

The ongoing Founding of the Pentecostal Movement between Centres and Peripheries.
Historical Investigation concerning the worldwide ‚Web of Relationships‘ of
FEPACO-Nzambe-Malamu

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The diversifying Christianity is growing and transforming itself at the „peripheries“. These are determined by „centres“ which were originally located in the countries and continents of the Northern hemisphere where for a long time the economic and social „capital“ used to be concentrated. In the context of globalization there are shifts of emphasis regarding the concentration of power. Former „peripheries“ become „centres“. They continue to be interrelated with former „centres“ which can now – and not just because of a certain perspective, but due to empirical verification – be identified as „peripheries“ as well. However, depending on the point of view of the observer and the criteria he or she applies it is indeed relative what is regarded as „central“ and what as „peripheral“. With the help of a concrete example from the research on Pentecostal Churches this thesis shall be made comprehensible in the following paper: the worldwide, interconnected network of the Pentecostal Church FEPACO-Nzambe-Malamu with its independent subsidiary church *IFEPAABom-Deus* demonstrates quite clearly where and how there have been new concentrations but also a decrease of religious and social capital all around the world. It becomes clear to which forces the respective performative speech acts are subject to. The people participating in these processes stress that by doing so they express their longing for the Kingdom of God.

1. The development of Christianity at the peripheries and the Pentecostal Movement

Point of departure of the following contribution which is based on the findings of my field research is the missionary- and church-historical expression of „the perpetual genesis of Christianity at the peripheries“. The British mission historian Kevin Ward puts it this way:

„Christianity was and is being created and re-created on the margins, the boundary, the periphery, and in doing so challenges the validity of all boundaries and peripheries.“¹

With regard to the ecclesio-gene developments and intercultural spreading of Christianity in the past 100 years a second insight may be added: We cannot possibly continue to speak of

¹ So the British mission historian K. WARD, Introduction, in: IDEM/B. STANLEY (eds.), *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity. 1799-1999*, Grand Rapids 2000, 3.

the Christianity. Rather, the phenomenon in question can only be summarized under the generic term of „World Christianity“ which allows for greatest possible differentiation implying a historical analysis² of convergences and divergences thereby making it also possible to think about homogeneity and diversity at the same time. So, under the headline „From Christendom to World Christianity: Missions and the demographic Transformation of the Church“, Andrew F. Walls emphasizes³:

„The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910, has passed into Christian legend. It was a landmark in the history of mission; the starting point of the modern theology of mission; the high point of the Western missionary movement and the point from which it declined; the launch pad of the modern ecumenical movement; the point at which Christians first began to glimpse something of what a world church would be like.“⁴

The mutual polarity of centre and periphery is connected with processes which are dealt with under the headword „globalization of Christianity“ and which have to be evaluated from the point of view of sociology of religion. This does not mean, however, that the putative relation between centre and periphery stated by Ward which up to the present used to be reflected in a confrontation of the West and the Southern hemisphere has just been reversed. It has to do with mutual, historically comprehensible processes in which it has to be established again and again where the centre or the starting point of an activity is located at a certain moment and where the periphery is located at which this activity is directed. Reading A. F. Wall's thesis critically one will become aware of its strength, but also of some of its weaknesses. What is meant to be „centre“ or what is meant to be „periphery“, is decisively determined by the standpoint of the observer and the respective criteria applied to the subject under investigation. As a rule, there are particular quantitative and qualitative characteristics that are investigated empirically. So up until today, when looking historically at the colonial period, the power of the colonizers has been seen as „centre“ – in contrast to the „weakness“ of the colonies regarding their development. Employing parameters referring to military and economic factors or to the ability to act of certain organisational structures, it is believed that one would be able to diagnose where the centre of gravity of power is situated, where the rulers reside and where the marginalized, the ones who are dominated by the colonizers, settle. Their geographically often very large habitat is defined as „periphery“. This point of view overlooks the fact that the colonies, through the exploitation of their natural resources in the protectorates during the

² Cf. H. SEIFFERT, Einführung in die Wissenschaftstheorie, vol. 2, Geisteswissenschaftliche Methoden: Phänomenologie, Hermeneutik und historische Methode, Dialektik, München 1996; „Geschichte“, [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historismus_\(Geschichtswissenschaft\)](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historismus_(Geschichtswissenschaft)) (07.07.2009).

³ A. F. WALLS, The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History, New York 2007, 49, with same headline to the there chapter 3.

⁴ WALLS, *ibid.*, 53.

colonial period in the South, were somehow turned into „centres“, too. Meanwhile – owing not only to the increase in population but also to the economic growth and the increasing worldwide influence of some of the countries in the South – the point of view has changed. This is also true for socio-religious processes, particularly with respect to the numerical shift of emphasis of Christianity – the genuine „Western“ religion from the north to the south of the globe.

