

“In and Out of Africa”: The Transnational Pentecostal Church Nzambe Malamu, Its Migratory Entanglements and Its Missionary Strategy

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Abstract

Transnational churches as Nzambe Malamu do not portray the Pentecostal movement as a whole, but only one of its segments. I examine here a certain Pentecostal Church, whose outreach is worldwide, from three different

perspectives: (1) the historic-postcolonial, (2) the socio-ecclesiological and (3) the aesthetic-performative dimension of the Pentecostal movement, which all correlate with one another. I want to show how the research of the Pentecostal movement is enriched by this interdisciplinary approach. Each of these three issues is limited and will be enlarged by a critical encounter by its neighbour-disciplines. Recognising the contours of this certain segment, our established mainline churches with their theologies as well as the Pentecostal Evangelicals are challenged to a constructive debate. Hopefully the debate with transnational Pentecostal Churches forces all its contributors to fashion a networked intercultural-interdenominational and ecumenical "Theology of Migration" which is already in process.

With the following considerations, I investigate one Pentecostal church whose outreach is spread worldwide, taking the following threefold perspectives which represent subdisciplines of Theology. These are: (1) the historical-postcolonial, (2) the sociologic-ecclesiological and (3) the practical-theological dimensions of the Pentecostal Movement. All are correlating and opening various perspectives to each other. Using these three observational postures, I want to show that the research of the Pentecostal movement¹ must enlarge its power of understanding by an interdisciplinary approach. Each of the three herewith connected perspectives leads us to formulate questions which find their answers partly through interdisciplinary extension towards its two neighbouring perspectives. One may assume these perspectives follow the three temporal dimensions of past, present and future: to have become a church, to be a living organized church in its present ecclesial self-description, and thus, to be a limb of the body of Christ—with its *becoming* effects—which is diffusing itself in external ways by performative practices (*Praxis Pietatis*) towards the forthcoming Kingdom of God. These three dimensions of time are related to each other and are finding a climax in the central figure of the church-founder Aidini Abala. He himself figures by his visionary charisma as a supposed irreplaceable witness of Christ.

The Historical-Postcolonial Perspective: Abala, Founder of Nzambe
Malamu, Between Religious Traditions and Anticolonial Rebellion

Apôtre Alexandre Aidini Abala was born on 15 July 1927 in Ngibi in the province of Ituri, Northeast of the Democratic Republic of Congo. He died in South Africa almost three months after his 70th birthday on 10 October 1997. He had gone to South Africa to undergo special medical treatment after a long period of sickness. By his ancestral name, Aidini, he is allocated an African identity.² This is due to a concrete cultural tradition of the social interests of the clan into which he is born, and this demonstrates the influence of his family origin which is responsible for this name-giving ritual. As an individual, Aidini represents a socially constructed and powerful "reality." Until our present times, and over 20 years after his death in 1997, people in and out of the DRC mention him with high respect and appreciation in public as well as in Christian circles. He is qualified as "a person of integrity, powerful, and acting with the authority of the Holy Spirit." He is often characterized as "humble and strong."³ His power management in the ministry of a church "was not without controversy" as an interviewee informed me.⁴ As historians, we have to deal with the discourse about a personality which is in correlation to his call. We have even to be ready to deal with conflicts since one cannot keep controversies out of the way. On the one hand, we are presented the picture of Aidini as an outsider, frontier-crosser and energetic critic of a bigoted Christian, religious leader insisting on church traditions without knowing why he is doing so. On the other hand, Aidini was the fatherly founder of the Nzambe Malamu who did not even fear church splits in certain cases. To the contrary, one may ask a question, was he so keen on resolving differences and on reconciliation? It seems he believed it would be wiser to accept the split of opponents and rivals without showing aggression if the "truth" was concerned, and to thus keep the majority of believers following him.

He biographically told of himself and his career for the first time in 1996, one year before he died.⁵ The title of that biography was

Apostle Aidini Abala – God Is Calling You to Serve Him! By that time, the Nzambe Malamu branch in Germany still called itself by the German name *Evangelische-Pfingstbruderschaft-Europas-in-Deutschland* (E.P.E.I.D). The main content of *Aidini Abala – God is Calling You to Serve Him!* is the history of his life which he puts into the centre of his descriptions. He characterizes his oral autobiography as an *experiment* that moves between two poles in one and the same immense web of relationships. The book is constructed in such a way that every segment extends concurrently from one phase of his life to the next, always between the contraries of desire and fulfilment. Abala's life-report is so far rhythmically constructed between call and response, between the one pole of being "called out" and the other a responding pole of positive reply as a successor of Christ. The latter is about the "crisis management" which is giving answers to the danger.

