GERTRUD HÜWELMEIER

Socialist Cosmopolitanism Meets Global Pentecostalism: Charismatic Christianity Among Vietnamese Migrants after the Fall of the Berlin Wall

Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity

Max-Planck-Institut zur Erforschung multireligiöser und multiethnischer Gesellschaften

mpimmg

Gertrud Hüwelmeier
Socialist Cosmopolitanism Meets Global Pentecostalism: Charismatic Christianity Among Vietnamese Migrants after the Fall of the Berlin Wall

Download: www.mmg.mpg.de/workingpapers

Abstract

By focusing on Pentecostal charismatic Christianity, this article explores the encounter of Vietnamese boat people in former West Germany with their political counterparts, Vietnamese contract workers in former East Germany and Vietnamese contract workers from ex-COMECON countries, who became asylum seekers in reunified Germany. It argues that Vietnamese migrants, formerly divided by different political attitudes and experiences, create social relations by joining global Pentecostal networks. However, this new unity cannot be understood as a new form of diasporic ethno-nationalism, despite the fact that many believers live primarily within Vietnamese networks, some of which extend transnationally to Vietnam. Once former contract workers from Russia, Poland, the Czech Republic and other East European countries become mobile believers, most of their proselytizing activities are based on global Christian sociality. Reconstructing their previous global socialist networks, new believers are spreading the Gospel in ex-COMECON countries and in late socialist Vietnam.

Keywords: socialist cosmopolitanism; Pentecostalism; Vietnam; Germany; boat people; contract workers

Author

GERTRUD HÜWELMEIER is an anthropologist, Senior Research Fellow and lecturer in the Department of European Ethnology, Humboldt-University, Berlin, and a Visiting Scholar at the Max-Planck-Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen.

ghuewelmeier@yahoo.de

Contents

The Holy Spirit Church

In 2008, I participated in an annual convention of the Holy Spirit Church, a charismatic Pentecostal church in Germany, founded by Mr Tung[1], a boat refugee from Vietnam. Every summer, about 500 believers, who travel from various regions of Germany, Poland, Russia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, Canada and Vietnam, gather at the Loreley, a famous rock at the Rhine River. This public space is a huge tourist site, part of the UNESCO World Heritage Cultural Landscape Upper Middle Rhine Valley visited by tens of thousands of people from all over the world every year.[2] Followers of the Holy Spirit Church have appropriated part of this public space by temporarily transforming it into a sacred place.

At the Loreley I met believers I already knew from my sites of fieldwork in Berlin and Hanoi.[3] During the gathering, I encountered Pastor Tran from Vietnam, the leader of an international church, whom I had previously visited in Ho Chi Minh City in 2006 and again two years later in Hanoi. As part of a global network, he was invited by the Holy Spirit Church to preach at the annual convention. Pastor Tran is not the only one who travels between Vietnam and Germany. I also met Mr Tien, a twenty-five-year-old punk with pierced ears, whom I knew from Sunday services in the Berlin branch of the Holy Spirit Church. While growing up, he had lived with his grandmother in Vietnam, as both his parents were former contract workers in Eastern bloc countries. In 2003, he arrived in Germany with a student visa, but was not successful in completing his German language course and, as a consequence, could not enter university. Mr Tien lived in Germany as a non-documented migrant for one and a half years, began dating a German girl, and later returned to Vietnam. Finally, he married his East German girl friend in Vietnam and returned to Germany by using family reunion regulations, arriving in Germany only shortly before we met in the Holy Spirit Church in Berlin. During the Loreley prayer camp, he told me that

---

1 I have changed all personal names as well as the names of the churches.
2 According to the legend, Loreley, a beautiful young woman, lured navigators of this river to their doom with her alluring singing, much like the Sirens of ancient Greek myth (Hüwelmeier 2010e).
3 I started visiting the Berlin branch of the Holy Spirit Church from 2006 onwards. During my fieldwork, the branch of about 50 believers moved to three different places, due to high rents they had to pay as they were guests in buildings owned by other churches, run by Germans. I participated in Sunday services and visited church members at home and in their work places, such as small flower shops and snack bars. I also took part in evangelization campaigns and in prayer camps in other places in Germany. By also conducting fieldwork in Hanoi, I focused on return migrants and their transnational connections.

he was ready to accept Jesus into his life and was preparing himself together with other young people to be baptized on the rocks of the Rhine River.

For many years, the headquarters of the Holy Spirit Church was situated in a small town in the western part of Germany, and it only recently moved to Berlin. Starting from a small-sized city, Pastor Tung founded many branches in West Germany, in cities such as Stuttgart and Munich, as well as in small towns and in the countryside, where many home churches emerged during the 1980s.

Although founded during the 1980s in West Germany, it was not until the beginning of the 1990s that the Holy Spirit Church extended its outreach globally. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the pastor felt a call from God to proselytize 'the East'. From that time onwards, he and his co-believers, apostles and evangelists, visited various places in former East Germany, among others the asylum seekers' accommodations, many of them located in remote areas, so as to bring the gospel to those people who had never heard about the Bible before. During the 1990s, branches of the Church spread to parts of former eastern socialist Europe. Pastor Tung narrated his emotions after the fall of the Wall: 'My heart was very touched, because of Vietnam. We also had a reunification and many of us had to leave Vietnam. And I pray, I feel joy with the German people, but I have pity for my Vietnamese people. And I pray to God, "God, save the Vietnamese, everywhere in the world." '

According to the pastor, the global network of the Holy Spirit Church has followers working in Germany, Sweden, Denmark, France, Switzerland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and other former eastern bloc countries. Outside Europe, branches exist in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Taiwan. The pastor often travels to visit believers in the different countries. However, travelling by itself does not make somebody a cosmopolitan. But, as the Church aims to missionize in former Socialist countries and various regions in Southeast Asia, it is important to examine to what degree the former concepts of the unity of the socialist world have created new forms of sociability and identity within the global Christian mission. Researchers can then compare these new globally circulating forms of sociability and identity with past and present forms of cosmopolitanism.

