

Christian Print Media in Kenya and their Coverage of Political Events in the 1980s and 1990s'

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2013

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ABSTRACT

The thesis argues that the Christian press in Kenya played an equally significant role as the secular press in bringing selected political events to the attention of the public. It explores the presentation of political news by Christian publications in comparison to secular publications. The focus was on four Kenyan political events, namely, the *Mlolongo* 1988 elections, the *Saba Saba* political riot of 1990, the Kenyan land clashes of 1992 and the Constitutional Reform process in 1996.

In all, 617 articles from both Christian and secular publications were read, content analysed, discussed and relevant conclusions and recommendations made. The content analyses indicated that Christian publications presented alternative views to those of the secular publications. The political involvement of the Christian publications brought sections of Kenyans such as clergymen and opposition politicians into the limelight. Thus, clergymen stood out as key players in Kenyan politics from 1988 onwards, especially with the coverage of *Mlolongo* in *Beyond*.

Analyses of the articles allowed for comparisons in the discussions of coverage. Thus Christian and secular publications point to differing presentations of the political use of violence and power struggles as the major themes in Kenyan politics in the 1980s and 1990s. These were used by Kenyan politicians for the acquisition and maintenance of the *status quo*. Overall, Christian publications augmented the coverage of Kenyan political events.

This thesis adds to the analysis of political news in publications. The examination of Kenyan publications resulted in the identification of a rich social and political history, which Christian print media publicly expressed as distinctive perceptions and interpretations. The study provides a broad and exciting area of exploration, making it possible for an examination of factors key to the churches' mission in the public forum of Kenya.