Contesting Nationalisms: Gender, Globalization, and Cultural Representation in Nigerian Beauty Pageants

By

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Abstract

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Over the last five decades, Nigeria has moved from being a nation enjoying its new post-colonial independence to a nation self-consciously placed within the international political economy. In this dissertation, I show how the complexity and tensions of this shift have helped shape, and are reflected in the Nigerian beauty pageant industry. Drawing on a case study of three beauty pageants, two national and one international, I compare the production, symbolism, and political controversies surrounding each pageant and the way it represents the Nigerian nation. I use these cases to argue that national identity exists at multiple levels and is constructed through and towards both national and international audiences. Organizers, contestants, corporate sponsors, fans and opposition groups manage and present the nation through pageants. They negotiate between highlighting cultural diversity within the country and displaying a shared national culture in a global world. The Nigerian beauty pageant industry has been influenced by social divisions within Nigeria and by its place within the international political economy; it is caught up in the dual process of navigating national unity and asserting global dominance.

I focus on how Nigerian beauty pageants: (1) project a cohesive national identity in a multiethnic and multi-religious society; (2) craft a narrative of unique nationhood while being part of the global arena; and (3) manage local adaptation and resistance to globalization. By comparing these contests—their content, structure, and associated discourses—I theorize nationalism as a *multilayered* process informed by local and global processes. I posit that the first contest, "Queen Nigeria," represents *cultural-nationalism* through its emphasis on the unity of the nation and retaining Nigeria's unique cultural heritage in the face of rapid globalization. The second pageant, "The Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria," embodies *cosmopolitan-nationalism*, stressing Nigeria's compatibility with an international community. The third case, "Miss World 2002," highlights *global-nationalism* through the intersection of Nigeria's local political situation and responses from the international community. I account for how local and international agendas play out through the trajectory of a nation.

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Chapter 1:
Representation, Contestation, and Symbolic Boundaries of the Nation

Introduction

On November 16, 2001 Nigeria's representative in the Miss World pageant, Agbani Darego, was crowned the first Black African winner of the international contest in Sun City, South Africa. Darego's win served both literally and figuratively as a litmus test for and symbol of Nigeria's national trajectory. When I interviewed one of the key members of the Nigerian press corps, he recalled:

> I keep remembering the day of Agbani's win...It was one of Nigeria's proudest moments apart from when the under seventeen won the World Cup and when Kanu's team won the 1996 Olympics. It makes everybody [feel] proud. In Nigeria, whether you like beauty pageants or not, the fact that a Nigerian went for the pageant, would make them like it. Agbani beat almost 81 girls and won the crown. You should have seen when she came back, everybody wanted to have pictures with her. You should have seen when we took her back to her [home] state, it was a public holiday. The line was long from the airport to the town. The secondary school kids were chasing the car that conveyed her from the airport. People were crying. I have not seen anything like that in my life. The then Minister of Culture and Tourism, Mr. Jack, who came from the same state as her, was almost knocked down on his way to Agbani's father's house. Imagine what millions of Naira could not do for Nigeria, a 19-year girl did it. You can put an article in the paper and spend millions of dollars on it; it didn't give Nigeria the goodwill as Nigeria got when Agbani won.

In explaining the impact of Darego's win, the journalist emphasized how her feat served to energize the public's national pride and brought "goodwill" to Nigeria akin to the Olympics and the World Cup. He noted that this win became a popular cultural reference point for Nigerians as hairstyles, fashion designs, and even an increased appreciation for slim [*lepa*] body shapes were linked to her. The journalist further stressed the effectiveness of this achievement in thrusting Nigeria into a more positive light that even "millions" could not fully realize. The "millions" to which referred were high government expenditures poured into attempts to rehabilitate Nigeria's poor image through media blitzes aimed at domestic and international audiences such as the state-sponsored "Heart of Africa" and "Good People, Great Nation" campaigns.

The state took an active part in using Darego's win to mold and advance a new image of Nigeria as a nation. Upon Darego's return to Nigeria, carnivals, receptions, and official state functions were held in her honor. The National Assembly stalled legislative activities for a courtesy visit from the newly crowned beauty queen; the government bestowed upon her the national honor of Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON) in addition to a high chieftaincy title from an *oba* [king]; and a portrait of Darego was eventually hung in the Assembly where it remains to this day. In 2010, during Nigeria's Golden Jubilee celebration to mark the country's 50 years of independence, Darego was featured in a government-endorsed event "50@50 - Nigerian Women: The Journey So far" to commemorate the nation's 50 highest women achievers. Politicians and government officials perceived her win as a sign of the success of Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999 and as evidence that Nigeria was prepared to be competitive in the changing global political economy. Dele Alake, a Lagos state Commissioner for Information and Strategy noted at the time, "This young and gifted lady symbolises the new Nigeria and a democratic dividend...[Her] victory has now opened doors to our youths to

compete with the best in the world."[1] The then president, Olusegun Obasanjo also noted how Darego's win remained a source of national pride and a direct reversal of the dominant image of Nigeria mired in "the dark days of military rule [and] the number one haven for corruption and bad governance [to] number one in beauty and intellect."[2] Young-Harry Adokiye, chairman of the sub-committee on Oil and Gas, commented, "This is good public relations for Nigeria and we [the House] want to set the pace in ensuring that this opportunity is recognised as such."[3] Thus, the state directly embraced Darego as a visual showpiece and as a spokeswoman for a newly democratic and a potentially internationally acclaimed nation.

In a country better known for its Internet scams (colloquially known as 419) than its tourism industry (Smith 2006) the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC), a parastatal board charged with regulating and promoting Nigeria's fledgling tourism industry invited Darego to a series of international tourism exhibits in Germany, the Netherlands, France, and the United States. The director of the agency at the time explained to me the underlying motives for actively involving Darego in the agency's tourism trade fairs:

> I saw a reason to promote her all around the world when she became Miss World. The international community won't say anything good about Nigeria. By the time Agbani won, before we even thought of hosting Miss World, for three months [after her win] I never read anything about her. Not in the papers or the television. Nothing! This is the first African to win Miss World and as I'm talking to you it hasn't happened again. The first African to win is a Nigerian and CNN is not talking about that. They are talking about our bad roads in Lagos, about Ajegunle [a densely populated slum in Lagos], about our dumpsites. As if they don't have dumpsites in New York!… Every country has a blend of the negative and the positive. I realized that if we don't tell our story, nobody will tell our story for us…. Agbani Darego became the brand for Nigeria to the international community.

The tourism agency thus sought to parlay Darego's win into a large-scale campaign to redeem Nigeria's poor image abroad and develop Nigeria's tourism business. The exhibitions displayed photographs of Darego posing at tourist locations throughout Nigeria, and a news article described her attendance as, "magnetic, as other exhibitors momentarily abandoned their stands to either have a glimpse of the most beautiful human being on earth, or to sign autographs, and most importantly, make enquiries about Nigeria and its tourism assets."[4] In these statements state elites ranging from federal ministers to government officials and even presidents linked a single crowning moment to the trajectories of their nation. For them, the achievement symbolized not only the promotion of development within their countries, but also the prospect of launching their respective nations as bona fide members of the international community.

Darego's victory revitalized not only Nigeria's image, but also its beauty pageant industry, particularly the leading "Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria" franchise which produced the queen. Darego who now divides her time between New York and Nigeria, later extended her new-found fame into a modeling contract with Ford, a L'Oréal cosmetics campaign, and a hosting gig on Stylogenic, a Pan-African fashion reality show. Previous to her win, organizers would hold small-scale auditions with a handful of aspiring models, relying heavily on personal

[1] "You Are a Pride of the Black Race, Tinubu Tells Darego" This Day 10 December 2001
[2] "Government congratulates Darego, Miss World" This Day November 22, 2001.
[3] Adeyemi, Muyiwa, Joseph Ollor-Obari, and Oghogho Obayuwana, "I Know Agbani Will Go Places, Says Father" The Guardian November 24, 2001
[4] "Agbani Lifts Abuja Tourism in Germany" Daily Trust July 18, 2002

contacts to convince women to participate in the pageant. However, in the year immediately following Darego's win organizers stressed how parents escorted their daughters to open screenings where hundreds flocked from all walks of life, clamoring for a chance to participate in the contest. Whereas previously public opinion towards beauty pageants remained largely ambivalent, many now saw beauty pageants as a viable platform for career advancement and national promotion.

As this example shows, beauty pageants are a site for national representation, but they are also heavily contested. During the rehearsals for the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria, Charles, a freelance photographer insisted, "If you want to feel the pulse of Nigeria, you won't find it here," gesturing towards the contestants for the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria as they were getting their measurements taken. He continued:

> Go to the BRT [Lagos' public transportation service], go to a market like Mile 12, or go to Surulere [a mostly working class area located on the Lagos mainland]. In fact you should go to Unilag [a large public university in Lagos] and talk to people. They will tell you themselves that these people do not represent them. The connection between the pageant and everyday Nigerians is a very average one."

Charles' observation that the pageant world was weakly connected to the everyday experiences of ordinary Nigerians was a common refrain that I heard in many conversations during my fieldwork. People who were unaffiliated with the beauty pageant industry often referred to issues of class and culture as they rejected or expressed skepticism about pageants as a site of legitimate national representation. Charles' admonition that I venture into the hustle and bustle of Nigerian life to get a "real sense" of Nigeria's national identity points to the ways in which Nigerian beauty pageants serve as a contested site of national representation. Yet, as I will argue, Nigerian pageants are also a stage on which anxieties and hopes of nationhood play out. The tension between representation and contestation is the key theme that animates this dissertation.

I will next contextualize this central theme by discussing Nigeria's role as an emerging nation that must navigate social divisions while trying to position itself as a major player in the international political economy. My analysis of this larger context is informed by the literatures on nationalism and globalization, which I will review, along with relevant literature in the fields of gender and culture. I will then turn to the literature on beauty pageants in other sites around the world, highlighting their value in exploring issues related to collective identity. Next, I will map out my research design and describe my cases, field sites, and methods. Finally, I will provide an overview of my central arguments and chapter organization.

Nigeria: Geopolitical context of an "Emerging Nation"

Nigeria has often been referred to as merely a "geographical expression," a weak and unstable state due in part to artificial borders created through the haphazard division and unity of diverse groups of people during the history of British colonialism. The notion of Nigeria as a "geographical expression" refers to idea that although Nigeria may exist as a territorial designation, it lacks a coherent national identity due to vast regional, religious, and ethnic divisions. This description can be traced to Obafemi Awolowo, (1966) a political leader during the struggle for Nigerian independence, who stated:

> Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no 'Nigerians' in the same sense as there are 'English,' 'Welsh.' or 'French.' The word 'Nigerian' is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria and those who do not.

This quote highlights the idea that Nigerians are much more likely to identify with ethnic or regional affiliations than national ones.

Since securing independence from Great Britain over 50 years ago, Nigeria has witnessed profound economic, political, and ideological changes due to grappling with market-oriented economic reforms and dealing with heightened social divisions, while also searching for transparent democratic governance. Nigeria is the seventh most populous country in the world, the most populous nation in Africa, and one of the largest oil suppliers in the world. The country's vast human and natural resources and political role as a key strategic regional actor highlight Nigeria's potential as a major global player economically and politically (Rotberg 2004). Nigeria's powerful military might, leadership in the region, and massive oil-wealth have contributed to its designation as the "giant of Africa." Yet, despite these resources, well-known images of political corruption, poverty, and communal conflicts have meant that its "giant" status is often qualified with terms such as "ailing" or "sleeping," which point to its unmet potential as an international powerhouse, mar its international reputation, and serve as major roadblocks to nation-building and unity (Obadare 2004; Suberu 2001; Ukiwo 2003; Watts 2004).

Massive wealth generated during the 1970s oil boom led the Nigerian economy to be called "the beacon of Africa." But in the 1980s and 1990s it was renamed the "crippled giant" due to the worldwide oil bust. In the 1970s Nigeria's oil boom fueled rapid state-sponsored industrialization and development (Apter 2005; Lewis 1996; Watts 2004). At the time, the naira (Nigeria's currency), was valued at $1.60 and its Gross Domestic Product grew close to 300 percent (Apter 2005). However, a worldwide decline in oil prices in the 1980s (at this point oil accounted for 80 percent of government revenues) led to high debt burdens and the devaluation of the Nigerian currency. By the 1990s, Nigeria underwent a series of Structural Adjustment Programs (which it later abandoned) in order to rehabilitate its economy (Lewis 1996). As a rentier state which derived the vast majority of its revenues from foreign sources (Yates 1996), Nigeria seemed poised to fall into the trap of the dreaded "resource curse" in which nations with high levels of natural resources fail to fully pursue economic development.

A nation's image is a key component of its place within the global marketplace as it plays a role in a country's attractiveness as a potential investment or tourist destination (Edmonds 2010; Wherry 2006; Wherry and Bandelj 2011). Nigeria's "image problem" began in the late 1980s, coinciding with the oil bust and economic decline. At one point, Nigeria's reputation was so poor that the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) posted warning signs in all US international terminals advising travelers about security conditions at Lagos International Airport and cautioning that the airport failed to meet International Civil Aviation Organization's minimum standards. The airport was notorious for high criminal activity, and Nigerian immigration officials routinely requested bribes for entry into the country. In 1993, the FAA suspended commercial air service between Lagos and the United States. Direct flights between the two countries were not reinstated until 2001 for major foreign carriers and 2009 for Nigerian-owned airlines. The country's poor international repute has contributed to its hyper-awareness about its place in the international political economy.

The development literature refers to countries that are in the middle of a transition between developing and developed status as "emerging markets" (Joseph 2008). These markets have been identified by analysts as undergoing rapid economic growth and eventually becoming part of the world's largest economies (Eichengreen and Hausman 2005). The most well-known

examples are Brazil, Russia, India, and China, or the "BRICs"[5] which have been identified as newly industrialized nations ripe for investment, with an emerging middle class, and pivotal in reshaping the international political economy. Following a series of economic reforms, Nigeria is currently in the process of positioning itself as an "emerging market" by leveraging its status as one of the largest oil producers in the world. The country intends to become one of the largest economies of the world, which will further globalize the nation. A number of international investment organizations and information companies have identified Nigeria as part of a group of countries called pre-emerging (or frontier) markets, which have a high potential for becoming emerging markets. These financial organizations include Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI), the Financial Times/London Stock Exchange (FTLE), and Goldman Sachs (which also coined the term BRIC to refer to the fastest growing economies in the world).

Nigeria's recent economic growth has spurred the development of a homegrown rising middle class, as well as a small but powerful super-elite who remain plugged into the international marketplace (Wheary 2009). More specifically, changing class dynamics within the country mean that Nigeria's nationalist visions must support its growing but fragile middle class which can take up the challenge of guiding the unification of the nation. At the same time, members of Nigeria's super-elite must tap into international capital to help secure Nigeria's place in the global economic landscape. These class dynamics undergird competing interpretations of nationalism.

Alongside these economic shifts, Nigeria has experienced a great deal of political instability and change, with seven military governments, four elected civilian regimes, and one interim civilian administration (Watts 1997) since independence. In 1999, following decades of military rule, the country returned to democracy. Yet Nigeria must still address its reputation as a heavily corrupt country (Smith 2006) and assert its credibility as a relatively politically stable nation in order to ensure international investment. Nigeria's corruption is often linked to its high levels of identity-politics (the specific form of politics is referred to as "prebendalism") in which government officials use their access to state resources to secure loyalty with their constituents, who are often divided by ethnicity, religion, and/or regional interests (Chabal and Daloz 1999; Joseph 1987).

Politically, Nigeria also must contend with the implementation of *sharia* law and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, particularly in the Northern region. In 2000, *sharia* (Islamic law) was established in 12 northern states[6] (see Figure 1). While *sharia* has long existed as a form of customary law governing family and cultural practices in some Northern Nigerian states, in 2000 *sharia* law was formally enacted as the basis of the criminal code in 12 Northern Nigerian States (Imam 1994). Within Nigeria, the North is considered to be "backwards" in comparison to the more "forward-looking" Southern half. This is due in part to colonial rule in which the North was ruled indirectly through its own traditional leaders, while the South was governed through British appointed administrators. The South thus historically had increased access to Western education and development, while the North continued to lag behind in terms of education and income. The formal application of *sharia* law in the North (ironically secured through

[5] A variety of other acronyms have been introduced to include others in newly industrialized nations such as BRICET (BRIC + Eastern Europe and Turkey), BRICS (BRIC +South Africa). BRICM (BRIC + Mexico), BRICK (BRIC + South Korea).

[6] Three of these states (Kaduna, Niger, and Gombe) have limited versions of the code that only apply to parts of the state with large Muslim populations.

democracy) institutionalized regional divisions within the nation, and further fused together ethnicity, religion and politics.

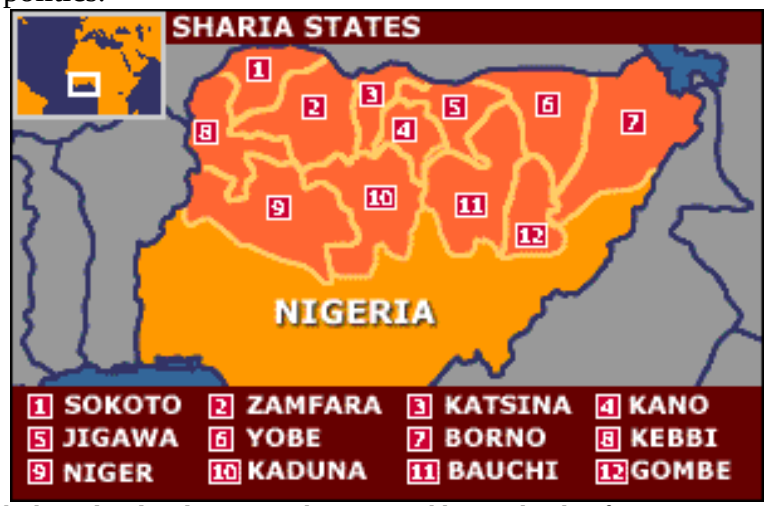


Figure 1: Nigeria states with sharia legal code. Source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1962827.stm

This postcolonial backdrop of increasing ethno-religious tensions within the nation animates my analysis of national representation. Much of the literature focused on conflict in Nigeria tends to highlight its political dimensions or the heightened animosity between settlers and indigenes, various ethnic groups and the recent clashes between Muslims and Christians. Although regional/religious splits between a "Muslim" North and a "Christian" South are often invoked as the main source of political tension, these seemingly neat regional divides do not always map cleanly onto religious or ethnic divisions and do not fully capture the highly fragmented religious, ethnic, and regional differences which sometimes result in communal disputes in the country. Nigeria's 36 states and federal capital territory, Abuja, are divided into six geopolitical zones: the Southwest, South-South, South-East, North-Central, Northwest and Northeast (see Figure 2).



Figure 2: Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, Federal Republic of Nigeria
Source: http://collections.infocollections.org/whocountry/en/d/Js7928e/4.1.html

Nigeria has over 250 ethnic groups, nearly all of which have their own languages and dialects. The nation is almost evenly split between Muslims and Christians, although the exact breakdown is heavily disputed; there is also a minority population which subscribes to traditional spiritual beliefs. Because of this ethnic and religious diversity, Nigeria seems to be the paradigm of "ethnic nationalism" based on exclusionary politics. Yet "civic"-based strands of nationalism that unite the nation such as shared systems of language (English is the official language) and

symbols (flags, national anthems, the national pledge) do exist and help promote shared national culture (Zubrzycki 2006). Given this ethnic and religious diversity, forging a strong and unified sense of Nigeria as a nation, which can present itself in a coherent way to an international community depends on the creation of widely shared symbols like holidays, public festivals, sports teams, monuments, and national literatures.

Wendy Griswold (2000) has shown how the Nigerian village novel emerged out of the domestic political economy, but, like Nigerian beauty pageants, was also shaped by an international audience. Similarly, Nigeria's national image campaign launched in 2009 and run by the Nigerian Ministry of Information and Communications under the tagline "Good People, Great Nation" sought to rebrand the nation by urging the public to appreciate unity in their diversity, reorient their manners and etiquette in order to be better "global citizens," (e.g. be being punctual and waiting your turn in line), and enjoy Nigerian made goods and services. This campaign also serves as a public relations notice to rehabilitate Nigeria's image abroad, boost tourism and encourage international investment in the nation.[7] Regional, ethnic and religious differences within the nation mean that national identities are heavily negotiated and contested. At the same time, Nigeria's economy (e.g. primarily through the oil boom) and its geo-political position (especially within the region), has internationalized Nigeria (Apter 2005). How does Nigeria manage to craft an image of itself at these varied levels?

While all nations must contend with the task of appealing to domestic and international agendas, this process becomes especially heightened in emerging nations that run the risk of being pulled apart if they fail to manage these competing interests. By using the term "emerging nation," I refer not to newly formed states (i.e. political units), but rather to newly developing nations, with a shared sense of cultural affiliation, which are vying to become major players in the international arena. Examining the interplay between how Nigeria manages to come to terms with itself as a nation and how it seeks to gain global attention is a critical point of departure in this project.

My use of the term "nationalism" primarily refers to national representation, or the shared and contested cultural scripts used to characterize the nation. I am concerned not only with the *scripts* nations use to make sense of themselves and what holds them together as "a people," but also the *scripts* nations project to other members of the international community, and the *scripts* the international community uses in narratives about a particular country. On the one hand, Nigeria seeks to take its place among the largest economies of the world. On the other hand, it still must deal with deep social divisions that hinder nation-building. These dual factors situate Nigeria as an emerging nation and provide the context within which nationalism must present itself to both international and domestic audiences to serve specific aims. As the nation persists in its attempts to revive its weak reputation, it continues to revel in the reminders of its past glory as Africa's golden child. I argue that these tensions embedded in public perceptions of Nigeria are reflected in vacillation between an enormous sense of self-importance due to the high expectations of the country and deep feelings of embarrassment about failing to realize this potential. In many ways, the Nigerian beauty pageant industry with its highly competitive nature and desire to showcase a glossy image of the country provides a unique window into understanding the dual strategy of securing national solidarity and garnering international

[7] During the inauguration of the program, Dora Akunyili the Minister of Information and Communication noted that the program would serve to "develop a sense of pride and authority through [the] process of national renaissance. We want to inspire a rebirth in our belief system, [to] repackage Nigeria and represent her to the world in a more acceptable manner."

recognition. These tensions provide a broader context for understanding how Nigeria negotiates the dilemma of staking a claim in the global political economy while remaining attuned to its internal sensibilities. In the section that follows I draw on the nationalism and globalization literatures to highlight how national meanings are constructed within the context of larger global developments. Nationalism should not be understood as a subset of larger global processes, but as dynamic systems, differentially shaped by politics, the economy, and culture.

Globalization and the Nation

Relations between local communities and global structures are central to this study as I examine the place of nations within the broader world. The literature on globalization grapples with this tension between the local and the global, analyzing whether one sphere is more likely to dominate. Several theoretical perspectives within the vast globalization literature propose distinct understandings of this relationship. The world society (or world polity) theory posits that international structures bolster commonality among nations such that universally derived principles like individual rights institutionalize a shared framework that legitimizes actors in world society. It points to the importance of these international cultural standards as shaping expectations regarding conduct and global integration (Meyer, Boli, Thomas, and Ramirez 1997). This theory prioritizes the influence of larger international structures in shaping isomorphism among nations. A second viewpoint, world systems theory, maintains that we must understand globalization through a system of capitalist exchanges in the world economy, which sustains an interconnected hierarchal structure between "core" "semi-peripheral" and "peripheral" countries (Wallerstein 2004). This theory indicates that specific core nations will maintain a hegemonic position over others. In contrast, a third framework on globalization, world culture, emphasizes the distinct ways local absorption of global processes occurs, detailing the interpenetration between the local and the global through terms like "glocalization" (Robertson 1995). This perspective suggests that diverse assemblages of multiple local communities intensify hybridity (Ong and Collier 2005). Lastly, the world civilizations model focuses on tensions within global politics and emphasizes a clash between global corporate control and traditional values based on religious orthodoxy or nationalism which seeks to retain localized identity (Barber 2010; Friedman 2000; Huntington 1996). Taken together, these models highlight the contradictory patterns evident within the relationship between nationalism and globalization, pointing to the importance of the international economy, political accord and conflict, and cultural identities.

A central debate within this scholarship is whether globalization will result in a convergence of cultural practices and ideas across nations (Bell 1973; Sklair 1991; Williamson 1996) or whether local diversity will persist and expand (Appadurai 1996; Giddens 1990; Zelizer 1999). The four models of globalization detailed above can be loosely grouped into one of two camps framed though the homogeneity vs. heterogeneity thesis. The world society and world systems theories most closely align with the homogeneity thesis, although the latter tends to place more emphasis on power and conflict as compared to the former. The world culture and world civilization models employ a heterogeneous approach towards globalization; however the latter underscores political discord while the former stresses harmonious cultural mixture. Proponents of the *homogeneity* thesis tend to emphasize the convergence of culture, in which some argue that globalization stems from and further reaffirms Western (or advanced industrialized countries) dominance in other parts of the world and the diffusion of universal international standards. From this standpoint, cultural differences are diminished and local specificity is overshadowed sometimes in favor of dominant Western cultural standards. Thus,

beauty pageants in Nigeria could represent a purposeful adoption of "Western" beauty standards to judge these contests as well as the proliferation of common beauty criteria around the globe. The use of Westernized ideals, especially in terms of body type but also with regard to skin color, hair texture, facial features and bodily display (e.g. fashion, adornments) would serve as evidence that beauty pageants in Nigeria do not reflect "authentic" African cultural standards and values, but rather Western ones. More specifically, the preference for tall, thin beauty queens may be seen as contradicting "traditional" African preferences for voluptuous female bodies (Onishi 2002). In a similar vein, international beauty contests such as Miss World might seem to represent the emergence and persistence of a single global cultural standard that marks the disappearance of national differences and local specificity.

In contrast, scholars who focus on the local adaptation or contestation of global cultures claim that globalization is leading to increased *heterogeneity*. That is, the juxtaposition of and increased interaction among cultures will result in a fusion or friction that reinterpret global norms through local traditions. According to this perspective, global impulses stem from multiple places and there is no unified center which attempts to maintain dominance through an imposition of universal global cultural standards. This framework might suggest that beauty pageants in Nigeria indicate changing cultural standards of global beauty originating from a non-Western source, resulting in a variety of cultural tastes that integrate and challenge local, national and global standards.

How might the degree of cultural homogeneity or cultural heterogeneity in a specific context relate to the source of production and the intended audience of different cultural forms? This question has been insufficiently addressed in the scholarship on cultural globalization since it is not adequately sensitive to context. Whether a cultural object is intended for internal consumption for a nation-building project or for external consumption in a quest for international legitimacy and striving for global standards might influence the shape and meaning that cultural tastes will take. My research addresses this gap by examining cultural globalization in a much more nuanced and situated way. Doing comparative research within a single country helps illuminate how complex social processes like nationalism, globalization and cultural production converge and unfold in a specific context and allows for a deeper consideration of the varied ways in which national representations may play out in a global world. By looking at the local and national levels within one country–understood in globalizing contexts—my research shows how cultural homogeneity and heterogeneity are not opposite processes but are complementary and central to the survival of a nation. Furthermore, my work counters typical conversations about globalization that tend to ignore Africa. I use the case of Nigeria to show how a postcolonial country is cultivating national identity in an era of increasing globalization.

Past scholarship has challenged the strict division between the local and the global, pointing to the localization of the global and the globalization of the local (Basu 2010). Using concepts such as "scattered hegemonies" (Grewal and Kaplan 1994), transnational feminist perspectives have paid close attention to how global capitalism has produced multiple subjectivities, local conditions, and global circumstances. The concept of transnationalism considers how shifts in global capitalism may challenge boundaries of national economies, identities, and cultures. It further complicates the local-global division to consider how nations cut across both scales. By theorizing *nationalism as multilayered*, I seek to address some of the criticisms leveled against conventional thinking about relationships between the local and the global. For example, conventional approaches tend to equate the "local" with homogenizing and

reified entities such as the "Third World" while associating the forces of globalization with the "First World" (Kim-Puri 2005).

Transnational feminists have theorized the nation by paying close attention to modernity, post-coloniality, and global economic processes within and across national borders (Grewal and Kaplan 1994). Grewal's (2005) *Trasnational America* explores the production of transnational subjects through politics, consumer culture, and discursive practices that tie in ideas of neoliberalism, human rights, and nationalism. In particular, she focuses on the circulation of "America" as a nationalist discourse that permeates within and beyond the boundaries of the United States, produced and consumed transnationally by a global civil society. Because of the global relevance of "America," it should be studied beyond as well as within the confines of a national territory; Grewal looks specifically at the significance of "America" to immigrants, and to migration more broadly. She chronicles the transnational dimensions of nationalist and neoliberal discourses through the lens of "transnational connectivities" within which cultural products such as texts, toys, and the media circulate. Alarcón, Kaplan and Moallem (1999) argue that the nation-state is built on "contradictory regulatory practices;" they argue that difference is critical to the challenge to and construction of "imagined communities."

Drawing from the insights of transnational feminists' interventions into conventional understandings of the nation, I argue as "emerging nations" seek to secure their boundaries, they craft national representations that appeal to and negotiate among multiple levels. Since those promoting the idea of a nation seek to reach multiple audiences, both within a country and internationally (Mayer 2000; Spillman 1997), they work to protect the uniqueness of their national identity through an emphasis on culture, history and tradition, while also angling for acceptance from an international community and insertion into the global political economy. One of the central tasks of a nation, particularly a relatively new one, is to manage the large number of locals splintered by racial-ethnic, religious, and regional differences, keeping them together through shared national symbols and ideologies. Nations also seek external legitimacy in order to participate fully in the "global community of nations."

Conventional accounts of nationalism tend to focus either on how elites control nation-building through their influence over the nation-state and the movement of capital (macro-level), or on how people adopt and contest national identities through cultural practices and discourses (micro-level). Classical accounts of nationalism by scholars such as Ernest Gellner (2006), Anthony Smith (2010), and Eric Hobsbawm (1992) detail the origins and development of nationalism in Europe, focusing primarily on how elites such as political actors, the military, intellectuals, and merchants use their influence to mobilize large-scale social movements, manage the state, and regulate the movement of capital. Through these macro-level, primarily state-centered political projects, elites control nation-building from above. More recent scholarship has placed deeper emphasis on how ordinary people adopt and contest national identities through cultural practices or discourses. Working at this more micro-level scholars such as Michael Billig (1995), Bart Bonikowski (2011), and Rogers Brubaker (2008) approach nationalism through the lens of routine, everyday actions that connect people to a broader "imagined community," to borrow Benedict Anderson's (2006) terminology. My dissertation shows how beauty pageants work as a civic institution mediating between these two levels. In the context of Nigeria, organizers of beauty contests (who are primarily men) use these events to establish political access to key government officials at both the state and federal levels and to attract investment in their organizations from a wide variety of corporations, from local businesses to multinationals. The state has also used beauty pageants as a venue for projecting a

positive image of the nation and promoting tourism. On the other hand, to be successful, beauty pageants must resonate with an audience of ordinary Nigerians who expect "authentic" representations of their nation. Organizers must therefore integrate recognizable elements of Nigerian cultural identity, such as traditional costumes, cultural performances, and the recitation of state slogans into the event. Contestants use a "beauty diplomacy" narrative which stresses charity, development, and goodwill to connect with Nigerians and promote their own voices and that of the public in the national arena.

The production of culture literature focuses on how the symbolic elements of culture are shaped by the systems within which they are created, distributed, and preserved (Peterson and Anand 2004). Bourdieu's (1993) concept of the "field of cultural production" highlights cultural producers, the social forces that guide their relationship to one another, to their audience, the market and the cultural objects they produce. Fields of production are sites of struggle over meaning, which produce not only cultural objects, but also knowledge and identity. Drawing on this concept, I study beauty pageants as public enactments of cultural production, which constitute presentations of collective cultural identity as well as struggles over cultural meanings (King-O'Riain 2008). I also consider beauty contests as ritual acts and public performances that project wider negotiations about national identity and globalization, illuminating shifting or stable cultural tastes.