My interest lies in exploring this meeting of formerly separate worlds within the territory of Germany, where migrants and refugees from former socialist countries are part of networks that extend into their countries of origin. In addition to asking whether the missionizing in former socialist countries creates new sociabilities, I also ask whether this broadened Christian mission as it is realized within Germany is in any way generating not only Christian difference but also simultaneous cosmopoli-

tan openness. In the first section I look at the arrival of different waves and groups of Vietnamese migrants in Germany, before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall. By focusing on experiences of flight in the case of boat people and of labour migration in socialist countries in the case of Vietnamese contract workers, I move on to investigate whether Vietnamese migrants may be characterized as non-elite cosmopolitans. I then look at the revitalization of religion in Vietnam, as this has an impact on new religious movements in the home country and abroad. The last section deals with issues of linguistic diversity and raises the question whether Pentecostal networks are better grasped by sidestepping an 'ethnic lens' (Glick Schiller et al. 2006). In my conclusion I will reflect on the diversity of religious networks in the diaspora. In contrast to pre-existing Vietnamese Buddhist and Vietnamese Catholic congregations in Germany, Pentecostal networks seem to be able to connect Vietnamese migrants who are otherwise represented as politically disparate groups split along the German East-West axis.

According to Pastor Tung, as Germany is the country of origin of Martin Luther, who translated the Bible into German, this host country of many Vietnamese was an ideal place for conversion. The pastor spoke of a *return mission*, based on a universal spirituality shared by those who are born again and who come from all over the world to reclaim Germany for Jesus. He argued that part of this return mission and God's plan was to bring tens of thousands of Vietnamese to Germany, both West and East. Finally, he reported, hundreds of boat people and former contract workers had already accepted Jesus into their lives in the diaspora. According to Pastor Tung's vision, believers will bring the gospel to other countries, in particular to those places where Vietnamese are living and working: in former eastern bloc countries, in Vietnam and in other parts of Southeast Asia.

As missionization is a central issue of global Pentecostalism (Vasquez and Marquardt 2003; Robbins 2004; Meyer 2010), religious experts as well as ordinary believers become mobile people, travelling to various places in order to proselytize. In contrast to nineteenth-century evangelicalism, which was embedded in a 'colonial modernity' (van der Veer 2002, p.169), with missionaries seen as part of the bourgeois and the privileged elite, and where the flow of religious messages was directed from the west to the 'rest', the new kind of multi-directional interaction and global outreach of today's Pentecostalism creates religious practitioners from below. But can any of the relationalities this missionizing creates across the boundaries of nation-states and sometimes across national and ethnic identities be considered cosmopolitan?

In order to missionize in ex-COMECON (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) countries as well as in late socialist Vietnam, the adherents of the Holy Spirit Church build on their former experiences and contacts as contract workers. These relationships brought them in contact with workers from an array of different countries. In the 1970s and 1980s the Socialist Republic of Vietnam signed bilateral treaties with a number of countries in Eastern Europe, such as Poland and the German Democratic Republic (GDR), and other countries, such as Algeria, Cuba, Mozambique, and Angola, and thus became part of a socialist world that spanned part of the globe. Many of the former Vietnamese contract workers in Germany participated in socialist internationalism on an every-day basis, living in workers' homes and encountering people from many other countries in East German factories. As 'true' cosmopolitans (Hannerz 1990), 'exhibiting a culturally open disposition and interest in continuous engagement with one or other cosmopolitan project' (Vertovec and Cohen 2002, p.8), Vietnamese contract workers were what I will call 'socialist cosmopolitans'. The concept of 'socialist internationalism' is an emic term, based on the official ideology of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries before 1990, and referring to political and class solidarity between workers from various nations and continents. After Stalin's condemnation of the term cosmopolitanism, it had a negative connotation, denoting 'rootlessness', lack of patriotism and questionable loyalty to the Soviet power. Socialist internationalism was always based on a strong national identity maintained through different Soviet institutions, which facilitated its replacement by nationalist slogans after socialism. Nonetheless, the socialist world did produce experiences such as those of some of the contract workers based on shared sociability and common humanity.

Consequently, I propose the term socialist cosmopolitanism, which denotes a relative plasticity and ethnic egalitarianism that characterized the mobility and interaction, trade, and migrant labour networks in ex-COMECON countries. Drawing on the concept of a 'socialist ecumene', discussed by Bayly (2007, p.6), who explored Vietnamese cosmopolitan intellectual families and 'socialist moderns', my particular concern in this article is with the mobile lives led by former Vietnamese contract workers, some of them former students, many of them sons and daughters of communist cadres. They experienced a kind of global socialist life and were engaged in forms of a cosmopolitan sociability by creating overseas friendship relations, economic ties and networks of exchange and reciprocity. Those who remained in Germany after 1990 or have come to Germany with this experience encounter other Vietnamese with a very different set of sensibilities as well as Christians who relate to each other not in

terms of nationality but through global Christian community. This Christian sociability is characterized by transnational networks of care, prayer sessions, economic and spiritual support and by sending money and donations to the home country.

