

**Nimi Wariboko. 2023. *Transcripts of the Sacred in Nigeria*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 327 pp.**

Nimi Wariboko's *Transcripts of the Sacred in Nigeria* highlights Nigerian Pentecostal religious rituals and eccentricities. The book analyzes the sacred as a tripartite proper order, based on practices and ideas, orature (as symbols and objects in addition to sacrifices), and social memory. Using philosophical analysis, social-ethical interpretation, and cultural criticism Wariboko contests generic concepts of gods, sacred, and deities' spirits or spiritual forces.

Wariboko's work consists of an introduction and six chapters that thematically address the sacred's various facets in post-colonial Africa. In the introduction he chronicles the ambiguity of the sacred character and explores the dialectics of the beautiful, monstrosity, and ridiculousness of the sacred. His unique perspective on these three facets also explores its interconnectivity, for the author utilized Devaka Premawardhana's social, philosophical analysis of Pentecostalism in Mozambique to highlight a "subject ability to move spatially and socially in a field of possibilities" (p. 11). Assertively, Wariboko argues that the church in Africa perhaps is yet to be an accurate reflection of the beauty of the sacred, particularly the Pentecostal churches as an example of "simulacrum of this capability to driving their members under the whip of the prosperity gospel for ceaseless consumption items..." (p. 11).

Chapter one is titled "The Sacred as Im/possibility," in which the author defines and describes the nature of the sacred and its burden for Africa in terms of quality and quantity. "Africans are not producing enough of sacred's quantity and quality to meet their needs" (p. 41). Chapter two, "Demons as Guests: Aesthetics of Pentecostal Prayers," explores the African Pentecostal experience within the cosmological order, highlighting the presence of demons and spiritual forces in worship. Wariboko proposes four theories to explain this, providing frameworks for understanding the Pentecostal postcolonial experience in African understanding of the sacred. Furthermore, Wariboko explores the Pentecostal faith through four path theories: sacred experience, vigorous evangelism, traumatic governance, and existential anxiety. These factors explain the Pentecostal faith, which is driven by emotion without rational structure, leading to destructive irrationalism and the theology of chaos music, which posits existence and everything created as evil and requires divine purification.

The third chapter, "Pentecostal Incredible," examines "the deformities of Pentecostalism in Nigeria and the way the sickness has shaped the commons of life in the country" (p.95). Wariboko's analyzes in this chapter exemplify the "monstrosity of the sacred in the African post-colony" (p. 94). Furthermore, Wariboko argues that the sacred has been "bastardized, condemned reduced to a sensational, excessively emotional, irrational religion" (p. 93), and thus depicting how Nigerian Pentecostals have turned away "from rationalist epistemology and plunging into the bottomless pit of spiritual episteme" (p. 93).

"Productivity of Violence in the Postcolony" (chapter four) focuses on the emergence and associated features of violence in postcolonial Africa, dividing the socio-political order into sacred and secular forms. Thus, Wariboko identifies seven typologies of violence via the historical and political dynamics to describe what constitutes violence and its associated impact on the African scape. Chapter five, "Choseness, Spirituality, and the Weight of Blackness," explores African chosenness and spiritual consciousness, highlighting how postcolonial Africa

has become a burden for the sacred. Wariboko posits that this belief drives the esoteric Pentecostal experience of redefinition of Blackness in the historic global world.

The central thesis of Wariboko's sixth chapter, "Disruption and Promise: The Religious Powers of Development," is that development has religious powers. The author argues that "for social transformation to occur, certain structures, institutions, norms and habits must be displayed, reorganized or transfigured" (p. 169). Furthermore, the author destabilizes the regnant approach to the study of religion and development but notes that religion is not synonymous with disruption only but also opportunities. He elaborates intently on this discourse as he examines the dissent, contradiction, and prospects of African Pentecostalism about payment of tithes, which has been accentuated in the Nigerian social media space by Ifedayo Olarinde (aka Daddy Freeze). Wariboko argues that the "promise of quick wealth accumulation has disrupted long-established sexual mores" (p. 181). Interestingly, apart from the elevation of tithing to an iron-cast form of spirituality by Nigerian Pentecostal pastors is the clarion call for accountability of these Pastors by worshippers.

Wariboko's *'Transcript of the Sacred'* is unique as the author deftly reconceptualizes the sacred and its associated possibilities in a community. His reconceptualization of the sacred was extensive in various sections of the book (introduction, an interlude and chapter one). He identifies and explores various facets of the sacred in Nigeria's religioscape, particularly the Pentecostal strand of the Christian faith. However, an obvious lacuna that Wariboko glossed over is the exploration of the nexus between religion and crime from the pulpit, which Wariboko faintly alluded to in the book's preface. *Transcript of the Sacred in Nigeria* is highly commendable, illuminating, and intellectually stimulating.

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