My work contributes to a growing body of research on cultural symbols and practices, ranging from food to sports to festivals, to understand the formation of national identities that are linked to the broader dynamics of the market, the state, and civil society (Alegi 2010; Bowen and Gaytán 2012; DeSoucey 2010). This scholarship, particularly the work of Lyn Spillman (1997) and Wendy Griswold (2008), has identified two major frameworks for understanding national representations. One focuses on a "world cultural frame" which highlights how nations seek to position themselves as part of the "global community of nations" (Adams 2010; DeSoucey 2010; Surak 2006). The other, an "internal integration frame," highlights the desire to unify diverse populations or emphasize national distinctiveness (Anderson 2006; Spillman 1997). I show how nationalism can exist at multiple levels within the same country, especially within the context of an emerging nation that is trying to both come to grips with itself as a nation and to assert itself as a part of the global community. In my case study of Nigerian beauty pageants I show how multiple strands of nationalism may be consolidated, even while they are in tension. Beauty pageants include a heterogeneous set of actors and are an especially charged site for the production of nationalism through negotiations of belonging as well as exclusion.

Beauty Pageants as a Case

Since most countries do not maintain an official nationalist program (Banet-Weiser 1999) scholars often turn to symbolic representations to gain insight into the cultural and political consolidation of nation-states (Zubrzycki 2006). By focusing on beauty pageants, my work weaves together various elements that past studies have identified as important sites in the construction of national identity, including the media (Anderson 2006), tourism (Rivera 2008), festivals (Apter 2005), corporate interests (Spillman 1997), and the state (Adams 2010). Together these various sites and their actors build narratives of a nation, providing insight into the production of nationalism over time and in contemporary society.

While beauty pageants are declining in popularity in more industrialized countries like the United States (Levey 2007), they are becoming increasingly popular in developing nations like India, Venezuela and Nigeria, (Edmondson 2003; Parameswaran 2001) where participation

in international beauty contests is seen as an entry point into the global arena[8] (Ahmed-Ghosh 2003; Dewey 2008). In interviews, proponents of the Nigerian beauty pageant industry often discussed how the contests propped open a window to their world, allowing others around the globe who either knew nothing about the country or believed only the negative stories about Nigeria to see it in a more positive light. Contestants stressed how they served as positive role models for the teeming youth population who face rising unemployment. While beauty pageants in more developed countries are mostly perceived to be old-fashioned, the Nigerian beauty pageant industry views its work as part of a larger project of announcing and advancing Nigeria's modernity. If anything, part of the opposition to these pageants stems from the viewpoint that Nigerian beauty pageants are almost *too* modern and out of step with Nigeria's heritage. In Nigeria, beauty pageants are primarily urban affairs, highlighting Nigeria's shifting landscape in which 50 percent of the population now lives in cities.

Beauty pageants, like other cultural events, can be used as a means of specifying a nation and situating it within a global society (Guss 2000). As a cultural form, they have been adopted and adapted throughout the world, yet take on specific meanings within any given country or community (Cohen, Wilk, and Stoeltje 1996). Because beauty pageants take place at differing levels of competition, it is possible to study how the form, content and meanings associated with pageants may change depending on the context (e.g. whether or not a national pageant participates in international contests).[9]

Beauty pageants evoke meaning on a number of registers. In an article reviewing the literature on beauty pageants, King-O'Riain (2008) suggests that beauty pageants are commonly understood in four ways: (1) as sites of oppression because they promote unattainable bodily ideals which objectify women (Faludi 1992; Wolf 1991) (2) as creators of cultural agency, forming alternative institutions that challenge dominant culture and promote diverse beauty ideals (Craig 2002) (3) a place for establishing and rearticulating cultural, sexual, gender, ethnic and national identities (Banet-Weiser 1999; Cohen, Wilk, and Stoeltje 1996; King-O'Riain 2006; Lieu 2000; Riverol 1992; Yano 2006) and (4) a source of commodification through economic markets such as media institutions, corporate sponsors, and the global beauty industry (Ahmed-Ghosh 2003; Hoad 2004).

A parallel to beauty pageants can be found in major sports competitions, particularly soccer (the "world's game) and the Olympics (Saavedra 2003). Peter Alegi's research (2010) on South African soccer establishes how sports can inform our ideas about national belonging,

[8] Viewership in the United States has been on a steady decline. In 1998 Miss America attracted 33 million viewers. In 2004, 9.8 viewers tuned in. 2010 (on cable television) garnered 4.5 million. There is no television rating system in Nigeria so there is no way of tracking the rise in audience members. However, organizers shared that in the past decade there has been a marked rise in the number of auditions from a few dozen to several hundred. Organizers explained that this sharp increase could largely be explained by Nigeria's winning Miss World in 2001.

[9] For example, the Miss America which began in 1921 and does not compete outside of the United States is now known as the largest source of scholarship money for women. The winner embarks on national speaking tour to promote her platform and the organization stresses the educational goals of its contestants and brands its swimsuit competition as a fitness and lifestyle segment. In 1994 viewers were asked to call a toll-free number in order to vote on whether or not the pageant should retain the swimsuit.73% voted that the contest should keep it. In 2000, an online pool revealed that 50% of respondents would not continue to watch the pageant if the swimsuit portion was removed. Miss USA began in 1952, after Yolande Betbeze, Miss America 1951 refused to wear a swimsuit. Catalina the swimsuit sponsor pulled out of the event and started Miss USA and Miss Universe to promote their products. Miss USA competes in the Miss Universe pageants are both are jointly owned by the Trump Organization and NBC Universal. Miss America is often thought to promote a more natural beauty, while Miss USA is thought to be more accepting of plastic surgery and enhancements.

gender, and race/ethnicity, while also having deep political meaning. For example, soccer helped to propel the international movement against apartheid in South Africa; many African nations, who supported the movement, pressured FIFA to exclude South Africa from participating in the World Cup until apartheid ended. The Olympics has also been a major site of political protest. For example the 2008 Olympics hosted in China witnessed opposition from a wide variety of social movements such as those opposed to the occupation of Tibet, groups that pointed out how China's economic policies helped support genocide in Darfur, and groups highlighting China's poor domestic human rights record (Beer 2009). Similarly, beauty pageants have garnered their own share of political protests, including feminists protests of the Miss America pageant in 1968 in Atlantic City, student-run demonstrations against the El Salvadorian government's 1 million dollar payment to host the 1975 pageant, and India's 1996 protests against Miss World which drew in a wide-range of concerns from feminists, Hindu nationalists, and labor organizations (Oza 2001).

The research in this field points to how beauty pageants position female bodies, particularly through a focus on standards of beauty, as sites of cultural expression and representations of an ideal womanhood. The participation of women in these contests serves as a visible discursive marker of the status of women in their respective societies and, by extension, the success and progress of a nation, fortifying the boundaries of femininity and cultural propriety (Cohen, Wilk, and Stoeltje 1996). In addition to examining beauty pageants as a symbolic text, research on the beauty pageants considers how these contests are produced through economic, cultural and political processes. Although this literature offers a solid starting point for understanding beauty pageants both as symbolic expressions of collective identities in a global world and as active fields in the production and contestation of cultural meanings, it does not fully theorize the tension between the local and the global as linked to national identities. By centering nationalism through a comparative-case analysis, I look at how nationalism is informed at the local, transnational and global levels. Using three cases of beauty pageants held in Nigeria, I examine the varied relationships at these levels in order to understand the friction between conveying unity while highlighting cultural variation in the nation, the attempts to orient global attention towards "emerging nations," and the struggle between national representation and contestation, shaped by the mutually constituted categories of gender, class, and ethnicity. Through their varied logics, the cases described in further detail below highlight distinct orientation towards the nation and globalization. I next provide a description of my three cases (two national, one international) of Nigerian beauty pageants: The Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria, Queen Nigeria, and Miss World 2002.

Description of Cases

The Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria Pageant

The Silverbird Group, a Nigerian-based media conglomerate with branches in Ghana and Kenya, coordinates the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria pageant. The Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria [MBGN] is the most visible beauty pageant on the Nigerian national scene and sends contestants to the top beauty pageants in the world. At the finale, MBGN chooses five winners who go on to represent Nigeria at different beauty, modeling and promotional contests within the country and around the world. The winner and first-runner up continue onto Miss World and Miss Universe, respectively. Silverbird's operations include cinemas, shopping malls, television and radio stations, live shows and events, in addition to beauty pageants. The Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria, an event which began in 1986, grew out of Silverbird's initial attempts to organize Miss Nigeria Universe in 1983. MBGN produced the first Black African winner of the Miss

World contest in 2001. While its organizers are primarily Nigerian-based, MBGN also relies on grooming and production experts outside of Nigeria, most notably from the United States and South Africa. These experts are said to internationalize the pageant and offer contestants a leg up in the Miss World and Miss Universe competitions. The Silverbird Group has sponsored three different international pageants within Nigeria, which brought in delegates from throughout the world to compete: the Miss Intercontinental pageant from 1986 to 1990, Miss World 2002, and Miss Silverbird International in 2004.

Contestants were chosen at various cities throughout Nigeria, primarily in the Southern part of the country (Benin in the South-South, Lagos in the South-West, Port Harcourt in the South-South, and Abuja the capital in 2010). Semi-finalists selected from these screening venues then compete in Lagos, where 30 finalists were chosen to compete in the final show. During my fieldwork, thirty out of the 36 states were represented at the show. The states from the northwest geopolitical zone where sharia law is in place were not represented in this or the Queen Nigeria pageant (the other case I have studied). Since contestants were screened and chosen without regard to where they are from, contestants did not necessarily represent the states they are actually from. The 2010 finale was held in Lagos and included a traditional segment featuring costumes from the state each contestant represented, a dance number choreographed by a member of a world-renown soul group to Nigerian pop music, a modeling segment, a swimwear segment, an evening wear event, and an interview portion. The finale and a reality show series was broadcast on Silverbird Television. This case exemplifies what I call *cosmopolitan-nationalism* since it aspires to highlight Nigeria's compatibility with the international community.

The Queen Nigeria Pageant

Queen Nigeria evolved from a popular game-show that incorporated mini beauty contests into a national pageant first held in 2008. The organizers specifically brand Queen Nigeria as distinct from a Western styled beauty pageant, claiming that it is a uniquely styled Nigerian contest in terms of fashion, talent and social etiquette. It is a joint venture between Silverstone Communications (also known as Gotham City), a privately run events-management firm and TV Enterprises (TVE), the commercial arm of the government-owned Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). TVE is responsible for initiating business ventures in addition to organizing public lectures and live cultural events. NTA is the largest broadcast television network in Sub-Saharan Africa with about 100 stations covering all states in the nation and includes international transmissions to North America and Europe.

The pageant is organized around a state tier system wherein contestants must first enter and win a state-level competition, however not all states participate. State-level competitions were hosted in 18 out of the 36 states and Abuja, the federal capital territory in Nigeria, with a vision of expanding to all states in the future. Winners from the various states then went on to compete at the national finale. All contestants must have a cultural tie to the state they represent either through ethnic heritage (i.e. as an indigene who can trace their roots back to the original settlers of the community), birth or residence. In addition to the judges, a group of invited elders and dignitaries, were asked to certify the results of the contest at both the state and national levels.

At the finale, contestants competed in two preliminary events: a cooking and a talent competition. The show itself included a dance routine in casual wear (one portion danced to Nigerian pop music and the other portion danced to a contemporary arrangement of traditional music from the region where the finale was hosted), a traditional costume section, usually with

attire from the state the contestant represented, an evening wear event and interview segments. Although I conceive of Queen Nigeria as a case of "locally" based nationalism, because its producers are based in Nigeria and orient their production of nationalism through locally-derived culture, the "global" is still very much involved. For Queen Nigeria, a pageant in which contestants do not participate in international pageants and whose actual audience is primarily within Nigeria, the global is also relevant since organizers and contestants imagine their audience to be global. The Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), a co-organizer of Queen Nigeria, broadcasts the show on NTA International which targets Nigerians in the diaspora through its satellite broadcast. Also, Queen Nigeria ultimately strives to gain access to an international audience. One producer of the show detailed his ultimate vision of Queen Nigeria reaching an international audience by organizing beauty pageants throughout the world, which would culminate in a final international beauty pageant rivaling Miss World and Miss Universe. This pageant which he mused would be called "Queens of the World" would be distinguished from other international pageants by its panache for local cultures from around the world and Nigerian-derived judging criteria. The producer viewed financial resources as the major roadblock to achieving this goal. This contest showcases *cultural-nationalism* since its focuses on valuing Nigerian culture through a "unity in diversity" mantra.

Miss World 2002

The Miss World pageant was founded in 1951 by Eric Morley, a British entertainment businessman, and was taken over by his wife in 2000 following his death. It is the longest surviving international beauty contest in the world and is currently franchised in over 100 countries. It was originally conceived of as a one-time publicity stunt officially named the "Festival Bikini Contest" which coincided with the Festival of Britain. It steadily grew into an annual sensation, attracting delegates from around the world (Whalen 2003). With a current estimated audience of two billion viewers from 200 countries, the Miss World pageant is one of the most widely watched events in the world.

Following Agbani Darego's Miss World win in 2001, Nigerian based organizers jumped at the chance to host the international event the following year. Following their successful bid, the pageant was jointly produced by Silverbird Entertainment and the London-based Miss World Organization in 2002. However, in Nigeria in 2002, the planned event sparked protests, which resulted in over 200 deaths, 1000 injured and 8000 left homeless. The violence led to the event being shifted to London (although some preliminary events were held in Nigeria). These protests included a wide-range of concerns, but the most prominent groups were those affiliated with Islamic organizations. I relied on archival material to document this case, and included it to highlight the intersection between international and local agendas, specifically as they pertain to political conflict. Through the concept of *global-nationalism,* I highlight the international fallout of this event as an aftermath of the contact and lack of coordination between the dominant nationalist logics detailed through the cases above (*cultural-nationalism* and *cosmopolitan-nationalism*).

Methods

My analysis draws from 10 months of fieldwork carried out in Nigeria during the 2009-2010 cycles of both national beauty pageants, and from a range of data including ethnographic observations, interviews, and content analysis of visual and print media. Combining these methods allowed me to focus on the content, structure, and discourses surrounding these two pageants from a variety of angles, providing insights into how national identities are produced "on the ground" both symbolically and through specific practices. I spent six months conducting

ethnographic observations of the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria as an unpaid intern. I also worked as a chaperone at Queen Nigeria for various state-level competitions and at the week-long training sessions leading up to the 2009 Queen Nigeria finale. I observed a week-long "grooming" process of a contestant as she prepared for the 2009 Queen Nigeria national pageant. The grooming process included lessons on poise and etiquette, cat-walking, how to best answer interview questions, diction and accent coaching, and instructions on styling. I was granted access to observe the screening process of selecting contestants to compete, the training period (camp), rehearsals, preliminary competitions, the show, and activities of the reign (accompanying beauty queens on press interviews, photo shoots, public appearances, and courtesy visits).

While I was based primarily in Lagos, the commercial hub of Nigeria, I also went to Port Harcourt, Benin, Abuja, and Ibadan for preliminary screenings and state-level competitions for both contests. The 2010 Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria finale was held in Lagos. I travelled to Jos, the capital of Plateau state in the north-central geopolitical zone, for the 2009 Queen Nigeria national competition. During observations I either took notes by typing into a memo application on my cell phone or in a small notebook. I wrote more detailed field notes within 24 hours of observations.

In addition to field notes, my data include transcripts from 55 formal in-depth interviews, with a mix of organizers, producers, groomers, corporate sponsors, reigning and former beauty queens, contestants and judges. The interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 3 hours, averaging about an hour in length. I conducted all interviews face-to-face, with the exception of one phone interview. In order to provide a fuller perspective on the place of beauty pageants in the Nigerian landscape, I asked questions related to: (i) the perceived role of beauty pageants in Nigerian society and the world, (ii) the broader public's views of and opinions about beauty pageants, and (iii) how beauty pageants fit into varied informants' personal experiences and professional positions. All formal interviews were tape recorded. My data also includes informal (unrecorded, but included in my field notes) conversations with makeup artists, journalists, production crew, photographers, and fashion designers, as well as analyses of documents such as brochures, websites, video recordings, and newspaper clippings. With the exception of names cited in newspaper accounts, which remain public record, all interviewee names have been changed. In a few instances I have altered small personal details in order to protect participants or only refer to them by their general titles. The names of the pageants themselves have not been altered since they would be impossible to disguise given their public visibility.

In order to explore the dynamics of Miss World 2002 –a key historical event in the landscape of beauty pageants in Nigeria and the country more generally—I analyzed archived news reports, supplemented by interviews I conducted with key Nigerian-based informants who represent both opposition groups and supporters of the contest. I decided to use newspaper coverage because the media reported on the key events surrounding the bid, preliminary hosting activities, protests and eventual move of Miss World 2002, allowing me to construct a rough timeline of events and identify key players. Furthermore, the print media offered a window into the dominant perspectives during this time period. Although the news media cannot be said to represent public opinion, journalists did play a role in recording the beliefs of both opposition and supporters, allowing both groups to present their viewpoints to a general audience. Thus, news reports created a public forum and helped to frame how the general public made sense of this event (Quinn 2008). Other scholars have identified newspapers as a site of public struggle over meaning and highlighted how news reports frame our understanding of institutions, social

problems, social movements, and events (Best 2010; Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, and Sasson 1992; Gitlin 1980). Focusing on major newspapers in a range of locations allowed me to undertake comparative analysis. My analysis also draws from miscellaneous archival materials from other news sources such as magazine stories, television coverage, and reports from international human rights organizations.

Far from being an "objective" site, the media figured prominently in the accounts of Miss World as a cited source of the spark of the protests, a mark of escalation for the riots and a means of establishing a documented failure. Organizers for the Miss World pageant referred to "irresponsible journalism" as contributing to the series of events which ensued. First, an offhand comment from a Nigerian journalist (who remarked that Muslims should not be upset about the beauty contest since Prophet Mohammed would have likely supported the event by marrying one of the contestants) was pinpointed as the initial impetus for the protests. Second, pageant organizers blamed the international media for overplaying the reports of riots in Nigeria. The head of the Miss World organization, Julia Morley, bemoaned, "You [the media] pulled Nigeria down and you allowed Nigeria to be humiliated."[10] Some leaders of opposition groups alluded to the intense international media attention surrounding the event as an opportunity to air their grievances about Westernization and moral failures. In the next chapter, I will trace the dominant discourses that account for the shifting media frame of Nigeria's "potential opportunity" to the "embarrassing event."

I focused on newspaper coverage of Miss World 2002 published between January 2001 when Nigeria began the process of bidding to host the event shortly after winning Miss World 2001 and December 2002 after the event was moved to London. I chose this time frame because it allowed me to focus on the public discourse surrounding the entire timeline of the event. I focused on the top circulating national tabloid and broadsheet English-language newspapers (according to the Zus Bureau Quarterly Media Audience Audit which gauges media popularity in Lagos, Aba and Kaduna) in Nigeria and the UK.[11] I used two full-text databases: Lexis Nexis and AllAfrica to identify relevant news articles, searching for the key terms, "Miss World Nigeria," during the specified time period. I also searched the archives at the headquarters of Nigerian newspapers in order to gain access to newspapers that did not provide information to these databases. At these archives I relied on the files of newspaper librarians to identify and collect relevant articles. After discarding duplicate and irrelevant articles, there were a total of 190 UK and 102 Nigerian articles.

I selected people to interview about the Miss World 2002 pageant by first combing through press coverage and generating a list of people who were consistently quoted in news articles. I was also able to ask these dominant players to refer me to others who were also involved as either members of opposition groups or supporters who might not have spoken to the media as extensively. Interviews helped to expand on the details presented in news articles, offering a more in-depth examination of these events and allowing me to crosscheck the information presented in news reports by questioning key players about their recollection and

[10] "City under curfew, pageant departs" The New Zealand Herald November 25, 2002

[11] The Nigerian Newspapers consulted include: Daily Sun (tabloid), The Punch (privately owned daily), The Guardian (privately owned national daily), This Day (Lagos-based Daily), The Champion (Lagos-based Daily), The Daily Times (formerly government owned, Lagos-based), New Nigerian (government daily, separate editions in Lagos and Kaduna), The Daily Independent (Lagos State based daily, Daly Trust (Abuja-based daily), Leadership (Abuja-based daily); The Comet (private daily), Vanguard (Lagos-based daily). UK Newspapers include: Daily Star, Daily Telegraph/Sun Telegraph, The Sun, The Times/Times on Sunday; the Daily Mirror/Sunday Mirror; Evening Standard; Guardian, Financial Times, The Independent

interpretation of events. Combining news reports and interviews allowed me to access both the breadth and depth necessary to understand the range of frames circulated around this event.

Project Overview

This dissertation focuses on three case studies of beauty pageants in Nigeria, which, I argue, are organized around three tension-filled strands of nationalism. Through an analysis of these cases I make three interrelated arguments. First, *nationalism remains a multifaceted process that works through several layers. In the context of emerging nations like Nigeria, nationalism often operates through a dual-faced logic with an inward-facing and outward-facing orientation.* Drawing from examples of two national beauty pageants in Nigeria, I show how one contest (Queen Nigeria's cultural-nationalism frame) focuses on unifying and celebrating Nigeria's diverse population, while the other (MBGN's cosmopolitan-nationalism frame) stresses Nigeria's compatibility and competitiveness within the international arena. While these logics are developed within the local Nigerian context, they also respond to global challenges and expectations. Thus, I also highlight the points in which the local and global intersect and diverge within the context of Nigeria. Through the international case of the 2002 Miss World contest which showcases *global-nationalism* I indicate how global and local forces converge through nationalist discourses.

Secondly, I point to the *shifting centers of globalization, particularly through the rising status of would-be emerging nations who seek to follow in the footsteps of successful BRIC countries.* Countries like Nigeria are actively working to assert themselves on the global stage through terms that acknowledge Western influence, but also account for their own circumstances. Through striving for global recognition, emerging nations preserve their country's uniqueness, while asserting themselves as part of the international arena. Past scholarship on globalization assumes that either cultural homogeneity through Western dominance or cultural heterogeneity through mixture will prevail. While I acknowledge how both of these processes work in tandem, I also note how this literature misses another possibility. That is, previously marginalized nations struggle to assert themselves as pivotal members of the international political economy. My focus on Nigeria, which is currently in the middle of transitioning into its status as a newly emerging nation, allows for a deeper understanding of the motivations underlying this evolution.

Thirdly, *I focus on the relationship between culture, politics, and the economy, highlighting how symbolic dimensions of nationalism and globalization shape and are shaped by politics and the economy.* Studies of globalization and nationalism tend to focus on the growth of economic capital and proliferation of political movements, yet I show how symbolic shifts that involve macro-level connections to the state and micro-level ties to people on the ground, play a role in political and economic developments in Nigeria. These relationships are unstable and remain historically contingent. In the Nigerian context, they are influenced by the country's place in the international political economy, particularly due to oil politics, and the political rise of religious fundamentalism, specifically the implementation and spread of *sharia* law. I use the Nigerian beauty pageant industry as a case of a civic institution that actively connects the macro to the micro, drawing in an understanding of nationalism and globalization at the cultural, structural, and interactional levels. This allows for a multidimensional perspective on emergent nationalism. Each chapter examines the intersection of nationalism and globalization in relationship to several domains: political contestation, cultural production, gendered representations, and economic interests in Nigeria.

Chapter 2 ("Beauty and the Beast") examines the underlying tensions between unifying and globalizing the nation through the lens of the Miss World 2002 event. I show how resistance, adaptation and regulation of globalization played out through discourses surrounding the protection of women's bodies. My theoretical framework focuses on a "critical event" to uncover both internal and external struggles that define national narratives. Drawing from interviews with Nigerian organizers and leaders of opposition groups, as well as textual analysis of print media and archival documents, I examine how various groups (e.g. local and international supporters and boycotters) debated the trajectory of the Nigerian nation-state through gendered tropes of security, morality, and advocacy to highlight parity or dissimilarity between Nigeria and the rest of the world. This case illuminates ways in which nations are built through local and international agendas that actively draw on gendered representations. I examine how beauty pageants speak to broader political matters by discussing how controversies, crises and contestation were framed and managed through this event.

In Chapter 3 ("Crafting Cultural Authenticity") I look at the different ways in which organizers, contestants, sponsors and fans managed and presented the nation through pageants, particularly how they negotiate showing cultural diversity while also displaying a shared national culture in a global world. I first sketch out a historical argument about beauty pageants as symbolic representations of the nation, detailing the origin and development of the Nigerian beauty pageant industry as linked to the trajectory of a post-independence nation. I then draw from my ethnographic data on the two national pageants to look at how they each debated the issue of cultural authenticity in national representation through a focus on religion and ethnicity.

In Chapter 4 ("Idealized Femininity, Women's Bodies and Empowerment") I examine how gender, especially in discussions of idealized femininity and discourses surrounding women's bodies, is constructed and debated through Nigerian beauty pageants. First I examine the motivations of contestants who not only want fame, prize money and enhanced social status but also seek to have a voice in the national arena through a "beauty diplomacy" narrative. Next, I show how the two national pageants crafted separate models of idealized femininity and presented distinct nationalist agendas, one which stressed unifying the nation (cultural-nationalism) and another which emphasizes globalizing the nation (cosmopolitan-nationalism).

Chapter 5 ("The Business of Beauty") shows how multiple actors, including corporate sponsors, state governments, the media, and marketing firms, converge to promote commercial products through beauty pageants. I contextualize this topic by explicating the role of privatization, neoliberal policies, and the state in Nigerian society. I detail the uneasy relationships organizers develop with key government officials at both the state and federal levels, with implications for the national pageants. Organizers seek to attract investment from a wide variety of corporate sponsors, yet face obstacles particular to the structure of their organizations. The chapter also examines the financial incentives experienced by contestants and their quest for upward mobility.

In Chapter 6 ("The Cultural Politics of Beauty Pageants") I summarize the argument I have developed throughout the dissertation and discuss the implications of my work for feminist theory, cultural sociology, the study of globalization, and Africana Studies by looking back on what beauty pageants as a case can offer to the understanding of gendered boundaries, political membership and cultural reproduction.

Chapter 2:
Beauty and the Beast: Controversies, Crises and Conflicts in Cultural Events

Introduction

In 2002, the Miss World beauty pageant website boasted: "Miss World 2002 will be the most lavish and spectacular production that we've ever undertaken. It's second only to the Olympics for international participation."[12] With over 100 contestants from around the world, and an estimated audience of two billion viewers from 200 countries, the Miss World pageant is one of the most widely watched events in the world. In 2002, after Miss Nigeria (Agbani Darego) won the 2001 edition of the pageant, Nigeria secured the rights to host the Miss World contest as a joint venture between the Nigerian-based Silverbird Productions (the privately-owned media firm contracted to host the event) and the London-owned Miss World Organization. Following the attention garnered by Darego's win, Nigerian-based organizers considered hosting the event to be the next step in announcing Nigeria's rising status to the world. When I asked why it was important for Nigeria to host the Miss World beauty contest, an organizer affiliated with the Silverbird Group stated:

> The first reason was to make history in Nigeria and about Nigeria. You remember, Agbani was the only Nigerian and black African to win the Miss World contest. It is prestigious. Then, the idea of why can't Nigeria host it came and the emotions of Agbani's success set in. In short, it was a logical thing to take it from there.

It seemed, to this organizer, to flow logically – if a Nigerian could meet and excel at the standards for world beauty, then surely Nigeria had arrived on the global stage sufficiently to now demonstrate its ability to host the pageant. As Nigerian organizers geared up to tackle the herculean task of extending the momentum garnered by Darego's win, they anticipated using the event to build the country's infrastructure, boost tourism, and attract global investment. By successfully managing the logistics of an event scheduled to be broadcast world-wide, they also planned to use it as a platform to present a "modern nation," combatting the prevalent negative perceptions of Nigeria as a haven for fraudulent business schemes, political corruption, and social chaos. Their expectations contained a two-fold strategy of solidifying national consciousness and securing international legitimacy. Hosting Miss World thus remained directly linked to the political aspirations of strengthening Nigeria's fledgling status as an "emerging nation."

Yet as Nigerian organizers prepared to hold the contest, violent disturbances, primarily centered in the Northern state capital of Kaduna resulted in over 200 people dead, 1000 more injured and 8000 left homeless, and eventually resulted in the event being shifted to London. In its aftermath, the protest left an indelible blemish on the international pageant's history and remains an oft-cited example of national embarrassment for the country. The management of a deeply shameful event can play a key role in shaping national identities (Rivera 2008). Aside from the Miss World protests in 2002, no large-scale protest has been mounted against a pageant in Nigeria's 55-year history of playing host to local, national, and international beauty contests. The combination of this particular pageant being an international event, held within the relatively newly inaugurated capital city of Abuja, and of its being planned in a post 9/11 world where international agencies (especially in the United States) were seeking to identify the next hotbed of radical Islam, help to explain the particularly explosive reactions to the pageant. The

[12] Democracy Now. "Miss World 2002 will be the Most Lavish." 2002. Democracynow.com. Retrieved Oct. 10, 2008 (http://www.democracynow.org/2002/11/27/miss_world_2002_will_be_the).

attempted hosting of the Miss World beauty pageant in Nigeria demonstrates how local adaptation and resistance to globalization are played out through representations of the nation.

While accounts by journalists, public opinion, and scholars tend to explain the protests as an inevitable outcome of Nigeria's communal conflicts, specifically based on religion, I draw out the broader political dimensions of these series of events as a symbol of globalization and vehicle for nationalism. In examining the political reach of cultural events, I situate this event within a specific time and space which accounts for both *internal* and *external* struggles that allow for a deeper contextualization of cultural conflict in a global world. In this chapter I show that the conflicts surrounding Miss World should not be understood as merely a product of religious convictions and misunderstandings. Rather, I propose two alternative framings that, while drawing in part on religious tropes, highlight a broader set of political issues that involve divergent understandings of the Nigerian nation-state both within and outside of Nigeria. These framings draw on both nationalist and globalization discourses that crosscut internal and external frames. That is, while nationalism is primarily viewed as a largely internally focused discussion, and globalization is presumed to be an externally oriented perspective, I show how both nationalism and globalization are debated through an internal and external logic that brings in both local and international actors. I use the term *global-nationalism,* to account for how local and international agendas play out through the trajectory of a nation.

I begin by examining how national anticipations and anxieties were projected onto and enacted through Miss World, outlining the key events during this time period. Then, drawing from interviews with Nigerian organizers and leaders of opposition groups and textual analysis of print media and archival documents, I examine how local and international supporters and boycotters debated the trajectory of the Nigerian nation through two key frames: (1) political geography (2) the protection of women. Both frames draw on ideas about national identity and global belonging. I show how Abuja, the intended host site, is a politicized city, focusing on how discussions about whether Abuja should be considered a neutral center or a Northern city point to deeper political concerns about Nigeria. Next, I highlight the politics of globalization, exploring how various groups relied heavily on gendered tropes of "protecting women" which differently highlight similarity or dissimilarity between Nigeria and the rest of the world. I use a theoretical framework that centers a "critical event" (Das 1995) as a key source of uncovering underlying social conditions and political struggle. Veena Das (1995) points to "critical events" as watershed historical moments that often involve deep violence. Similarly, sociologist Eric Klinenberg's (2002) study of the Chicago Heat Wave focuses on how disasters can be a source of understanding broader social processes that are symbolically constructed by journalists and public officials. Drawing from their theoretical insights, I focus on the Miss World events as a contested site of public debate that brings together a variety of political actors, who together shape national narratives about Nigeria.

Timeline of Events

Through the chronology outlined below, I highlight the various groups involved in these events such as private enterprises, the media, political activists, and the state, tracing the shift from the initial optimism surrounding the bid as a tool for "showcasing" the country to the world, to the various sets of protests against the event, and finally to the framing of Miss World as a profoundly humiliating event that further revealed Nigeria's wide-scale failure to achieve modernity on the world stage.