New migrants – The arrival of Vietnamese in Germany

In order to explore what makes Germany a unique place for the encounter of both boat people from South Vietnam and contract workers from North Vietnam, I will briefly focus on the two main waves of arrival of Vietnamese in the two Germanys. The political division of Germany into West and East affected the destinations of migrants from different parts of Vietnam: While boat people, mainly from southern Vietnam, sought refuge in West Germany (Federal Republic of Germany or FRG), other Vietnamese migrants, mainly from northern Vietnam, arrived in East Germany (German Democratic Republic or GDR) as contract workers. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, another group of migrants, namely Vietnamese asylum seekers who had been contract workers in other former socialist countries, entered reunited Germany as well. Due to violence including murders among rival gangs of Vietnamese cigarette sellers on the black market in Berlin and eastern Germany in 1996, former contract workers were widely represented as a 'cigarette mafia' in the German press (Bui 2003).

Although a small number of boat people and contract workers built up social relations after 1990, such as marriages and economic ties (Bui 2003, p.156), in general, boat people and contract workers kept apart from each other. Internal differences among Vietnamese in Germany are based on political, cultural and religious backgrounds. Boat people, a number of whom are traders with Chinese-Vietnamese background, were mainly Catholic or Buddhist (Baumann 2000, p. 44). They left Vietnam after the end of the American-Vietnam War due to political and /or economic reasons, while contract workers, living and working in the former GDR and other east European countries for several years, considered themselves as non-religious. These differences are still relevant today in reunited Germany and manifest themselves in religious congregations such as separate Catholic and Buddhist communities in western and eastern Germany as well as in western and eastern Berlin. In this context, Pentecostal churches serve as places where political tensions, different ethnic backgrounds, legal status, access to the labour market and historically different experiences are being reconciled.

The arrival of tens of thousands of boat people in West Germany in the late 1970s and at the beginning of the 1980s transformed the multi-cultural landscape of the country. As a result of generous support programs from the federal government, for example, language courses and family reunification policies in the early 1980s (Beuchling 2003), boat refugees have become integrated into German society. The first Vietnamese Pentecostal church emerged in West Germany as early as the 1980s. Founded by a boat refugee, as mentioned above, the church spread through his and his co-ethnics' proselytizing activities. By the end of the 1980s, several branches and numerous house churches had been created in Hamburg, Hannover, Stuttgart, Munich, and in various small towns and in villages in West Germany.

Compared to the boat refugees, the circumstances of the arrival of tens of thousands of contract workers in East Germany, the Socialist 'brotherland' of Vietnam, were quite different. Most of the contract workers came from North Vietnam and migrated through labour agreements between the GDR and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, which were signed in 1980. The Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia and other ex-COMECON states signed similar agreements with Vietnam. When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and Germany was reunited in 1990, the fate of the former GDR contract workers was up in the air. During this time of great insecurity, the government of the newly reunited Germany sought political solutions for the migrants including financial incentives for returning to Vietnam and temporary legal guidelines for those who did not wish to return to their home country.[4]

In the 1950s, long before the arrival of boat people and contract workers, a small number of former students from socialist North Vietnam had spent a seminal period of their lives in East Germany. Known as 'die Moritzburger', about 300 children of communist cadres were sent to Moritzburg near Dresden and were educated according to East German standards. Later, a number of them, as well as other students, returned to study at East German universities; others were trained in China or the USSR. Part of the 'worldwide socialist ecumene' (Bayly 2007, p. 9) most of these educated people came from families with a long-standing tradition of literacy and/or from families who actively took part in anti-colonial resistance. They returned to Vietnam after some years of studying and actively participated in building socialism.

---

4   According to the latest national statistics (http://www.statistik-berlin.de/pms2000/sg03/2006/06-09-19b.pdf), 12,426 Vietnamese with legal status are living in Berlin. An estimated number of 120,000 Vietnamese are currently living in reunified Germany including non-documented migrants and migrant *contract workers* from former socialist countries such as the Czech Republic, thousands of whom arrived in Germany and applied for asylum after the fall of the Wall.

As part of an intelligentsia (Bayly 2007, p. 30) who shared a cosmopolitan openness to new experiences as well as language competences and their families' need for remittances, many returned to the 'socialist brotherlands' in the 1980s as part of the contract worker scheme. Former students were now needed as interpreters and 'group leaders' of those Vietnamese working in the factories of East German enterprises. A number of the former students did not return to Vietnam after the reunification of Germany.

In addition, thousands of Vietnamese from eastern bloc countries, having lost their status as contract workers, entered Germany, mostly via the Czech Republic, to apply for asylum in reunited Germany. Many of these had traumatic experiences in ex-COMECON countries, after the fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of local nationalisms. In the following section, I will explore the degree to which these experiences have shaped the global Christian networks rooted in Germany by examining the narratives of boat refugees and contract workers.