Abala's crisis management serves as a model for the whole Nzambe Malamu church in its religious practice. The listeners, especially those who are involved in the service and in its performative liturgy, are animated to give resonance. Emphatically, they are encouraged to accompany Abala with their own inner power of imagination: moving from one life-threatening situation to the next and from a productively interpreted turning point of their lives to the next. Each time the protagonist comes to new and decisive insights, he or she is seemingly empowered to do extraordinary deeds by which he or she implements the renewals, enlarging the actual sphere of influence of Nzambe Malamu concerning the foundation of its congregations, the winning of new members, and the expansion into new countries and regions beyond Africa.

The specialty here is that the biography of the *charismatic* Aidini Abala is performed by himself with the aim of documenting and underlining the legacy of his apostolic assignment. Today, his successors in church administration use the narrative for posterity, and in so doing, preserve the life of Abala for present purposes. When he reinvents himself performatively in the life of Jesus, of Paul or of the apostles, he embodies with his sermons the ideal Christian and the stereotypical parishioner of Nzambe Malamu.

The term "*transnational*" is justified and used by several scientific disciplines. It lends itself to fall back upon several of these different concepts. They all are plausible, if regarded from a transdisciplinary perspective. That means that we don't have to ask after "identities" which one can separate from each other as "units" concerning geographical, ethnological or nation-state points of views, but combine and interrelate empirical methods and disciplines historically to one another.

First, I ask myself about the "space" in which we may situate the specific discourses around Nzambe Malamu and, vice versa, reflected on how the discourses themselves constitute this space. The awareness for the conditions of the construction of Nzambe Malamu and its historical entanglements *between* the three continents Africa, America and Europe demands us to examine a useful term which is in use in the English-speaking world of sciences: "Black Atlantic" or even "Circum-Atlantic". The term was introduced in connection with globalization and postcolonial discourses by Paul Gilroy who relates the content to Stuart Hall.⁶ But the scientific community in the meanwhile prefers the use of the well-established concept called by the adjective "transnational." The latter seems to be more practical concerning the research of the formation of networks. In our case we investigate networks of a Pentecostal movement. If I prefer to rely on the idea of "transnationality," it is because I want to show that we don't deal with the formation of identities just in an "international" but also in a "transnational" sense, analysing subversive processes of an ecclesiogenetic Pentecostal-charismatic counter-culture. This counter-culture stretches over "spaces", e.g. the real as well as symbolic "Atlantic."⁷ As historians, we ask for dynamic processes happening between places. We are interested in power-structures and how they came into being. Here, in the space between Africa, the Americas and Europe, it is the area which was, for centuries, used for the inhuman slave trade. It is the very same space which still claims our injustice, actually the so-called neoliberal world economic order which is committed to neoliberal capitalism. Every year, thousands of migrants try to overcome the Atlantic or the Mediterranean Sea on

their passage from Africa to Europe. In this way the history of injustice has been written and is still being written.

By the term “transnational,” we especially underline the idea that borders of nation-states are not at all to be interpreted as essentialist marks by which a nation defines its geographic space, thereby establishing a hegemonial identity. Furthermore, we must raise the question, where, why and by whom these frontiers have become much more relative and are even lifted to cross, and even forced to overcome them as far as possible. Nzambe Malamu is one of many churches, beginning with the history of their origin in manifold transnational entanglements (e.g. to the USA, to Great Britain, South-Africa, Canada, Germany etc.), which continue in the context of personal migration.⁸ According to Anna Quaas, while doing “transnational research,” we have to concentrate on the question of how far “transnational connections” play a role in the churches which we investigate and what could exactly be the meaning of this role. Here, I must stress the findings of Gerrie ter Haar that there were African churches which started with their spread out of the continent of origin by moving overseas to be among the first which participated in international networks, which they did not have access to until the late twentieth century.”⁹

We must ask if this so-called *networking identity* of Nzambe Malamu, which was and still is steadily developing during its spread from Africa to Europe, is as novel as it looks. My conjecture is that not only did Aidini Abala himself generate it, but that such a genuine network-like self-understanding was common as an identity-marker among the precursors of the foundation of Nzambe Malamu in the 1940s in Kenya. This continued already for years up to the fifties of the 20th century following the first of Nzambe Malamu as a church. But how did such a small Nzambe Malamu church develop to be an effective and wholesome facet of the globalized world in its transnational religious dimension? It seems here that the “migration-factor” with its social as well as religious implications was beneath other mostly influential factors.