Here is a timeline of events:

November 16, 2001: Agbani Darego edged out 92 other contests vying for the coveted Miss World crown, becoming the first Black African to win.
January 2002: The Miss World Organization extended an invitation to Nigeria as well as four other countries to bid as the host of the 2002 cycle of the competition. A delegation from the Miss World Organization toured possible venues the following month.
March 22 2002: Amina Lawal, a 30 year old woman from a small village in Katsina state (in Northern Nigeria) was convicted of adultery and sentenced to be stoned to death after giving birth to a baby girl (named Wassila) more than nine months after her divorce was finalized. Lawal insisted that the father of the child promised to marry her but later rescinded and refused to provide support. According to the legal code, bearing a child outside of wedlock constitutes sufficient grounds to be convicted of adultery. The execution is stayed for two years to allow Lawal to wean her baby. She lost her first appeal in August.[13]
June 2002: Nigeria secured hosting rights. At a press conference, the first lady, Stella Obasanjo, announced plans for a partnership between her office's Child Care Trust charity project and the government ministries of Culture and Tourism and of Aviation. She pledged that while the federal government will expend no public funds, it will provide logistical support for the event. Almost immediately, a number of religious organizations (mostly Muslim) condemned the pageant.
September 27, 2002: Amnesty International presented a petition with 1.3 million signatures gathered online to Nigerian officials at the London High Commission in protest of Amina Lawal's sentence. In solidarity, several contestants such as Miss Norway, Miss Panama, and Miss Denmark[14] threatened to drop out of the competition to rally behind Lawal, and they began to lobby their respective governments to take an official stance on the case.
October 4, 2002: Organizers decided to postpone the event originally scheduled for November 30th during the final week of Ramadan to the following week after demands that holding an event during that time period would be insensitive to those observing the Muslim holy month of fasting and spiritual reflection.
November 11, 2002: 88 contestants arrived in Abuja for preliminary events and pre-show activities.[15] In Abuja they met with state officials and worshiped at the Aso Rock Villa Chapel. They then travelled to Cross Rivers State, located in the southeastern coast of the country, to visit tourist sites such as the Obudu Cattle Ranch (now known as the Obudu Mountain Resort) and Mary Slessor's House (the house of a famous Scottish missionary stationed in Nigeria during the 1800s), and to witness a boat regatta (a cultural water parade), among other events pre-selected by a joint team of Nigerian-based organizers and the Miss World crew during the planning stages.
November 16, 2002: Amidst some opposition to the pageant, a Christian, British-trained Nigerian style reporter for *ThisDay*, Isioma Daniel, wrote that the Prophet Mohammed would have likely approved of the contest and chosen one of the Miss World contestants as his wife. The paper issued a retraction in the following Monday and Tuesday editions, faulting a technical

[13] Her sentence was later overturned in the Katsina state court of appeals in September 2003.
[14] Contestants from Denmark, Switzerland, Austria, Iceland, Mauritius, Sri Lanka and Costa Rica formally decided to boycott and did not participate in any pageant-sponsored activities. The Korean representative withdrew from the pageant while it was still in Nigeria. Delegates from Panama, South Africa, Spain, and Tahiti initially boycotted but reversed their decisions once the pageant was moved to London (www.pageantopolis.com).
[15] There are some discrepancies in the number of contestants reported in the media. I have decided to go with the figures reported on the website http://www.pageantopolis.com a leading archive of beauty pageant material from around the world.

glitch during the editing process which prevented the deletion of the passage. The newspaper later issued a formal "apology to all Muslims" and denounced the article as "utterly provocative." Daniel resigned and fled to Benin (she was later granted asylum in Norway). The editor-in-chief was later detained for three days by state security agents.

November 20 - 24 2002: The article angered some Muslims and escalated into full-blown riots in Kaduna,[16] a northern Nigerian city which is heavily Muslim but has a sizable Christian population. Most of the riots in Kaduna were directed towards the offensive article which trivialized objections to the pageant. Rioters vandalized mosques, churches, and hotels and burned down the local offices of *ThisDay*, the Lagos-based newspaper that published the offending article. Rioters chanted "Down with beauty" and "Miss World is Sin" while marching the streets (Whalen 2003). Security agents imposed a curfew, patrolled streets, and stopped and searched motorists to enforce calm to the city. Following congregational prayers on Friday, demonstrations spread to Abuja, Nigeria's capital and the intended venue for the event, where police reportedly made 27 arrests.[17]

November 23, 2002: Late on a Saturday night, organizers made the final decision to switch venues to London for "the sake of the nation." Contestants, organizers, and their entourage boarded busses headed to the airport to leave the country on specially chartered aircraft. They arrived early the next morning, and holed up in a hotel near Heathrow airport.

November 26, 2002: Following a meeting with 21 Islamic youth groups, Alhaji Muhmud Aliyu, the deputy governor of Zamfara state, issued a fatwa (religious edict) calling for the death of Isioma Daniel for blasphemy against Prophet Mohammed. The decree met with some disagreement over its validity from Islamic scholars within Nigeria and other Muslim countries since Daniel had issued an apology and was also not subject to Islamic rulings since she was not a Muslim. Jerry Gana, Nigeria's Information Minister, ruled the order "null and void" and said that the federal government would ensure that the order would not be carried out. The fatwa was later revoked.

December 7, 2002: The 52nd Miss World pageant was moved to its new venue at Alexandra Palace, London, where Miss Turkey, a Dutch-born model and actress, was crowned the winner. She was the first to win the title from a predominately Muslim country since the pageant was held in Egypt in 1954. Many noted that her win was a political decision to promote a "secular and moderate" version of Islam. During the event, a statement was read on stage, stating "Our hearts go out to the families who have suffered, and we hope that Nigeria recovers swiftly and will finally be recognized for the beauty it possesses." A moment of silence was held in tribute to Amina Lawal at the contestants' request. Despite attempts for the contest to absolve itself of any responsibility, it remained beset with controversy. The mayor of London rebuked the contest for bringing "tragedy and strife" to Nigeria, accusations of "swimsuits dripping with blood" were plastered throughout British newspapers, and no British television station agreed to broadcast the event (Whalen 2003).

In the wake of their disappointment, Nigerian organizers insisted that although the beauty contest was eventually held in London, an effort remained to integrate and represent "Nigerian culture" at the final event in London. Ben Murray-Bruce, the then Nigerian Television Authority Director-General and founder of Silverbird insisted, "It is our show. All the shots were taken in Calabar; so everything you're going to see on television will be on Nigeria. Agbani (Miss World

[16] I am referring here to Kaduna city, the capital of Kaduna state.

[17] "Nigeria calls off Miss World show" BBC News 23 November, 2002 (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2505353.stm)

2001) was in Port Harcourt and we did a big production on her. So, all you are going to see will be Calabar and Port Harcourt. The only thing about London you're going to see is the stage... The girls [contestants] all want to come back to Nigeria. Julia [Morley, owner of the Miss World pageant] will surely come back with the new Miss World and the finalists." Like the carefully edited "fun tape" footage captured at popular Nigerian tourist attractions, organizers hoped to show controlled images of Nigeria which highlighted the very best of Nigerian culture, hospitality, and luxury. However, it is clear that, if anything, the Miss World pageant worsened Nigeria's already poor image, resulting in an international public relations nightmare for the country. The newly crowned Miss World never did return to Nigeria for a visit.

I now turn to the competing frames within which this contest was understood. First, I detail how opposition to the pageant took place partly because of political geography centered on Abuja as the host city. This site selection called into question the issue of state funding for the event as well as regional divisions between the North and the South. Then, I look at conflicts surrounding location, gender, and culture debated through contending discourses of "protecting women."

Political Geography of the Nation

Abuja, the intended host city for the 2002 Miss World pageant, is located in the midpoint of the country and became the new capital of Nigeria in 1991. Abuja is part of the middle belt region of the country which encompasses thirteen of Nigeria's 36 states either in part or in full.[18] This central regional zone is known to be a meeting point for dozens of Nigeria's ethnic minority groups alongside some affiliated with majority ethnic groups (namely Yoruba and Hausa ethnic groups). The lack of concrete borders around the territory in addition to its ethno-linguistic diversity, make this region a heavily contested frontier element. The constant debate about whether parts of this area constitute the North or the South region of the country belies simplistic territorial divisions with the Nigerian nation and also point to certain instabilities. For instance, much of the ethno-religious violence in the country is concentrated in this middle belt region. According to a dataset compiled by Human Rights Watch, 22 of the 36 Christian-Muslim riots took place in the Middle Belt between 1999 and 2005 (Lewis, Albin-Lackey, and Scacco 2006; Scacco 2009).



Figure 2: Middle Belt Region, Federal Republic of Nigeria.
Source: http://themessengervoice.com/?page_id=17

[18] Aside from the federal capital territory, the middle belt region includes the following states in part or in their entirety: Kebbi, Niger, Kaduna, Bauchi, Yobe, Gombe, Adamawa, Taraba, Plateau, Benue, Nassarawa, Kogi, and Kwara.

The capital was relocated from Lagos, in the southwest region of the nation, to the new, more central location in part to mitigate the commonly referenced regional/religious splits and conflicts between a "Muslim" North and a "Christian" South, and thus to signal national unity. Although the decision to move the capital was made through an official government decree in 1976, economic and political turmoil delayed final construction of the purpose-built city until the late 1980s, and government functions did not fully resume until the 1990s. The city is now known as the political powerhouse of Nigeria and contains the headquarters of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the regional offices for the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

While capital city relocation is a relatively rare occurrence, it is not all that infrequent within Africa. Seven out of 54 African countries have moved their capitals during the post-independence era. While there are a number of different motivations specific to each country, they can all be understood, in part, as a strategic geopolitical move on the part of political elites. Shifting capitals is a tool for nation-state building in order to both centralize the state apparatus and reinforce allegiance to the nation, which helps to resolve the dilemmas of a country's political geography (Schatz 2004). In the case of Africa, Abuja's position as the new capital follows in the footsteps of other African countries like Malawi and Tanzania, which transferred administrative control to another city. In a postcolonial era, these shifts contain deep political symbolism such as rejecting colonial legacies, rectifying the previous capital's awkward geographic position in relation to the rest of the country, and freeing the capital from ethnic and regional control of one dominant group (Armstrong 1985). Through debates about the cultural-political geography of Abuja, supporters and boycotters of the pageant debated the trajectory of the Nigerian nation.

A Political City

Nearly everyone I spoke with recognized Abuja as an especially politicized city, which inflected the broader political concerns in Nigeria. For example, when I asked one of the core organizers what he would have done differently if he were to host the event again, he responded:

> Organizer: I would not do it in Abuja. I will do it in Lagos.
> Interviewer: Why wouldn't you do it in Abuja?
> Organizer: Because when they started attacking the girls, they were attacking President Obasanjo. Obasanjo was seeking re-election, they were attacking him, they were discrediting him because the North wanted to produce the next presidential candidate…. And you know in Nigeria everybody takes advantage of your weak spot and everybody goes after you.

By identifying the protests as a way for the North to benefit from regional divisions and as an attack on then-President Obasanjo's "weak spot," organizers deflected the blame onto internal politics. The organizer's statement makes reference to the North's desire to disrupt the PDP's (Nigeria's ruling national party) unwritten "gentleman's agreement" that party nominations and presidential politics would be based on a rotational formula with Northern and Southern candidates taking turns at the seat of presidential power. Thus, Nigerian supporters construed protests against Miss World as a political move, motivated by Northern politicians who deliberately riled up the masses to ensure opposition to President Obasanjo's second term. By referencing Obsanjo's mounting re-election campaign, the broader context of Nigeria's recent return to democracy in 1999 become an important element in the controversy. As a British newspaper reporting on the first lady's statement noted:

> In a statement last night, the president's wife accused Islamic activists of taking advantage of Nigeria's newfound democracy. 'The Nigerian government has said time and again that our laws are supreme, consistent and capable of addressing this unfortunate development,' she told the audience of 500 guests and more than 80 beauty queens. 'I also believe that all those who support Amina and the women of Nigeria have a duty to show up in Abuja.' She went on: 'Her appeal against the sentence imposed by the sharia court will be heard by a federal court and she will be pardoned. It has always overturned death sentences in the past. No woman has been stoned to death in Nigeria.'[19]

While the first lady stressed the federal court's authority to overturn the sentence passed down by the sharia courts, President Obasanjo maintained that while he was against the ruling, commenting that he would "weep for Amina" if the sentence were carried out, he would not directly intervene in the judicial process. During a radio and television address to mark Nigeria's 42nd independence anniversary, the then president Olusegun Obsanjo spoke about the controversy, pointing out that Lawal could still mount an appeal. He noted, "We fully understand the concerns of Nigerians and friends of Nigeria, but we cannot imagine or envision a Nigerian being stoned to death. It has never happened. And may it never happen." Nigerian organizers highlighted how a desire to appeal to the North prevented the President and other politicians from issuing more forceful denouncements of the Amina Lawal case. Their wariness over the state's management of the event was evidenced through organizers shuttling between meetings with high-ranking officials in an attempt to get formal state confirmations that the government would commute Lawal's sentence and control the riots. The organizers maintained that the series of events became a mishandled diplomatic affair that effectively put the country on the defensive with respect to the international community. They had hoped for and sought a more purposeful public alignment between the state and the goals of the pageant, an outcome which the politics of the Nigerian North and South prevented.

In contrast, Nigerian opposition groups took issue with state funding for the event, pointing to the partnership with the first lady's charity and the logistical assistance provided by the government through a number of federal agencies. While the national government walked a fine-line in terms of its official sponsorship of the event, two state governments (Cross Rivers and Rivers States) did serve as formal co-sponsors. Opposition leaders complained about the government's promotion of the event and the public funds injected into hosting it. During our interview, one opposition leader protested vehemently:

> We need to start focusing on doing things which are beneficial to us, beneficial to the average people. We should be talking about that. Miss World has nothing to benefit for the average Nigerian. Why didn't you bring the world trade here or whatever, you know we need to start concentrating, either as a government, as a people, as a group, on doing things that are beneficial to the average Nigerian. So, to me, hosting Miss World was not what we needed at that time, it does not better the life of anybody; rather, it corrupts people, so, why not focus on the socio-economic impact of this issue rather than look at it from this issue of opposition to it and so on. How does it benefit the average Nigerian? Does it add to our education, does it add to our wellbeing, does it add to our understanding of what life is? Absolutely not! It's just a bloody waste of time and resources and you have the Nigerian government

[19] Cooper, Tim. "Stoning row casts shadow over Miss World gala night." November 11, 2002. The Evening Standard, pg. 3

> participating and funding it, these are things that are wrong. What is the business of government with Miss World? It is a private venture, let the private person run his show. Spend the [public] money on roads, spend the money on building hospitals, use it to better people's life. That really to me was the issue in the Miss World context, not the issue of whether Muslims are opposed to it or whatever.

Similarly, when I asked another opposition group member why they did not also target their hostility towards national pageants in Nigeria, he answered:

> They have the right because not all of them are Muslims, and they are not using government's money. Blue chip companies like STV, UAC and the rest of them put their money [up] because they are going to get a lot of benefits from the publicity stunt. But the Miss World was being organized with government funds, that is the immoral part of it! It was immoral to use government funds that belong to both Muslims, Christians and even the pagans to organize something that is not of any benefit to the average Nigerian. So you cannot compare Miss World being organized and sponsored by the government of Nigeria with Miss Nigeria being sponsored by Daily Times or the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria being organized by Ben Bruce. You know these are individuals, they have every right to do whatever they like with their funds, maybe get a bank loan. If they like they can make profits and sometimes they make a loss but these are individuals and if you oppose them, then it is not right because they have the fundamental human right to do whatever they like. But the Miss World was being sponsored by the Federal Government of Nigeria, it is public funds, and it is immoral.

Opposition groups maintained that within Abuja, the state had to be especially vigilant about not appearing to be supportive of any one group over the other, and echoed some of the concerns voiced by Nigerian labor and civil rights organizations that the state's involvement in the beauty contest was a distraction from more pressing concerns facing ordinary Nigerians such as high rates of unemployment, erratic power supply issues, and increasing crime rates.

Abuja: Cosmopolitan or Conservative City?

Nigerian supporters viewed Abuja as a cosmopolitan city chosen due to its existing infrastructure and status. While Lagos, the port-metropolis of nearly 8 million people, is currently undergoing a transformation into a global "mega-city," in 2001/2002 it was not considered a suitable venue because visitors would have had to navigate the city's overcrowded and gridlocked streets, as well as witness its poorly maintained infrastructure. As an organizer stated matter-of-factly, "It [Abuja] was the only venue that could be used. Abuja is the capital. It has all the facilities that could be used and the government. It is all situated at Abuja." Organizers were quick to point to Abuja as the "seat of power" and the obvious choice, especially in comparison to Lagos. An organizer noted:

> [W]here [else] would we have held it? Lagos where there is so much insecurity? Abuja is the capital of this country and when you have events like that, you follow it up with where you have government officials, you know whatever we do here in Nigeria, you depend on government for patronage and since the government had endorsed it, we just felt that it was right…. Miss World was hosted by the President's wife in Abuja and we had done a fund-raising ceremony where over a hundred million was raised to buy equipment.

This organizer notes the partnership between the pageant's goals and the country's development schemes, highlighting how hosting the event in Abuja served to bolster their access to Nigeria's political prowess.

Organizers largely viewed Abuja as a neutral city, and were baffled over its association with the Northern region of the country. As one organizer explained:

> The international media took pot shots at us for wanting to hold the pageant. They said Nigeria has a sizeable population of Muslims. But one thing I tell people who wanted to listen is that Nigeria is not a theocracy, we are a secular state. The federal capital is not under the jurisdiction of sharia. If we had gone to Sokoto state, we knew that the state had adopted sharia, whether rightly or wrongly is another thing entirely. Because under the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, I am not sure that you can impose sharia. That is another discussion for another day. If we had gone to the Northern Nigeria where the predominant population is Muslims and we offended their sensibility, it is a different matter. But the Federal Capital territory of Nigeria, is the federal capital territory where Islamic, Christianity, cultural, traditional and whatever is allowed to co-exist side by side.

Nigerian supporters emphasized that Abuja was entirely separate from the North, and was a cosmopolitan city where all parts of the country's multi-religious and multi-ethnic heritage should coexist peacefully. They also stressed that Nigeria is a secular state, taking issue with the imposition of sharia law (a legal code based on the Qur'an, Islam's holy book) in over a dozen states in the Northern region of Nigeria.

Opposition groups, however, viewed Abuja as a Northern city which they defined not just primarily as Muslim, but also as a culturally conservative region even for Christians. Due to cultural sensitivities over bodily display, Abuja was considered an inappropriate host site. Opposition groups noted that while the elite may have been cosmopolitan, everyday residents in Abuja were Northerners and thus conservative:

> You can hold Miss World in Lagos, you can hold it in Port-Harcourt but since you are holding Miss World in Kaduna or Kano, you are looking for trouble. It is common sense, it is not the issue of religion now, it is [about] culture. The northerners culturally are core Muslims, even if you see northern Christians, they are well dressed, and they will speak, 'Insha'Allah'. So, you need to be sensitive to this thing and know what you will do, then I am sure there would be no problem.

This opposition group leader thus points out that if the event had been held in Lagos or Port-Harcourt, two major cities in the South, there would have been no issues. To him it was self-evident that organizers were looking for "trouble" if they sought to host Miss World in Kaduna or Kano, which are Northern cities. His perspective alluded to the belief that the conflicts surrounding Miss World were caused in part by holding the event in Abuja, which he presumed is a Northern city much like Kaduna or Kano. Moreover, he argued that the issue is not so much about religion as *culture* since even Northern Christians are "well dressed" (meaning that they dress modestly) and are sensitive to bodily display. He also mentioned that culturally Northerners are "core Muslims," alluding to the common refrain that I heard throughout my fieldwork: that Muslims from the Southern part of Nigeria are "subdued," or not as conservative in their religious beliefs. For example, citing Lagos as an example, one religious leader remarked that the city was subject to "contamination" because it was a "mixture that has gone very far and big." His point is that Lagos is a cosmopolitan city where people from all over the nation and indeed the world (with its sizeable expatriate community) seem to "dilute" the religious fervour

in the area. Therefore, opposition groups stressed that regional distinctions in addition to religious differences played a role in the conflict and violence surrounding the pageant.

The international community, most notably human rights organizations, mapped the events onto broader communal conflicts in the country, emphasizing the implementation of sharia law in some Northern states. They also speculated about the stability of Abuja and thus the nation as a whole. For example, a report by Human Rights Watch noted:

> On the afternoon of Friday, November 22, the violence spread to the federal capital, Abuja (about 185 kilometres south of Kaduna town), where Muslim youths began smashing vehicles and lighting fires in the center of town. The police intervened fairly promptly, and nobody was killed in Abuja; however, this was seen as an alarming development as it was the first time that the capital was directly experiencing the effects of inter-communal or inter-religious violence more commonly associated with other parts of Nigeria.[20]

In the same vein, a British tabloid reported: "Muslim rioters went on the rampage in the northern city of Kaduna in protest at the competition and more than 100 people were killed with a further 500 injured. Fears are now growing that the riots could move to the capital before the event goes ahead."[21]

By noting Abuja's proximity to Kaduna, the central location of the riots and associated casualties, those outside of Nigeria emphasized the potential threat posed by sectarian conflict characteristic of other areas of the country, most notably the North. Kaduna, a majority-Muslim city with a sizeable Christian population is known as a religious flashpoint due to its deep history of religious-ethnic tensions. In linking the Abuja protests to those in Kaduna, foreign press flattened the terrain of Nigerian politics, speculating about an increased shift towards escalating religious conflict in the country as a whole. Nigerian organizers, in contrast, tended to deemphasize the potential threats posed by protestors, for example by stating that the demonstrations in Abuja were only confined to "one square block," that the "trouble was never closer than two miles away"[22] and that contestants were safely protected by a thick-layer of security. The international media stressed how protests had spread from the north to Abuja where contestants were being held as "virtual prisoners" and were directly at risk. For example, one article pointed out, "The controversial event was plunged into crisis when violent protests spread from the north of the country to the capital, Abuja. Muslim youths last night went on the rampage close to where the contestants are staying amid tight security."[23] While organizers tried to distance the contest from the demonstrations that surrounded it, international groups stressed the contest's proximity to the protests, making sure to point out how the violence had trickled down from nearby Kaduna, a city known for ethno-religious conflicts since 2000.

These different perspectives on the part of local and international groups point to distinct agendas concerning the trajectory of Nigeria, debated through the cultural and political geography of Nigeria. For one group, Abuja symbolizes cosmopolitanism, an image that relies on maintaining a secular state throughout the nation through an emphasis on federal authority. For opposition groups, Abuja remains a Northern city, and only a cosmopolitan city from the

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[20] The "Miss World Riots" Continued Impunity for Killings in Kaduna July 23, 2003 Vol. 15, No. 13(A) http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/nigeria0703_full.pdf

[21] Lowry, Kevin. "100 Are Killed As Muslims Rioting Disrupts Nigeria; Miss Scotland Quits Contest" The Express November 23, 2002

[22] Knowsley, Jo. "How the British Girls Rescued Miss World" Mail on Sunday. November 24, 2002. Pg. 3

[23] Ellis, Mark. November 23, 2002. "Miss World Moved; Contest Flees Nigeria Riots" The Mirror. Pg. 17

perspective of elites. By referencing rising casualties in nearby Kaduna, international groups honed in on the potential threat the Miss World demonstrations posed to the normally calm city, which remained seemingly immune from communal conflicts. Moreover, by tying together issues of Obasanjo's pending re-election campaign, diplomatic affairs, the state's backing of the pageant, and Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, local and international groups asserted the profound political reach of these events.

The Politics of Protecting Women

In discussions about the pageant, all groups (national organizers, national opponents and international boycotters) used the trope of protecting women, yet they used distinct frames which reflected their varied orientations to the hosting of Miss World. While they all emphasized the protection of women, they focused on different sets of women, including foreign pageant contestants and vulnerable Nigerian women, whom they viewed as in need of protection, highlighting wide-ranging standpoints towards the Nigerian nation and its place in the world. The focus on protecting women's bodies exposed the vulnerabilities of the nation, which demanded state intervention. I argue that these discourses surrounding the protection of women's bodies map onto divergent views towards globalization–local adaptation, Westernization, the affirmation of universal standards, and an emphasis on a clash-of-civilizations. These divergent views express different interpretations of the responsibilities of the Nigerian state. I draw from the multiple responses to Miss World from various groups, which encompassed a wide-range of concerns, including activists who organized under the banner of international human rights, public and political opinion, most notably from Britain (Nigeria's former colonial power), and religious groups within Nigeria.

Nigerian Supporters: Security

Nigerian organizers of Miss World 2002 emphasized the compatibility of the pageant with a global community by highlighting the *security* they were providing the beauty queens from around the world. They used state-backed security as a way of linking local initiatives with established international expectations of order, wealth, and competition. Pageant contestants were to be treated as cultural ambassadors from their respective countries, and Nigeria's ability to adequately protect these delegates became an important symbol of the country's worthiness to take its place in a global community of nations. Nigerian organizers stressed the 24-hour surveillance of contestants through appointed chaperones, heavy security detail at the five-star Niccon Hilton hotel in Abuja, as well as access to armored vehicles, motorcades and chartered private jets, as evidence that like other countries, Nigeria was able to provide adequate protection for all contestants. Newspapers reported the following:

> No fewer than 3000 security agents have been engaged by Silverbird Production, organizers of this year's Miss World beauty pageant, to guard the 93 contestants. Vice President of the company, Mr. Guy Murray-Bruce, explained that the measure was taken to forestall any unpleasant incident during the period the queens would spend in Nigeria…[He] discussed that the beauty queens, who arrived [in] Nigeria last week, had expressed satisfaction with the security in place for them. The security men were drawn from the police, state security services (SSS) and the bomb squad [and] are spread throughout Abuja, Calabar, and Port Harcourt. 'Security is tight because these girls are ambassadors of their various countries and they ought to be presented with a good view of Nigeria and they ought to be secured at all times…We don't want people coming in and the girls going out. We are responsible for them.

> We've got to look after them like eggs. If anything goes wrong, we are responsible,' he noted.[24]

Similarly:

> Participating countries in the Miss World beauty pageant 2002 billed to hold in Nigeria in December have been assured of the safety of their citizens coming for the event. The Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Tafa Balogun who gave assurance while receiving the National Coordinating Committee in his office, said the police had put in place adequate security arrangements to ensure the successful conduct of the pageant. According to him, the security situation in Nigeria is no less safe than of most advanced countries that had successfully hosted the world event.

In an interview with the Nigerian-based publicity director, she assured me:

> We were working closely with security agents and at no time did they tell us the girls were in danger. The girls had the protection they needed. The girls were ensconced at the Hilton. Because of how pageants are and how society works, it generally would have been difficult for anyone to have access to the girls, even if they were in London or the U.S. The girls were not fair game.

By stressing their competence in protecting beauty contestants through the state-backed security agents (e.g. soldiers, mobile police officers, intelligence operatives), minimizing the potential risk faced by contestants due to their inaccessibility to the public, and making direct comparisons to other "advanced countries," organizers sought to ensure Nigeria's stature within the international community. Organizers and supporters directly linked the ability to effectively handle the custody of 88 delegates from around the world to Nigeria's broader national project of becoming an essential member of the international political economy. As Ben Murray-Bruce commented after the contest had unraveled, "We lost a great opportunity to showcase Nigeria to the world. And people will say, if you can't look after 18-year-old girls, who can you look after? It's dangerous. It's a dangerous trend. It's one that will hurt us for a long time to come. We've got to understand the consequences of what has happened. This will be with us for a long time."[25]

Nigerian-based organizers felt that the international community, especially the press and human rights organizations, were determined to portray Nigeria negatively, creating a major stumbling block to organizers' ability to achieve their objectives. As one organizer stated:

> We had a press conference and all the press wanted to know about was, what do you feel about this Amina that was stoned to death? What do you feel about armed robbery? And other related questions. They were not even asking about the pageant, what they were after was Nigeria's problems. They don't see anything good in Nigeria. They say Nigeria is not safe. How many people were killed in South Africa, how many people were killed in the city of Chicago within 24 hours? With the number of people they killed in a year in Chicago, it took us a year to achieve, or should we talk about rape in South Africa? My policy was that if you ask me anything negative about Nigeria, I come behind you to ask which country you are from and I am sure I am going to find something against the country.

Through the use of other countries as yardsticks, organizers framed Nigeria's problems as similar to (if not less than) those faced in any other developed country. Supporters of the pageant viewed the international media as invested in suppressing positive stories of the African continent and as opposed to Nigeria's "right" to host the event. A media consultant for the Nigerian organizers

[24] "Miss World: 3000 security men to guard beauty queens." Punch November 19, 2002 1;9 News section
[25] Ramirez, Luis. "Nigeria/Religion" Voice of America News December 13, 2002.

further voiced her concerns about the role of the international press, noting that Nigeria was both regionally important and already deeply integrated into the global order:

> [I wish] for them to report it as it is happening and to stop dehumanizing Nigeria! Everybody makes Nigeria as a poor nation. If you don't know Nigeria and you have not visited the country and you see how she is being reported internationally, you will think, the country is backwards. One of the things I wanted to do was to tell them that Nigeria is undergoing development, it is an important country, it is a good place and if she breaks up today, there will be issues in Africa. Because some of the countries in the West Africa Region are looking up to her. Nigerians are enlightened people; they travel all over the world. I am sure; there is no part of the world that there is no Nigerian. We have good and bad Nigerians as it is the world over. So the message was this, say it as it is. Don't stoke the fire, don't stoke the flame. Don't exaggerate the situation and don't cause confusion just because you want to sell a good story.

Another organizer spoke about the role of international human rights organizations:

> All those folks like Bianca Jaggar[26] [a well-known human rights advocate] who specialized in pretending to protect the dignity of the human race, they found Nigeria a sitting duck…I didn't find out how these guys make money before, they spread this information, frighten the West, then the West give them money and they go out to say they want to save Africans. They do it for financial reasons. I found out a lot of stuff about these so called [people] who say they want to protect and save Africans, it's a game.

Organizers used a comparative logic that directly assessed their achievements in relationship to other "developed" countries. They emphasized their compatibility with international standards through their ability to provide exceptional security to contestants. Nigerian organizers also highlighted how their efforts remained hampered by the international community's insistence on pulling Nigeria's status downwards in order to either appeal to audiences that had grown to expect stories of political disorder from Africa or to attract donations from contributors who sought to offer support for a poor "underdeveloped" nation like Nigeria. This logic echoes the critique often leveled against former colonizers of seeking to hamper the development of their ex-colonies, particularly those on the cusp of becoming full members of the international political economy.

Through these tactics, Nigerian supporters emphasized protecting the *physical* bodies of contestants through discourses of policing, surveillance, and military access, which were meant to signal the *economic* prowess of the nation and highlight Nigeria's readiness to be more fully inserted in the global political economy just like other developed countries. The focus on security became a means of not only confirming the stability of the Nigerian state, but also an essential piece of globalization since it substantiated Nigeria's claims of international compatibility. By focusing on the similarities between Nigeria and other countries, Nigerian supporters sought to emphasize local integration of global expectations.

Nigerian Boycotters: Morality

A number of different Nigerian organizations voiced their opposition to the pageant, including civil rights and labor organizations and Christian religious groups. However, the most vocal opposition groups which garnered the greatest media attention were some Nigerian Muslim organizations that expressed their discontent over the pageant, labeling it an indecent spectacle.

[26] Jagger was invited to be a judge for the Miss World pageant, but declined and wrote an editorial published in a British newspaper which called for a boycott of the contest due to the Lawal case.

While they tended to focus on concerns over the physical exposure of contestants' bodies, their overall framework of protection stressed the *spiritual* bodies of all women as mandated by Islam. They highlighted the need to protect women against the commodification of their bodies, and expressed unease with the contestants as well as the "polluting" effect of their presence on women in the country. Incidentally their sentiments echoed much of the feminist backlash against beauty pageants throughout the world, making for a case of odd bedfellows akin to the political alliance between U.S. anti-porn feminists and Conservative Christians. During my fieldwork I approached a member of Nigeria's now largely defunct Women in Nigeria (WIN) organization, a leading secular women's rights group, who said that her group did not organize any large scale demonstrations against the pageant because they considered it to be "corporate concern" and that their activism centered around securing basic social and economic rights for women in the country.