Migrants as cosmopolitan subjects

Vietnamese boat refugees were among the first new migrants from Asia in West Germany after the guest worker programs for people from Italy, Turkey, Spain, and Greece in the 1960s and 1970s. Boat refugees left Vietnam on small, leaky boats and endured traumatic circumstances during their flight across the sea, many not even knowing whether they would survive. Vietnamese boat refugees could be considered non-elites who believed that they could never return. Many of them lived in refugee camps in Southeast Asia for months before being transported to Europe or the United States. They carried with them a politics which positioned them against the socialist government of Vietnam and this position was the basis of their acceptance as refugees.

One of them was Pastor Tung, who founded the Holy Spirit Church in Germany after his arrival in 1981 (Hüwelmeier 2010d). Born into a Protestant family outside of Saigon as one of twelve children, he claimed to have lost his belief in God in his early youth. He claims it was God's mercy that allowed him to survive on the boat in the South China Sea and it is this experience of rescue that he regards as his call to serve. Soon after his arrival in Singapore, he began proselytizing in a refugee camp. He continued his work in Indonesia as well as in Germany once he and his family arrived there.

Like Pastor Tung, the followers of the Holy Spirit Church in Germany in the 1980s were boat refugees and had similar flight experiences. One of the adherents was Mr Lanh, who had left Vietnam with two close friends after the end of the American-Vietnam War because they had not seen any possibility for a new start in their country of origin. Mr Lanh, a former law student in Saigon, confirmed that the knowledge he had acquired at the university was useless in socialist Vietnam. Fleeing the country was not an easy decision, as Mr Lanh had to leave his wife and child behind. After their arrival in Germany, the friends were separated and settled in different places. Mr Lanh's friend became a church follower and invited him to visit and to participate in the religious services. This finally led to Mr Lanh also joining the Holy Spirit Church, and he soon became the leader of several home churches and Bible study groups in small villages in northern Germany. As this case demonstrates, new social relationships were created via church networks, which are partly based on previously existing ties of friendship, a certain historical context (the end of the American-Vietnam War) in a specific location (Saigon), and common flight experiences. Sociability, in this case, was shaped by the experience of leaving one's country of origin as a consequence of political transformation. Those who had dreamt of becoming part of the intelligentsia in the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) turned their back on the reunited Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

In the years after 1990 the Holy Spirit Church grew rapidly with the assistance of Vietnamese 'newcomers' from former 'socialist brotherlands', such as the USSR, Poland, and the Czech Republic, a number of whom settled in Germany. Conversion to evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity took place in many countries in postsocialist Eurasia, such as in Ukraine, which was called the 'Bible Belt' of the former Soviet Union (Wanner 2009, p.163) or in Kyrgyzstan, where the 'Church of Jesus Christ' established forty-five congregations, (Pelkmans 2009). One Vietnamese student who had converted to Evangelical Christianity in the former Soviet Union became a pastor in the Holy Spirit Church after his arrival in Germany. His Russian language skills, acquired through his previous cosmopolitan experience, were quite useful in establishing new church networks with Moscow and other places. Another church follower was Mr Mai, whom I met during my fieldwork in Hanoi in 2008. Before arriving in Germany in 1993, he had lived in Russia for five years. Born during the American-Vietnam War, he finished high school in the late 1980s, before leaving for Russia. He intended to stay there for only three years, earn some money, and then return to Vietnam to apply for the university entrance exam. As he reported, he wanted to contribute to the advancement of his country by studying law or business.

His aspirations were quite different from the experiences of the law student Mr Lanh, who was raised as a Catholic and had been trained in South Vietnam during the war. Mr Lanh lived in refugee camps in South East Asia for nearly one year, speaks English and German quite well, and visits his many siblings in the USA on a regular basis. After his conversion to Pentecostalism in Germany, his preaching in the 'Lord's Center', a church mainly visited by Vietnamese, is based on patriotism and love for his country of origin, love between peoples, between spouses, parents and children, and on reconciliation among all mankind.

Contrary to Mr Lanh, Mr Mai had never heard about Christianity in Vietnam and only came into contact with its ideas while entering Germany as an asylum seeker after 1990. At the end of the 1980s he wanted to earn some money abroad, in Siberia, to support his family after *doi moi* (1986), the era of 'renovation' and economic reforms, when, according to him and to my informants in Hanoi, food was very scarce and consumer goods could only be obtained by receiving them as remittances from abroad. Working in the 'socialist brotherlands' just as the various regimes were collapsing and being replaced with rather virulent nationalist politics, he felt most unwelcome. The loss of moral values, the experiences of humiliation and corruption, as well as the exclusion and xenophobia in the former 'socialist brotherlands' are interpreted as signs of the society´s lack of faith and decline and are thus part of conversion narratives.

Mr Mai fled to Germany but his experiences of racialization and discrimination continued. He paid a human trafficking team several hundred US dollars and through them arrived in Germany in 1993. After a long journey, he was placed in different homes for asylum seekers. His residence status was always uncertain and he never knew whether or when he would be deported. In the asylum seeker housing in Germany, he experienced daily violence among the inhabitants, who all came from different countries. According to him, the Vietnamese were at the bottom of the hierarchy, below the Africans, Russians, and Bosnians. He personally experienced fighting, rape, and drug-dealing in the home. The German police could not provide any safety. One day, Mr Mai found a Bible beneath his bed, written in Vietnamese, and started reading. After having lost all his hope, he joined the Holy Spirit Church and started to engage socially with others. According to his narrative of conversion, he met 'good people', who helped him in his desperate situation. Very soon he became part of a translocal network of Christians, who know each other, visit each other and take care of each other. He started talking about his experiences in Siberia and the racist attacks in Germany and thus felt at home in the church as everybody listened

to him. When he barely escaped a fire in the dormitory, he finally accepted Jesus into his life. Some years later, when his status as an asylum seeker was denied, he returned to Hanoi and became a preacher and a leading figure in the underground branches of the Holy Spirit Church.