2. Sociology of knowledge-related prerequisites for the research of the Pentecostal Movement

Here it is also essential to clarify again and again whether someone takes up the emic or the etic perspective, whether he or she approaches the topic as an *insider* or an *outsider*. No matter how someone tries to determine him or herself with regard to others – or how the (so-called) others try to do so with regard to oneself: this takes place in processes based on *mutual relationships* which, for their part, generate these, too. This reciprocity inherent to all constructions of identity can only be influenced to a certain extent. A first hermeneutical step, in order to distinguish between insider and outsider perspective, consists of distinguishing between the self-description and the outside description of phenomena. It has to do with being aware of the self-descriptions and self-definitions of others and to examine them as such. The focus on intercultural topics allows for looking into the diverse reciprocities between cultures, denominations, church forms and religions.⁵

With this recent insights of neighbouring scientific disciplines are taken into account that all, in one way or another, work with the *concept of culture*: cultural and social anthropology⁶, the postcolonial discourses with which scholars of the humanities from the Southern hemisphere have been trying to gain attention for decades⁷, – and the insights of philosophical linguistics⁸, which are taken up in the sciences of history and sociology⁹. For the most part here there is an intercultural focus regarding the analysis of how local settings are influenced by global dynamics and vice versa. Thus, in the case of Intercultural Theology it is concerned with the phenomena of religion and of faith in this entirety. For this, the empirical methods of the post-

⁵ M. FISCHER, 'Freiheit und Liebe': Wechselseitigkeit zwischen den Religionen – gesehen von Franz Fischers Begriff der 'vorausgesetzten' Wirklichkeit, in: R. AULKE et al. (eds.), Wechselseitigkeit als Grenzerfahrung, Norderstedt/Leipzig 2007, 98-118.

⁶ W. SCHIFFAUER, Migration und kulturelle Differenz, Berlin 2003; IDEM., Der cultural turn in der Ethnologie und der Kulturanthropologie, in: Handbuch der Kulturwissenschaften, vol. 2, Stuttgart 2004, 502-517; C.S. HORNSTEIN, Grenzgänger – Probleme interkultureller Verständigung, Frankfurt/Main 2003.

⁷ F. FANON, Die Verdammten dieser Erde, Frankfurt/Main 1981; S. HALL, Rassismus und kulturelle Identität, Hamburg 1994; P. GILROY, The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness, London 1995; A. APADURAI, Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization, Minnesota 1996; E. SAID, Orientalismus, Frankfurt/Main 1997; H.K. BHABHA, Die Verortung der Kultur, Tübingen 2000.

⁸ P. BOURDIEU, Die feinen Unterschiede, Frankfurt/Main 1982; J. DERRIDA, Positionen, Graz/Wien 1986.

⁹ R. ROBERTSON, Glokalisierung, Homogenität und Heterogenität in Zeit und Raum, in: U. BECK (ed.), Perspektiven der Weltgesellschaft, Frankfurt/Main 1998, 192-200.

colonial science of history provide helpful instruments without claiming their absoluteness. So this results in a first consequence: to the degree that it becomes problematic to constitute and to delimit foreign theologies and religions as research subjects of one's own, the interest is transferred from structures to processes. Religions and the cultures they have an influence on are accordingly seen not so much as rigid, long-lasting „systems“ of norms, values and ways of thinking etc., but as „fields of discourse“, based on reciprocal processes, in which norms, values and interpretations are negotiated, interpretations are established and broken open, in which multiple religious identities are shaped, and institutions and ideas from the outside are taken up and are creatively developed further – and in which transcultural-trans-denominational networks are conceived. The interest is focused on a *cultural field* where discussions about different norms and apparently contrasting values take place. And it is focused on perceptions as cultural practice, or on the processes that lead to the development of new world views; on the importance of medially (re-) constructed images of reality and self-defined forms in which faith is lived; it focuses on questions of the cultural flow, on hybridity¹⁰ as well as on the reception and translation of religiously defined interpretative patterns from other contexts.¹¹ Therefore it will also be looked at the importance of church institutions and organized forms of different denominations.

3. The eventful and mutual relationships between ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’

In addition to the quantitative measurability of such processes, the qualitative methodology must not be ignored by any means. It is at least of equal importance. Here it has to do with the *self-perception* and *self-description* of individuals and social groups, in the concrete case, of churches and Christian communities. With that the active participation of church members in church activities comes into view. The latter can be measured statistically by looking at how often and for how long people attend church service and also other church-related activities. Besides, there is the religious linguistic competence up to the willingness to actively and in dialogue bear witness of one's own Christian faith. As a rule, with regard to expressing one's own faith, Christians from the South have meanwhile become more adept at it than Christians from the North. Yes, Christians coming from the supposed peripheries living as migrants in the North ask: „Why is it that in these politically free countries only so few people attend church service on Sundays?“ In fact, there are statistical estimations for the city of Hamburg

¹⁰ Cf. the respective article by M. FISCHER, Hybridität/Hybridisierung, in: Interkulturelle Theologie. ZM 34 (3/2008), 282–304.

¹¹ A summary of the current discussion can be found in: A. ACKERMANN, Das Eigene und das Fremde: Hybridität, Vielfalt und Kulturtransfers, in: F. JAEGER/J. RÜSEN (ed.), Handbuch der Kulturwissenschaften, vol. 3, Stuttgart 2004, 139–154.

according to which more people with a migration background attend church service than Germans, although the latter are still the majority of the city's population. From this example can be seen how useful the thought pattern „centre – periphery“ can be when applied with regard to its inherent mutual basic structure: a (former) periphery can become a (current) centre, as it is demonstrated by the example of the worldwide shifts in emphasis of Christianity in the South. But to understand what the supposed new „centre“ is giving off and how it is affecting the former „centre“; that is, the new „periphery“, in an interaction of the two is at least of equal importance. For in a certain and new way, to refer once again to our example, Hamburg has become a 'centre', namely, the centre of the Christians of Southern origin living in Germany. Consequently, Hamburg is not only a centre of German economy, politics and culture for its native inhabitants, but with its concentration of migrants who actively declare their Christian faith it has become a „centre“ of a quite distinct, we might say, „hybrid“ kind where social-religious processes of glocalization take place.