One leader of a Muslim opposition group declared, "As far as Muslims or Islam is concerned, a woman is a sacred being that needs to be given proper protection and dignified. We don't consider women to be objects of commodities for sale or a contest for sexual products." Another leader noted, "We think it's immoral for young girls to expose their nudity just because you want to do a beauty pageant." Nigerian-based opposition groups' language echoed Western feminists' criticism of the commodification of women's bodies, yet relied on assumptions about morality rather than women's rights of self-determination to justify their opposition. While the most prominent opposition from religious groups relied on interpretations of strict Islamic doctrines, others also stressed how "core" Christians would hold a similar view based on a shared cultural upbringing. Both opposition members contrasted "African culture" with Western influences:

> Look, in traditional African society, women don't go cat walking on the stage because they want to look beautiful or whatever, it's not done, it's not part of our culture, not even religion. It's not part of our upbringing. So, it's an aberration to us. Miss World has come from the western influence. The influences we have in this country are traditional African society, Islamic, Christian and the western influence. It is un-Islamic, it's not traditional, It's not Christian. It can only be a western thing.

His statement echoes sentiments expressed by others who interpreted Miss World as a signal of Nigeria's adoption of Western culture, rather than a means of securing Nigeria's insertion into the global political economy on its own terms, as envisioned by Nigerian-based supporters of Miss World. Using a process of elimination that distinctly demarcates major cultural influences in Nigeria, this opposition leader concludes that the pageant is a Western element completely separate from the traditional African culture which unites Nigerians regardless of religion. Rather than recognizing the possibility of hybridity, he draws a clear distinction between African and Western culture. By stressing the spiritual dimension of protecting women's bodies from commodification, and cautioning against Westernization, opposition groups within Nigeria promoted a vision of the nation as a *moral* force, responsible for preserving the authentic cultural elements of the country.

Opposition groups realized that their actions had world-wide impact, which reaped international attention, especially from the press. When I asked one opposition leader to describe his participation in the demonstrations in Abuja, he stated:

> Oh yes it was fantastic, it was a world event, the whole world was aware…The whole media world was already in Nigeria to cover that event. CNN was there, and they interviewed us…They covered the demonstration and it was being viewed by the

> whole world as it was going on and that was why it had immediate effects. The parents of the girls were seeing the protest, and they were worried that probably some of the protesters can harm their children. So it got adequate publicity. If publicity was localized within Nigeria, the event would have been staged.

When I followed up by asking why he and his allies did not organize protests around the large crop of national and community pageants in Nigeria, he fired back:

> You know all those ones are more or less localized, you know if they want to do Miss Oyo [a state in the South-West] for instance, it's something that is localized, it doesn't have the kind of effect that we are going to have if the whole world is watching… All of them [international pageants] could take Nigeria by storm, you know with all their negative repercussions. So the local ones do not have any effects like the international one[s].

This opposition member couches his group's efforts as being in part supported by the international media who could bring awareness to his group's concerns and publicize their voices on the world stage, a feat that would be impossible to realize if the event only received local media attention. He also asserts that international pageants remained a central target because unlike local beauty contests, they had deeper negative effects. Thus, the international hue of the pageant played a profound role in stoking demonstrations against the event.

International Boycotters: Violation and Advocacy

Groups such Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the World Organization Against Torture supported a boycott of the event, issuing urgent appeals against Amina Lawal's sentence. These groups had participated in a similar campaign for Safiaya Hussani, the first woman to receive the death penalty for adultery in Nigeria whose sentence had been reversed just four days prior to Lawal's verdict. However, human rights organizations were able to leverage the massive attention on Nigeria during this time due to the Miss World contest. Thus, the Miss World events became wrapped up in the Lawal case since boycotters were aghast at the prospect of hosting a world event in "such a country," and organizers had to assure members of the international community that the case would follow due process in Nigeria and justice would prevail for Lawal.

Amnesty International launched a global letter writing campaign and organized fundraisers, demonstrations, and sponsored an electronic petition campaign asking people to write letters to the President of Nigeria, Minister of Justice, ambassadors and high commissioners in their countries, as well as local representatives. Emails were forwarded throughout the world and urgent pleas for support were posted on various websites under the banner of "saving Nigerian women from being stoned to death." The campaign against Amina Lawal's sentencing became one the most successful "viral" Internet awareness campaigns of its time, drawing the attention of public figures and celebrities such as Bill Clinton and Oprah Winfrey. The campaign focused on Lawal as a victim of poverty and gender discrimination whose fundamental human rights were being violated. For instance, one website set up to bring awareness to the case argued:

> Women's and Human Rights organisations in Nigeria have already highlighted the emerging pattern of people from poor backgrounds - particularly women - being the victims of cruel, inhumane and discriminatory sentences introduced by Regional laws in the states of northern Nigeria…. Under Federal Nigerian law, Amina has the right to have her life and personal dignity respected. This right is enshrined in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, which confirms the sanctity of

> human life. This right is also recognized by all the international and regional human rights declarations and conventions to which Nigeria is a signatory.

By bringing together issues of gender discrimination, poverty, and human rights, international boycotters stressed the universality of "women's rights as human rights."

Amnesty International was careful to stress that they were not against sharia laws per se, but rather were against the penal code's violation of Nigeria's constitution and international law. For example one spokesperson for the organization observed:

> We have continually asked the Nigerian authorities not to introduce punishments which amount to ill-treatment and torture under new laws based on Sharia. The new Sharia Penal Codes as they are currently enacted and practised puts Nigerian citizens at risk of discrimination on grounds of gender, religious belief and social status. The Nigerian authorities at state and federal level have the responsibility to ensure that international human rights standards prohibiting the death penalty, cruel, inhuman and degrading punishments are respected in any legislation enacted in Nigeria. We are puzzled by the response of the Nigerian officials; the Federal Minister of Justice himself has declared these sentences unconstitutional yet no practical action is taken to end what must be a prolonged psychological torture for Amina Lawal who still faces an agonising death. The danger of human rights becoming victim of politics is real.

Amnesty International expressed frustration at Nigerian federal authorities' lack of active interference in the judicial process and doubted that the execution could be stayed without international intervention. A report issued by Amnesty International which advocated for the government to overturn the stoning sentence stated:

> The Federal Government seems to deliberately deliver two contradictory speeches for internal and international audiences. Despite reassurances by President Obasanjo, the Government is still failing to take effective measures to ensure that the new Shari'a penal legislation is in line with the Nigerian constitution and the country's obligations under international human rights instruments.

Through signature campaigns that targeted government authorities in countries around the world, international human rights organizations directly targeted the state and tried to put pressure on the Nigerian court system by pointing out Nigeria's obligation to international conventions and its own Constitution. By focusing on the administration's commitment to follow international treaties ratified by the Nigerian government, human rights organizations focused on the protection of women by the *legal* arm of the state. The organizations also admonished the potentially coercive reach of the state as a violator of standardized human rights through its adoption of sharia law and poor treatment of women. Lawal's case served as an exemplar of the threat posed by the confluence of religious fundamentalism and human rights abuses.

As part of the broader boycott, about half a dozen delegates withdrew from the Miss World 2002 contest. Miss Panama was reported as having said, "Although their culture is very different from our own, no one should be stoned to death." The calls for a boycott were led by Miss Denmark who stated, "I would hope that the other contestants would boycott it too, so that we could get some political pressure put on Nigeria. I do not want to participate because of the poor woman Amina Lawal." Miss France, Sylvie Teller, said: "When a woman faces the most agonising death, there are more important things in life than winning a crown for being

beautiful."[27] Boycotting contestants drew from the discourse of universal human rights while also acknowledging cultural difference. Through the stances they took, they sought to advocate for women's rights in Nigeria, attempting to serve as a bridge between Nigeria and their own countries.

A group of ten British Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) wrote an open letter to the newly elected Miss England, urging her to condemn the scheduled sentencing of Amina Lawal for its "horror and inhumanity" and to use her position to compel organizers to move the venue away from Nigeria. The letter stated in part, "For beauty queens to celebrate in shimmering clothes, while off-stage a Nigerian woman's most basic right to life is violated, drags the whole competition into disrepute." Miss England responded that her presence in Nigeria would bring additional attention to the plight of women in the country and felt reassured that the Nigerian government would intervene as necessary. After the move to London, other British politicians from several parties continued to go on the record against the contest. A Labor Member of Parliament (MP), Glenda Jackson said, "They should call the whole thing off as a mark of respect to the people who died in Nigeria. What's the point of such a contest anyway? It's such an antediluvian concept. Miss World has become utterly irrelevant." In calling attention to Miss World as an old-fashioned notion, she drew a deep contrast with Nigeria's hope of using this same event as a means of staging modernity. The Liberal-Democratic international development spokeswoman Jenny Tonge expressed: "They should think about stopping the whole thing now. It was extremely insensitive of Morley to put it in Nigeria in the first place. I am absolutely appalled. It is so sad for Nigeria because it is a country which is trying to emerge from the developing world and this will set it back." The Tory international development spokeswoman, Caroline Spelman added: "There is a degree of responsibility on the part of those who organise international events like this." She further noted that she would press the British International Development Secretary to review British-Nigerian diplomatic ties in order to prevent a similar incident from recurring.[28] On November 4, 2002 the European Parliament passed a resolution condemning the sentence, and the EU commission resolved to provide "financial help to strengthen Nigeria's legal and democratic structures and the Nigerian government is urged to put an end to the use of the death penalty." The European parliament's committee on Women's rights unanimously voted in favor of boycotting Miss World and the Chairperson Anna Karamanu of Greece remarked that Nigeria "treats women in a totally unacceptable way." In the United States House of Congress, Representative McCollum of Minnesota introduced Resolution 351 which sought to "condemn the practice of death by stoning as well as other acts that constitute torture and unfairly discriminate against women."

Reports in British tabloids and broadsheets tended to emphasize the obvious misstep on the part of the Miss World Organization to attempt to hold Miss World in a "politically, religiously, and tribally divided country such as Nigeria." They also noted how the beauty contestants were forced to flee Nigeria due to the chaos sparked by the contest. As one British newspaper article stated, "The 91 beauty queens vying to become Miss World sought refuge in the boutiques and burger bars of West London yesterday, a day after leaving Nigeria amid scenes of rioting and bloodshed."[29] American coverage of the events similarly focused on how the conflicts surrounding Miss World highlighted Nigeria's separation from the West, but included

[27] Dougherty, Hugh. "Boycott of Miss World: Nine girls quit contest in protest at host nation's plan to stone 'adulteress'" The Evening Standard November 5, 2002

[28] "Calls to scrap Miss World over riot death." The Evening Standard (London) November 25, 2002

[29] "Queens leave the riots behind to strut and preen." The Times November 26, 2002

slightly more references to Nigeria's place in the growth of fanatical Islam. For example, the *New York Times* included an op-ed piece by Salman Rushdie in which he made direct comparisons between Nigeria, Egypt, and Iran. He sarcastically wrote:

> Nigerian Islam's encounter with that powerhouse of subversion, the Miss World contest, has been unedifying, to put it mildly. First, some of the contestants had the nerve to object to a Shariah court's sentence that a Nigerian woman convicted of adultery be stoned to death and threatened to boycott the contest -- which forced the Nigerian authorities to promise that the woman in question would not be subjected to the lethal hail of rocks. And then Isioma Daniel, a Christian Nigerian journalist, had the effrontery to suggest that if the prophet Muhammad were around today, he might have wanted to marry one of these swimsuit hussies himself. Well, obviously, that was going too far. True-believing Nigerian Muslims then set about the holy task of killing, looting and burning while calling for Ms. Daniel to be beheaded, and who could blame them?[30]

Similarly, a letter to the editor responding to an opinion article that challenged Anti-Islamic rhetoric and emphasized moderation in Islam, stated:

> Re 'Anti-Islam Rhetoric Undercuts Moderates,' Commentary, Dec. 11: Having traveled to Egypt and Turkey, I know that believing in the Islamic faith does not mean that one is vicious or violent. But such everyday peaceful lives are sadly overshadowed by events like the senseless violence in Nigeria over the Miss World pageant. Until there is a vocal condemnation across the Islamic world of the fringe minority who are filled with ignorance and hate -- of those in the Islamic world who take out of context the words of the Koran -- there will be a justification of those on the other side who deride Islam. Moderation comes with proof in action, not from words.[31]

By drawing in references to Muslim-majority nations and noting the moderate factions of Islam, the American press noted Nigeria's potential to fall prone to radical Islam. While human rights organizations and advocates tended to emphasize striving towards *sameness* through the trope of universal human rights, British politicians, the press and public opinion highlighted inevitable *differences* between Nigeria and the developed world. The U.S. press included expressions of heightened concern of Nigeria's potential to fall prey to radical Islam in a post 9/11 world.

Conclusion

The case of Miss World 2002 and its surrounding conflicts resulted in a catastrophic blow to Nigeria's international image and revealed some of the underlying issues that contribute to national fissures. Rather than focus on the conflicts as merely a problem of religious difference, I have shown that broader concerns about the politics of globalization and nationalism circulated around this critical event. These concerns draw in mixed narratives that were both internal and external to Nigeria. Discussions about whether Abuja should be considered a cosmopolitan city immune from communal conflicts, or a Northern city that should be governed by conservative morals, highlighted deeper political concerns about which parts of the nation would be showcased. Deeper understandings of the nation encompass both political geography and the gendered politics of globalization. While supporters of Miss World sought to further align Nigeria with a global community, opposition groups interpreted this as a signal of Westernization rather than internationalization. This case provides insight into tensions between

[30] "No More Fanaticism as Usual"; [Op-Ed] Salman Rushdie. New York Times Nov 27, 2002. pg. A.23
[31] "Letters; Bible and Koran: Keep It in Context" Los Angeles Times. Dec 15, 2002. pg. M.4

Nigeria's struggles to be further inserted into the international political economy and its efforts to retain national unity.

The 2002 event and the ensuing political crisis brought underlying tensions to the forefront that were based not just on religious divisions, but on unresolved conflicts over secularism, region, and globalization. The long-term legacy of these events still remain as it is still seen as a blot on the reputation of Nigerian beauty pageant organizers and a set-back on the goal of elevating and reviving Nigeria's image. A beauty queen shared defensively that she felt that the event had become so entangled with Nigeria's broader national narrative that it affected her chances at world contests since others looked at her with alternating glances of disdain and pity. One of the main organizers vowed to stage a "comeback" of Miss World to again play host to the international community and secure Nigeria's position as a global leader. These fissures that so dramatically emerged in this event, filtered through the world of beauty pageants, continue to shape the forms of nationalism that emerge, displaying the undermining of a coherent sense of the Nigerian nation. This event exemplifies a culmination of the nation's attempts to stage itself internally and externally as a cohesive and modern nation. It illustrates how nation-states are defined in part through broader debates about globalization and the political geography of nations. I next turn to the history of pageants in Nigeria before and after the Miss World fiasco to situate how the idea of hosting the pageant remained so critical to Nigeria's national trajectory and what followed after the debacle.

Chapter 3:
Crafting Cultural Authenticity: Diversity and the National Production of Identity

Introduction

During my observation of the 2009-2010 cycles of the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria [MBGN] and Queen Nigeria national pageants, a representative from Plateau state emerged the winner. A state located in the middle belt region of the country which loosely separates the nation's 36 states in the far North from the southern part of Nigeria, Plateau is known as the "Home of Peace and Tourism" because of its picturesque sites such as waterfalls, rock formations and game reserves. With its ethno-linguistic diversity, large number of ethnic minorities, and nearly equal mix of Christians and Muslims, Plateau's place as the poster child for national amity and tranquility was shattered by an increase in ethno-religious violence. The first round of ethnic violence emerged in September 2001, with later large-scale episodes in November 2008 and January 2010 (Scacco 2009). Most people trace the conflicts in areas like Plateau to settler/indigenous battle over land, which just so happens to map onto ethno-religious lines.

Plateau's once peaceful coexistence amidst cultural heterogeneity represented Nigeria's promise of maintaining national solidarity while promoting cultural diversity, but the communal conflicts of the last decade revealed the violent pitfalls that potentially threaten this harmony. Rather than scrutinize contestants' backgrounds and argue over which one provides the most "authentic" link to the state, I argue that it is necessary to analyze the production of cultural representation to uncover what it tell us about national identities. In this chapter, I focus on how the two national pageants –The Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria and Queen Nigeria–handled and balanced these promises and pitfalls through their divergent ways of representing cultural diversity and authenticity. Both pageants worked to manage, perform, and embody national representation, but Queen Nigeria took an approach I call *tactile*, which was focused on rootedness and familiarity, while the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria (MBGN) used a *tactical* approach, focused on strategy and discovery.

I begin by placing the friction between national cohesion and fragmentation into broader context, employing a historical arc that focuses on the main sources of struggle over Nigerian cultural identity. By linking the origin and development of the Nigerian beauty pageant industry to key historical periods marking the country's independence, rise to international prominence as an oil rich nation, periods of civil war and military rule, and subsequent return to democratic governance in more recent years, I use pageants as a lens for viewing transitions in Nigerian politics, culture and economy. The different phases of Nigeria's nationalist project have been embodied within pageantry and are linked to watershed moments in Nigerian history. The first section relies on archival material and interviews from the Miss Nigeria pageant, the first national pageant in Nigeria (dating back to 1957), to show how pageants serve as symbolic representations of the nation. I map out the rise, the decline and the subsequent return of the franchise. I examine how the history of beauty pageants in Nigeria sheds light on struggles over and changes in national identity and cultural representations over time. I next draw from my ethnographic fieldwork in the worlds of two national pageants, Queen Nigeria and the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria. The "traditional" segments of these pageants promoted different representations of the nation and remained connected to broader debates about cultural authenticity, ethnicity and the national production of identities.

A History of Nigerian Pageantry 1957-2010

The history of the Miss Nigeria pageant, the country's original national pageant, has been a series of starts and stops, punctuated by moments of constitutional democracy, civil war, and periods of military rule. While currently the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria (MBGN), which began in 1986, garners the most national visibility, the Miss Nigeria pageant was often described to me a critical national institution and a must watch event in its heyday. By examining shifting orientations within the Miss Nigeria pageant and highlighting the economic, social and political pressures that alternatively prompted governing elites and leaders of private industry to endorse, ignore and/or actively advance the Miss Nigeria beauty pageant, I explain some of the underlying motives for advancing particular visions of the nation. I also focus on the declining prestige of the Miss Nigeria pageant, the ascendance of the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria, the Miss World bid, and the start of the Queen Nigeria contest.

Consolidating National Identity in a Time of Transition: 1957-1966

The Miss Nigeria pageant began in 1957, three years prior to Nigeria's independence from Britain, in the same year in which Nigeria held its constitutional conference. During this first phase of Nigerian democracy (the First Republic) as the nation consolidated, national symbols like beauty pageants served as a means of legitimizing the burgeoning nation-state both within the nation and to the rest of the world as it negotiated its status as a post-independence nation. This pre-figuring moment during the final years of colonial rule highlights an age in which Nigeria was just coming into its own, attempting to stake out a unique national identity while still aware of its colonial ties to Great Britain. Rather than implementing a clean break from its former colonial master, the beginning of the Miss Nigeria during this time of transition reflected the country's measured and steady process of decolonialization.

The *Daily Times of Nigeria* Newspaper held the license for the first Miss Nigeria pageant, which initially started as a photo contest in which hopeful contestants sent in their pictures to the newspaper headquarters. These pictures were published in the paper and finalists came to Lagos (the then capital) to compete in the nation-wide competition. The *Daily Times of Nigeria* (DTN), the sponsor of the Miss Nigeria established in 1926, was one of the earliest newspapers, with among the highest circulation, in Africa. The newspaper was primarily owned by British businessmen and the Daily Mirror Group in London. In 1963, DTN became a public company traded on the Nigerian Stock Exchange. This marked the gradual transfer of ownership to Nigerians, and by March 1974, following the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree, DTN became a wholly Nigerian-owned company. DTN rose to prominence as a newspaper with national circulation; sponsoring the Miss Nigeria beauty pageant served as a means of growing its customer base.

In its inaugural national edition in 1957, held in the hall of the exclusive (all-male) Lagos Island Club, the Bobby Benson Band, a Nigerian highlife musical group, entertained the crowd with its signature style of jazz horns and guitars. Grace Oyelude, the first Miss Nigeria (a woman of Yoruba heritage who grew up in the Northern state of Kano), later recalled of her crowning moment: "On the day of the event, I dressed up in a native attire, tying my wrapper neatly. I was the only one dressed in Iro [wrap skirt] and Buba [blouse] that night." When asked what special qualities she possessed that allowed her to clinch the crown that night, Oyelude remarked: "Maybe the way I dressed. There was no make-up. Even the Iro and Buba I put on cannot reveal any statistics [her body measurements]."[32] Her choice of Aso-Oke, a hand-loomed fabric typically worn for formal occasions and traditionally associated with the Yoruba ethnic

[32] Adeyemi, Muyiwa. "My Reign As first Miss Nigeria" The Guardian December 7, 2002

group of Southwestern Nigeria, gestured towards traditional forms of beauty and the promotion of Nigeria's cultural heritage. While her attire was connected to a specific ethnic group, during this time in which Nigeria remained governed by the British and divided into three separate regions, there was seemingly no contradiction seen in a specific ethnic group standing in for a nation. At the same time, the 200 pound prize money and one-week London excursion trip awarded to the winner hinted at the pageant's appeal for a "modern" woman. Her trip to the capital city of Nigeria's colonizer signified this symbolic moment of transition. The *Daily Times* later spotlighted Oyelude in 1963 after she returned from an extended nurse training course in London and returned to practice nursing in Nigeria.

Nigeria gained independence in 1960 and the winner that year was hailed as "Miss Independence." The winner, Rosemary Aneize, who went on to become a prominent broadcaster and actress, spoke Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, the three dominant indigenous languages in Nigeria. She was a guest of honor at the Independence Day Ceremonies and met Queen Elizabeth II. Her ability to speak the three main national indigenous languages likely buttressed claims of unity. Aneize's meeting with Queen Elizabeth II at the Independence ceremonies served as a symbolic transition from British rule. In 1964 Nigeria had its first democratic national elections and Miss Nigeria's Edna Park participated in the Miss Universe pageant. This was the first time a Nigerian contestant officially participation in an international pageant, which further shored up Nigeria's claim as a self-governing nation preparing to establish international recognition and integration.

Military Regime, Civil War and National (Re)Integration: 1966-1977

In 1966, the year of Nigeria's first military coup, the Miss Nigeria pageant was not held for the first time in its nine-year history, but it returned the following year in 1967. In 1967, the Nigerian Civil War began, with Biafra and other southeastern provinces seeking to secede from Nigeria to become a self-governed republic. Although the movement received some sympathy from international sources, only five countries officially recognized the new Republic. The civil war ended in 1970, and, with the exception of a hastily organized pageant in 1972, there was a seven-year span when no pageant was held. After the end of the Biafran war, the need for unifying the nation through civic institutions like pageants might not have been as important. In 1975, the Federal Government acquired a 60 percent stake in the *Daily Times* Newspaper (DTN), marking the transition of DTN from a private-held company to a government controlled enterprise. This switch directly tied Miss Nigeria to the ebbs and flows of the state, integrating political actors into the pageant's national goals.

Oil Wealth and Commercialization: 1977-1988

In 1977 Miss Nigeria returned, the same year as FESTAC, the Festival of Black African Culture began. FESTAC was a celebration of Pan-African culture which included Black nations throughout the world. Andrew Apter (2005) observes that this time period was a phase of massive oil display for the country which sought to announce itself as the center of the Black world. My interview with the organizer who revived Miss Nigeria in 1977, after a five year hiatus, centered on his motivations to shift the pageant's focus from a cultural form of entertainment to a commercial enterprise. This change marked Nigeria's economic transition in the global marketplace due in part to its oil wealth. Explaining his rationale for pursing this new aim in 1977, the main organizer during the bulk of the 1970s and early 1980s explained that he injected marketing and finances into the pageant by first giving the winner a N6000 annual salary (nearly $14,000 in today's dollars) and by making sure that all winners received a car. He noted:

> In 1977, I started Miss Nigeria on a salary of six thousand per annum which was a good salary at that time and in addition, there is what we call [an] appearance fee -- we charge you money and it is divided between us and Miss Nigeria. We will reserve her own money and at the end of her reign, she will collect it in bulk. I said to myself that Miss Nigeria must have a car and a chauffeur. I introduce that into it in 1977. No Miss Nigeria had ever gotten a car. Since 1957 when they started, only one got a car and it was given by Chief Tom Benson when he was the Minister of Information and to celebrate independence. It was Miss Rosemary Anieze Adams that won Miss Nigeria in 1960 and she got a small Fiat. That was the first and the last before I took over. I made it a condition to which they kept even after I left and they started having a car. So that year, I got three cars for the first, second and third.

The organizer also negotiated bringing the reigning 1977 Miss World to crown the new Miss Nigeria with MKO Abiola (a major Nigerian political figure) serving as the chairman of the occasion. When I asked him to describe what made Miss Nigeria unique, he replied:

> Because [we] reflect the national outlook, like Ben Bruce's (the original national director of the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria) own, it is always Lagos. Let there be zonal (referring to the division of the country's 36 states into geo-political zones based on region) [contests] so that people can feel it everywhere. It is laziness and all that he [Ben Bruce] is after is profit. Yes we want profit, but it must reflect a national outlook. They [MBGN] just pick this one, Miss Sokoto and so on, and they're not even from that state most of the time. I don't believe in that. But our own, we do it in zonal, northern zone where states in the North will compete, Bendel Zone, places like Warri, Port-Harcourt, East, places like Enugu, so we just pick a place in each zone.

Although the organizer of the 1977 pageant stressed that the pageant was after profit, he also insisted that the process of selecting contestants according to specific regional zones allowed for the development of a "national outlook." When I pressed him to clarify the zonal arrangement, he compared the process to the People Democratic Party (Nigeria's national ruling party) and its rotational power-sharing agreement based on the country's six geopolitical zones. He stressed that by alternating where the national finale was held and selecting finalists according to zones (the top three contestants in each zone participated in the national finale), the pageant could be "felt by everyone" in the nation. And while contestants were expected to wear the national attire that corresponded to a particular zone during the national show, he stressed how organizers used promotional considerations to choose the national wear worn by Nigerian queens at international pageants. Detailing the logic, he stated, "It [just] depends on what will sell Nigeria better; it does not matter whether it is Ibo, Hausa and Yoruba. If the girl is Ibo, we may give her Aso Oke [Yoruba cloth] because [we might] have a sponsor for Aso Oke." This tactic points to the co-mingling of cultural and financial incentives.

Organizers also rested their commercial success on their ties to the *Daily Times* newspaper, as an informant detailed:

> I think from our antecedents being the *Daily Times* of Nigeria, Nigeria's number one newspaper at that time, our reputation also took us a long way. It was the *Daily Times* organising it. So, if the push came to shove, they could sue us and they would be sure that we are not going to go away. *Daily Times* would always be there to be sued, not a company that would disappear overnight. So, that put us in good stead and we on our part have to think about tangible benefits for the sponsor. 'Okay, you can brand the whole stage for the contest,' television would be there, the whole media would be

> there and you could put your name on the car for one year and everywhere she went, people would see the car and you could bring your product to the contest and give out to people. You know, we had to be creative all the time otherwise we are not going to get any company.

Due to the country's serious financial problems towards the mid-80s, Nigeria was inconsistent in sending contestants to the top international pageants like Miss World and Miss Universe. In 1986 the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria pageant started and began sending contestants to compete abroad. Silverbird Entertainment, the family-owned company that organized the contest, had earlier tried to hold a Miss Nigeria Universe in 1983, but it was panned as a failure since the winner was ultimately dethroned (I was told that she was too demanding and they decided to just cut their losses and not send anyone to Miss Universe).

The Return of Military Rule and a Tale of Two Pageants: 1989-1998

Between 1986 and 2004 there were two national pageants in Nigeria: Miss Nigeria and the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria. During this time period, due to Miss Nigeria's decline, MBGN was able to emerge as the dominant pageant in Nigeria, acquiring the rights to send candidates to the top international pageants, Miss World and Miss Universe. I heard differing accounts from various sources about why MBGN was able to secure the rights; former Miss Nigerian owners speculated that MBGN bribed someone and stole it, while MBGN maintains that the rights were available since Miss Nigeria had allowed it to languish, and that they followed due process. Miss Nigeria filed a lawsuit against MBGN in 2001, which was later tossed out. But all agree that Nigeria's military rule from 1989 to 1998 had a direct impact on the Miss Nigeria pageant, while largely leaving MBGN unaffected. While MBGN organizers claimed that due to the military regime, less money circulated in the marketplace, which made finding sponsorship difficult, the organization was able to weather the economic downturn despite these hardships. In contrast, the Miss Nigeria organizers ultimately linked the demise of the *Daily Times*, and by extension their pageant, to military rule. Miss Nigeria's close ties to the Nigerian government through its sponsorship by the *Daily Times* newspaper meant that the general public and corporate sponsors viewed the pageant as just another mouthpiece for an unpopular military regime. One organizer explained the impact of the *Daily Times*' takeover by military in the 1990s when the military seized control as a majority shareholder in the company:

> Number one the *Daily Times* had begun to lose its reputation. It was no longer as credible as it used to be. So, if you were organising a beauty contest for instance and let's say that you went to a company, it's like they would listen to you before when I said I came from *Daily Times*. It was a heavyweight. I mean it was just enough to make a walk in and say, 'I am from *Daily Times*, I want to talk to you.' They would let you in because everybody knew *Daily Times*. But in the later years, *Daily Times* had lost it and that credibility had gone and therefore you could not just walk in and say, 'I am from *Daily Times*.' That has been lost.

Without adequate sponsorship, Miss Nigeria eventually floundered. Organizers admitted that they could not effectively compete with MBGN since they staged impressive shows with lighting effects and attractive staging. However, the military regime did have an impact for MBGN on the international stage. In 1993 MBGN's representative, Toyin Raiji, was forced to exit the Miss World competition held in South Africa, due to political pressures from international human rights organizations protesting the Abacha military regime which had just executed Ken Saro-Wiwa, a prominent activist. This example further displays the entangling of beauty competitions with national and global politics.

The Return of Democracy, the Rise of Sharia, and The New Global Village: 1999-2010

Leading into the new century, MBGN reigned supreme as the leading national beauty competition in the country and its 2001 delegate won the Miss World pageant. MBGN's organizers Silverbird Productions obtained the rights to hold the Miss World contest the next year however it was ultimately relocated to London due to protests. Despite the botched attempt to host the 2002 edition of the international beauty contest (detailed in the preceding chapter), Silverbird's MBGN continued. Its prominence built the groundwork for the emergence of the Queen Nigeria pageant in 2008, who viewed MBGN's dominance as a problematic representation of the country since it did not center a culturally "authentic" depiction of Nigeria.

Similarly, Miss Nigeria re-emergence under new management in 2010 (the same year as Nigeria's 50th year anniversary of independence) after a six-year hiatus sought to rectify Nigeria's image by bringing back a "vintage Nigerian glamour" and "modern elegance" highlighting nostalgia for the past as well as a look towards the future. Re-launched as a scholarship program under the tagline, "One Nation, One People, One Queen," this "new" version of the Miss Nigeria contest harkened back to the "glory" days of wealth and hopefulness in the nation's past. Current organizers stressed that pageants were once known as a major national institution but had become "bastardized" due to the mushrooming of various pageants throughout the country, some of which were organized by those seeking to scam corporate sponsors and hopeful contestants. The Miss Nigeria organizers emphasized that unlike MBGN they had no intention of grooming contestants for international pageants, but rather sought to have their beauty queens serve as goodwill ambassadors who would focus on charity work through the newly inaugurated non-profit, the Miss Nigeria Organization. The Miss Nigeria winners would also work with international NGOs like the World Health Organization and bring Nigeria's cultural values of respectability and customs to the outside world.