A number of Vietnamese from East European countries had similar experiences in Germany of not feeling safe in their respective host country. Many of them were asylum seekers and not allowed to work while others arrived in Germany as non-documented migrants. For some of them the Pentecostal churches became places where memories and narratives of migrant experiences could be reconciled. While receiving spiritual support from the churches and being incorporated into a religious network of co-ethnics, these migrants were able to rethink their often painful experiences.

Moreover, the churches built a platform for a new moral order. Within that new space, former contract workers also rethought their experiences with local authorities in late socialist Vietnam. A number of believers and church leaders had formerly been members of the Communist party or leading cadres in Communist youth organizations in Vietnam. By joining the Holy Spirit Church in Germany, they were encouraged to make a 'complete break with the past' (Meyer 1998), and, I would like to add, a complete break with their *political* past. Mrs Vuong, for example, a communist cadre, told me that she had been actively involved in expelling Christian students from school in Hanoi in the 1980s. After her conversion in Germany in the 1990s, she repented as she regarded her political activism as sin. As a former contract worker she accepted responsibility in the church and assumed office as an elder and a preacher, thus establishing a new Christian sociability different from her former political practices and ideologies. At the same time, those from the South found the space to put aside their experiences of flight from socialist Vietnam. Meanwhile, more recent arrivals embraced their new-found Christian sociability as a way of dealing with the allurement of the consumer culture of the recent 'market socialism' in Vietnam and of Europe, since the 'gospel of prosperity', an integral part of the preaching, includes happiness, health and economic success.

One may consider the religious experts and church leaders who forge and maintain transnational religious ties while travelling within global Christian networks as the elites of local congregations. However, some of the leading evangelists of Vietnamese Pentecostal churches are working in German factories. Moreover, their travelling and willingness to engage with the 'Other' does not signal privilege and wealth as in Hannerz' image of the elite cosmopolitan (Hannerz 1990, pp. 238-39; see also Vertovec and Cohen 2002, p.6). Rather, their travel is similar to the transnational

Catholic nuns, who move between Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America but cannot be labelled as elite cosmopolitans (Hüwelmeier 2008b). I have argued elsewhere that these nuns practice a cosmopolitanism from below, by negotiating ethnic diversity within their congregations and by contributing to global justice and human dignity in various parts of the world. Working as teachers and nurses to the poor, they do not exclude non-Christians.

Contrary to Catholic nuns, it is questionable whether the sociability of the evangelizing Vietnamese Pentecostalists, engendered through their travel as they encounter actors of various backgrounds, can be called cosmopolitanism. Pentecostal cosmopolitanism has its limits, in particular with regard to tolerance and respect for other religious traditions. One characteristic feature of Pentecostal charismatic churches is their focus on a dualistic world view: the constant fight between good and evil, between God and Satan. Other religious practices are imagined as 'powers of darkness' (Meyer 1995) and thus have to be abolished.

Discourses about diviners, spirit mediums, soul callers and ancestor veneration are quite popular in everyday discourses in the Pentecostal charismatic churches built by Vietnamese and should therefore be part of the analysis of Pentecostal diasporic practices. The emergence of Pentecostalism among Vietnamese in Germany is immediately connected and influenced by the revitalization of diverse religious practices in Vietnam after the economic reforms known as *doi moi*. Consequently, I will briefly describe the religious diversity in late socialist Vietnam and contextualize its impact for Vietnamese in the diaspora.

Pentecostalism is one of the fastest growing religious movements to be found in contemporary Vietnam, within a context of the increasing importance or revitalization of religious activities (Malarney 2002; Taylor 2007). Pentecostalism competes with various forms of religious practices. For example, spirit possession has once again become quite popular among Vietnamese businesswomen in Hanoi and other places (Endres 2006) as well as in the USA (Fjelstad 2010). Ritual specialists, such as soul callers, are consulted by many people in Vietnam in order to get into contact with the war dead (Lauser 2008). Hanoians in their 80s, whom I met during my fieldwork, who had taken part in the anti-colonial resistance and fought against the Americans, only recently erected ancestor altars at home. National leaders began visiting monuments to the nation's founding ancestors, bringing incense offerings. The influence of the Catholic Church is growing, not least because of recent conflicts with the government. This religious diversity exists together with contemporary consumerism that is marketed as a cosmopolitan lifestyle.

In contemporary Germany, the religious landscape among Vietnamese is as diverse as in Vietnam. In former East German cities, new pagodas are currently in the process of being founded. Only recently, a Vietnamese Buddhist pagoda was inaugurated in a Vietnamese wholesale market in the eastern part of Berlin (Hüwelmeier and Krause 2008; 2010b). Shrines are also common among Vietnamese entrepreneurs in the eastern part of Germany, who erect small altars at the entrances to their grocery stores, travel agencies, and nail studios to protect themselves, their families, and their businesses and to increase their economic success (Hüwelmeier 2008a).