4. The outrageous charm of those who are marginalized (by outside assignment)

With a statement of A. F. Walls another train of thought follows:

„The crucial events of Christian history have often taken place through obscure people. The missionary movement itself, in both its Catholic and protestant phases, has usually been a peripheral activity of the church.“¹²

Surely Walls does not want to disqualify certain persons as „obscure people“. Neither does he, by using such a manner of speaking, want to point to the fact of and the danger of denouncing innovative founders of religions as eccentrics – referring to their respective socio-religious surroundings. But treating it ironically, he brings up the fact that those of a different creed compared to tradition may provoke the observer to examine his or her own view. Starting out from this thought, what has been described up until now can now be applied quite concretely, starting with the case study of a Pentecostal Church that has its origins in Africa. By doing so, we do not start with the activities of white Western missions and their protagonists but with those of African Christians. A. F. Walls' positively provoking quotation of „*crucial events*“ and „*obscure people*“ will now be illustrated with the help of the example of a Pentecostal Church, in whose centre in Kinshasa black preachers, pastors and missionaries meet, who are from Africa or close to the culture there and who establish new congregations not only in Africa but also in Europe. FEPACO-Nzambe-Malamu is the official name of this Pentecostal Church which represents more than one million members worldwide and which is

¹² WALLS, Process (see note 3), 53.

registered officially as FEPACO (Fraternité Evangélique de Pentecôte en Afrique au Congo, Kinshasa). „Nzambe-Malamu“, its popular name, is an emphatic exclamation which is widespread in church revivalist circles and which, in this case, is *relocalized* in its Lingala version, one of the Central African *linguae francae*.¹³ Originally of biblical origin, the phrase was introduced by North American missionaries in its English version and has to be translated „God is good!“.

The founder of FEPACO is the Congolese Alexandre Aidini Abala (1926-1997) who in 1996 made an impressive tour visiting the then already established European migration congregations of *Nzambe-Malamu* where he gave lectures and carried out evangelizations. He died only one year later in South Africa while undergoing medical treatment. He was buried in his homeland, the DR of Congo, near Kinshasa. At present, the Church is led by his wife Révérende Amvico Ewada Héléne (born 1947), „Mama Amvico“, as she is lovingly called by close friends and church members. She is in charge of a church of about one million members and more than 1000 congregations. Thus she functions, according to church nomenclature, as their official *Chef Spirituel*. With her ordination for this post in 2005 she was recognized by the state as Représentante Légal de FEPACO-Nzambe-Malamu in the DR Congo.

5. FEPACO-Nzambe-Malamu/ IFEPAA-Bom-Deus: Churches between Africa and the West

In the following, this Pentecostal Church and its concrete current organization will be firstly in Germany and then in Finland examined.

5.1 FEPACO-Nzambe-Malamu/ IFEPAA-Bom-Deus in Germany

In order to sharpen the focus on FEPACO-Nzambe-Malamu's presence in Europe and especially in Germany, the following development has to be taken into account: Since 1977, little by little, in Africa a small part of this Church – which with its concentration in Angola was seen as one of its „factions“, anyway – has gone its own way. The resulting Pentecostal Church was able to „take over“ the majority of the migration communities that had been established before 1997, especially in Germany. As one of the reasons can be stated that the number of Angolan migrants living in Germany outweighed the number of Congolese in the then FEPACO migration communities. Nonetheless, this and also the further development

¹³ For Garrard, „Nzambe-Malamu!“ is derived in this sense and he recognizes it as a translation from the English „God is good“, T. L. Osborn's crusade war cry“. Cf. D. J. GARRARD, Art. Congo, in: NIDPCM, 72. The Bible frequently recurs to the „Grace of God“, in particular in the context of the question of theodicy, but also as praise for God the Creator. It is remarkable that the concrete phrase „God is good!“ cannot be found. It is a summary of what is said as regards content in the biblical passages such as Ps. 113 to 118 and can be verified with verses such as Nah 1,7 or Ps 145,9 from the Old Testament which in turn have to be understood in their respective contexts.

must not be interpreted as if here primarily ethnic motives have played a role. The respective ethnically, culturally, linguistically or nationally shaped identity of members of migration communities describes only one part of their self-understanding.