The 2010 Miss Nigeria pageant held zonal[33] castings in four Nigerian states, making sure to cover the major regions in the country. They also included opportunities for Nigerians in the diaspora to audition in New York and London. All of Nigeria's 36 states and the federal capital territory of Abuja were included in the pageant. Organizers sought the endorsement of not only of the federal government, but also the three major traditional rulers in Nigeria. With a new mandate to bring Nigerian culture into the "global village" the current Miss Nigeria sought to balance traditional and modern sensibilities.

The next section draws from my fieldwork with two contemporary national pageants in Nigeria. The Queen Nigeria pageant organized state-level competitions whose winners go on to compete at the national finale. Contestants were expected to be experts on their states, privy to the specific details that made their states distinct. Queen Nigeria contestants did not go on to an international competition and the finale was held in Jos, Plateau state who served as official sponsors in 2009. It is partially owned by the Nigerian Television Authority, the government-owned television network. At the time of my fieldwork, the pageant operated only in 18 of the 36 states and the national capital. Queen Nigeria had a vision of expanding to all states in the country, even as organizers maintained that holding contests in some states in the North would be unlikely due to resistance. The Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria did not hold state level competitions, but rather organized auditions in several metropolitan cities, primarily in the South. The 2010 MBGN finale was held in Lagos.

[33] Nigeria's 36 states are divided into six geopolitical zones based on region: North-Central, North-Eastern, North-Western, South-Eastern, South-South, South-Western.

National Culture and the Invention of "Tradition"

In all contemporary Nigerian national pageants, beauty contestants are rarely referred to by their given names, but by the states they represent. At all times, contestants wear a sash draped over one shoulder, with bold block lettering identifying the states they represent. Both Queen Nigeria and MBGN included a traditional segment, where contestants are expected to wear traditional outfits to represent their specific states. In most cases contestants have to borrow or rent traditional costumes since these are not a part of their daily wear. Contestants also research the background of the states they represent (e.g. tourist attractions, mineral resources), memorizing their mottos, and investigating the cultural traditions of the various ethnic groups that reside in the state. Through these ceremonial enactments of "ethnicity," which utilizes a standardized vocabulary (Adams 2010), every state retains a discernable ethnic identity or set of ethnic identities which neatly correspond to "traditional" costumes, music, dances, and gestures. This regulation of ethnic "difference" presumes an unchanging reified version of tradition, which is neatly separated from modern life. Both national pageants rely on similar tropes that evoke traditionalism within the Nigerian context, but assign differential meanings to them.

Over the course of the state-level competitions and during the pre-show rehearsals for Queen Nigeria's national finale, contestants are routinely questioned about the best assets that their states have to offer including tourist sites, natural resources, and the names of political leaders. Queen Nigeria's judges and organizers expect easy familiarity with the detailed knowledge of her state which each contestant must effectively communicate as if it were second-nature. By consistently being asked about the detailed symbolism behind their traditional outfits, the ethno-linguistic makeup of their states, and how their platforms directly impact people in their states, Queen Nigeria contestants were envisioned as having an automatic, habitual, and almost innate connection to the states they represented. Participants understood that being rooted in a specific community granted them more genuine access to the "grassroots," and allowed them to have a more authentic voice on the national scene.

In contrast, contestants for the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria learned about their states on the fly. They are assumed not to "know"—and therefore to need to research--the basic facts about the states they represent, and they are repeatedly told that they may represent states that they are not actually from. By educating themselves about areas of the country that they were likely unfamiliar with, contestants expressed their ability to value Nigeria's diversity, which they could then present on the world stage through international beauty contests. They established themselves as national cosmopolitans by transcending provincial understandings of cultural representation.

That is, although evocations of varied state "traditions" are present in both pageants, they each represent the diverse cultures of the nation differently, in ways that fit with their differing national narratives. I call Queen Nigeria's version of national representation *tactile* because it presumes tacit cultural knowledge on the part of the queens, and a tangible connection to the states they represent. By showing how she was in touch with and rooted in the specific state she represented, each contestant highlighted familiarity with their state of origin and their grassroots acceptance. Contestants for the title of Queen Nigeria emphasized their connection to a specific state throughout the competition and supported a federation model of national unity. In contrast, the screening process for the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria filtered hopefuls without regard to where they were from. MBGN's *tactical* form of cultural representation stressed acquired knowledge, strategy, and open-mindedness about cultural diversity, which focused on global integration. Below, I describe how each pageant understood cultural and state representation in

the pageant, the level of audience participation, the meaning behind the traditional segment and its placement in the show, and how they grappled with regional differences, especially with regards to the Northern region of the country. This struggle over culture within the pageant draws in the main sources of conflict in Nigeria including ethnicity, religion, indigene/settler distinctions, regional differences, and geo-politics.

Queen Nigeria: Regional Spotlighting and National Unity

Each contestant in the Queen Nigeria pageant had to demonstrate a cultural tie to the particular state she represented. Initial competitions were organized at the state level and each winner at the state level then went on to compete at the national finale. This state-tiered organizational scheme was used in part to emphasize a "genuine" connection to the state at the national events. Organizers demonstrated how contestants were plugged into the Nigerian Television Authority [NTA], the country's government owned national broadcast network with stations in each state capital. Through their participation in the competition, contestants were tied to state branches of the television network. The pageant also involved first ladies who were invited to provide winners with scholarship funds and logistical support for their charity work. Will, Queen Nigeria's choreographer, stated, "The Queens are crowned by the first ladies of each state, so it is more or less a government thing, and Queen Nigeria is organized by NTA." By stressing the heavy participation and official endorsement from first ladies, governors, and other state dignitaries, in addition to the partnership with the government-owned television broadcast network, Queen Nigeria sought to legitimize their beauty queens as the rightful state representatives.

Participants highlighted how Queen Nigeria contestants stood out from others due to their more direct connection to the states they represented. For example, when I asked one of the organizers what made Queen Nigeria unique, Mr. Richard[34] explained:

> I believe you could check it out from the systematic approach of how the Queens emerge. I think that is our selling point. The reason is simple; participants at our national events are Queens who come from various states of the federation with the active participation of people and the government in those states. So, before the girls even emerge, we usually sensitise the communities about the extent of what we want to do. If we are looking for a Queen that will represent a state, not just the state but will have a national star. There is always argument even at state competition, do we just pick a girl because she suits her fancy here or we will pick a girl that would make us proud at national final. So, we involve the government. That is why at the national final, we invite the government representatives of those states. That is why the participants must be from that state so that the government representative could identify that a girl is truly from that state. They would want to come because they were part of the process which produced her. That is the factor we are talking about. What we are having now is that we are trying to connect people with what we are doing, [to show] that this is their thing.

[34] My use of titles for some organizers (e.g. Mr. Richard) and first names for others reflects the common references used to indicate social standing in these pageants, as well as my own positionality relative to organizers, mostly due to age. Most of the male organizers were middle-aged, and, as a result, I referred to them by the title "Mr." as a sign of deference. The female organizers were much younger and closer to my own age, with contestants usually referring to them by the title "Sister," "Auntie," or by their first names. I followed these age-based conventions in the way I interacted with organizers. My own identity as a Nigerian-American in my late 20s greatly facilitated my entrance into my field sites and allowed me to establish rapport with participants.

Mr. Richard emphasized that choosing queens at the state-level prior to a national finale, with government representatives verifying each contestant's claimed tie to a particular state, enhanced contestants' connections to the culture of the states they represent. Also by highlighting the need to "sensitize communities" and solicit "active participation" as part of the pageant's goals, Queen Nigeria established that beauty queens remained joined to everyday Nigerians on the ground.

At the competition itself, local ties were again emphasized. The general public could easily attend each state-level Queen Nigeria show by buying tickets at the door for N1500 ($10). During each show, the MC invited audience participation by affirming that "everyone is a judge," and by asking the audience "Who is your Queen?" "Has she won your hearts?" imploring the judges to "give us a young girl that is acceptable to the state" and inserting a smattering of pidgin English and the local language into his act. Audience members often responded with boisterous roars of approval, heckles or yelling "I want that one!" participating using familiar call and response rhythm. Through these actions, organizers stressed the importance of the crowd in selecting the crowned queen. Once the semi-finalists were chosen, the MC held their hand and paraded them in front of the judges, special guests, and elders who were asked to certify the results. By requesting that designated elders would have the final say in who gets chosen as the queen, participants showed their support for a widespread cultural practice in which elders are considered to be the wisest and given full respect.

In the traditional costume segment of Queen Nigeria, contestants were expected to explain the meaning and symbolism behind each component of their attire. Traditional attire was usually an outfit associated with a specific ethnic group in Nigeria. Showing their familiarity with each piece of their attire was meant to display their cultural knowledge and highlight their cultural tie to their state. During the national show, a few of the girls wore traditional clothes that were meant to symbolize the nation as a whole, for example by wearing green and white, the national colors of Nigeria. Some mixed state costuming with such national symbols. These eclectic mixes helped to buttress Queen Nigeria's unity in diversity maxim. In explaining their traditional costumes, contestants described how their clothes signified purity, fertility, royalty, ethnic pride and national unity. Many of the contestants used their attire to signal their marriageability and commitment to their country and communities. Prior to the show, organizers asked pointed questions about how they selected their costumes by barking out questions like: Who wears this? When do they wear this? Why do they wear this? By asking detailed questions that required a proper justification for contestants' sartorial choices, organizers sought to authenticate participants' cultural knowledge. Deola, a contestant, shared the importance of integrating traditional attire into pageants and made a direct comparison between Queen Nigeria and MBGN:

> You get to know who you are and what you represent and the state you represent and the home town you come from. That attire is your tradition and you have to fix yourself into it to be Queen Nigeria. You have to let them know what it really represents and you don't just have to wear the attire alone but you have to know the origin of the attire that you are wearing. Like in MBGN, I would say you don't really have to be from that state before you know it but you have to learn it, even if you learn it, you have to represent the place and you must know it. So you possibly don't have to be from there, fine you don't have to be from a place before you have to represent the place. Like now I am from Ekiti and if I am to represent Calabar, I have to go to Calabar and learn about their culture but as it is in Queen Nigeria pageant, you don't have to start going anywhere, you represent where you come from.

Queen Nigeria contestants emphasized that they had an easy time representing their states because whatever research their preparation did require could be easily done by asking family members or tapping into community resources. Deola's comment above suggests that, in contrast, an MBGN contestant might have to travel to another state to learn enough about the culture to properly represent it.

When I asked Lovett, an organizer, to explain how Queen Nigeria was different from other beauty pageants in Nigeria, she emphasized contestants' "authentic" representation, anchored in their cultural knowledge of a particular state:

> It's different in the sense that actual state queens are created and when we say actual state queens, [I mean] you have the right to contest if you have full knowledge of the state. We don't just pick people to represent a state because you are just looking for queens, we have to make sure you understand their values 'cause it's all about Nigeria. It's a kind of cultural integration program like the NYSC [National Youth Service Corps] thing, bringing people from this state sending them to that state. It might not be an indigene of that state contesting but the people that have lived and are ready to make a change in that state. You have to know what you are doing. Even if you are sleeping we can wake you up to tell us something [about your state]. You should be able to do it. You have to know the nitty-gritty of such a state.

Lovett's insistence that a contestant should be familiar with the "nitty-gritty" of the state she represents, and should be ready to communicate this knowledge at a moment's notice, even after being awoken from a state of slumber, highlights the cultural fluency and agility that organizers expected from contestants. Likening Queen Nigeria to a cultural integration program like the National Youth Service Corps [NYSC], a national program that stations college-educated youth in service programs all over the nation, was meant to highlight the national unity that Queen Nigeria aimed to achieve. This vision of national unity sought to bring together the country's diverse parts in order to strengthen the country as a whole. Moreover, she emphasized that this cultural fluency was not necessarily tied to ethnic heritage (e.g. as an indigene), but could be attained through residence and the desire to make a contribution to local communities at the state-level.

Organizers of the Queen Nigeria contest often struggled with the question of how a cultural import that was Western in origin could be translated into the Nigerian context, especially since their pageant emphasized locally rooted traditions. They dealt with this concern by inserting Nigerian cultural references throughout the casual wear, traditional wear and evening gown segments. During the finale, the MC continually stressed the need to "start appreciating our own." During the dance number segment of the Queen Nigeria pageant, organizers and choreographers purposely selected a Plateau regional song for the traditional number to pay homage to the fact that the state government was an official sponsor. The contestants wore green and pale yellow tie-dyed [*adire*] material sewn into scooped-neck tank shirts and capri-length pants. This type of regional spotlighting was comfortable for Queen Nigeria because it served to promote the federation model of the nation, in which national union and self-governing states are considered to be mutually reinforcing rather than incompatible.

Because they worked with a federation model of the nation, Queen Nigeria officials felt obligated to incorporate the North, even as they understood that it would be problematic to do so. Lovett explained that Northerners were especially resistant to pageants because of religious concerns over bodily display:

> They are religiously conscious people. Their religion is their culture. They don't believe in pageants. Like I said, they feel they are not supposed to expose any part of their body…they weren't convinced that it was going to be different, when they hear the name pageant they think it's something exposing. I know there are so many ills associated with pageantry…and for the northerner it's a sensitive aspect. They can disown their daughters for contesting. Its only northerners that have lived outside the northern states that will be willing to come out and in their case then you could see someone that have resided all her life in Abuja coming out to represent her own original state like Bauchi because she still knows her state.

Lovett stressed that Queen Nigeria was a different kind of pageant that sought to accommodate those who normally would not enter a contest because of cultural concerns. However, in an attempt to preserve the unity of the nation, organizers stressed how contestants who might not currently reside in more culturally "sensitive" areas could still show cultural ties through their heritage and as such serve as appropriate representatives for certain states. Despite the difficulty, Queen Nigeria felt it had a duty to represent all states, even those in the North.

MBGN: National Balancing and Global Integration

Contestants for the Miss Beautiful Girl in Nigeria (MBGN) pageant were chosen through an audition process at various cities (mostly in the South) in which semi-finalists were selected and asked to come to Lagos where the final crop was chosen. MBGN organizers maintained that because they were primarily concerned with securing those with the best qualifications, they were satisfied with their current system of assigning contestants to states regardless of where they were actually from.[35] I witnessed first-hand the process by which, for the most part, contestants were randomly assigned to specific states. At the end of the Lagos audition, after all the finalists were selected, Octavia, the pageant coordinator, gathered the finalists around her and asked some of them where they were from. She then began the process of assigning them to states. One of the contestants requested to represent Rivers State where she was from, but Octavia dismissively replied that it did not matter. When the contestant insisted that she did not know anything about the state to which she was assigned, Octavia instructed, "Just go online and do some research on the basics. It doesn't really matter, just do your best." Some contestants were not content with the states to which they were assigned and frowned in response to their assignment; this most often happened when the state, e.g. Taraba, was in the North. When Lagos was assigned to one contestant, others told her that she would have to work hard, because people expect a lot from Lagos. Octavia soothed some of the sulking contestants, urging them to smile, and insisted that the states they represented had no bearing on their ultimate chances of winning the pageant.

When I asked Kachi, a contestant, her own thoughts about this process, she explained nonchalantly, while shrugging her shoulders, that it was just a form of "balloting" (drawing straws), and that no one received any special treatment. Remarking that she was in her own words "lucky" to be assigned Abuja, I asked why she was pleased with the state she was assigned:

> I just thought it was a good, Abuja, the federal capital city. You know I felt that some states could bring you to the limelight without you struggling to do that, places like Port Harcourt, Lagos, Abuja, Rivers and Calabar. If you find yourself representing

[35] In some instances contestants that win an independent state-level contest prior to MBGN get priority in representing that state as MBGN organizer see it as a way of encouraging other organizers to prime contestants that will ultimately help their own franchise.

> those states, people will want to see who is representing Port Harcourt and then if you are good enough, fine [pretty], and if you represent that place well enough, it will be easier for you to shine. I just felt good when I was chosen for Abuja and for me it was a good sign.

Kachi's rationale was that being selected to represent states where Nigeria's major cities are located would make the judges pay closer attention since people are always curious about what is going on there and this spotlight would be automatically transferred to the contestant. Certain states would give a contestant an edge since they would not have to work as hard to draw attention. In short, contestants viewed the state assignment process through a strategic, rather than a cultural lens, as they did for Queen Nigeria. Kachi admitted that she would have preferred to represent her own native state, Imo, because she "pretty much knows all about it," she also mentioned that she appreciated MBGN's system. She continued:

> Having us tagged by the states of this country, Miss Abuja, Miss Delta and so on is important because it's a national pageant. I'm not from Abuja but I had to wear the costume, I had to research on that thing. You can imagine an Ibo girl researching Nassarawa, you know it teaches us something and gets you to appreciate it in a very interesting way. You don't just want to come out looking like a normal Muslim lady; you will want to add flavour to it to make it beautiful. You know it makes you appreciate other people's culture, it makes you appreciate another state and with that I think it helps in making you see the beauty of the Nigerian culture.

Other contestants shared similar sentiments:

> I think it is more open ended than it is imposing. It doesn't make you sit in the bus of your home town and it makes you get exposed to other traditions and you would be like 'I have to fix in for this tradition the best way I can because this is what I am representing.' But if you are representing Miss Sokoto you have to know their tradition, what they are eating in Sokoto and everything about Sokoto. It adds to your Library of the things you know. That helps a lot. (Oluchi, 23 years)

Similarly:

> I looked at it from the point of view that if you were to be a good Nigerian, you should be able represent any state and I don't think that should be a big deal…Sometimes five people may be from one state and they can go to any state to pick a Miss whatever, so that is why it happens that way, so if you are lucky you get your state. (Blessing, 25 years)

These contestants observed that MBGN's selection process, which did not emphasize local recruitment, forced them to move beyond their insularity and loosen their provincial attachments. They described themselves as free to learn about unfamiliar cultures. This allowed them to buttress their claims to be cosmopolitan not just outside of the country (since they could convincingly speak about the country's wide ranging diversity when they travelled), but within the country as well. They insisted that the randomized method was logical because you often had multiple contestants from the same state and all states had to be represented in a national pageant since it would be considered biased otherwise. Contestants also saw the selection of traditional attire as a creative process in which they tried not just to authentically represent their states, but also to stand out (in fact MBGN awarded a best traditional costume).

Contestants sometimes hurriedly learned basic facts about their states during rehearsals with some getting quick language lessons to incorporate into their greetings, or practicing movements that would best showcase their states. As they were preparing for the opening dance

sequence, a couple of contestants asked to use my Internet-enabled Blackberry phone to help them look up the slogans of their states and the ethnic groups that lived in that state. The organizers of the Queen Nigeria pageant probably would have looked down on this open self-education process taking place just days before the show. On the first day of MBGN rehearsals one of the contestants seemed to forget the state that she was representing. When Octavia called out, "Abia," there was no response. "Abia!" she exclaimed again, raising her voice while pointing to a contestant who finally answered, looking up with surprise. "Get used to being called by your state. Everyone look down at your sash. This is your new name. We do not know your names, we only know you by the state you're representing." I never witnessed this type of prodding at the Queen Nigerian finale, whose contestants, having gone through a state-level pageant, had already become accustomed to being referred to by their states.

While MBGN contestants were comfortable with the random assignment of contestants to states, the practice was a source of continuing controversy with the public. Its break with the tradition of determining ethnic group affiliation through patrilocal lineage challenges widespread assumptions about cultural fluency mapping onto ethnic identification and state/regional divisions. One audience member reported that during the MBGN show some audience members screamed "How can an Igbo girl represent Kogi state?!? It's not right!" This skepticism was not based primarily on stereotyped distinctions based on physical appearance, but rather about ideas about cultural familiarity and heritage. Right before the start of the final debriefing meeting to review, the national director queried, "So how many Igbos did we have this year?" One of the other organizers responded, "I think at least three-quarters of them were Igbo" "That's the problem, it's mostly Igbos. Northerners just don't come out [to enter the contest]…even though they are the most beautiful."

I should be clear here that while MBGN's random assignment of contestants is considered problematic within Nigeria due to the traditional Nigerian notion that cultural ties to a state are typically traced through paternal ethnic heritage (i.e. by being an indigene), such that whatever the place of birth or residence, one can only "authentically" claim a state through the father's original ethnic lineage, Queen Nigeria also disrupted this understanding of this standard definition of state membership by including birth, residence and grassroots recognition as being equally acceptable forms of proving state allegiance and cultural representation. In describing the "federal character" model of Nigeria's political system, Mamdani (2001) shows that since the Constitution promotes a system in which legal entitlements such as access to public universities, civil services, and the army is based on a quota system set for each state in the country, cultural identities become translated into political identities. That is, because states and local governments (counties) generally stipulate that only indigenes can qualify for state quotas, specific ethnic groups are matched onto certain states. However, proposed constitutional reforms would require that rights such as the ability to vote or run for office would not be tied to indigeneity. A 2009 NOI-Gallup Poll reported that 67 percent of Nigerians supported the idea that settlers and indigenous should have the same political benefits. These changes suggest that Queen Nigeria's redefinition of regional and state membership as transcending ethnic ties takes place in the context of a larger conversation about the transformation of political citizenship in Nigeria. This tension between federalism and indigeneity are key categories to understanding the tensions between ethnicity, nation and identity since they animate conflict within the country (Bach 1997; Human Rights Watch 2006).

MBGN Organizers were well aware of the criticism that contestants were not ethnically diverse enough to allow all states to be represented by someone from an "authentically"

appropriate ethnic group. But they resigned themselves by lamenting that would-be contestants from the North rarely bothered to audition so that it was difficult to find representatives from Northern states to participate in the pageant. While I was working in Silverbird's main offices, one of the clients who rented office space in their building remarked, "They have to be very careful! Silverbird is looking for trouble if they think they can continue this process of just assigning girls to any state. One of those northern states just might sue them." When I asked him what he thought might be a suitable solution to their predicament, he replied that they needed to just go to that area and recruit people.

One incident showcases some of the trepidation MBGN faced when dealing with representing some states in the North. Mr. Tim, the national director for MBGN, had asked me to take the bag of sashes from the messenger who had delivered the package from the seamstress. I took the bag upstairs to the hotel meeting room that had been converted into rehearsal space. The chaperones, Ada and Jenifer, and I went through the sashes one by one so that we could verify that they were complete, check the spelling of each state's name and later distribute them to the contestants. I handed sashes one by one to Ada, who inspected it and then handed it over to Jenifer, who draped them over her shoulder. By the end of our inspection session there were four sashes tossed on the floor in a pile: Sokoto, Kebbi, Kano, and Kaduna. As she tossed one of the sashes to the side, Ada muttered, "No we don't use these ones." The messenger was instructed to take one misspelled sash so that it could be corrected and return with the missing states that were to replace the four states tossed on the floor. Jenifer looked towards the pile of discarded sashes on the floor and asked Ada, "What of these ones?" Ada replied, "Those are sharia states" "Oh and you don't use them?" I asked. "We never have." She answered, shaking her head. The seamstress had gotten the order mixed up and incorrectly provided sashes for four states (the ones discarded on the floor) that were not represented in MBGN.

Ada's insistence that MBGN had never represented sharia states in the national show was not accurate. During my fieldwork I saw a photograph with a contestant wearing a Sokoto sash. When I asked an organizer if they had ever had sharia states represented in the pageant, he replied that they might have had one slip through in the past, but they purposefully omitted the more "extreme" sharia states after the Miss World protests in 2002. It is important to look at this omission of particular states within the politics of sharia law which, while enacted in 2000, became an international concern in 2002 during Nigeria's hosting of Miss World.

When I asked the national director the rationale for not including all states, he sighed heavily and replied, "I would love to. I am weary of religious issues. Some states don't favor pageants. Because of that I shy away from states that are anti-pageants, because they have sharia law. Imagine if a girl won the pageant and she was from one of those sharia states. How would you handle the homecoming for example?" He later admitted that he was thinking about doing away with the policy, and having all 36 states plus the federal capital territory represented in the pageant. He explained his likely change of heart noting, "I think it's unfair. Not everyone in that state might feel that same way. It's a national show. It's not just the states that I like [laughs]. Although we might have dabbled into them [sharia states] in the past without knowing it, we try to avoid it. But, it's beyond sharia. Now, it's about the nation. Next year I will probably do all 36." The following year the pageant did increase the number of contestants from 30 to 34, leaving out three northern states.

With expensive tickets that had be purchased before the main event to guarantee a seat (regular: N5000 ($33), VIP: N30000 ($200), VVIP: N50000 ($300)), organizers seemed more interested in creating a "classy and elegant" affair than the intimate involvement stressed by

Queen Nigeria. MBGN felt that its goal was to put on a dynamic show for the live audience and those watching on their television sets at home. Fans could participate in the show by voting via text for their favorite contestants, who were then guaranteed a spot in the final 16 semi-finalists. Organizers, however, said that they viewed this mostly as a publicity stunt to get the audience invested in the show. The real judging was placed in the hands of a carefully selected group of professional spectators (judges) whose credentials in the business, entertainment and political worlds could bolster the goals of the pageant. The judges usually included expatriates. While Queen Nigeria stressed its connection to the government, MBGN was quick to point out its status as a private enterprise that used the state as appropriate to further its corporate aims.

While Queen Nigeria selected a regional Plateau song for their traditional number which included all contestants to pay homage to its host state, MBGN worked hard to ensure that the show was regionally diverse during the dance number. Ngozi, the assistant choreographer, instructed the contestants to separate into groups, clustering states into specific regions. She taught some traditional dance movements to each group separately, asked them to put their own spin to it, and gave them some corrections to clean it up. Each girl introduced herself by state, naming the slogan of the state, usually followed with a greeting in one of the state's native tongues. The regions were: South-South, East, West, and the North. The North was the largest group with 11 contestants. This group of 11 contestants representing the North appeared to be an undifferentiated mass, signaling the belief in a monolithic unified culture, in contrast to the South whose representatives were separated into culturally distinct sub-regions. This representation of the North as one unified mass highlights some level of symbolic discomfort with the region, which is not treated with the same level of nuance as the South. The dance practice continued and Ngozi interrupted to give them a word of advice. "Look this is carnival. This is traditional. This is Africa! Bring that joy from the carnival into your Introduction. Don't try to be cool [posing with her hands on hip, tossing her hair and cocking her head to the side], you can do that in the evening section." Ngozi's comments stressed that the traditional segment was a time in which contestants should be loud and boisterous, freeing themselves from the rigid demands of maintaining a posed and poised gait and posture. This created a clear demarcation between the traditional segment and other portions of the contest, with later portion focused on more stylized displays of modern hyper-femininity.

Later on in the MBGN pageant rehearsals with the traditional dance troupe and live drummers, someone pointed out that they were only incorporating one ethnic group (Yoruba) into their dances and that the regional dances did not match up to the regional parts of the contestants' introductions. When I asked Emeka why they were concerned about it, she replied, "It's a national pageant, you need to be PC," alluding to the idea that MBGN had to manage regional representativeness in a balanced manner. Ngozi the choreographer noted, "[Originally] they end up with a Yoruba number, so that can't work, so you are indirectly saying Yorubas rule Nigeria. You [need to] represent everybody and you end up on a general note and I tried to make them understand that and they just couldn't see it." Mike, the American-based producer, and Oris the head choreographer from the dance troupe were debating the various changes that needed to be implemented. Mike insisted that the choreography be changed in order to be more representative, with a dance that matched the region introduced at that particular time, and a unifying dance at the end of the number that would combine movements from all regions of Nigeria. The choreographer spluttered, "There are 200 cultures in this country, you can't represent them all! You can't do a unifying dance with Edo which is a more graceful dance mixed with a Fisherman's dance. I don't know how people will feel from those regions, because

it's not elaborate enough." Mike responded, "So, there is no kind of unifying dance? Well just end with whatever region we're in." The choreographer still seemed unsatisfied and appeared to rack his brain for possible solutions. They stood in front of some traditional outfits neatly laid out in groups. Mike started, "Look. I just care about the production value, so pick which costumes will add to the production and look best on stage and on TV." He then pointed to a couple of costumes and walked off. Ngozi said that her solution would have been to choreograph a contemporary Nigerian dance piece at the end, which would enable audience members to have a backwards (signaling tradition) and forwards (signaling the future) outlook on Nigerian cultural performance. Paying homage to Lagos as the host site, which is considered a cosmopolitan city that brings together different ethnic groups from all over the country (although still traditionally associated with the Yorubas), was not considered to be appropriate, in contrast to Queen Nigeria's regional spotlighting of Plateau state. This concern over performing a nationally representative number that did not seem to favor one group over the other was not present in Queen Nigeria.

MBGN has to also manage national cultural representations on a global stage. The fashion designer who designed some of the national costumes for MBGN during international pageants told me that he focused on including "ethnic touches" by incorporating indigenous fabrics and dramatic accessories such as raffia, wooden buttons, and bright colors. Ultimately, he insisted that he wanted to maintain an African contemporary look that would not stand out too much on the world stage during international competitions. When I asked why it was important to pursue a "contemporary look," he responded:

> It is important so that they will not look out of place, because they are going to the world stage where everybody will be present. So they need to look very trendy. They really need a touch of what fits them, so that they will still stand beautiful to represent the beauty of the ethnic colour you represent, which is significant in such an event where everybody comes in with the best of the best of her country.

The fashion designer stressed that the main objective for MBGN contestants on the world stage was to have enough "ethnic color" to represent the nation, but not to stand out as so "ethnic" and uncosmopolitan that they didn't belong on the global stage. Unlike the Queen Nigeria pageant, whose winners did not go on to international competition, MBGN projected a cultural image at both the national and international levels.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined how varied cultural representations of states, regions, and the nation play out through struggles over cultural authenticity about direct vs. indirect state representation, the extent and nature of audience participation, the content and placement behind the traditional segments, and the need to highlight or obscure regional differences. Part I utilizes a historical narrative, tracing the history of the beauty pageant industry in Nigeria to display the internal and external dynamics that entered into Nigeria's shift from a post-independence to an emerging nation. Part II considers how two contemporary national pageants go about producing and displaying "tradition." Queen Nigeria stressed how it retains Nigeria's heritage by staging state-level competitions which allow contestants to easily connect with the culture of that area. Contestants are expected to be able to readily tap into their own authentic cultural knowledge of specific ethnic groups and regions. In contrast, MBGN contestants, who oftentimes did not represent states that they were from, emphasized that learning about other cultures throughout the country provided credence to their cosmopolitan claims and allowed them to represent the full range of ethnic and cultural identities of the nation, which proved helpful at international

phases of the contest. By comparing how cultural difference is managed and debated I examined the presentation of national identity within an increasingly globalized world forum.

Chapter 4:

Miss Cultural and Miss Cosmo: Idealized Femininity, Women's Bodies, and Empowerment

[Queen Nigeria] is someone Nigerians can easily relate to and identify with in terms of how she is…. She has the core values of our people, our culture and our orientation. [Queen Nigeria] is who we are.

-Organizer of Queen Nigeria

[The Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria] is a Cosmo girl…someone who is trendy, passes time in the U.S. and the UK…. Very fashion-forward.

-Fashion Designer for the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria

Introduction

The 2009 edition of the front cover of Queen Nigeria's program was splashed with shades of green, Nigeria's national colors, with a silhouette of a beauty queen with a green head wrap and crown on her head. In contrast, the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria's brochure featured the headshot of the reigning beauty queen in a sequined gown with a pair of gossamer angel wings superimposed behind her, a riff on the Victoria Secret's Angels campaign. These two contrasting images, along with the two quotes above, highlight the different visions of idealized femininity and the distinct nationalist claims of these national beauty contests.