According to the beliefs of Vietnamese Pentecostal Christians, these altars as well as other religious practices are the work of the devil and must be rejected by adherents of Pentecostal churches. Those whose souls are to be saved must abandon their former ritual activities. While the 'battle against idolatry' (van der Veer 2002, p. 173) was already part of the activities of evangelical missionary societies in the 18th and 19th centuries, currently, this battle may take different forms. It is waged in contemporary Pentecostal charismatic underground churches in Vietnam as well as in diasporic headquarters such as the Holy Spirit Church in Germany (Hüwelmeier 2010c). As various spirits are constructed as the Other in Pentecostal discourse (Hüwelmeier 2010a ; Hüwelmeier and Krause 2010a), there is a constant war between the Holy Spirit and other spirits. Given the primacy they accord this spiritual war between good and evil, Vietnamese Pentecostals cannot be said to be cosmopolitans despite their willingness to embrace all comers within their global Christian network. Diversity of political and national backgrounds is tolerated and these differences are said to be of no account within the body of Christ. On the other hand, the leadership is not open to cultural diversity in terms of alternative religious beliefs.

Beyond the ethnic lens?

In several articles about Pentecostal congregations in Germany, Glick Schiller and her colleagues have argued that Pentecostal networks must be studied without an ethnic lens (Glick Schiller 2005; 2009; Glick Schiller et al. 2006; Karagiannis and Glick Schiller 2006). This is because the members of many congregations and the networks of which they are a part stress that they have come together as Christians rather than on the basis of ethnic or national identity, and many of these churches actively recruit German members. Glick Schiller (2009) has stressed that the uni-

versalism of fundamentalist Christian migrants, while globe-spanning and transnational, is not cosmopolitanism. Even as it unites Christian migrants with natives, the universalism of migrant fundamentalism divides Christians from all others. My research demonstrates that a similar argument can be made for the types of sociability forged by Vietnamese Pentecostalism in Germany and transnationally. Despite language constraints among some Vietnamese, especially among former contract workers, which keeps them within Vietnamese-language prayer meetings, Vietnamese Pentecostalists are linked to a global Pentecostal Christian network. The sociability of their Christianity allows them to overcome former political differences around a new unified Vietnamese national identity. Their persisting mastery of Vietnamese is also valued in their missionary efforts in Vietnam. The Holy Spirit Church maintains the Vietnamese language within a project of forming the home country into a Christian one. Yet its members also create church links that are simultaneously global as well as national.

Although Vietnamese is the dominant language in believers' everyday lives and in the Sunday services, adherents and pastors of the Holy Spirit congregation and its networks welcome anyone who joins them in prayer. German visitors are assisted by second generation migrants, sitting next to them, who interpret the sermons and prayers during the healing rituals. At the annual convention at the Loreley, about 500 Vietnamese arrived as well as some German spouses and a few English-speaking preachers. Sermons were translated into German and English. Christian songs were sung in Vietnamese, in English and in German with the lyrics projected onto the wall via a beamer. However, everyday communication among adults took place almost exclusively in Vietnamese during the multi-day prayer camp, while young people, second generation migrants, spoke to each other in German.

Encounters between Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese ordinary believers from other countries also occur within other Vietnamese Pentecostal churches. For example, a group of about thirty believers from Latin America participated in an annual convention of the Lord's Center, another Vietnamese Pentecostal church founded in Germany, in which I took part in 2007. During the one-week gathering, which took place in a small village of northern Germany, where the headquarters of the church is located, prayers were offered in German, Vietnamese, Spanish and English.

Moreover, a number of Vietnamese believers come into contact with Germans and people from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds in their everyday lives and in these activities they use their church membership to extend bonds of sociality across ethnic and cultural divides. By participating in a language course, for example,

Mrs Huong, a former Vietnamese contract worker from the Czech Republic, met a Pentecostal believer from Africa, and asked her where she could find a new place for worship, as Mrs Huong had split from the Holy Spirit Church together with some Vietnamese women. She received a phone number of an African pastor but was not able to contact him as he only spoke English.

Many of the transnational ties of these congregations are forged and maintained by travelling pastors. Pastor Tung and his assistants are part of a global network of German and non-German pastors and thus are connected with leading figures of various ethnic and national backgrounds: American, German, Vietnamese and Indian evangelists as well as religious experts from various other countries. However, most of those who participated in the daily activities of the Holy Spirit Church were Vietnamese. A handful of Germans, spouses of Vietnamese believers, join the annual conventions, yet I rarely met them during Sunday services.

Language is a decisive issue in the Holy Spirit Church and in other Vietnamese Pentecostal churches founded in the diaspora. Unlike the pastors and other boat peo-ple, who speak German quite well, most of the former contract workers from East Germany and asylum seekers from ex -COMECON countries do not speak passable German, although they have been living in the host country for about twenty years. They prefer to read the Bible in Vietnamese and gather with other Vietnamese in the church and in their daily lives. Variation within Pentecostal churches in the language used for prayer is common among Pentecostal congregations founded by migrants in Europe. Some congregations founded by Africans perform services partially in English or French or simultaneously in German and English, while other churches, for example, those from Ghana, provide services in Twi in order to attract those who are not able to speak English (Glick Schiller et al 2006; Adogame 2010; Hüwelmeier and Krause 2010b).

English is generally only spoken by second generation Vietnamese or by boat refu-gees with transnational family ties to the USA. French, the former colonial language, is hardly spoken by former contract workers and asylum seekers, many of whom were born during the American-Vietnam War. However, a number of the adherents of the Holy Spirit Church have basic skills in Russian, Polish or Czech, as they came to Germany as asylum seekers from other countries. Because of their language com-petence, some of the ordinary believers from Berlin travel to their former countries of residence in order to proselytize. For example, members travel from Germany to Poland to distribute Bibles at the main station in Warsaw.