The present leader and president of the Luanda/Angola-based subsidiary church of FEPACO is pastor *Simao Lutumba Ndosimao* (born 4.2.1945). His Church is named IFE-PAA-Bom-Deus. *IFEPA* is an acronym for the Portuguese *Igreja de Fraternidade Evangélica Pentecostes na África, em Angola*, which is, in fact, the translation of the name of the parent church FEPACO from the Congo into the Angolan language. And *Bom-Deus* is the same-language version of „Nzambe-Malamu“, that is, „God is good!“. As regards content, IFEPA stands for the same theology as its parent church FEPACO, but concerning church policy – due to internal differences which need not be discussed here – it strongly emphasizes its autonomy. Correspondingly, the German subsidiary church is called „Gemeinde Barmherziger Gott“, abbreviated GBG. When attending a church service in the GBG branch in the South German city of Würzburg not only the intercultural make-up of the congregation but also the practical way is noticeable in which it is dealt with the resulting multitude of languages. Songs, the reading of biblical texts and the sermon are usually translated into three languages: German, Lingala and Portuguese. The pastor of the congregation is from Angola, their treasurer is German. The majority of the Christians in this congregation come from Africa, but there are also a family from Pakistan, a Russian woman and several Germans.

Not only the congregation's make-up, but also its theology reflects a genuine intercultural community. For the believers the four primary Pentecostal Theologumena of *Salvation*, *Faith Healing*, of *Holy Spirit Baptism* and the *Expectation of the Second Coming of Christ* are manifested, one the one hand, against the background of the *action-like-conditioned* biblical message which is questioned with regard to its relevance. I e., when it is said in Hebrew 13,8 „Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and forever“, then a member of the congregation takes this statement as a personal point of reference and applies the above-mentioned four Theologumena to these words. Conversely, this and other biblical statements are read in view of the Pentecostal theology. At the same time this teaching is elucidated as a (missionary) *interpretation* of the biblical message also against the background of the previous pre- and non-Christian cultural and religious traditions: on the one hand, the Christian message is brought up in the context of the traditional interpretation of the world. On the other hand, it challenges the so-called „world (of sin)“ which is evident there. And it is meant to make the true life in Christ stand out against it. Starting from such dialectical processes the biblically testified „presupposed acts“ become „promised acts“ whose realization for the believer – believing and

acting full of hope – is not only marked out in Jesus' working of miracles when these are preached anew in his or her respective cultural context. Rather, they are to be elaborated there – again performatively – so that the promise will be kept at least basically. For that the Pentecostal theology takes up biblical models which are first of all found in the life and deeds of Paul, the apostles and the first community in Jerusalem. They all bear witness of God's working in Jesus Christ in such a way that corresponds to what J. Moltmann described in his eschatology.¹⁴ That the Kingdom of God becomes accessible for the believers can happen when that what is described by terms such as „eternal life“ or „God's presence in the Holy Spirit“ becomes relevant for the personal life-story of individuals and for the communities of those to which FEPACO and GBG (since 1997) know themselves to belong.

Many have joined this church in the past 40 years of its existence. This has often happened and continues to happen as a result of evangelistic propagation, healing, intercession, liberation and is demonstrated in the church service-related as well as social community building. Through this the story of God's people in the Old Testament or of the original first community is experienced as a continuum in which each and everyone participates, in so far as he or she lets him or herself be empowered to do so by the working of God. In the here and now the believers understand themselves to be the current version of God's community, and they make use of the power to continue the history of faith as part of the people of God into the future. Starting from Hebrew 13:8 and other biblical verses that are interpreted *performatively*, in their faith each and every individual can consider him or herself to be a representative/in Jesus.

5.2 FEPACO-Nzambe-Malamu/ IFEPAA-Bom-Deus in Finland

In the next paragraph we will see, that there is an interesting and very recent „white“ connection. Its origin can be fixed in Germany as the (minor) centre of IFEPAA-Bom Deus in Europe and is leading to Finland. But it is managed and mainly bodied by African migrants as well as by the Angolan centre of IFEPAA-Bom Deus with Europe as its periphery.

Pastor *Tuomas Harri* (born 1981)¹⁵ and the Finnish National-branch of IFEPAA-Bom-Deus: The originally baptized Finnish Lutheraner arrived in Frankfurt / M. as an academically student of classical music in 2001. There he got converted together with his fiancée Marielle, by origin a practicing catholic believer from France, in a street evangelization of Bon-Deus which took place in the shopping mall of the city-center of Frankfurt („Auf der Zeil“). She

¹⁴ J. MOLTMANN, *Theologie der Hoffnung. Untersuchungen zur Begründung und zu den Begrenzungen einer christlichen Eschatologie* (original edition 1964), Gütersloh 1997, 300f.

¹⁵ Cf. Interview M. Fischer – Tuomas Harri on 6.3.2009.

studied in the same master-class as he classic horn. They both plaid already as virtuos musicians in the worldwide acting European Youth-Orchestra. After their anabaptism they were involved as church-elders in the youth-work and other responsibilities in the German brunch of IFEPAA. They got married in Bom-Deus, quit their academic music-education and were sent after Tuomas' ordination as a Pastor by the officials of IFEPAA-*Bom-Deus* in 2007 to Turku / Finland as explicit reverse Missionaries. Both of them left Germany „in duty of the Gospel“¹⁶ facing new challenges in Finland: the african migrant-minority and the neopagan white citizens, consciously or unconsciously waiting for salavation by the good news.