Women's bodies are often symbolic sites through which debates about the trajectory of a nation take form, shaped in part through shifts in the global economy, cultural globalization and colonial trajectories (Dewey 2008; Hoang 2011; Mani 1998). The woman-as-nation thesis examines how women serve as cultural bearers of tradition through tropes of domesticity, motherhood, and modesty (Chatterjee 1990; Gaitskell and Unterhalter 1989; Hansen 1992; McClintock 1995) and as symbols of modernization through discourses of work, politics, and sexuality (Foucault 1988; Gal and Kligman 2000; Shilling 2003). However, the gender and nation literature does not fully explain why gendered nation-building projects may differ within the context of the same country. I show that gendered national representations—the shared and contested scripts used to characterize a nation—serve multiple purposes and simultaneously target internal and external audiences (Spillman 1997). I ask how and why gendered nationalist messages are sometimes framed differently. This chapter suggests that beauty pageants perform an important dual role in emerging nations like Nigeria by creating both a unifying vision of femininity within a country and a more cosmopolitan vision of femininity that places Nigeria squarely in the international arena.

Focusing on relationships between gendered ideologies and the reproduction of the cultural and political boundaries of nations, the gender-and-nation literature analyzes the different kinds of masculinity and femininity used to represent nations (Alarcon, Kaplan, and Moallem 1999; Enloe 1990; Kondo 1990; McClintock 1995; Nagel 1998; Sinha 1995). Transnational feminist scholars have theorized this mutual constitution of gender and nation by arguing that women, in particular, serve as both cultural bearers of tradition and symbols of progress and modernity (Yuval-Davis 1997). Tradition has often been framed as a means of ensuring protection from or struggle against foreign influences (Chatterjee 1990; Kandiyoti 1996; Moallem 2005). Modernity, on the other hand, is primarily understood as a sign of the failure or success of nation-building in the global arena (Gal and Kligman 2000).

This literature has problematized, as well as utilized, this binary between tradition and modernity, focusing on how these categories are produced in tension with each other to construct distinctions between nations, ethnic difference within nations, and boundaries of "the West" in opposition to the "Third World" (Alarcon, Kaplan, and Moallem 1999; Choo 2006; Grewal 1996; Grewal and Kaplan 1994; Moallem 2005; Mohanty 2003; Radhakrishnan 2005).

Taken as a whole, the woman-as-nation literature not only shows how women are used to reproduce of national boundaries, but also explores the dynamics of gender, class, sexuality and racial hierarchies in constructions of ideas of the nation. Scholars also emphasize the importance of examining the reconfiguration of gender relations in moments of rapid change such as in postcolonial and post-socialist contexts (Gal and Kligman 2000; Jayawardena 1986; McClintock 1995; Stoler 2002; Yuval-Davis 1997). I extend this scholarship by paying close attention to the cultural economy (Mears 2010) of the formation of gendered nationalisms, arguing that contemporary nations must appear to embody both traditional and modern models of femininity in order to shore up national boundaries, especially in emerging nations.

Tests and Models of Idealized Femininity

This chapter considers the formation of gendered national representations primarily through the perspective of Nigerian beauty pageant organizers who, as cultural producers, employed a *relational* discourse of idealized femininity (e.g. claiming to represent "true Nigerian womanhood") to bolster their broader nationalist claims. The organizers of each of the two pageants I studied promoted a gendered nationalist vision in direct competition with the rival national pageant. I use the term "idealized femininity" to highlight the public cultural construction of femininity in these beauty pageants; these constructions emphasize distinct sets of skills, divergent ways of managing appearance and dress, and varied strategies for displaying social class. The organizers molded competing visions of their contestants. Queen Nigeria upheld a *cultural-nationalist* ideal, valuing varied Nigerian customs and unifying Nigeria's diverse population. In contrast, the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria pageant was oriented to a *cosmopolitan-nationalist* paradigm, highlighting Nigeria's compatibility with a global, modern community of nations. In the last chapter, I laid out this contrast with respect to the ways ethnicity was enacted differently in these two national pageants through *tactile* and *tactical* models of representation. In this chapter I show how the same set of issues play themselves out with respect to ideals of femininity and embodiment. As I will show, each of these gendered national identities was produced for a specific audience and was constrained by the system within which it was created.

Although I focus on the discursive differences between cultural and cosmopolitan femininities and their accompanying national ideologies, it is important to point out that there was some crossover among the contestants and would-be contestants for the two pageants. For example, during the cycle I observed, more than a third of the contestants for Queen Nigeria auditioned during the same cycle for MBGN or had auditioned in a past cycle. Of the remaining Queen Nigeria contestants, most were either planning to or open to the possibility of auditioning for a future cycle of MBGN. This overlap in contestants highlights that these competing sets of gendered national projects should not be understood as rigid categories that never intersect, but rather are informed by each other. Elements of cosmopolitanism figure into a cultural-nationalist logic and vice versa. My emphasis remains on detailing the primary orienting principle of each pageant in order to unpack these contrasting gendered national representations.

Empowerment and the Beauty Diplomacy Narrative

While contestants were aware on some level of the symbolic differences between the two pageants, and readily adapted to the demands and expectations of each contest, it was organizers (mostly male) who were the most invested in framing contestants' femininity and their embodied representations of the nation in divergent ways. Contestants approached both pageants from a much more flexible standpoint, stressing a "beauty diplomacy" narrative, which values charity, development, and goodwill in order to connect to everyday Nigerians. They sought to promote

their own voices and that of the general public in the national arena. In applying this narrative, contestants insisted that all pageants serve as a means of promoting national culture and increasing the nation's standing. For example, while I chatted with a group of three contestants during a brief break at a pre-show training session, they all focused on how becoming a beauty queen transformed them into public figures, and they quickly rattled off (attempting to one up each other) the various charity ventures they hoped to pursue during their tenure. All of them had auditioned for, and participated in, a range of pageants, including MBGN and Queen Nigeria. When I asked Doyin, one of the contestants, to describe her motivations for participating in pageants, she noted how winning a prominent pageant would provide her with a platform in which "everybody will want to listen." During the remainder of our conversation, the contestants also pointed out how beauty pageants had allowed for Nigeria to gain attention abroad, while also "awakening" an appreciation for Nigerian culture among youth. For instance, in highlighting the place of beauty pageants in Nigeria Faith explained, "It has to do with empowerment, empowering the youth, creating awareness, drawing attention to Nigeria as a whole from the state level to the national level to the international through pageantry."

Using pageants to voice their views in the national arena was the major difference contestants saw between the work they did as beauty queens and the work done by those in similar industries such as fashion modeling. Contestants chided models (even while some of them pursued modeling careers themselves) as merely "hangers," "fine book covers without content," and "faceless." As Penelope noted in comparing the two:

> Basically, they [models] are just all hangers and they walk, they have the blank expression on their face and they just show basically the clothes. They are not doing anything, they just walk, come out, walk, come out, that is just what they do. But for pageantry, pageantry is you, your beauty, intelligence, creativity, boldness, communication, it is basically you, showcasing you and what you have got.

The focus placed on "showcasing yourself" was a common way of describing the aim behind their participation in pageants. Contestants sought to embody positive attributes such as charisma, intelligence, and being articulate. Contestants focused particularly on the need for beauty queens to have excellent speaking ability, a skill they felt models did not have to possess. Articulateness, in turn, was linked to the ability to portray the nation. As Lade, another beauty pageant contestant, pointed out when detailing the difference between modeling and pageantry:

> They are not talking about Nigeria when they interview some models. They [models] can't even speak good English! In modeling you don't have to talk, but in pageantry you can't escape that, you have to talk, the camera will always get you.

Contestants, and especially crowned beauty queens, stressed that their voices allowed them to be taken seriously in a male-dominated society, serving as a source of empowerment and making them agents for social change. Kachi, a bubbly 23 year-old who won a year-long endorsement deal with one of the corporate sponsors of MBGN, discussed her own reasons for auditioning:

> I wanted to have a platform or a voice to speak in this country. It is not like I won't get there eventually but it is something I know will help me, it will be a kind of spring [board] to what I want to be in life, it will give me a voice in this country, it will help me achieve my dreams in an easier way. I really want to affect the lives of people in this country. Competing for me was not just about feeling beautiful that I'm qualified; it was what was in my heart and what I wanted to achieve with it.

In a highly sexualized industry where their physical bodies remained on constant display, contestants were quick to parrot the clichéd phrase that pageants measured inner rather than outer

beauty. Moreover, they also insisted that they could use the attention garnered through pageants as a tool to amplify their voices, make a difference in the country, and reach for their goals.

Contestants also stressed their own symbolic role in which showcasing their own positive attributes served a larger function of highlighting the good elements of Nigerian society. Later in our conversation, Faith likened beauty pageants to football and Nollywood (Nigeria's film industry), all of which she viewed as cultural products that could be exported to other countries to cement relationships:

> Pageantry is another means of promoting the good side and nature of Nigeria. In other words, it means getting the attention of other countries down here to Nigeria, showing them how peaceful, hospitable we are here in Nigeria. You know, create a relationship with other countries. Pageantry is one of the ways that can be achieved.

Faith understood her position and that of other contestants to be that of cultural ambassadors who could use their beauty, charm and hospitality to gain attention for Nigeria and maintain ties to other countries around the world. They also perceived pageants as a vehicle to counteract negative perceptions of Nigeria. Camryn, MBGN's reigning queen, noted how pageants could address foreigners' views of women's issues in Nigeria:

> Number one, we are telling people that here in Africa, women are also given a sense of responsibility, and pageantry has been able to say that. There is a whole lot of misconception about women in Africa, in Nigeria; they are treated badly, in terms of widowhood, sex education and all of that. So pageantry has been able to break that barrier…. Pageantry has really done well; it has been able to not just help Nigeria but her citizens.

Beyond their work as cultural diplomats who sought to rectify the negative image of Nigeria abroad and build connections to other nations, contestants also believed that beauty queens needed to reach out to the community (especially youths) and use their titles to gain access to political leaders in order to serve as liaisons between the general public and the state.

Contestants were clear to point out that while this work was an expectation of all beauty queens, that there was a distinction between those who use their title and office effectively and those who are merely after fame and fortune. Towards the tail-end of our conversation about the role of beauty queens in Nigerian society, Doyin explained:

> We've had many beauty queens that we never knew existed. They didn't make an impact, they just carried the crown and they didn't use the crown efficiently. So when you have the crown, it's like an open door for you, so it is left to you to keep the door open. It is left to you to carry on the legacy and show them that I'm actually capable, I'm beautiful, I've got the crown, I've got brains. With the crown, you could enter the National Assembly, you could go to visit the governor, he'll give you a listening ear, he will say oh yes, she is a beauty queen and she has something she is doing.

Similarly Penelope noted that while pageants provide you with a platform, it is up to the individual beauty queen to use her voice effectively to "speak for the people," push the country forward, and provide a collective voice for the nation

> I always say that pageants give you a voice and then you speak…If you decide to be a picture queen, you remain that, you'll just be taking pictures at events and that's it. But if you know that you have a voice to speak, this is what makes you a great woman in this time. Because for me it is not just about the pageant…it is about how she's helping the country, how can she take the message [forward], how is she using that crown on top her head? It gives you a voice to speak for the people.

Through these statements both Doyin and Penelope emphasized the additional work needed to become a successful beauty queen. They did not view this work as automatic, but rather as a public role that required purpose, thoughtfulness, and dedication. Through their humanitarian activities, motivational speeches, and warmth towards the general public, contestants sought to achieve this aim.

Beauty queens saw themselves as national figures and role models who were under constant scrutiny in the press and within the court of public opinion to maintain a "scandal-free" reign. Beauty queens worked on "grooming" themselves through a focus on their voices, smiles and carriage to attain a sophisticated yet approachable air. Contestants saw even the way they walked as reflecting their public role: while models walked in a manner that showed them as merely "fashion billboards," contestants learned to adopt a more pedestrian, but refined gait. Using fashion models as a point of comparison, Chinwe described how beauty queens had to interact with the public.

> As a model you can decide to be saucy or snooty. You can decide to walk anyhow you want, just do anything because no one cares about what you are doing. But once you are a beauty queen, you are a public figure, people want to know everything you do. You have to comport yourself, it makes you a better person but when you are a model you can do anything you feel in public. As a queen, you can't talk anyhow, eat anyhow, act anyhow you want in public. The paparazzi is there. Because she is well known, everybody is watching her, anything she does, any little mistake she does, you see it in the paper.

Contestants understood that they were under constant public scrutiny and were expected to fulfill specific standards. Before announcing the 30 finalists for MBGN, Mr. Tim noted:

> You will all become nationally famous now. You will become the talk of your neighborhoods, churches and mosques. Nothing you do will escape the camera. Big brother, or rather big sister, [referring to the female chaperones that constantly monitor contestants] is always watching you. There are rules and regulations here. No boyfriends, no "uncles" [a slang term to refer to male patrons who informally sponsored contestants]. There will be no visitors and no outings except for supervised visits made by appointment. The only men you are allowed to associate with are those that work for the Silverbird crew.

Through this pronouncement, the national director acknowledged the status of contestants as national public figures but also highlighted that in order to maintain their reputations, they would be kept at a distance from the public. In addition to acting polite, pleasant, and elegant, beauty queens were expected to maintain a high intellectual standard, which was directly tested in the interview segment (called the IQ or Q&A period in the Nigerian pageant world). This task was not only measured by the ability to answer the designated question correctly, but also by the ability to "speak well," which meant both having a clear accent and correct English grammar. When I asked one of the organizers to define "speaking well" and explain why it was so regularly emphasized, he responded:

> Specifically, their English must be good. You know the funny thing, when girls go for the Miss Universe and Miss World, the ones who can't speak in English speak their local languages and you have the translator and that shows that it doesn't matter there. But in Nigeria you must be able to speak English well. You can't come on stage and start to speak in Hausa, Ibo or Yoruba, and translators will now have to translate again. It doesn't work here, It's strange isn't it?

Contestants strived to develop a British or American lilt to their voices, which they viewed not as a sign of Western imitation, but rather as a status symbol since it highlighted their education or experiences travelling abroad. During my time observing Noyo's work as a pageant coach, he included accent lessons as part of the package, noting that he had been trained at the Nigerian British Council during his days working as a broadcaster. The following day, some of Noyo's trainees and I were waiting for him to arrive. A flustered contestant came late, rushing to meet us at the bench before Noyo arrived. Quickly trying to catch her breath, she exhaled to compose herself, crossed her legs and, practicing the subtle speech instructions we had learned the previous day, remarked, "It's time to act poshy now" in an affected accent. This "act" highlights some of the body work (Gimlin 2007) in which contestants engaged in as they used their physical appearance, walks, smiles and speech to connect to ordinary Nigerians while highlighting that they were of the right caliber to be beauty queens. Regardless of the myriad motivations that drove contestants to pursue beauty pageants as an avenue for national recognition, organizers advanced their own gendered visions of the nation.

Serving Up a "Touch" Of Africa

A key component of the Queen Nigeria pageant, showing its commitment to producing a "true" Nigerian queen, was a cooking competition. Each contestant was allotted a N1000 ($7) budget to spend on ingredients for a regional dish that represented her state. The judging criteria included speed, cleanliness, taste, and service (i.e. presentation of the dish and interaction with the judges). On the day of the cooking contest, the contestants, organizers, and I gathered outside of the hotel, preparing to head over to the market to buy the necessary ingredients for the upcoming cooking contest to be held later that afternoon. As one of the organizers, Mr. Richard, handed a N1000 note to each contestant, he launched into a lecture. "We are going to be watching you closely," he began. "We are going to be paying attention to how you interact with the sellers. How you bargain. How you choose your ingredients. And, when you're cooking, we will be looking at how clean you keep your station. These are things you all should know. I shouldn't even be telling you this." Mr. Richard's insistence that he should not openly inform the contestants about the judges' expectations signaled that they should already be aware that their assessment extended beyond the flavor and presentation of their meals.

We drove to the small open-air market and tumbled one by one out of the large van. The contestants wandered through the market inspecting goods and haggled over prices at the different wooden stalls filled with fresh meat, peppers, tomatoes, and greens stacked onto small tin plates. Their brightly colored sashes imprinted with the names of their respective states, and the two-man camera crew following close behind them to capture their movements, readily identified the contestants to curious onlookers whose reactions ranged from intense stares to side glances as they continued their own shopping. Some sellers yelled to attract the contestants' attention to their stalls, while others simply continued with the work of attending to their present customers.

When I asked one of the organizers, Lovett, the rationale behind including a cooking competition in the beauty pageant, she answered:

> Because we are looking for an African woman. We don't just want your shape or your face or just your intelligence, we want to see you do African things; you have to cook African dishes…African women put their skills to work... We want you to know your culture. We'll appreciate it better. We don't have to be Westernized all through, there is a touch of Africa and there is a touch of Nigeria. It must reflect in your cooking etiquette.

Lovett's focus on "cooking etiquette" highlighted a set of "skills" that she directly linked to African womanhood and an appreciation of Nigerian culture. The contestants received very little guidance as to what recipes would be appropriate and did not get any training in basic cooking skills. Instead, it was assumed that the ability to cook was a skill intrinsic to African women's culture, and that Queen Nigeria would simply be testing this skill. The emphasis placed on testing specific cultural skills harkens back to the *tactile* hands-on form of cultural representation expected by the Queen Nigeria pageant.

Queen Nigeria's focus on a culinary test as a symbol of "authentic" Nigerian femininity tapped into a widely-held idea outside of the beauty pageant world that conventional markers of domesticity such as cooking Nigerian meals, childrearing, or housekeeping are standard elements of femininity. As such, the cooking competition connected contestants to a recognizable domestic element of femininity which would resonate with a broad Nigerian audience. Organizers labeled those who could not cook "spoiled" or "out of touch." As Lovett lamented, "It would amaze you that some are 20, 18, and they have never cooked. [The cooking test] is telling them you don't have to depend on mummy and daddy for everything or a fast food joint." Although multinational fast food franchises like KFC have only recently begun to enter Nigeria, more established homegrown or South African imported fast food corporations are often viewed as a sign of Westernization and middle-class convenience. By showing off their skill in cooking specific local cuisines and demonstrating their ability to navigate one of the many open-air markets typical of the area, contestants highlighted their cultural competency within Nigerian traditions and also warded off the threat of being seen as spoiled by their parents or overly dependent on Western-derived influences like fast food joints. This also served as an age marker as young women displayed independence from their parents and assumed their own forms of domesticity. Along with being public figures, contestants had to mark themselves as modern women with a traditional anchoring. Thus, Queen Nigeria contestants were presented as the national custodians of Nigerian cultural identity, hedging against foreign influences.

Modeling the Self-Confident Nation

Queen Nigeria's cooking test assumed contestants' pre-existing knowledge of traditional African dishes, which highlighted an intrinsic cultural skill and emphasized differences from Western culture. In contrast, the organizers and groomers of the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria pageant worked on carefully cultivating skills needed for the modeling segment of their competition, in part through the prism of internationalism. During the show, one contestant would be crowned the "Face of Select Pro," serving as an endorsement ambassador for one of the sponsors of the event, Select Pro Cosmetics, a makeup and styling line. Gina, the African-American producer flown in each year to drill the contestants on poise, etiquette, cat-walking, and posture, spent most of rehearsal periods teaching the choreography needed for the modeling sequence as a Lady Gaga track pulsed in the background. The use of imported experts from the United States and South Africa in addition to elements of global culture helped to further secure MBGN's cosmopolitan prestige. During an interview, Gina emphasized that international pageants were becoming increasingly focused on modeling and as a result she had to train contestants not only in the mechanics of walking, posing and grooming but also in gaining self-confidence and professionalism, qualities needed to be successful in the field. When I asked her to describe her ideal candidate, Gina responded forcefully, "Someone really competitive. It's a game they play, and it's about learning to play that game and playing it well."

Learning to "play the game" of self-confidence was woven into the 10-day pre-show training and rehearsal period (referred to as "camp"). On the night of the first day of camp, the

panel of organizers and groomers sat in a row of chairs facing the 30 contestants. After all the organizers and key members of the production crew were introduced and the national director made his opening remarks, Gina stood up and stated, "I only have one question: which one of you is my queen?" About five hands shot up immediately and a couple more hands were tentatively half-way up in the air. "I only saw a couple of you raise your hands," Gina continued,

> A lot of you seem unsure. We have to work on that. Part of this process is about having confidence. You have to be sure that all of you can say you can be a queen. I'm going to work on instilling that confidence. If you don't want to win, you might as well go home now. I want you all reaching for that crown!

She ended her pep talk with, "Again I want to ask, who's my queen?" This time all hands shot up. Through such tactics, Gina continually instructed contestants in the rules of the game.

The skills contestants were supposed to acquire—especially those promoting self-confidence, professionalism, and competitiveness—were meant to be used off as well as on the stage. One lunchtime discussion revolved around how African contestants are perceived to be at a disadvantage at contests like Miss World or Miss Universe because they lack self-confidence. Eliza, a South African production specialist, pointed out, "African girls are so soft. They are trained to be quiet and obedient." "Oh, but you know those Latin girls! Watch out. They are so aggressive!" Emeka, a reporter for Silverbird Television, interjected. "They have to be trained to be firm. They can be a lady on the catwalk, but firm off of it," Eliza concluded. Emeka and Eliza's exchange, made an explicit comparison between Nigerian and Latin American women (who are well-known for their success at international beauty competitions), highlighting the specific transnational poles of feminized gendered ideals that contestants were expected to navigate. While "African" women are conventionally imagined as soft, weak, and dutiful, this clashes with constructions of "modern" women as strong, assertive, and confident. Eliza insisted, however, that contestants could be still be *trained* to be firm, a process that MBGN directly engaged by "grooming" contestants, using "international experts" who were thought to provide a competitive edge at subsequent phases of the competition. As agents of internationalism, MBGN contestants were expected to embody firmness and self-confidence, traits that are expected to signal a cosmopolitan nation. Moreover, contestants from both pageants used their bodies to signal the gendered form of nationalism expected from their respective contests. In the section that follows, I highlight how pageants differentially represent the country through specific practices of embodied nationalism.

Embodied Nationalism

Bodily practices and markers of appearance such as dress, makeup use, accent and grooming, are vehicles of collective identity, and women's bodies are often the terrain where national identities are produced, maintained and resisted (Banet-Weiser 1999; Choo 2006; Gal and Kligman 2000; Huisman and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2005). The embodiment literature has established how cultural constructions of the body are shaped through the consumption of local and global media (Casanova 2004), the quest for modernity and upward mobility (Edmonds 2010; Rahier 1998), and tension between establishing ethnic or racial authenticity and incorporation into "mainstream" societies (Craig 2002; Rogers 1998). The beauty pageant literature has contributed to this scholarship by highlighting the varied meanings attached to beauty queens as embodied symbols, (King-O'Riain 2008) and by pointing to the objectification and commodification of women's bodies (Ahmed-Ghosh 2003; Wolf 1991), the struggle over national consolidation (Banet-Weiser 1999; Cohen, Wilk, and Stoeltje 1996), and the desire to establish and rearticulate difference and heterogeneity (Borland 1996; McAllister 1996; Moran

1996; Sanders and Pink 1996). By looking at specific bodily practices and ideologies such as debates about beauty, bodily display, and embodied class trajectories, I argue that specific framings of the body shape how the nation is managed and configured. While Queen Nigeria sought to accommodate differences within the nation, while also promoting a sense of unity, MBGN remained oriented towards securing an internationally competitive edge for its winners.

Challenging and Strategizing against "International" Beauty Standards

For both national competitions, organizers and judges evaluated contestants' bodies based on factors such as height, body size, hair style, skin color and texture, and teeth and smile. Queen Nigeria and MBGN had a fairly similar range of contestants in terms of skin color and negligible differences in body size; the average self-reported bust-waist-hip ratio in inches for Queen Nigeria's 2009 contestants was 33.6"-28.1"-37.8," and for MBGN contestants in the same year, the ratio was 33.6"-27.4"-37.5." In spite of these similarities, the pageant organizers framed their beauty ideals in different ways. Both sets of organizers moved away from "traditional" African bodily preferences for voluptuous, heavier-set bodies, yet fashioned divergent ways of interpreting the role of "international standards" within beauty contests. Queen Nigeria openly challenged "international standards," noting their Western-based bias and insisting that international standards should be opened up to include a wider variety of appearance ideals. In contrast, MBGN accepted "international standards," choosing to maneuver within these norms in order to position their candidates as competitive within worldwide beauty pageantry.

While "international standards" mattered to Queen Nigeria organizers, they were critical of Western preferences, insisting that the "international" should be expanded to include more than Western criteria. When I asked one organizer of Queen Nigeria what specific beauty traits they looked for, he responded: "In Igboland it is someone who is large that is considered beautiful, because it shows she is well taken-care of. But here it doesn't play a role. We are not looking for 'Miss Big and Bold.'" He insisted that international standards of tall and thin beauty queens mattered because organizers had to "move with the trend" within the beauty pageant industry. At the same time, he noted that while MBGN is bound to follow international rules and regulations, if Queen Nigeria were to host an international pageant of their own, other nations would have to abide by Nigerian-derived guidelines, which would directly challenge Western dominance. Another Queen Nigeria organizer held a similar sentiment insisting that you could not simply "throw international standards away" but you had to open up international beauty standards to include African ones, in order to reach a kind of "middle ground," noting that "Even now you have Western girls who can't fit into those standards. They are becoming bigger, with rounder butts too, so these international standards are changing." His observation that even "Western girls" find it difficult to attain narrow standards of slimness directly calls into question whether or not these ideals are achievable and notes that they are adjusting as a result. Organizers for Queen Nigeria gestured toward a shifting orientation within international standards which must account for, or at least acknowledge, the presence of Nigerian body ideals.

In contrast, MBGN organizers did not openly question international standards. Gina explained that her involvement in the pageant, which resulted in MBGN (as "Miss Nigeria") winning the Miss World title in 2001, had successfully pushed their standards towards thinner and taller contestants, in line with international criteria. A couple of days before we headed for the auditions, one of the organizers warned, "We don't want any big leg girls. If you have any of those local guys pick the contestants, they will just be looking for girlfriends. We don't want that, so watch out for that." By cautioning screeners to be wary of "big leg girls," his comments

suggested a distinction between locally-based desirability and the quest for a candidate who would fit internationally defined notions of attractiveness.

MBGN played within "international standards," but they sought two different types of contestants who would appeal to different niches within international pageantry. MBGN chose five winners who went on to represent Nigeria at different beauty, modeling and promotional contests within the country and around the world. The winner and first-runner up continued on to Miss World and Miss Universe respectively. Organizers noted that Miss World is considered to be more popular in places like Asia, Africa and Europe since it is a European pageant, while as an American-based pageant, Miss Universe is more popular in North and South America. Candidates sent to Miss Universe are described as "model-types" who are tall, slim and dark. Miss Universe, owned by the mogul Donald Trump, is viewed as a corporate enterprise focused on integrating the modeling industry into the Trump business empire. Dark skin is viewed as important for Africans because it makes them exotic-looking and stands out. In contrast, organizers said that they looked for a "girl next door" type to send to the Miss World pageant, a British pageant organized and privately owned by the Morley Family. To appeal to Miss World's "beauty with a purpose" tagline and focus on raising money through charity functions, organizers and judges focused on picking a fresh-faced, innocent looking candidate with mass appeal. These candidates tended to be more shapely, shorter and lighter-skinned than candidates for Miss Universe. The national director of MBGN detailed the difference in the following way:

> Well for Miss World, it is a family owned organization. They are looking for a likeable personality in a woman—someone they would consider a daughter. A nice person, sweet and lovable person who can achieve goals. For Miss Universe, I see them looking for an exotic model who can model for Gucci and the rest, you know a high flying person. And we will be looking for a wholesome person for Miss World and a commercially viable person for Miss Universe. Someone that can do an advert, be on the billboard, can stand in front of TV camera.

MBGN Organizers contrasted the two pageants as striving towards a natural vs. glamorous look which they mapped onto skin color. This strategy of playing up differences within the terrain of international standards highlights the *tactical* approach adopted by MBGN.

On the one hand, preference for lighter-skin candidates fits in with the commonly accepted paradigm of a Western-dominated media which disseminates such images around the globe. On the other hand, in the case of candidates sent to Miss Universe, MBGN commodified darker skin color as a stand-in for difference, without overtly dismissing "international beauty standards" which tend to emphasize height and slimness. In this way, women's bodies stand in for and manage difference in a non-threatening way (Williamson 1986). Beyond highlighting the social dimensions of skin color (Glenn 2009), by both marketing light skin as a marker of global "mass appeal" and capitalizing on dark skin as a form of desired "exotic beauty," MBGN managed beauty ideals through a global cultural economy, demonstrating flexibility in striving for international legitimacy.

The pageant often touted their success in winning the 2001 edition of the Miss World beauty pageant as a sign that international standards were shifting towards recognizing Africa. When Agbani Darego, Nigeria's representative to the Miss World pageant clinched the title, she announced to the world that "Black is Beautiful." Pageant participants viewed Africa as the next frontier for beauty. One organizer explained:

> If you are looking at [international] pageants today, Americans never win…. I will tell you why: because Americans are so programmed from birth, they are so

> mechanical that there is no natural beauty in an America woman today. Now the world is looking for natural beauty and guess what the future is? Africa…African beauty is becoming exciting. All of a sudden we are becoming the future and we could win every year but we've got to stay focused.

They claimed that Western countries like the United States were plastic-looking, unusually pin-thin, and plain. In contrast, African beauty was seen to be more natural and striking. Beauty contestants viewed developing countries like Venezuela and India as their main rivals, and countries like the United States and England as less competitive. Through their tactics, MBGN signaled the new direction of international pageantry which increasingly focused on members of the developing world as necessary to the growth of the market. Exotic looks, through dark skin for example, provided Nigerian beauty contestants with an edge internationally.

Debating Bodily Display: Banning Bikinis versus Bikini Barbie-Turns

Organizers for Queen Nigeria spent time policing the amount of skin contestants showed in public. Contestants' costumes and attire were inspected prior to the final show to make sure they were not too revealing, and during excursions to visit public officials and sponsors, contestants were instructed to either wear "native" attire (a colloquial term referring to African-styled clothing) or to cover up with a shawl if they were wearing tight-fitting or skimpy "English dress." One of many incidents that highlighted Queen Nigeria's close attention to the bodily display of their contestants involved Ebun, a 19-year old college student at a private university and a contest in the 2009 pageant. During one of the last days of lessons with Noyo, a beauty pageant coach who trained and consulted for a wide variety of beauty competitions, Ebun inquired, "We need to talk about what I need to pack and wear! What outfits should I have for camp?" Noyo replied, "You have to go buy some new outfits. I don't care if you have to get them second-hand. You need to scare those girls! You need to get some bomb shorts [very short shorts] cut up to here [he gestured to about his mid-thigh] and knee socks in different colors." On the first day of camp, Ebun arrived in short black shorts, a yellow-tank top and gold gladiator sandals. Later that afternoon, she had put on a pair of black leggings underneath her shorts and changed into a T-shirt. She told me that she had been pulled aside by one of the organizers and chastised for her outfit. Noyo's miscalculated strategy was meant to intimidate other contestants, and was a common piece of advice that he gave all his trainees. That is, Noyo's suggestion that Ebun wear revealing clothing at the Queen Nigeria training camp was entirely off base and a mistake for this particular contest. While contestants in other pageants aside from Queen Nigeria might have found success with this tactic, Queen Nigeria organizers informed Ebun that she would have to dress much more modestly during her time in camp. For Queen Nigeria, policing the amount of skin showed in public allowed for greater support from people throughout the country and helped them to establish themselves as an African and national brand.

Queen Nigeria was specifically branded as a no-bikini show. Wearing a bikini, or nothing more than "bra and pants" as it is often referred to, was frequently brought up as un-African and representative of a major roadblock in the effort of pageants to gain greater acceptance throughout the country. By barring bikinis from the show, organizers believed they could attract girls who normally would not enter a beauty competition, as well as assuaging anxieties about bodily display in pageantry. Raul, an organizer of a state-level pageant for Queen Nigeria, explained why Queen Nigeria did not want to include bikinis:

> Especially in Africa, we believe that nudity is wrong, women should not be exposing their body; they [Queen Nigeria] didn't want to celebrate nudity and especially as a

> national brand. It's family TV, where the young, the old, and children would be able to watch…We want to celebrate our culture, without celebrating bikini.