While the inability of many members of the Holy Spirit Church to speak passable German or English may keep Vietnamese Pentecostalists in Germany from making the connections they desire with non-Vietnamese speaking Christians from some parts of the world, they sustain their global outreach through other competencies. Their previous socialist cosmopolitan practices led Vietnamese to acquire a range of other languages, i.e. Russian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Czech, as well as cultural competences. These are now mobilized within new Christian sociabilities. Competencies developed in other countries are deployed by former Vietnamese contract workers and asylum seekers for missionizing activities in former socialist 'brotherlands'.

Conclusion

The political situation in late socialist Vietnam, different legal statuses in reunified Germany, various social and political groupings such as boat people and contract workers, language, generation and date of arrival have to be taken into account when exploring Vietnamese Christian sociability. Diversity, or what recently has been called 'superdiversity' (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2006; Vertovec 2007) is a characteristic feature with regard to the global outreach of the Holy Spirit Church. The political divisions between North and South Vietnam (until 1976) and between West and East Germany (until 1990) are paralleled in the creation and emergence of religious networks of Vietnamese in Germany. Vietnamese Catholic communities and Vietnamese Buddhist communities in reunified Germany are still almost exclusively composed of boat people, who are reluctant to welcome former contract workers and asylum seekers because of their previous socialist identities and politics. In contrast, Vietnamese Pentecostal churches embrace all newcomers without regard to their political past, class or ethnic background, or identifications with their resident nation-state. The unity they build is national but the sociability is at the same time Christian and global, traversing national and cultural boundaries.

However, even while negating some borders, the members of the Holy Spirit and similar churches ultimately reject cosmopolitan sociability. As Pentecostal Christians they separate themselves from all those who, through ancestor altars, spirit possession, Buddhism, Catholicism and other religious traditions, fail to take Jesus into their lives and thus are not part of their faith community. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit Church in reunified Germany, where boat people encounter their politi-

cal counterparts, former contract workers and asylum seekers from ex-COMECON countries, may be characterized as a place in which socialist cosmopolitans 'from below' are transformed into global Pentecostal believers.

Acknowledgements

References

ADOGAME, AFEOSMIME 2010 'From House Cells to Warehouse Churches? Christian Church Outreach Mission International in Translocal Contexts', in Gertrud Hüwelmeier and Kristine Krause (eds), *Traveling Spirits. Migrants, Markets and Mobilities*, New York: Routledge, pp. 165-185

BEUCHLING, OLAF 2003 *Vom Bootsflüchtling zum Bundesbürger*, Münster: Waxmann-Verlag

BAUMANN, MARTIN 2000 *Migration – Religion – Integration. Buddhistische Vietnamesen und hinduistische Tamilen in Deutschland*, Marburg: Diagonal Verlag

BAYLY, SUSAN 2007 *Asian Voices in a Postcolonial Age. Vietnam, India and Beyond*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

BUI, PIPO 2003 *Envisioning Vietnamese Migrants in Germany. Ethnic stigma, immigrant narratives and partial masking*, Münster: Lit Verlag

ENDRES, KIRSTEN 2006 'Spirit Performance and the Ritual of Construction of Personal Identity in Modern Vietnam', in Karen Fjelstad und Nguyen Thi Hien (eds), *Possessed by the Spirits: Mediumship in Contemporary Vietnamese Communities*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, pp. 77-93

FJELSTAD, KAREN 2010 'Spirited Migrations: The Travels of Len Dong Spirits and Their Mediums', in Gertrud Hüwelmeier and Kristine Krause (eds), *Traveling Spirits. Migrants, Markets and Mobilities*, New York: Routledge, pp. 52-66

GLICK SCHILLER, NINA 2005 'Transnational Social Fields and Imperialism: Bringing A Theory of Power to Transnational Studies', *Anthropological Theory*, vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 439-61

-- 2009 ' "There is No Power Except for God": Locality, Global Christianity, and Immigrant Transnational Incorporation', in Bertram Turner and Thomas Kirsch (eds), *Permutations of Order. Religion and Law as Contested Sovereignties*, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 125-47

GLICK SCHILLER, NINA and CAGLAR, AYSE and GULDBRANDSEN, THADDEUS C 2006 'Beyond the ethnic lens. Locality, globality, and born-again incorporation', *American Ethnologist*, vol. 33, no. 4, pp. 612-33

GLICK SCHILLER, NINA and EVANGELOS KARAGIANNIS 2006 'Contesting Claims to the Land: Pentecostalism as a Challenge to Migration, Theory and Policy', *Sociologus, Journal for Empirical Social Anthropology*, vol. 56, no. 2, 137-71

HANNERZ, ULF 1990 'Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture', *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 7, pp. 237-51

HÜWELMEIER, GERTRUD 2010a 'Female believers on the move. Gender and religion in Vietnamese Pentecostal networks in Germany', in Glenda Lynna Anne Tibe Bonifacio & Vivienne Angeles (eds), *Gender, Religion and Migration: Pathways of Integration*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, pp. 115-31

-- 2010b 'Götter in einer deutschen Universitätsstadt', in Antje van Elsbergen, Franziska Engelhardt and Simone Stiefbold (eds), *Ansichten, Einsichten, Absichten. Ein Souvenir aus der Marburger Kulturwissenschaft* (forthcoming)