I think that it is more than a footnote, that Tuomas Harris personal spiritual way had already brought him several years before, 1997 in Turku in Finland, together with the worldwide and especially in Africa well known healing revivalist *Reinhard Bonnke*. It was during his Europe-wide tourney „from Minus-to-Plus“. Tuomas' testimony of the encounter with Bonnke is remarkable. The German preacher delivered at that evening in Turku a personal prophecy to Tuomas, which included the explicit „call“ for the latter. He should become involved in the „harvest of God“. Tuomas explains: „Bonnke left suddenly the stage, looking around until he recognized me, still hiding myself and standing shy behind a column. He arrived and touched softly my shoulder and gave me that very message“.¹⁷ If we recognize, that even the founder of FEPACO-*Nzambe-Malamu*, Rev. Aidini Abala cooperated with Reinhard Bonnke in a conference in Harare 1986 we get another perspective on this very *fluide, fragile* and *empowering* web of relationships.

If I say „*fluide*“ it means, that Bonnke from his point of view may today not at all remember the short encounter with Tuomas Harri in 1997. For Bonnke this was surly just a small happening, many years ago. For Tuomas it was not only, but *is* still a strong occasion! If I say, that the developement of IFEPAA-*Bon-Deus* in Finland is „*fragile*“, what do I want to say? It means, that persons, names, locations and connections of the web of relationships can change very quickly. To illustrate it with our case: Harri quit already from the leadership of IFEPAA-*Bon-Deus* in the meanwhile. But before he left, it took him only three years of hard work together with his wife and others, to establish the regional brunch of IFEPAA-*Seurakunta-Laupias-Jumla* (SLJ). They startet as a house-church in the small cottage, owned by Tuomas' mother and located in a garden nearby Turku. Nowadays *Seurakunta-Laupias-Jumla* has already three congregations in *Turku* (2004), *Tampere* and *Helsinki* (2007). In 2009 the new church got registration by the Finnish goverment. Tuomas Harri was assisted by Congolese, Angolean and other migrants as well as by Finnish christians. Although Tuomas recognizes fruits of his work, he is

¹⁶ Vgl. Interview M. Fischer – Tuomas Harri am 05.03.2009.

¹⁷ Cf. Interview M. Fischer – Tuomas Harri on 5.3.2009.

sometimes really frustrated, that only some Finns reacted to his evangelistic activities. Approximately 70% of the church-members are migrants and asylum-seekers from overseas in Finland, the rest are whites. Why did Harri leave his position? He recognized even, that he isn't able to bridge the cultural gap which separates him from some of the African members. He found out that the call of Jesus is only one important of several elements of the puzzle. He confesses: „To be involved in an emerging church like the IFEPAA-*Seurakunta-Laupias-Jumla* means even to have theological knowledges.“ He felt, that his theological even his intercultural expertise wasn't enough, to be responsible for such a responsibility. Since last year he studies together with his wife theology in a Pentecostal theolocal seminary of the Assemblies of God (*Iso-Kirja-Opista*), located in Finland. An original pastor of FEPACO-Nzambe-Malamu (an older brother of the former General secretary of FEPACO worldwide), migrant in Finland, who was as a pastor of IFEPAA-*Seurakunta-Laupias-Jumla* Tuomas Harri's assistant and counselor of the members with African background, is now his successor. On the one hand, we can interpret this development as a crisis: The hope, that a Finnish leader is able to manage all questions isn't fulfilled. If I say „*empowering*“ it means, that the success-story of FEPACO / IFEPAA seems to go on: Migrant Christians with African origin, living in Scandinavian cities (e.g. Stockholm), in Russia (Petersburg) or in the Baltic states (Estonia) try in the meanwhile to connect with *Seurakunta-Laupias-Jumla* and to ask the Finnish new established ‚center‘, to found further congregations in these ‚peripheries‘.

We conclude: The young Pastor Tuomas Harri, who was sent from GBG-Germany to his Finnish home-country a „messenger of Christ“ shows how effective Bom-Deus is operating in the meanwhile with a minority of active western members. But we have even to recognize, how fragile this cross cultural structure of the leadership and body of IFEPAA-*Bom-Deus* is. From the historical *cross sectional* point of view¹⁸ we are investigating the intercultural story of Nzambe-Malamu *synchronically*. We ask, how the actual web of relationships is woven. The very same investigation gives us insight in the *longitudinal section*¹⁹, if we come across the role which T.L. Osborn or Aidini Abala play for many members of IFEPAA-*Bom-Deus* until today as founders of the movement. This is the *diachronical* perspective, which is actualised and activated by performances in healing- and deliverance-services, which accompany bible-oriented preaching and are special teachings.

6. Substitution of the limited network metaphor by the concept “web of relationships”?

¹⁸ German: „Längsschnitt“.

¹⁹ German: „Querschnitt“.

What do we actually mean by „network“? Do we use the term as a *metaphor* or as a *method*?²⁰ With the help of the term one can come close to the insight that according to their self-understanding FEPACO-Nzambe-Malamu or IFEPAA-Bom-Deus are not „churches“ in a classical sense. However, the concept behind the network metaphor seems to belong too much to the language of technology and to be methodically not precise enough in order to be applied to socio-religious phenomena without hesitation. In my view, it is better to see the fluid and extremely adaptable manifestations of Pentecostal-Charismatic community building and diversification with their processes functioning to a high extent via personal contacts as „web of relationships“. The latter take place in „transnational social spaces (TSS)“.²¹ These are „transcontinental spaces“ where it is less and less possible to define the identities at home there essentially. They are rather to be traced back to social and migration processes than to national or church-related ties. In addition to distinguishing between „networks“ and „web of relationships“, the distinction of these two social forms from rather short-term, event- and project-orientated „cooperations“ can be helpful.²²