Raul's insisted that as a national brand seeking to attract a broad audience, Queen Nigeria could not be seen as supporting "nudity." In contrast, Will, the choreographer, observed that an international audience would not have to navigate these issues:

> Not all mothers can allow their daughters to go on bikini. And if you watch pageants here, you will see that those bikini segments, they don't air it. The norms and values here are different. There are some things that we don't appreciate. It might be abusive to viewers. If it's international TV, it's something that is not new. It's not a big deal.

Raul and Will's comments indicate that a national public, rather than an international one, guided the format followed by the Queen Nigeria pageant. By banning bikinis and remaining attuned to regional, religious and cultural concerns over bodily display, Queen Nigeria sought to present itself as a legitimate arbiter of Nigerian culture through an inclusive stance which recognized locally-based differences, unified the country, and helped establish an African-centered national brand.

Whereas Queen Nigeria drew a firm line against including bikinis in its show and actively policed bodily display, MBGN included a bikini segment, and contestants often wore short, tight cocktail dresses to attend dinner parties, meet-and-greets and press functions. Fairly early in the process, would-be contestants were expected to get comfortable with showing large amounts of skin in public. Early in the initial screening process, for example, those who auditioned were told to change into their bikinis and five inch high heels; then, dressed this way, they were instructed to come up one by one and introduce themselves and then stand in a lineup and turn around in a "Barbie turn" (a slow, 360-degree spin) so that screeners could inspect their bodies. Bikinis were used to "weed out" contestants according to body type (e.g., uneven skin texture, poorly-proportioned bodies, cellulite, and stretch marks) and the presence of scars. Scars from accidents (exhaust pipe burns from motorbikes were commonly referenced), protruding belly buttons, and "tribal markings" were pointed out, scrutinized, and debated over the course of the screening process. Markings on the body either in the form of "tribal markings" or scars, served to indicate specific ethnic traits or membership in lower status communities (Ford 2008; Rogers 1998), and were thus seen as inconsistent with a cosmopolitan femininity, which was meant to signal Nigeria's international prestige.

At the end of the Port Harcourt screening process, Calvin, the South African producer, commented:

> We have to have them in bikinis to look for scars. Some of them have such bad scars from accidents, or really bad belly buttons, or those big tribal markings and we have to see all of that. We need to eliminate anyone with really bad scars or else they could get disqualified at Miss World or Miss Universe.

"You see this?" he asked me, leaning in as he ran his index finger across a faint pink line that reached across his neck. "This scar is from a car accident that split my neck open. But you can barely see it. If the surgery were done here [his surgery was done in South Africa], the scar would be all jagged. There is no way they could have done it here." Rejecting scars was in part a means of distancing the pageant from the scarification representative of an "old" Nigerian tradition and associated with outdated cultural beliefs or uneducated people from rural areas. Scarification has long been practiced among the major ethnic groups in Nigeria and consists of ceremonial cuts on various parts of the body (including the face) for a wide variety of purposes: medicinal healing, ethnic identity, beauty, and fashion. However, it has declined in practice in

the last two decades. Blessing, a former beauty queen described how Nigeria's lack of access to plastic surgery potentially put contestants at a disadvantage at international pageants, noting:

> Like Mexico, they really got lots of support; they were given big apartments, cars, Puerto Rico actually got a free plastic surgery as one of her prizes. When you win it, you get anything on your face or body. They don't hide it over there. For the first time in my life, I saw silicone boobs, I never knew there were injections for pushing out your booty, there were nose jobs everywhere, tummy tucks everywhere.

Discussions about whether scars could be simply hidden implied that readily visible scars would somehow betray Nigeria's lack of access to good surgery or resources to travel abroad, thus relegating Nigerian beauty contestants to an un-modern status internationally.

The MBGN organizers recognized that including bikinis in the program made some Nigerians apprehensive about the pageant, but they insisted that it was necessary in order to be in line with international standards both in terms of format and body ideals. Organizers dismissed concerns about bodily exposure by asking, "What is a beauty pageant without a swimsuit section?" or "When you go to the beach what do you wear? A bathing suit." Through such matter-of-fact statements, organizers sought to normalize the inclusion of bikinis in a country where seeing women in bathing suits, even at public beaches, is rare (Nigerian women often wear jeans, shorts, t-shirts and tank tops at the beach). By doing so, MBGN closed itself off from internal hesitations over bodily display and instead emphasized how bikinis visually showed off which bodies were more in-line with "international" standards based on body type and lack of scarring, and thus ripe for inclusion in international contests.

Classed Trajectories: Cultured Beauties and Jetsetters

Nationalist projects are always class-specific. Both of the Nigerian contests molded a specific classed version of their participants, geared to their different target audiences. Queen Nigeria made class distinctions based on local references, which promote a cultured middle-class Nigerian woman. In contrast, MBGN focused on the speedy upward trajectory of their contestants who, through winning or even just participating in the pageant, might gain entrance into an otherwise impossible-to-penetrate jetsetter echelon of Nigerian society aligned with transnational capital and culture. These class-marked paths of nationhood manifested in varied emphases concerning the body.

Queen Nigeria organizers specifically targeted college students as ideal candidates and treated having gone to college as an unwritten prerequisite for entry, in part to highlight contestants' educated, middle-class trajectories. They also invoked specific, negative images of "market women" to create an implicit class distinction between the contestants and the type of women they should actively distance themselves from. Late one evening during dance rehearsals Will, the choreographer, asked the contestants to walk one-by-one to form two lines for the opening sequence of the dance number. As one contestant walked by, he bellowed, pointing at her, "You! Why are you walking like that? You look like a woman carrying firewood on her head. Start over!" Throughout the rehearsal he scolded, "You are all dancing like market women!" Will's repeated statements invoking images of a "woman carrying firewood on her head" or "market women" evoked women living in rural villages or working in poor, urban environments. Market women have a long history of trading in urban Nigeria and other areas of West Africa (Byfield 2002; Clark 1994), and serve as a recognizable symbolic figure. In the context of beauty pageants, market women were imagined as rough and brash – characteristics that beauty queens should not exhibit. Instead, contestants were expected to maintain a refined beauty queen stance, maintaining excellent posture in high-heeled stilettos, even while dancing.

Rather than include the sharp, multi-rhythmic movements with big jumps and leaps which often characterize West African dance, choreographers taught flowing movements which incorporated twirls and stylized walks. Contestants were expected to have skills traditionally associated with Nigerian women, which gestured towards an "authentic" African context by showing competence, in traditional cooking, for example. But they were not to be *wholly of that* context. This allowed Queen Nigeria to construct a class-specific cultural ideal.

Jane Collier (1997) has shown how an ambivalent stance towards "tradition" may figure into modernity. Embracing "traditions" may symbolize region and identity, while rejecting the actual way of life. In this case, rejecting "market women's" embodiment and emphasizing the educated middle-class lifestyles of contestants implies a hierarchy of who can serve as a cultural icon for the nation, creating an ideal of Nigerian womanhood that is educated and middle-class but embraces some symbolic elements of "tradition."

In contrast with the social class symbols and dynamics central to the Queen Nigeria pageant, MGBN signaled the anticipated rapid upward mobility of their contestants. The process of "grooming" during camp was seen as having a profound impact on the contestants. "Grooming" contestants focused on changes in both demeanor and physical embodiment, with direct consequences for the projected class mobility of contestants. Those associated with the MGBN pageant often commented on dramatic changes in the contestants over the course of the 10-day camping (training and rehearsal) period that led up to the finale.

One day I was chatting with one of the chaperones, Ada, as the contestants were having their photographs taken for the brochure. She motioned toward the group of contestants gathered outside the pool of the five-star hotel that served as host for camp, "They will all change. You'll see them next year and you won't even recognize them." Omar, one of the television presenters for the reality show that followed the contestants over the course of camp, echoed Ada's comments. "Remember that girl we saw in Benin? She is not even the same girl anymore! She has really changed. I don't know if you noticed, but I saw her on an *okada* [motorbike] when the rain was pouring down in Benin. Now she acts so different." One of the organizers made a passing comment about one of the previous reigning beauty queens:

> She's looks very clean, she doesn't have that girl look. [Bunmi] had that look, and she even had a PA [personal assistant] to carry her bag. The first day we saw that, we all wanted to die. Just like two months after she won, there was a girl she hired just to carry her bag…They change after they've won, their presentation and everything changes, the way they dress. When they are in camp, they learn about how to stand and walk.

With access to hairstylists and makeup artists provided by MBGN and the opportunity to interact with some of the top Nigerian fashion designers, contestants' physical embodiment was expected to change over the course of the contest and beyond. Contestants quickly upgraded to weaves or lace-front wigs to achieve a silky-long hair texture and length, with hair from India, Peru or Brazil considered the most premium. They were expected to own the latest Blackberry phones, designer handbags and platform heels. Joy, the reigning queen, entered the room wearing strappy heeled sandals and a black sequined dress, with her crown nestled inside a large silver makeup case. She was being interviewed and photographed for a magazine article. The photographer introduced himself. "We have met before I don't know if you remember me. Wow! You've really changed. Ohh!" he remarked, looking her up and down. "Silverbird's money has changed me" Joy responded with a smile.

During the audition process, a couple of the chaperones pointed out a woman who had auditioned for the past two cycles of MBGN. While she had made the cut in the past, she did not go on to win the crown. "Each year she comes back cleaner and cleaner." When I asked the chaperone what she meant, she responded that each time the woman returns to audition her skin looks fairer. This observation was one of many describing physical changes in contestants' bodies as a result of participating in the pageant. In this case the changes came from access to exclusive skin and makeup treatments which seemingly made the skin "cleaner." Contestants worked to achieve vibrant, even-toned skin free of blemishes, regardless of their skin color. In particular, contestants sought to eliminate black patches on their elbows and knees. This finding is similar to reports by other scholars who have observed that lighter skin not only promotes dominant beauty ideals, but also secures and verifies upward mobility (Hunter 1998; Pierre 2008; Rahier 1999). Contestants were also expected to eschew second-hand and counterfeit clothing and accessories which flood the Nigerian market. Instead they were to wear Nigerian couture and shop at malls with brand-new American or European merchandise.

Pageant contestants had direct access to some of the nation's most powerful political officials and elite businessmen. Observers described contestants as cultivating a new polished image that directly translated into increased social status and a jet-set lifestyle. During dress rehearsals the day before the finale, while all the contestants practiced onstage, Mr. Oke, a staff member at Silverbird, commented:

> I'm always scared of these girls. They are powerful. That's why I'm always nice to them. They're all going to dump their boyfriends after this is over. You'd be surprised, one of them might be the future wife to a minister [head of government ministries]; [he snaps his fingers] they might just be the one to make that phone call to make or destroy a deal.

Contestants' new-found public exposure and fame granted them access to form relationships with business leaders, celebrities, and politicians, which were touted as signs of emergence into new elite circles centered on transnational culture and capital. Most contestants would otherwise not have access to these groups. Mr. Oke's comments referred to contestants who acquired access to political elites connected to the international business world. Since Nigerian oil is nationalized and the federal government controls nearly 90 percent of oil revenues, which it distributes to federal, state, and local governments, connections with politics and politicians are the fastest way of gaining access to capital. Organizers stressed how contestants moved into new accommodations (usually on the Island), gained access to chauffeurs, and consumed the trendiest luxury brands. Through shifts in embodiment and lifestyle, contestants, especially pageant winners, were said to embrace a new-found status which signaled the nation's position in an international political economy.

Conclusion

This chapter has described configurations of practices that construct different representations of femininity, and by extension, separate visions of national identity. By focusing on differing sets of skills, debates over appearance and dress, and diverging modes of economic mobility, I have argued that the two national pageants I studied constructed distinct versions of gendered nationhood. Queen Nigeria constructed a *cultural-nationalist* model of femininity which emphasizes *testing* cultural competency, primarily through a cooking contest. This cultural competency test served as a means of connecting contestants to a broad Nigerian community and showing appreciation for Nigerian culture, with the ultimate aim of unifying the nation. In contrast, the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria pageant featured a modeling competition

that emphasized *cultivating* skills, such as self-confidence, viewed as integral to success at the international phases of the pageant. This *cosmopolitan-nationalist* model stressed Nigeria's compatibility with an international community, with the effect of globalizing the nation. Through the cultural production of idealized femininities, varied contours of the nation—as inclusive of cultural and ethnic diversity geared to different local audiences *and* part of global community for a transnational audience—were consolidated in tandem through the multilayered process of nationalism.

Adding empirical nuance to the literature on gender and nation, I have teased out complex relationships between the local and the global, detailing how specific versions of gendered national representations are consolidated on national and international stages to serve distinct purposes. Nigeria's broader efforts to navigate internal social divisions while attempting to stake global claims helps to inform the simultaneous production and management of two different logics. This is a complex process laced with tension and potentials for conflict; the consequences might potentially threaten to pull the nation apart. The logics co-exist as part of efforts to shore up the nation both internally and in global contexts.

I have shown that competing models of nationalism are articulated through processes that highlight distinctions of gender, ethnicity, and social class and that are tied to broader structural dimensions of Nigeria's shifting position as an emerging nation. I have explained the consolidation of nationalist projects through a gendered process that encompasses cultural, ethnic and religious diversity in the push to unify the nation and to position it within the international political economy. I also explored how a sense of Nigeria as a nation is continually reconstructed through the dynamics of gendered representations, the framing of "ethnic traits" for a domestic and an international audience, and through divergent class trajectories. This intersectional approach makes a contribution to the race, class, and gender literature from a global perspective. I argued that both of these logics, *cultural-nationalism* and *cosmopolitan-nationalism*, co-exist as strategies for shoring up the nation through domestic and global claims. In examining the gendered interpretations of nations in a non-Western context, I add to the scholarship on gender and globalization by providing alternative accounts for how and why gender nationalisms differ. In this and earlier chapters I have focused on the nation through the lens of symbolic representation. In the next chapter I show how the economy plays a critical role in shaping these discourses.

Chapter 5:
The Business of Beauty: Political Economy, Corporate Sponsorship and the State

Introduction

Beyond promoting the nation, Nigerian beauty pageants are used to plug pretty much everything from beauty products (e.g., the contest for Miss Delta Soap), to the tourism industry (Miss Tourism), telecommunications (Miss Telcom), and regional economic integration (the Miss ECOWAS contest). ECOWAS is the Economic Community of West African States, a regional group of 16 Western African countries. The winner of this pageant is supposed to use her position to help cement peace in the region, working with the ECOWAS commission in Abuja, Nigeria. In this chapter I examine the underlying financial motivations of both contestants and organizers, along with the pressures they face to serve political goals on behalf of the Nigerian state. Contestants view pageants as a means of "getting ahead" in their future careers. Organizers navigate a tension between subscribing to the demands of the state and the demands of private capital. For the Queen Nigeria pageant, for which state support is its primary source of financing, the organizers can easily be seen as political pawns. Meanwhile, organizers of the Miss Beautiful Girl in Nigeria pageant try to court state approval for their contest, but view it mainly as a way to further their commercial interests. For them, targeting multinational corporations remains the principal aim, even though they must also contend with the risk of alienating local sentiments.

The State and the Market

In this chapter I consider the larger ecology within which Nigerian pageants operate, specifying how views about the state, corporations, the media, and public opinion enter into pageant politics. Nigeria's political economy entangles the state and the market with national and global forces. Although oil is nationalized in Nigeria, it still remains a part of international marketplace due to its tie to multinational companies and exportation to countries around the world. Oil and its surrounding politics provide a key example of these contradictions. Ownership of oil is controlled by the federal government according to national decrees. Political officials govern the access to state revenues which they distribute to themselves and their constituents to secure their loyalty. This patron-client relationship allows for the use of political office for personal gain and is a key explanation for Nigeria's lack of neoliberal economic reforms (Joseph 1987). That is, state control over capital becomes a source of political power and comingles the public with the private. The attempts to deregulate the oil industry by decreasing state subsidies and moving towards privatization of the market further highlight this tension between state and capital. Nigeria's national beauty pageants navigate within this context, aligning themselves with the state and/or marketplace to advance their organization's goals. Moreover, since economic capital is concentrated in the hands of the state, gaining employment with the state is typically viewed the fastest means of securing upward mobility and stability. Contestants' participation in beauty pageants and their goals of working in the entertainment business highlight how some members of Nigeria's growing youth population disregard and bypass this conventional pathway to economic security.

Selling the Dream: Fame, and Fortune, and Mobility

In the previous chapter I discussed how the two major national beauty contests project different class images of their contestants, with Queen Nigeria assuming a more settled, already-there notion of middle class identity, contrasting with MBGN's assumed trajectory of a contestant quickly zooming upwards socioeconomically, to an elite jet-setting lifestyle. In this

section, I focus on the career aspirations of contestants themselves, noting how they view beauty pageants as a launching pad for their professional pursuits.

One afternoon on a day dubbed "Children's Day" I sat in the lobby of Silverbird Television Network (Stv). On this day, school-aged children were invited to come in to serve as substitute hosts for the regular presenters on select Stv programs. During a break from a tour of the studios, a group of four girls stood inside the lobby in matching red school uniforms, white knee socks and black flats. They gazed at the rows of framed pictures of past MBGN winners on the wall. "Did you know Regina Askia (a former Nollywood actress) was one of them?" one girl asked the others huddled around her. "There's Toyin Raji" (also an actress), another girl said, pointing to one of the pictures on the wall. "I will contest one day" one girl announced. "I will contest right now" another joked as she pretended to run towards the door that led to the offices where the CEO of Silverbird Productions works.

The ability of these school-aged girls to rattle off the names of several MBGN winners from the 1980's and 1990's (before they were even born) highlights how some past contestants have been able to use their victories to cement their positions as household names among a segment of the Nigerian population. While just as many Nigerian beauty queens fade into obscurity, beauty pageants in general, and MBGN in particular, have managed to build an image of themselves as platforms from which women can earn instant name recognition not just in Nigeria, but also internationally, since many end up relocating to the United States or the United Kingdom. In commercials advertising the N5000 ($33) entry forms enticing contestants to audition for MBGN, the concluding tagline invites hopefuls to "make all [their] wishes come true." In a country where the average resident makes a little over N100,000 per year (about $700), MBGN's cash prize of three million naira ($21,000), a brand-new car, potential endorsement deals, and lavish gifts amounts to a lottery jackpot for those crowned.

Contestants in both national competitions stress that beauty pageants are not a career in and of themselves, but rather a "launching pad" to "secure their futures" in order to pursue lucrative careers in entertainment, media, business and even politics. In fact, repeat contestants are often mocked as "professional contestants," silently chided for not making the most of their previous attempts since all finalists have the opportunity to make significant contacts as a result of their participation in the contest. One contestant explained that participating in the pageant was like a "ladder" and provided her with a winning edge. She noted, "Many of us youth want to go into a variety of things. Aside from modelling, we want to do movies, to be musicians and presenters, and, we think, pageantry is the only opportunity to achieve all these. The moment you enter for the contest, everything changes for you." Another contestant observed about her participation in pageants, "It makes you a better person. You have an opportunity to have the best and also improve…[Y]ou meet a lot of better people, you have an opportunity to achieve something. If there is anything that you want to do, but you don't have an opportunity, it's just going to pave a way for you to do anything that you want to do, any positive thing that you want to do." Contestants said that through media attention and making key connections with those in the industry, they were able to fast track their professional careers. Through this route, these young women bypassed the traditional routes of higher education, climbing the corporate ladder, and relying on state-sponsored civil servant positions to ensure upward mobility. When I asked how she felt MBGN helped her achieve her professional goals, Faith said, "I made fantastic contacts. That was one major thing. People I don't know before, the movers and shakers, who can help you in life. I met them, and they were like oh you are the new girl." Faith's position among the newest crop of beauty queens provided entrance into the social worlds of business

leaders and politicians, allowing her to make the transition into a career in the oil and gas industry.

Organizers were quick to point out that beauty pageants enable contestants to pursue careers in a wide-range of fields beyond the entertainment business, for instance, by providing them access into male-dominated fields. As the national director of MBGN explained, beauty queens not only help themselves, but also serve as symbolic role models for young women throughout the nation:

> The goal of MBGN is women empowerment and what it does for young ladies is that it creates a platform for them to choose a career of their choice and propels them into any field they want. It's [also] symbolic. When you have a beauty queen like an MBGN girl, you will like the young girls to emulate them to say let me help develop my community in some form or the other and let me lead in an industry where women are not known to lead. I think it encourages young girls to emulate this character. Hopefully even if you are not The Most Beautiful Girl, it makes you realize that your dreams can be realized if you work hard at it, and it gives women an equal opportunity as men. We promote entrepreneurship. Our contestants have become international models and have gone onto the House of Representatives. This is just another form of business that parents should accept.

By recasting participation in beauty pageants as a form of respectable entrepreneurship and a way to equal the playing field between men and women, organizers sought to legitimize the industry as a viable pathway for success and mobility.

While the use of beauty pageants as stepping stones is a familiar theme in the global pageant world, Nigerian participants stressed that the increased popularity of beauty contests in the developing world could be traced to high levels of poverty. One marketing director asked me, "What do you think would happen if I plastered a call for a beauty pageant outside right now? Girls would flood this building out of desperation." In Nigeria the yearning to "find a way out of poverty" was seen as linked to the upsurge of aspiring beauty pageant contestants. An incident that illustrates this connection occurred when one of the top executives for Silverbird called Lola (a pageant coordinator) and me over to introduce us to a young woman who had just relocated to Lagos from the Eastern part of the country. She was interested in getting into the entertainment industry, and the executive wanted to link her up with Lola in order to "mentor her." Lola encouraged the young woman to purchase an entry form for the MBGN pageant. As Lola browsed through the young woman's modelling portfolio, making specific critiques and giving her beauty and fitness tips, Mr. Abe pulled me aside, leaned over, and whispered:

> "You see her? She wants to be famous. The whole beauty pageant thing is just born out of necessity. How else would people here get famous? In Europe and the U.S. you don't need such things. But here there is poverty. Take religion for instance. In Europe they transform churches into discothèques, and you only see them praying if their plane is going down. Once they are safe on the ground, they forget all about religion. Here you have people praying and praying. Here it's about limited circumstances. Poverty limits people. In the U.S. and Europe you have opportunities.

Mr. Abe's remark about using beauty pageants as a means of boosting your professional aspirations might seem out of step with the thinking of Europeans or Americans, but it seems practical and logical in a country like Nigeria. Nigeria's comparatively blocked economic system has forced youths to pursue more unconventional pathways for mobility. As Lola and the

aspiring young woman continued their conversation, Mr. Abe left to return to his office. He looked over his shoulder and instructed Lola, "Make her famous!" In a subsequent interview, Mr. Abe further emphasized the importance of poverty in bolstering beauty pageants:

> Let me tell you, poverty is a good thing, poverty creates opportunity, it creates entertainment, it creates excitement and it creates creativity. Poverty is why we are successful today... Beauty queens are usually from poor homes no matter where they come from in the world. Boxers, athletes and anybody in the arts, creative people are usually from poor homes. Society looks down on them but when they become successful you take them in. That's the irony of life. So poverty is good in the art [world] because it helps us become successful. That's what we are.

MBGN organizers, in particular, insisted that while some contestants were more fortunate than others, the vast majority came from "humble backgrounds." They pointed out that those from wealthier backgrounds might not be in need or as appreciative of the respect, the invitations to special functions, and the business opportunities that might result from their participation.

Over the course of MBGN's auditions and rehearsals, organizers and other members of the production crew emphasized how contestants transformed from "bush girls" to "cosmo girls" through their participation in the pageant. They talked about how they often struggled to make decisions about finalists based on "very slim pickings" since the "most beautiful ones never come out." I soon learned that the discussion about whether or not the "most beautiful ones" even decided to audition for the show was as much about social class as it was about physical appearance. At the audition in Lagos, one woman with short cropped natural hair coils stepped up on the short runway to audition. Myriam, one of the chaperones, gasped and chuckled. I asked why she was laughing and she answered, "Look at her hair. She looks like a village girl." Another would-be contestant was mocked for her Eastern accent. Myriam and the other onlookers joined together in laughter as they imitated the woman by exaggerating their pronunciation of "t's." Another woman who auditioned introduced herself by stating, "My names are" and indicated that she was studying English. "I thought it was 'My name is'" Octavia interjected watching from the side lines, "and she says she is studying English?" she asked incredulously with a sneer on her face. The appearance and demeanour of those who auditioned (especially their speech patterns) marked their class status. The MBGN audition process was designed to sift through the countless hopefuls to find the diamonds in the rough.

During our sit-down interview, when I asked Octavia how the pageant had changed in recent years, she pointed out that while auditions over the past couple of years were yielding higher calibre contestants, they still had to deal with "local girls," whom she distinguished from "classy girls."

> Octavia: Instead of getting all local girls now we are getting more classy, good looking, smart and intelligent girls.
> Interviewer: What do you mean by local girls?
> Octavia: Remember that haggard girl in Port Harcourt that came in to contest, she really had no business being there. Compare her to someone like [Penelope]. With the way she dressed and everything. I think she is a local girl to me. I might be wrong anyway but you know appearance means a lot. Compare [Penelope] with most of these girls you saw in Benin. I'm not saying [Penelope] is like Rihana [an international pop star] but you can't compare her with those girls. She looks far better…. If you bring a village girl to town and she stays in the town but still

> surrounded by her village people, her local people, how do you think that girl is going to behave if she comes for MBGN and then comes to Lagos?

By making the distinction between "local" and "classy" girls, Octavia highlighted the divide between city and rural life, noting that a "local girl" who was still surrounded by her "village people" would be out of place at MBGN and in Lagos. While she indicated that they still had to contend with a large number of "local girls," especially in cities like Benin which are considered much less developed than other major capitals in the country, she insisted that they had managed to attract increasing number of "classy girls."

While cities like Benin were thought to attract more "local" girls, Lagos, in particular, was noted as prone to social climbers. For example, one organizer noted, "In Lagos there will be a high turnout. But you will have more losers too. You will see house girls [servants] that managed to get N5000 show up." By imposing a N5000 entrance fee, organizers hoped to keep most of the riffraff at bay, noting that that this financial restriction was necessary to prevent just "anyone" from auditioning. Another participant pointed out the distinction between Lagos and other major cities in the country, noting that those who come to audition were overly ambitious. He commented, "For the Lagos girls, MGBN is a platform to become 'big girls' [influential]. But in the region [cities outside of Lagos], MBGN is an inspirational competition."

MBGN organizers focused on picking the "right kinds of girls," noting that while they were able to avoid choosing those considered to be at the bottom of the barrel, they rarely had access to those considered the cream of the crop. One participant noted that the "standard" of contestants had diminished since the days when people like Bianca Onoh [MBGN 1988 and the daughter of a former governor] had won the contest. Remarking that pageants were once a "high society" event, he noted that "I learned that this year no girl bought the form who was from Ikoyi or VI [affluent Lagos suburbs]; the ones from Lagos are from the outskirts." Throughout the rehearsals, organizers constantly questioned how they managed to select some of the women as finalists, even speculating that there had been some logistical glitch which mixed up the final tallies. After the pre-judging in which contestants would be whittled down to the final 16, I asked Ms. D., the wife of one of the executives, what she thought of the contestants. "Some of these girls have behinds bigger than me. Some of them have been gaining" she complained. Calvin, an organizer, nodded his head in agreement. "I think there might have been a mistake with some of them. Like maybe their numbers didn't match up properly. Some of the girls, I don't even know how we picked them." "It's the buffet. It's a killer. Most of them haven't seen as much food all in one place at once before" concluded Ms. D. Someone else speculated that they starved themselves for auditions and then stuffed themselves with food once they had secured a spot as a finalist. On the first day of camp while Kamal, one of the hosts for the MBGN reality show took a break from interviews, he commented, "These girls [shaking his head]. They're no good. I expect them to be more polished. They're shallow and tacky. Our kind of girl wouldn't go for this kind of thing. They think this platform is too easy. These are just regular girls." By openly mocking contestants, for example by implying that they were gaining weight because they had never been exposed to such decadent food before, MBGN personnel noted the modest background of their contestants.

Investment in a "rags to riches" storyline allowed MBGN organizers to directly take responsibility for the upward mobility of their contestants. When one of the executives learned that a former beauty queen had refused the complimentary VIP tickets and insisted that she would only attend if she was granted the more exclusive VVIP tickets, he roared in response, "We made [her]! We wiped [her] out from poverty. She was living in a *face me face you* [small

narrowly spaced apartments that face each other], her mother was selling *akara* [bean fritters] on the streets! Who does she think she is?!?" Contestants were expected to feel indebted to MBGN for elevating their lifestyles, a feat that other pageants were not nearly as successful in executing.

Contestants insisted that their positions came with high expectations about the lifestyles in which they were expected to operate in a new realm of society. A couple of days after the finale during a post-show wrap up meeting, Lola was repeatedly instructed to work on "upgrading her queens" by assisting them with finding a better wardrobe, accessories, and makeup. In a subsequent encounter with one of the queens, Lola gingerly pointed out that she would have to replace her fake Louis Vuitton handbag with something else, "This is the glamour industry. People expect a lot."

With some prodding, most contestants openly admitted that gaining financial security was a primary motivation for their participation in pageants. The combination of cash, status and fame, which they viewed as being able to catapult their social agendas remained significant. As a sponsor noted when I asked about the contestants' motivations:

> They like that money. Sometimes, it may be the status because it changes your life completely. I think most of them like the advantages that come with the title. They are able to do most things with that title. Some of them are University students and they have many programmes at heart, which they are unable to do, but with the title, they will be able to do some and also spend more money on their education as well. So, I think, it is mostly money.

Contestants maximized their chances by entering a wide variety of contests within the pageant circuit, with MBGN considered the brass ring of the Nigerian pageant world. Contestants claimed that they could not be as effective with their charity work if they did not also pursue their economic interests since higher class status translated into having deeper social impact. For example, one participant noted the interplay between financial and charitable goals:

> The motivation is the money that is involved in the pageant because there are a lot of sponsors if you are able to penetrate in. There is money to be made from it and some of these girls establish NGOs which makes them money. And some of the organisers of the events collect 10, 20, 30 per cent of the money being made from these NGOs. It is a lucrative business.

After losing the Queen Nigeria contest, Laide insisted that she would switch her attention towards MBGN, which she now viewed as more financially profitable.

> I'm still going to go for the MBGN because I believe in Nigeria it is the number one recognized pageant. So if I win that and I go for the Miss World. Even if I don't win, people will look up to me, people will want to be like me because really in Nigeria, if you are not known, you won't have a say in the society. You might have a lot you want to impart into the society, but nobody wants to listen to you until you've made a name for yourself. They will be like oh that girl was [MBGN], she has experience. So this is not where I want to stop, I want to go further. Then probably if I win the pageant, I could go into the fashion industry and I intend to sing too. So basically I just want to revolve myself around the entertainment industry.

In this quote, Laide points out that while she has goals of making a difference in the country, she will not be able to seriously achieve them without the exposure gained from a contest like MBGN. Thus, her individual career ambitions went hand in hand with her desire for the collective development of the country.

Another Queen Nigeria contestant bluntly pointed out that MBGN was a more worthwhile endeavour, fixating particularly on the fact that while Queen Nigeria's winner had been awarded a base model hatchback Kia Picanto (worth about $12,000), MBGN winners were presented with cars from Hyundai, Suburu, and Toyota, which are considered higher quality brands. When I asked her to further explain the difference between MBGN and Queen Nigeria, she elaborated:

> [In MBGN] everything's worth it, the prize, the exposure, the event. Even if you don't win you are exposed and you can see somebody who will like you for your stature and will want you to work for him or her so from there you get up. Not like my own beauty pageant we didn't get anything. The only person someone came to is Miss Lagos, and someone gave her a CD. I don't know what that CD contained, someone also came to me and said oh you are beautiful and that is all but for something like MBGN you get connections.