-- 2010c 'Dämon oder Holy Spirit? Geistbesessenheit in einer vietnamesisch-pentekostalen Gemeinde in Berlin', in Dorothea Schulz and Jochen Seebode (eds), *Refraktionen. Zwischen postkolonialer Kritik und Deutung der eigenen Gesellschaft*, Hamburg: Argument Verlag (forthcoming)

-- 2010d 'Moving East: Transnational Ties of Vietnamese Pentecostals', in Gertrud Hüwelmeier and Kristine Krause (eds), *Traveling Spirits. Migrants, Markets and Mobilities*, New York: Routledge, pp. 133-44

-- 2010e 'Mediating the Apocalypse. The Disaster of the Titanic in Vietnamese Pentecostal Discourse', in Heike Behrend (ed), *Spirits and their media* (forthcoming)

-- 2008a 'Spirits in the market place: Transnational networks of Vietnamese migrants in Berlin', in Michael Peter Smith and John Eade (eds), *Transnational Ties: Cities, Identities, and Migrations*, Comparative Urban and Community Research (CUCR) book series, Edison, NJ: Transaction Publishers, pp. 131-44

-- 2008b 'Negotiating diversity. Catholic Nuns as cosmopolitans', *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Religions- und Kulturgeschichte* (SZRKG), 102, pp. 105-17

HÜWELMEIER, GERTRUD and KRAUSE, KRISTINE 2008 'Götter ohne Pass. Religiöse Vielfalt und neue Migration in Deutschland', Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Dossier: Religiöse Vielfalt & Integration, http://www.migration-boell.de/web/integration/47_1662.asp

-- 2010a 'Introduction', in Gertrud Hüwelmeier and Kristine Krause (eds), *Traveling Spirits. Migrants, Markets and Mobilities*, New York: Routledge, pp. 1-16

-- 2010b 'Der Heilige Geist im Gewerbegebiet. Forschungseinblicke in die veränderte Landschaft Berlins', in Alexa Färber (ed), *Hotel Berlin* (Berliner Blätter), Münster: LIT Verlag (forthcoming)

LAUSER, ANDREA 2008 'Ahnen, Götter, Geister in Vietnam und in der Diaspora. Ein transnationales Forschungsfeld', in Andrea Lauser und Cordula Weissköppel (eds), *Migration und religiöse Dynamik. Ethnologische Religionsforschung im transnationalen Kontext*, Bielefeld: transcript, pp. 147-72

MALARNEY, SHAUN K 2002 *Culture, Ritual and Revolution in Vietnam*, New York: Routledge Curzon

MEYER, BIRGIT 1995 ' "Delivered from the Powers of Darkness": Confessions about Satanic Riches in Christian Ghana', *Africa*, vol. 65, no. 82, pp. 236-55

-- 1998 'Make a Complete Break with the Past: Memory and Postcolonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist Discourse', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 28, no. 3, pp. 316-49

-- 2010 'Pentecostalism and Globalization', in Allan Anderson, Michael Bergunder, André Droogers and Cornelis van der Laan (eds), *Studying Global Pentecostalism. Theories and Methods*, Berkeley: University of California Press (forthcoming)

NIESWAND, BORIS 2008 'Wege aus dem Dilemma zwischen Transnationalismus- und Integrationsansatz. Simultane Inklusion von migranten-initiierten charismatischen Gemeinden in Berlin', in Andrea Lauser und Cordula Weissköppel (eds), *Migration und religiöse Dynamik. Ethnologische Religionsforschung im transnationalen Kontext*, Bielefeld: transcript, pp. 35-52

PELKMANNS, MATHIJS 2009 'Temporary Conversions: Encounters with Pentecostalism in Muslim Kyrgyzstan', in Mathijs Pelkmans (ed), *Conversion after Socialism. Disruptions, Modernisms and Technologies of Faith in the Former Soviet Union*, New York: Berghan, pp. 143-61

ROBBINS, JOEL 2004 'The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 33, pp 117-43

TAYLOR, PHILIP (ed) 2007 *Modernity and Re-enchantment. Religion in Post-revolutionary Vietnam*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

VAN DER VEER, PETER 2002 'Colonial cosmopolitanism', in Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen (eds), *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism. Theory, Context, and Practice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 165-79

VASQUEZ, MANUEL A. and MARQUARDT, MARIE FRIEDMANN (eds) 2003 *Globalizing the Sacred: Religion Across the Americas*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press

VERTOVEC, STEVEN 2007 'Super-diversity and its implications', in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 29, no. 6, pp. 1024-54

VERTOVEC, STEVEN and COHEN, ROBIN (eds) 2002 *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism. Theory, Context, and Practice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

VERTOVEC, STEVEN and WESSENDORF, SUSANNE 2006 'Migration and Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Diversity in Europe: An overview of issues and trends', in Rinus Penninx, Maria Berger and Karen Kraal (eds), *The Dynamics of International Migration and Settlement in Europe. A State of the Art*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 171-200

WANNER, CATHERINE 2009 'Conversion and the Mobile Self: Evangelicalism as "Travelling Culture" ', in Mathijs Pelkmans (ed), *Conversion after Socialism. Disruptions, Modernisms and Technologies of Faith in the Former Soviet Union*, New York: Berghan, pp. 163-82