With regard to the discourse concerning the first Christian community in the interculturally shaped ancient metropolis Ephesus biblically testified in Ephesians, A. F. Walls under the chapters' headline „The Ephesian Moment: At a Crossroad in Christian History“²³ emphasizes the following aspect:

„The work of salvation is a historical process that stretches out to the end of the age [...]. Thus, the Ephesian letter speaks of ‘the power that is working in us’ (i.e. in the midst of the believing community [...] Eph 1:19–23).“²⁴

When, by following this thought, in the following analysis it will be talked about ecclesio-gene transitory „spaces“, then these formulations describe the transitory, but also the timeless performative character of the phenomena of the Christian community building in question. Furthermore, „church“ in the Letter to the Ephesians as cosmic ‘body of Christ’ is interpreted in a *spatial* way in such a way that the two are *per se* due to intercultural, yes, interreligious, transitive – space-exceeding processes and conflicts: „Which is his body, the fullness of him that

²⁰ Cf. D. BÖGENHOLD/J. MARSCHALL, „Netzwerkforschung zwischen Theorie und Methode: Zur Aktualität der Netzwerkmetapher vor dem Hintergrund aktueller interdisziplinärer Integrationsbemühungen von Soziologie, Ökonomik und Geschichtswissenschaften“. Paper for the conference „Ein neues Paradigma in den Sozialwissenschaften – Netzwerkanalyse und Netzwerktheorien“ at Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt/Main, September 27-28, 2007.

²¹ Cf. L. PRIES, Transnational social spaces: Do we need a new approach in response to new phenomena!?, in: IDEM. (ed.), *New Transnational Social Spaces*, London 2001.

²² Cf. R.M. AXELROD, *Die Evolution der Kooperationen*, München 2000.

²³ WALLS, *Process* (see footnote 3), chapter 4, 72ff.

²⁴ WALLS, *ibid.*, 73f.

fillet all in all“ (Eph 1:23). With regard to the Pentecostal-Charismatic shaping of Christianity in the past century a double tendency to missionary acceleration becomes immediately noticeable which shows – statistically and theologically provable – that what we have to deal with – compared with Catholicism and classical Protestantism – is an intensification of Christian existence that should neither be under- nor overestimated: in a temporal and spatial dimension the spreading of Christianity is the result of increasing possibilities of intercultural endeavours at communication and, conversely, has always to be understood as reflexive reactions to a socio-economic-cultural globalization. With Michel Foucault, ‘space’, which geographically can only be determined to some extent and which is open at its margins, can be called „communication space“.²⁵ This space has different dimensions, depending on where we are going to delimit it.

The whole point of the talk about a *worldwide web of relationships* is that with this, it can be made clear what is genuine about globalization, how it is organized and how its dynamics come about. Conversely, the concrete example of the German migration congregations of the originally Congolese Pentecostal Church FEPACO-Nzambe-Malamu demonstrates how the global processes become concrete in the re-localization of migrating individuals and families when these become organized in communities, i. e. in our case, in a Pentecostal Church. In a local location the global developments do not only find their dialectic counterbalance but also their starting point and end by which they are, in principle, constituted. The personal, institutional, social or political relationships run along worldwide, translocal paths. But what the globalization is really about manifests itself yet again „on location“, in people and communities, who are concretely aware of each other and therefore maintain worldwide relationships. From the point of view of the observer, their emergence and dissolving come particularly into view at the emerging *peripheries*. „Web of relationships“ does not only describe the space but also the structure and how time is filled with content. This is true for those who, analyzing from a historical perspective, move hand over rope from one combination to the other. It is asked where an individual strand of a relationship and also where several linked strands come from and then what pattern becomes apparent. Someone who is asking in such a way is automatically inquiring *synchronically* and *diachronically*. What is investigated is their context – by which they are linked at several places and with varied strong ties: he or she unties and unravels. Moreover, the forces and dynamics are of interest that in their dialectic produce knots or are the result of such knotting. And, last but not least, one’s attention is directed at where, when, how and why these knots may unravel once again: where are they destroyed, either

²⁵ M. FOUCAULT, *Archäologie des Wissens*, Frankfurt/Main 1973, 183.

with care or violently? Where do they stay intact and where are they forgotten or, due to a lack of attention and care, are they untied, that is, either become part of the collective memory or fall into oblivion?²⁶ So a per se multidimensional *web of relationships* comes into view. Contrary to the term „network“ here the focus is not on the structures but on the question of personal and communal transcontinental interactions, alliances and cooperations.

7. The performative and the missionary dimension of the Pentecostal Movement

Pentecostal-Charismatic identity is also shaped by the enthusiastic experience of one's own as well as communally experienced limitations. The historical „horribly wide trench“ between one's own personal presence and biblically testified figures and their stories is not just overcome, but it is bridged and, in fact, used creatively and *performatively*, in the execution of holistic smaller and bigger events or celebrations that are shaped by various elements and linked by social interaction or communication: quotations from the biblical message and the connected sermon, prayer, music, dance – sometimes spontaneously, but as a rule planned, all of these, in defined healing-revivals or healing crusades, are aimed at physical and/or psychological illnesses or the liberation from demons, curses or magic.²⁷ Imaginations and ecstatic states of trance are caused by Pentecostal intercultural performances, evoked through the liturgy which is strongly shaped by rhythmical music employed in several events such as church services, fellowships, prayer nights, fasting, Bible seminars, evangelizations and other church-related events and which are to be summarized under the key word of „embodiment“ (incorporation).