Similarly another Queen Nigeria contestant complained that she felt that she had wasted her time with the pageant and regretted not participating in a Lagos-based ethnic contest since she felt it would have provided more financial resources than Queen Nigeria, a relative newcomer on the scene:

> Sisi Oge [a Yoruba cultural pageant] is even more known and they give you a car, money and everything. It really pained me. I should have at least gone for that one. You don't just waste your time in Jos. And apart from that, Sisi Oge, even if you don't win, you come out there and you see companies there, they could pick you as their face even if you do not win, you come out there and you get to do jobs for maybe soap companies, billboards and the like. Even if you don't win the pageant or the competition, you get other offers to compensate. That is one thing about MBGN. You cannot go to MBGN and your life remains the same. Like the actress Stephane Okereke. You know she was first runner-up, MBGN. Look at what she is doing now. I think MBGN gave her publicity. Look at Silvia Eden too from Cross River state, she was first runner-up too or a former Queen. From there, she had opportunity to do billboards, movies, and stuffs. Even if you don't get to win, you will get to connect. That is one thing about MBGN and that is why it stands out. In Nigeria as far as I am concerned, MBGN is still the best even if there are some stories you hear and everything, it is still the best.

Immediately after the Queen Nigeria finale as we rode back in the van to the hotel, one of the contestants loudly sucked her teeth and, using pidgin English, bitterly protested about the contest's outcome : "Na wa o [Wow] for this silly pageant. After all effort we put for this here contest! They better come give us our money o! We no go leave this city without it." Others angrily agreed with her assessment. Someone else pointed out, "They can't even compare themselves to MBGN. If you see the gift bags they get filled with new pairs of jeans, T-shirts, even Sleek makeup!" Contestants maneuvered within the world of pageant, evaluating which ones were most likely to align with their quest for upward mobility, with MBGN usually coming squarely on top.

Building the Brand

The mobility that beauty queens secure through pageants helps to communicate a specific lifestyle that supports the respective brands of each contest. Through endorsement deals contestants promote corporate products. For example, in detailing her responsibilities as "Miss Lacsera" a sponsor for MBGN, one contestant detailed,

> I am a brand ambassador; I represent the brand, the day I met the CEO, he told me, if you are Miss Lacasera, your King is Lacasera. So I have to carry my brand as high as I can. I have to represent my brand. If I am at Silverbird Galleria [the mall], I can't [drink] Coke, when I know I should be having Lacasera. If I am out or anything, I should have a beauty carriage about me. I'm officially the sweetest girl in Nigeria as Miss Lacasera so I have to be very approachable with my personality, stay beautiful, I have to really represent, it is all about the brand, promoting it with who I can be." Through this statement, she maintains that she is able to use her positive attributes to enhance the Lacasera brand.

Queen Nigeria and MBGN leverage their connections to major media companies, bartering for free advertising in exchange for services and monetary sponsorship. In a meeting with a potential sponsor, Lola explained the difference between a barter arrangement and a co-sponsorship package during a meeting with a potential corporate sponsorship. "A barter arrangement is, let's say I have this newspaper," gesturing towards a newspaper on the glass top conference table,

> And you have this phone. You want my phone and I want your newspaper. We trade and everyone is happy. A sponsorship is when you have this phone and this newspaper is our event. You provide free services and we give you PR at our event. Whenever we promote MBGN we mention you as an official sponsor. We can mention this on the website, on the radio, on TV and in our cinemas. Right now we are only looking for sponsors

Lola suggested that while a barter relationship involved a more equal financial exchange, the sponsorship agreement was based on Silverbird's own self-devised valuation of their media brand. After Lola provided details about the arrangement, the sponsor's face visibly relaxed and she nodded, "Yes that sounds good. That's what I want." Lola then assured her, "I will just put in all in writing for your approval. MBGN is such a superbrand that you will get a lot of exposure, it's just hard to break in."

In part through the success of MBGN, Silverbird has built its brand around the image of being cutting-edge and in tune with international trends. The Silverbird television station regularly airs foreign syndicated content like "Desperate Housewives" in addition to locally generated content. Silverbird's beauty pageants serve as its frontline marketing campaign. As an executive explained to me about the role the contest plays in the overall company, "MBGN brings us out there. Silverbird is not a dull brand, it's a bright brand. People want to know where she is. Be associated with her. And know what she's up to. She helps our brand, and adds a lot of value to the company." Organizers often invited MBGN contestants to business events, stressing that the beauty queens attracted attention and intrigue from prospective business partners. They maintained that MBGN not only built the Silverbird brand, but could also promoted other corporations, especially since MBGN held a critical advantage over other pageants in representing the country internationally.

In contrast Queen Nigeria, which is associated with the Nigerian Television Authority, a much more established network, is viewed as a more old-fashioned media outlet. That company maintained that they had a corporate edge because they were the largest African broadcast network with stations covering all of Nigeria. They used Queen Nigeria to attract more young people and to directly compete with Silverbird. As an affiliate of Queen Nigeria who worked with the private marketing consulting firm explained to me, starting Queen Nigeria was part of a larger process of NTA building a new name:

> [Queen Nigeria] makes NTA have a name and then it can compete with MBGN, because NTA is not happy that MBGN came and overshadowed them. The Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria should be handled by NTA as the largest Network. If you are showcasing or presenting a girl to represent Nigeria and the medium through which Nigeria should be known [and] NTA is not there, it means there is something wrong. MBGN has been doing it for a very long time, so that was why NTA said let's do something of our own.... Now NTA showed people their level of thinking is not old anymore. It is like a new revolution in activities in NTA, so that is why I think they ventured into pageants. They're into shows and entertainment too now.

Thus, NTA officials viewed their collaboration with Queen Nigeria as a way of injecting new energy into their network and as a way of one-upping Silverbird.

Financial Sponsorship: Corporations and the State

Pageant organizers shared that one of the biggest hurdles they faced in their jobs was securing adequate sponsorship for the event. Their goal of generating revenue was often thwarted by skepticism, neglect and sometimes even outright hostility from potential sponsors. Their reputations as credible brands were especially important in a context where beauty pageants like other industries were sometimes associated with dodgy business ethics. MBGN in particular had developed a positive reputation which helped sustain it. As one vendor shared when I asked him to explain why he described MBGN as "classy":

> Because they don't promise you a price and fail, they promise this is a price and you get it immediately. They have good deliverance. They keep to their words. And for the girls they pay them immediately [which] allows the girls to invest. Most of those who participate in the pageant are paid before the end of the pageant. This makes the pageant the best.

Several up-and-coming vendors (e.g. photographers) agreed to work for pageants pro-bono in exchange for promotional advertising and exposure. Other industries, especially football [soccer] were often brought up as a silent rival to beauty pageants since they drew considerable financial support from the government and corporate sponsors. In contrast, beauty organizers wrote countless proposals in the hopes of attracting funding from the state, local companies and/or multinational corporations, but received only a small fraction of the level of support generated by football. Lamenting the lack of financial backing, particularly from the state, Emeka noted:

> The beauty pageant industry here deserves more attention because of the role they play in developing countries. In other places they treat their queens like second first ladies. But the Nigerian government is not really as interested here. The government is not really taking advantage of this platform, they don't see the value. They just pay lip service to us. Look I'm a feminist, but the bottom line is this is a business, and if it means women have to parade around in swimsuits to make money so be it.

Emeka observed that the state does not fully capitalize on the value-added potential of the industry and thus missed out on a viable economic initiative.

One the major hurdles organizers sought to overcome was the fact that some corporations viewed beauty pageant sponsorship as too limiting because of its association with women. When I asked why they encountered difficulty in securing more sponsorship, one organizer explained:

> Because it is just about ladies and people don't want to limit themselves to brands just for women, most brands are for everybody, if you start limiting your brands to only women, then, you'll lose sales. Like having a women's drink, you'll surely lose sales from men also, so it is very hard.

While both MBGN and Queen Nigeria had to contend with this gendered barrier, they were generally able to attract specific types of support due to the structure of their respective organizations. For MBGN with its attention to international competitions, private multinational corporations seemed like a natural fit. In contrast, Queen Nigeria primarily targeted state governments to legitimize their endeavors and also received backing from local corporations like Glo (a homegrown mobile network) and Mr. Biggs (a fast food chain).

MBGN viewed multinational corporations as the key target for sponsorship because they were the only companies with sufficient resources to afford the full benefits of the partnership. Organizers felt that multinationals were a logical fit with their brand message, even as they found it difficult to convince a large number of multinationals to buy their message. One executive noted:

> Multinationals need to realize the benefits of using these young delegates as ambassadors for their products. It's hard for them. You have to sell the fact that they can sell your product. And it's a lifestyle. Why shouldn't Coke Light realize that they can be used to symbolize this new diet drink that they have? Because our contestants are young and fit and coca cola light is just perfect for such girls.

They insisted that while in other places in the world, clothing, jewelry and beauty companies flocked to beauty pageants to promote their products, in Nigeria local companies were not cash rich and disregarded the importance of advertising. In my job as an unpaid intern for MBGN, much of my time was spent writing proposals and presentations for a wide array of corporations. On my first day on the job, Lola asked me to brainstorm a list of ideal companies to focus on for sponsorship. The final list included Moet, Blackberry, Rolex, and Range Rover among other luxury brands. Despite our numerous attempts, we were only able to obtain free alcoholic beverages from Moet. One day Anesh, an expatriate who worked for Silverbird, checked in on our progress and then proceeded to give us a pep talk and specific tactics to increase our chances. "Look when you deal with multinational companies [with Nigerian satellite offices] go directly to the head or as far up as you can go because they don't trust anyone below them. When you deal with the local Nigerian businesses go for the middle, because they will be able to convince their bosses." Anesh's strategy was meant to target the specifics of the Nigerian business environment; while multinationals expected more formal dealings, Nigerian corporations would be more comfortable with using connections to help broker a deal. By being sensitive to the "Nigerian factor" that differentially influenced multinational and local companies, Anesh believed that we could optimize our prospects.

Because of their affiliation with multinationals, MBGN officials were especially concerned with being in line with "international standards;" thus, rather than comparing themselves to other Nigerian beauty pageants they usually paid closer attention to other national franchises outside the country as well as the major international beauty contests. For example, in preparing the program for their event, they thumbed through copies of the Miss Universe handbook. They insisted that this year's brochure had to be exceptional because last year's had been rushed and contained a number of typos. The national director expressed his embarrassment at travelling abroad with the brochure, noting that he refused to show it to other national director from other countries.

Another challenge MBGN faced in terms of appealing to multinationals as sponsors was the belief that these brands did not want to offend any part of the country. As an organizer commented:

> A lot of the multinational brands in Nigeria shy away from getting involved in

> pageants for one or two reasons. The primary one is that the multi-nationals which sell its brand across the nation are religious sensitive. What I mean by that is that it will not want to upset the Muslim community in the North if they are promoting Lux soap in the North where women are seen to be covered up, to be more conservative. As such they are very cautious when advertising because they are looking at the national perspective, not that we will just promote the product in Lagos. Another hurdle which is being taken away slowly is family values, a lot of families don't allow their girls to get involved in pageants just because they see it as not reputable ones for girls to involve in. It is slowly opening up since we won the Miss World in 2001, a lot of parents are being enlightened and realized that it is not what they think it is and as such the awareness is a lot better and the acceptance is open. However, we still have the problem when we get to the North because of the religious reasons, the people from the North don't let their girl to take part in any competition the only experience they have is to their pulpit, that's it. They shy away from publicity like that.

His comments frame religious concerns about modesty and body display in pageantry as an economic concern since multinationals seek the broadest appeal for their products. As such they would be disinclined to sponsor beauty pageants because of opposition from some segments of the Nigerian population.

Both pageants developed an ambivalent relationship with the state, switching between a level of mistrust and sought-after patronage. At MBGN, I spent hours writing invitation letters and finessing sponsorship presentations for state dignitaries, requesting financial backing and their attendance as special guests of honor for the show. Organizers hand-delivered the typed letters to personal assistants and handlers hoping that politicians' attendance at their event would facilitate further political access. Organizers also included the pictures and titles of relevant governors and the heads of state ministries in their brochures. However, MBGN also insisted that they did not rely on the state for assistance, noting a shift in Nigeria's economic landscape towards embracing private enterprise. One organizer noted:

> Historically, government accounts for all jobs, all patronage and all income in Africa especially Nigeria. Now the private sector in entertainment with no support from the government is becoming successful with athletes, pageants, artistes who are becoming successful on their own. They are the ones that should get all the national honours. They are the greatest Nigerians ever.

He later insisted that government officials were useless "illiterate village guys" stating "They can discuss village politics [but] they are not going to talk to me about pageants and shows." In his next breath, however, he insisted that the government should play an active role in supporting the entertainment industry by passing a law that required all banks to reserve one percent of their loans for the industry.

Queen Nigeria pursued governors as the ideal primary sponsors for their events, and in the 2009 cycle, Plateau state served as an official sponsor. However this close alliance with the state meant that while MBGN was judged through a largely impartial lens, contestants and spectators viewed Queen Nigeria as susceptible to partisanship. At the grand finale of Queen Nigeria, when the winner was announced the hall erupted in cheers and screams. Miss Plateau, the contestant from Queen Nigeria's host city, had emerged the winner. I slipped backstage going through the side door to observe the reactions of some of the contestants and their minders. "PDP!!" [the name of a political party] one of the girl's handlers screamed. I also heard other

people yelling “PDP” in the hallway and outside in the audience. I was instructed to collect the small laminated placard that the contestants had pinned to the outside of their clothes to identify their state. As I collected the placards, the contestants’ reactions ranged from visibly angry (some contestants stormed out), to crying to nonchalant. I hugged one of them who whispered in my ear, “Now you’ve seen how a pageant can be influenced” and walked way. On the short car ride back to the hotel, some of the contestants sullenly grumbled that the show was a “family affair” which allowed Miss Plateau, a contestant from the host state, to emerge the winner. PDP or the People’s Democratic Party, Nigeria’s ruling political party which has produced both of Nigeria’s Presidents since its return to democratic rule in 1999, was used in this case as shorthand for political influence and power run amok.

In a later interview with a contestant, she placed the blame squarely on the organizers due to their close ties to the state. She noted:

> I blame the organizers. Your ‘yes’ should be your ‘yes’ and your ‘no’ should be your ‘no.’ Not because you want to collect money or peanuts from your government, then you turn to [….] Like the Yoruba saying goes ‘because you want to eat meat, then you will now be calling a cow *brother cow*. It is not supposed to be like that. So, I think it is the organisers that have the problem not the elders. It was so obvious, the result was there and they stroke like three names. And you know it was a regional stuff, one person from the West, one from the South, East. Then Plateau. You know Plateau won.

She pointed out that the winner and the runner-ups each represented the major geopolitical regions of the country, serving to placate concerns about favoritism in the pageant.

Conclusion

In this chapter I showed how contestants and organizers in both pageants must differently negotiate between local, national, and global levels in their attempts to get ahead and generate revenue while also maneuvering within the worlds of corporations, government, media, and public opinion. Contestants see their individual concerns of financial gain as compatible with the goals of national development through charity work, since they believe that they will not be taken seriously without the social status and cash flow associated with beauty queens. They also view MBGN as the more lucrative pageant due to its higher visibility, established brand value and stronger ties to the entertainment and business worlds. MBGN remains deeply invested in the “rags to riches” narrative since it allows them to accept direct responsibility for the upward mobility of their contestants. While Queen Nigeria pursues the state as its primary source of funding, MBGN views multinationals as the ideal. These competing interests highlight the tug-of-war between state and private capital within the context of Nigeria’s political economy.

Chapter 6:
The Cultural Politics of Beauty Pageants

We, at the new Miss Nigeria office, wish to emulate other Secular countries around the world (such as Indonesia, Singapore, Egypt, Jordan, Algeria, Lebanon, Turkey, Georgia, Kazakstan) who all hold pageants in a credible and decent manner. Countries such as Indonesia with the largest Islamic population in the world who take part in international beauty pageants, or Cyprus and Ethiopia with large populations of conservative Christians who take part in beauty pageants try and balance modern liberties with traditional values. This is what we will achieve at the Miss Nigeria office.

-Creative Director, Miss Nigeria 2010

As the quotation above by the Creative Director of the 2010 Miss Nigeria pageant[36] highlights, Nigeria is currently in the midst of grappling with establishing itself as a modern nation while still retaining its traditional sensibilities. The Creative Director highlights Nigeria's ability to retain a sense of cultural values sensitive to the religious and cultural diversity of Nigeria (for example by making comparisons to other culturally conservative countries), while also emphasizing Nigeria's modern secular and more cosmopolitan political identity. The Director's comparison to other nations highlights the extent to which Nigerians are keenly aware of their place in the globe. In this dissertation I show how this attempt to "balance" tradition and modernity, efforts to highlight Nigeria's competitiveness on the global stage, and expectations about Nigeria's particular trajectory works through a multilayered process of nationalism which involves appealing to both a broad and diverse domestic population and a more cosmopolitan, international public. The beauty industry is a site where ideas about Nigeria are created yet also challenged. While these circumstances are uniquely Nigerian, I argue that conditions specific to this national context shape its trajectory from post-independence to an emerging, more fully autonomous nation with a developing economy.

This dissertation advances three core theoretical arguments. *First, I contend that nationalist logics work through a complex orientation that focuses both inward and outward.* Emerging nations like Nigeria simultaneously seek to unify the country within while positioning themselves as major global players outside of their borders. This process is especially heightened within the context of Nigeria due to the high stakes involved; if these logics are not reconciled, this relatively unstable nation is at risk of internal disintegration, as well as the loss of its foothold in the international political economy. Foreign nations also influence Nigeria's national trajectory as the country's international reputation often comes to bear on its sense of national identity. The dynamics of national belonging and global achievement can alternatively validate or threaten each other, shaped by articulated processes related to class, gender, and religious-ethnicity. These processes are also historically contingent. In the case of Nigeria the rise of religious fundamentalism, particularly Islamism, fuses together religion and politics. Nigerian's specific form of emergent nationalism also embeds tensions between its federal system and the forces of indigeneity that influence understandings of ethnicity, culture, and nation; and its economic status as an oil-rich nation with accompanying contradictions between state and market. Through an analysis of beauty pageants held in Nigeria, I focus on three forms of emergent nationalism which help ground these tension-filled logics: *cultural-nationalism* which remains focused on valuing and unifying Nigeria's cultural diversity; *cosmopolitan-nationalism* which centers Nigeria's capacity for global integration; and *global-nationalism* which accounts for how international expectations may influence national trajectories.

[36] This is Nigeria's first national pageant which began in 1957 and re-emerged in 2010 after a six year hiatus.

My second line of argument *highlights a shifting direction of globalization, evident in the rise of would-be BRIC nations that are on the cusp of cementing their positions as newly developed countries successfully following in the footsteps of countries like China and India.* Since Nigeria is still in the middle of this transition and has been lauded for its high potential, it is an especially fruitful location for analyzing this shift. I argue that paying close attention to emerging nations is critical to understanding the next phase of globalization, as a range of nations seek to dominate the international political economy and cultural marketplace. Middle-stage countries like Nigeria, Vietnam, and Pakistan seek to shift the global center towards their own nations by helping to create a new world order that challenges yet recognizes Westernization and the hybridity of cultures. While the globalization literature tends to ignore Africa or only focus on the region as a victim of globalization, I highlight Nigeria, a regional powerhouse, as a prominent actor in this process.

Finally, *I analyze relationships between globalization and nationalism by examining connections among economy, politics and culture.* I challenge the dominant perspective in scholarship on nationalism and on globalization, both of which open inquiry by highlighting the growth of economic capital and/or the influence of the state, and which assume that the ideological dimensions of both of these processes are filtered through arrangements between state and capital. These literatures assume that cultural changes are merely a consequence of economic and political conditions. While acknowledging the importance of Nigeria's political-economy, I emphasize the importance of culture as a key way in which people position themselves as members of the international political economy and guide the trajectories of their nations. I show how symbolic changes in and of themselves can influence the economy and politics. Cultural shifts are not only shaped by the political-economy, but also influence the direction that it may take, informed by global and national formations. I examine these relationships at both the macro and micro levels by showing how the Nigerian beauty pageant industry attempts to connect everyday understandings of national and global belonging on the ground to macro shifts in the Nigerian political economy through the state and private enterprise. The two national pageants I studied intentionally sought to link to the ordinary experiences of Nigerians through "authentic" cultural representation and by trumpeting their charity work while they also appealed to the state and corporate worlds for financial support and political legitimacy.

Summary of Empirical Argument

I opened the dissertation by describing Nigeria's failed attempt to host the 2002 Miss World beauty pageant. I used this unfolding event to illustrate the enormous pitfalls that threatened to pull the nation apart. Through the lens of a global event, I examined the internal and external narratives that drew on ideas about Nigeria's political geography in addition to gendered tropes of security, morality, and advocacy. Debates about whether Abuja, the intended host city could be considered a neutral cosmopolitan center or part of the North and thus culturally conservative highlighted broader struggles about the direction of the nation. Similarly, discourses about protecting "vulnerable" women pointed to larger notions of Nigeria's place in the world. I argued that religious politics not only within the context of Nigeria but also globally constitute an important prism through which to view these events, but that religion should not be considered the main determinant of the conflicts. The event's symbolic mandate to present itself as a modern and thriving nation should not be divorced from protest on the ground and the power and liabilities of the state.

I next traced the earlier trajectory of Miss Nigeria to provide political and economic context for understanding contemporary beauty pageants. I discussed the timeline of the pageant as a form of cultural entertainment in the prefiguring moments of post-colonialism, a commercial enterprise during the height of Nigeria's oil wealth, the impact of the military regime on the state-aligned Miss Nigeria contest, and the rise of religious elements within Nigeria during the present era of the "global village." I use this history to contextualize my analysis of two contemporary national Nigerian pageants. Through a discussion of their differential approaches to cultural authenticity, idealized femininity, beauty and embodiment, class trajectories, and sponsorship, I show how these two pageants project distinctive visions of the nation with Queen Nigeria focused on unifying Nigeria's diverse cultural patchwork and the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria concentrated on globalizing the nation by strategizing within the international arena.

Table 1: Summary Comparisons of National Pageants

	The Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria	**Queen Nigeria**
Nationalism	Cosmopolitan	Cultural
Cultural Authenticity	Tactical (Strategy, Discovery, and Flexibility)	Tactile (Rootedness, Familiarity, and Federalism)
Idealized Femininity	Cultivating Self Confidence (e.g. Modeling Competition)	Testing Cultural Competency (e.g. Cooking Contest)
Embodiment	Bikinis Required	Bikinis Banned
Beauty Standards	Strategize within International Beauty Standards	Challenge International Beauty Standards
Class Trajectories	Jetsetters	Cultured Beauties
Target Sponsorship	Private Multinational Corporations	The State

Revisiting the Nigerian National Question

These forms of nationalism are historically situated, predicated on Nigeria's shift from post-independence to its current "emerging nation" status. I defined emerging nationalism in two ways: (1) emerging onto the international political economy during a period of economic growth and reform; and (2) settling into more concrete definitions of national identity that promote solidarity *and* heterogeneity. The key issue that plagues Nigeria is how it will reconcile conflicts generated by its colonial legacy in which a diverse group of people were shoehorned into one nation-state. As Nigeria continues to forge a nation out of this complex and messy diversity, questions persist about whether a particular ethnic group, religion, or region will come to dominate or become marginalized (Human Rights Watch 2006). Three key circumstances of the wider Nigerian political economy helped shape my discussion of Nigerian nationalism: (1) the question of the role of the North in the country, particularly with regards to sharia law and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism; (2) relationships between the federal system and indigeneity (the original settlers in a state, based on genealogical background) which define local states by ethnic-based definitions; (3) the impact of oil on nationalism and Nigeria's place in the world.

While Northern elements of the country expressed discomfort with beauty pageants long before the 2002 Miss World pageant because of culture and religion, I use this event to highlight the fusion between religion, politics, and regional delineations in Nigeria. This event must be understood in a post-9/11 and post-sharia context. Worldwide perceptions of the Miss World conflicts in Nigeria, especially perceptions in the U.S., were in part colored by the hunt for the next hotbed of radical Islam. Furthermore, connections between religion and politics have been heightened by the implementation of sharia law in some Northern states. This move to establish

varied regional legal regimes highlights issues of political fragmentation, the viability of secessionist politics and the prospect of secular ideologies, all of which test the federal model of the nation (Falola 1998). This federation model allowed for the implementation of Islamic legal doctrine, deepening the use of religion to hasten political access and control.

The "federal character" principle was codified in Article 14(3) of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution. A federal system was meant to ensure equality among the various groups in Nigeria by mandating that they would have uniform access to federal resources including oil revenues, civil servant jobs, and military positions. However, this system legitimizes discrimination based on indigeneity. That is, since federalism is measured through a quota system allocated through the states, officials at the state-level work to ensure that government funds are only given to the "rightful state recipients," defined through indigeneity. Only state and local governments (i.e. counties) can decide who is an indigene, meaning that they effectively divide people into one of two categories: those who are indigenes and can trace their ethnic roots to that original area, and those who are settlers and cannot legitimately lay claim to a state regardless of their length of residence. This system assumes inflexible divisions between these two categories, laying the groundwork for disputes throughout the country (Bach 1997; Human Rights Watch 2006; Kraxberger 2005).

In sum, the federal system draws specific lines in which ethnic and cultural distinctions get mapped onto specific states, thus preserving ethnic distinctions at the state level and, by extension, at the level of the federation. Both of the national pageants I studied worked within this context, problematizing this association in distinctive ways. Queen Nigeria tweaked the federation model by expanding definitions of cultural authenticity beyond indigeneity to include residence, birth, and grassroots acceptance. Yet the pageant still retained faith in the promise that the nation will ultimately be unified through its diversity. The Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria adopted a cosmopolitan perspective towards cultural representation, encouraging contestants to indirectly learn about Nigeria's multiethnic population regardless of where they were from. Both of these strategies attempted to transform cultural definitions of national identity by reworking notions of authenticity and diversity within the context of Nigeria's social divisions.

Scholars have discussed the critical role of "oil consciousness" (Adunbi 2011) in Nigerian nationalism and its status in the international political economy (Watts 1997). This consciousness refers to Nigeria's global self-importance as a resource-rich area in addition to the accompanying conflicts that shake the nation due to struggles over the allocation of oil revenues and uneven development of the Niger Delta region, the source of Nigeria's oil (Adunbi 2011; Okonta 2008). In Nigeria oil is both nationalized through state control and also globalized since it serves as the country's ticket to tighten its position in the international marketplace. The oil industry is formed through an alliance between multinational corporations and the state, linked together by private sector brokers at the local level (Adunbi 2011). This alliance sets in motion a consistent tension between the state and the market, flanked by local private enterprise and multinational corporations. I have shown how both national pageants navigated within this framework with Queen Nigeria allying with the state as its main financial supporter and MBGN pursuing multinational companies as ideal. These economic decisions came with attendant roadblocks and obstacles. Queen Nigeria's association with the state meant that its final decisions were highly susceptible to allegations of government influence, connecting to the larger popular consciousness about the corrupt nature of state-sponsored activities. MBGN's pursuit of multinational companies was met with concerns about to what extent a deal might compromise the broad-based consumer base of international firms. That is, multinational

corporations sought to penetrate the entire Nigerian marketplace and pushback against pageants in the country remained a liability to this aim.

Taken together, federalism, indigeneity, religious politics and the oil industry highlight the dual impact of social divisions and global aspirations which frame visions of Nigerian nationalism presented through pageantry. Examining the dynamics of Nigerian beauty pageant industry reflects the country's broader position in the global market as it seeks to position itself as a rising member in the international community of nations while bridging its diverse population.

Beauty Pageants around the World: Implications for Future Research

Examining beauty pageants throughout the world can deepen understanding of gendered boundaries, political contestation, economic conditions, and cultural membership, pinpointing moments of division and convergence. Recent news features in prominent media highlight some of these tensions as they have played out in specific globalized sites. A 2010 New York Times article examined two rival Columbian pageants to highlight social divisions within the country along with pressures to exert increased global prominence. The better-known Miss Columbia pageant was held in a boutique hotel and included mostly light-skinned contestants from rich families. In contrast, the Independence Queen contest operated on a shoestring budget, included a street festival through the slums' street, and almost all contestants were Afro-Columbian. As the article explains, these two pageants present two competing versions of Columbia: one which is rich, white and glamorous and another which is poor, neglected and involves the raising of Black consciousness.[37] In this dissertation, I have articulated a similar contrast by arguing that emerging nations often must contend with a dual facing logic in which contrasting visions of the nation are projected. Future research can employ comparative ethnographic methods in order to specify the factors that influence emergent nationalism in particular countries around the world.

In the case of Nigeria, I plan to deepen my case comparison by considering how diasporic strands of nationalism have played a role in Nigeria's national development. Although unconnected to official national pageants in Nigeria, these ethnic Nigerian pageants in places like the United States, Canada, and the Netherlands, help create a bridge to the country of origin, while also building ethnic communities in countries of settlement. Through a multi-sited approach, I will illuminate the varied incorporation and transnational strategies of Nigerian immigrants in different parts of the world, while tracing ways in which they remain connected to the development of Nigerian national identity. In this project I will be able to actively connect concepts of racialization and ethnicity to the literature on nationalism. Conceptually I define these diasporic beauty pageants as global cases which employ a cultural-nationalist perspective.

Table 2: Comparative Case Studies of Nigerian Nationalism

	LOCAL	**GLOBAL**
CULTURAL	Queen Nigeria	Nigerian Diaspora Pageants
COSMOPOLITAN	MBGN	Miss World 2002

Ideas about race and ethnicity figure prominently in most pageants throughout the globe. For example the 2012 Miss World Fiji contest erupted into controversy when the 16-year old mixed-race winner (Torrika Watters) was dethroned for both being under-aged and for criticism that she looked "too Western" and could not "properly" represent the country's population.[38] Torrika Watter's failure to meet minimum age requirements and the public outcry that her win highlighted the whitewashing of international standards, reveal formal and informal ways in

[37] Romero, Simon. "Dueling Beauty Pageants Put Income Gap on View" *New York Times*. November 30, 2010.
[38] Ortiz, Erik. "Beauty queen stripped of title over age, not race" New York Daily News. May 14, 2012

which ideas about age-specific female beauty are tied to nationalism. Ideas about fixed physical appearance (most notably through socially constructed ideas of race and ethnicity) infuse ideas about national belonging and sustain the marginalization of specific groups.

These assumptions about racial purity and national representation have rocked beauty pageants for decades and are linked to larger and shifting social contexts. Within the United States, for instance, the crowning of racial minorities has been heralded as a signal of progress and equality throughout the country while formal and informal barriers to entry display racial discrimination (Banet-Weiser 1999; Craig 2002). Within the context of Nigeria, debates about the degree to which ethnic membership maps onto state lines, and about who can "rightfully" represent a state and whether regional differences should be emphasized or obscured, play out through debates about cultural authenticity and national identity. As ideas about relationships between federalism and indigeneity transform, new narratives about ethnicity, culture, and the nation begin to emerge. These are fascinating processes to document and analyze.

Beauty pageants also highlight how gender boundaries are both tenuous and sturdy. The 2012 case of Jenna Talackova who was initially disqualified from the Miss Canada Universe competition for being a transgender woman highlights this. While Talackova (with the assistance of her feminist lawyer-activist Gloria Allred) successfully prompted the Miss Universe Organization to reverse its ruling by challenging the requirement that each contestant must be a "natural born woman," the social borders around femininity remained intact. The existence of formal rules of entry which often require contestants to meet minimum age requirements, be unmarried, never pregnant, and to be "born a woman," highlight how discourses of femininity are contoured by categories of age and status. Talackova, for her part, maintained that she sought to use her participation in the pageant as an opportunity to empower women like herself and to open the door for others, noting, "I've set a precedent for a lot of women in my situation so once I step on that stage every woman in every other country that doesn't have the option I have now can fight for it. I feel so blessed with this opportunity."[39] While beauty pageants are often viewed as prototypical sites of women's oppression, contestants often saw their own participation as a sign of empowerment, especially in terms of having a voice in the national and global arenas. Changing ideas about gendered representation within Nigerian beauty pageants signal Nigeria's place in the world. Studying these shifts on the ground as they remain tied to ideas about class, ethnicity, politics and the economy helps illuminate the course that Nigeria's emergent nationalism is taking.

[39] Szklarski, Cassandra. "Transgendered Miss Universe Canada contestant Jenna Talackova plans on making serious run at top prize" The Canadian Press May 15, 2012

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