies of amplification, and with enhanced projection over soundscapes and sightlines. We can also look to where ordinary people are putting their money. Both the evidence from Zege and my interviews with Orthodox donors in Addis Ababa show a clear emphasis on two fronts: building and rehabilitating churches, and providing for the upkeep of church schools and trainee priests. Orthodox activists regard the continuation of the specialist priesthood as integral to the survival of the religion. The two newly built churches in Zege serve another purpose, beyond reestablishing a territorial claim: they are bases for church students, funded by the same revenue streams that built the churches. Architectural renovation goes along with the renewal of the specialist priesthood.

Images that circulate on Facebook, as well as many of the recorded sermons that have recently become popular, may stray far beyond the authorized doctrine of the Orthodox Church. There are still widespread debates about whether the new Amharic hymns are appropriate, or whether they constitute deviations from tradition. To this extent, media enable diversions from centrally controlled Orthodoxy. However, Orthodox Christians are expressly and actively returning to the authority of the church and the priests as the public instantiation of Orthodox belonging. The apparent paradox, of increasingly heterodox ideas combined with increasingly vocal loyalty to Orthodox institutions, tells us that there is more at stake here than doctrinal questions of content. Prayer is public, and its media of instantiation, the allegiances it forms, and the institutional basis of its authority are all widely recognized as being integral.

We should also note that, to the extent that media technologies contribute to politicized interreligious conflict, or at least discomfort, it is usually not just in the circulation of images, but in the affective ways that media articulate with the occupation of lived space through churches, mosques, and loudspeakers. Equally, the effects of media are contingent on the material infrastructures and financial networks that underpin them (Boyer 2012, Larkin 2013). In the case of the new churches and mosques, these constructions may be taken as indexical evidence of the political-religious networks and interests that underlie them.

In his survey of approaches to religion and media, Eisenlohr (2012) advocates those frameworks that regard religion as always already mediated. There is a case for saying that Ethiopian Orthodox Christians have always known this. A corollary of this insight, as I hope to have shown, is the conviction that prayer is at heart a shared, public endeavor that translates effectively between local and long-distance materialities. Tales of the efficacy of prayer almost always possess the public dimension: a priest in Addis Ababa telling me how the prayers of the church brought victory to Ethiopia at the Battle of Adwa in 1896, for example, or local ideas in Zege that the prayers of priests enact an ongoing covenant with God to protect the local environment and make sure that the rains fall.

The polemicization of Ethiopian religious discourse that some observers have described is real enough (Abbink 2011, Samson 2015), and certainly exacerbated by the speed and visceral quality of digital media. But it is important to note how frequently the flashpoints that result in prayerful declarations of Orthodox, Islamic, or Ethiopian identity involve migrants. The victims of ISIS were reported to be on their way to Europe, and the migrants in South Africa were killed for traveling to seek work. Those sharing images and money are also frequently those who have gone abroad and are reaffirming old connections and new identities of memory. The more global consciousness of people in Zege is a result not just of media technology coming to them, but of people from Zege going out into the world.