²⁶ Cf. the British sociologist Anthony Giddens with his view that in general the term can be best understood when it is referred to basic aspects of spatial and temporal distance. Globalization concerns the *intersection* of presence and absence, the *linking* [emphasis by M.F.] of social events and social relationships [in the distance] with local contexts“ [„der Begriff der Globalisierung im allgemeinen am besten verstehen lässt, wenn man ihn auf grundlegende Aspekte der räumlichen und zeitlichen Entfernung bezieht. Globalisierung betrifft die *Überschneidung* [Betonung M.F.] von Anwesenheit und Abwesenheit, die *Verflechtung* [M.F.] von sozialen Ereignissen und sozialen Beziehungen [in der Ferne] mit lokalen Zusammenhängen“, in: A. GIDDENS, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Oxford 1991, 21; quoted from: R. ROBERTSON, *Glokalisierung, Homogenität und Heterogenität in Raum und Zeit*, in: U. BECK (ed.), *Perspektiven der Weltgesellschaft*, Frankfurt/Main 1998, 194. Robertson himself refers to the sociologist Göran Therborn (Cambridge), who states that modernity developed rather independently in three important regions outside of Europe: in the New World, East Asia and Africa; space and geography were therefore relatively independent from each other and would not have, as it is frequently thought in too simple a way, a relation of cause and effect so that globalization thus could not just be diagnosed as a „consequence of modernity“. (ROBERTSON, *ibid.*, 195f.). Its prerequisite would be *globality*: „Globality is the general condition that makes the spreading of ‘general modernity’ more easy – globality now understood as the mutual penetration of geographically different civilizations“ [„Globalität ist die nämlich die allgemeine Bedingung, die die Verbreitung ‚allgemeiner Modernität‘ erleichtert hat – Globalität nun verstanden als die wechselseitige Durchdringung geographisch unterschiedlicher Zivilisationen.“] (ROBERTSON, *ibid.*) From this I draw decisive conclusions for the empirical understanding of the „world“ with the help of the cipher of „networks“, in which homogeneity and heterogeneity, universalism and particularity are always linked together and where their interconnections can be comprehended – but in which the analysis or the interpretation always lag behind the „real life“ (cf. ROBERTSON, *ibid.*).

²⁷ Cf. B. MEYER, *Translating the Devil*, Edinburgh 1999, 141ff. a. o.

Regarding the *missionary* dimension of the Pentecostal Movement it has first of all to be stated that the Pentecostal Movement from its root or beginnings in the Holiness Movement of the 19th century has always been internationally orientated and actively engaged in mission. A great number of their members are won over by conversion from other (world) religions but also from the African traditional (ATR) or indigenous or primary religions. A special challenge for the migration congregations are the more and more secular societies of Europe and North America. Considerable success of their missionary work in this context is (still?) a long time in the coming.²⁸ But for the self-understanding of many of these congregations, especially with regard to FEPACO-Nzambe-Malamu and IFEPAA-Bom-Deus, the existence of subsidiary communities explicitly and publicly evangelizing and calling for conversion in the squares, streets and railway stations in the Western world are eminently important, as it is again and again emphasized not only in Europe and North America. In a publicly given statement Révérende Amvico Ewada summarized what has been repeatedly emphasized in the official reports and discussions of the general assembly of FEPACO-Nzambe-Malamu in Brazzaville (Republic of Congo) und in Kinshasa (D.R. Congo) in 2007. With her words she describes nothing but her insight that her church in the light of the fragility of social, economic and political as well as spiritual issues will continue to steadily constitute itself, renewing itself so strongly between the centre and the periphery that the Holy Spirit comes to his empowering development:

„The congregations of FEPACO-Nzambe-Malamu which we have in Europe are very important to us. They are our official church representatives that are the spiritual home for the Congolese living abroad and others. Let these congregations be a blessing for the whole of Europe so that the Gospel, in the spiritual desert existing there, let anew pour out new streams of the love of God so that through our service many people may find eternal life.“²⁹

The worldwide Pentecostal migrant movement is at the very same time not only a simple success-story, which is empirically qualified by quantitative data like growing percentage of members and mushrooming churches which are founded here and there. I am critic against such overestimations. They can help to a certain extend to make us understand the crucial importance of the pentecostal movement. But they include the danger of political misinterpretation especially by some historical churches and governments who identify the pentecostal movement as a fundamentalist ideology with its sectarian teaching not empowering but inferioring

²⁸ Cf. the monograph of WÄHRISCH-OBLAU, *Self-Perception* (see note 29), 133ff. 225ff; cf. also the older collection of articles of M.A. DEMPSTER et al. (eds.), *Called & Empowered: Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective*, Peabody 1991; equally important as the voice of an African theologian in view of recent migration communities of African origin and their identity in the USA: HANCILES, *Christendom* (see note 37), 253ff.

²⁹ Cf. participating observation of M. Fischer in Brazzaville on 29.03.2007.

its successor. This happens in some of the churches and in some aspects of the movement and we have to take it serious. But we shouldn't „pour out the child with the whole bathtub“. We have to be realistic and have to differentiate. This movement has a *paradox* structure: *fluide* and *stabile, fragile* and *empowered* at the very same time.

Abstract

A diversifying Christianity is growing and transforming itself at the „peripheries“. These are said to be determined by „centres“ which were originally located in the northern hemisphere where the economic and social capital used to be concentrated for a long time. In the context of globalization shifts in emphasis take place where the concentration of power is concerned. Former „peripheries“ become „centres“. They continue to maintain mutual relationships with former „centres“ that now – not just due to a certain focus of the observer, but empirically provable – become identifiable as „peripheries“, too. However, what has to be regarded as „central“ and what as „peripheral“ is also dependent on the point of view of the observer and the criteria applied. With the help of a concrete example from the research on Pentecostal churches this thesis will be made understandable: the Pentecostal church FEPACO-Nzambe-Malamu with its independent subsidiary church IFEPAA-Bom-Deus that can be seen as a „worldwide network of relationships“ makes us realize where and how – worldwide – new concentrations of and decreases in religious and social „capital“ have come about. It will also become clear to what powers, while longing for the Kingdom of God, the performative speech acts are subject to.

Resümee

La chrétienté se diversifie, elle grandit et se transforme aux « périphéries ». Que celles-ci soient déterminées à partir de « centres », situés d'abord aux continents et pays de l'hémisphère nord où, pendant longtemps, le capital économique et social s'est concentré. Au cours de la mondialisation, des centres de gravité se déplacent et, avec eux, des lieux de pouvoir. Des « périphéries » d'autrefois deviennent des « centres ». Elles continuent en relations d'échange avec les « centres » d'autrefois qui, à leur tour – et ceci n'est pas uniquement le jugement d'un observateur intéressé, mais se laisse vérifier empiriquement – peuvent être identifiés comme « périphéries ». Il va de soi que cela ne peut pas écarter le fait que ce sont le point de vue de l'observateur et les critères sur lesquels il base son jugement qui décideront sur ce qui sera vu comme « central » et « périphérique ». Un exemple de la recherche sur le pentecôtisme illustrera cette assertion et permettra de la suivre: L'église pentecôtiste FEPACO Nzambe-Malamu avec sa succursale indépendante IFEPAA-Bom-Deus que nous identifions comme « tissu de relations » montre, où et comment, à niveau mondial, il y a eu de nouvelles concentrations et diminutions de « capital » religieux et social. On comprendra aussi à quelles forces d'espérance du Royaume de Dieu les actes d'expression performatifs respectifs sont exposés et soumis.

Zusammenfassung

Die sich diversifizierende Christenheit wächst und transformiert sich an „Peripherien“. Diese werden scheinbar von „Zentren“ aus bestimmt, welche ursprünglich auf den Kontinenten und Ländern der nördlichen Hemisphäre verortet wurden, wo sich lange das ökonomische und das soziale Kapital konzentrierte. Im Zusammenhang mit der Globalisierung kommt es zu Schwerpunktverlagerungen, was die Machtkonzentrationen betrifft. Ehemalige „Peripherien“ werden zu „Zentren“. Sie stehen weiterhin in wechselseitigen Beziehungen zu bisherigen „Zentren“, die nun, nicht nur bei bestimmter Fokussierung des Betrachters, sondern aufgrund empirischer Nachprüfbarkeit, auch als „Peripherien“ identifizierbar werden. Dabei ist es aber auch relativ vom Standpunkt des Betrachters aus und von den Kriterien, die er anlegt, was als „zentral“ und was als „peripher“ zu gelten hat. An einem konkreten Beispiel aus der Pfingstkirchenforschung wird diese These nachvollziehbar gemacht: Die als weltumspannendes „Beziehungsgeflecht“ zu identifizierende Pfingstkirche FEPACONzambe-Malamu mit ihrer selbstständigen Tochterkirche IFEPAA-Bom-Deus lässt erkennen, wo und wie es weltweit gesehen zu neuen Konzentrierungen und Abschwächungen von religiösem und sozialem „Kapital“ kam. Es wird nachvollziehbar, welchen das Reich Gottes herbeisehnenden Kräften diesbezügliche performative Äußerungsakte unterliegen.

The ongoing Founding of the Pentecostal Movement between Centres and Peripheries.

**Historical Investigation concerning the worldwide
,Web of Relationships' of FEPACO-Nzambe-Malamu**

Moritz Fischer / Neuendettelsau (Germany)

- 1. The development of Christianity at the peripheries and the Pentecostal Movement**
- 2. Sociology of knowledge-related prerequisites for the research of the Pentecostal Movement**
- 3. The eventful and mutual relationships between 'centre' and 'periphery'**
- 4. The outrageous charm of those who are marginalized (by outside assignment)**
- 5. FEPACO-Nzambe-Malamu/ IFEPAA-Bom-Deus: Churches between Africa and the West**
 - 5.1 FEPACO-Nzambe-Malamu/ IFEPAA-Bom-Deus in Germany*
 - 5.2 FEPACO-Nzambe-Malamu/ IFEPAA-Bom-Deus in Finland*
- 6. Substitution of the limited network metaphor by the concept "web of relationships"?**
- 7. The performative and the missionary dimension of the Pentecostal Movement**