Nina Glick Schiller and Linda Basch, among the very first to

conceptualise "transnationalism" as an analytical frame of reference, state:

To conceptualize *transnationalism*, we must bring to the study of migration a global perspective. Only a view of the world as a single social and economic system allows us to comprehend the implications of the similar descriptions of new patterns of migrant experience that have been emerging from different parts of the globe. At the very same time, it is in terms of these bounded identity constructs that migrants frame their individual and collective strategies of adaptation A focus on transnationalism as a new field of social relations will allow us to explore transnational fields of action and meaning as operating within and between continuing nation-states impose on their populations. Migrants will be viewed as culturally creative but as actors in an arena that they do not control. Transnational flows of material objects and ideas will be analyzed in relation to their social location and utilization – in relation to the people involved with them."¹⁰

Schiller and Basch, of course, do not relate only to experiences of migration in a narrow, transnational long-term movement away from a place of origin and its duration, but even to inner-state migration that translates into short-time migration which lasts only to a certain limited period. It seems that the only concern of the protagonists of transnationalism is the missionary expansion of the Pentecostal-charismatic version of Christianity.¹¹ Quaas herself is skeptical of observations which are resulting in the concept being called "reverse mission." Here we pose two questions: How can one assume a "global understanding of mission"? To what extent, historically, is "reverse mission" not a construct, especially as the missionary practice of the historical churches themselves was anything but unified?¹² Besides, according to my own analysis, the personal and organizational commitment of many of these leaders of migrant-churches in many cases takes place beneath their social, economic and political motives to migrate. Sometimes these

different motives are interconnected in a special way. Transnationalism, as a scientific method of research, seems to be more suitable for our case because it helps us understand the striking inner and outer mobility of the protagonists and congregations as well as to investigate their organizational ecclesial units better and to comprehend their dynamics. It is important to examine the original situations and relevant processes in their fluid positioning between possible “centers” and “peripheries.” How is the original situation changed? What is different in each new position and how does both interact dialectically with each other? Ogbu U. Kalu states here, combining the questions and the relation between religious and secular motives and how positioning in respect to power-relations works: “They build international and intraregional linkages that enhance their evangelical capacities and image. There will be a tendency to avoid foreign control and yet desire to be recognized as a ministerial partner.”¹³

One of the peculiarities of Nzambe Malamu, which is common with other “independent Pentecostal churches originating in the Global South” is its strong distraction. Its congregations are presently spread over three continents and in more than 30 nations. In Germany, the situation is no different. They recently numbered 17 churches. Interesting, in my opinion, is how they construct their collective identity as *a networked storytelling and interpretive community*. We could document how this discursive “brotherhood” could build up networking structures and was, at the very same time – and even up till now – threatened by permanent setbacks. It seems that networking, as well as any other forms of socialization, is threatened by conflict. The function of the Nzambe Malamu relational network depends on maintaining existing external contacts that go beyond the previously established network and its nation-state structure, and that new relationships are established. How far are these contacts vivid and is it possible to establish new ones? This needs enormous flexibility and shows how difficult it is to construct reliable organizational structures. Regional and global identities are constituted in reciprocal processes. This is supported, for instance, on a local level

by regular visits between leaders of congregations and organizing exchanges of visiting preachers on certain Sundays.

At the level of single parishes, there is a striking fluctuation of members as the consequence of inner migration. Inner migration is detectable on a continental level, that means in Africa, in Europe as well as in the Americas. Depending on the spatial frame, this may possibly have to do with *transmigration* among believers of Nzambe Malamu within the Federal Republic of Germany, but also between European nations and/or at a transcontinental level. It also happens that pastors within a country of migration are strategically shifted by church authorities to fill vacancies or to establish new congregations. Lay persons who move for private reasons eventually search again for a connection to an existing Nzambe Malamu congregation close to their new residence – or are even ready to function as an outpost of another forthcoming congregation.

The Sociological-Ecclesiological Perspective: Development of “Nzambe Malamu” as a Transnational Ecclesial Network

A significant role is played by Nzambe Malamu’s cautiously so-called “networks”. Networks knot or entangle themselves into existing contexts by tackling certain fibres, strands and existing links where they develop further. In doing so, the actors expect to strengthen their individual or collective identity which is created in discourses taking place between the imagination of the past and the visionary projection of a better future.¹⁴ “Network” is a term or an imagination that nowadays dominates the scientific discourse of intercultural theology, as Michael Bergunder stresses.¹⁵ If I understand Joel Robbins correctly, he tries—somehow parallel to my own use of the term “web of relationships or tissue of relationships,” (Ger.: *Beziehungsgeflecht* or *Beziehungsgewebe*)—to define the originally sociological metaphor of the *network* (compare other terms: “tissue,” “webbing” and “fabric”) as a socio-theological category while questioning it ecclesologically. Robbins defines it as a widespread network of people, which is kept together through their publications and other means of media

productions, conferences, revival meetings and constant travels and mutual visits among the church-leaders.¹⁶

The heuristic possibilities of the network idea functions in the context of what is meant by “frontier” (Ger.: *Grenze*, Latin: *limes*): It is especially clear that along these so-called frontiers and peripheries, one may identify the construction of Nzambe Malamu’s identity by markers of crises and even breaks. Among these, three markers stand out: Charismatic leadership, transnationality and rituals of miracle-healing. The British missionary historian, Kevin Ward, speaks out firmly of the genesis of Global Christianity, which is not only creating the peripheries, but also recreating them: “Christianity was and is being created and re-created on the margins, the boundary, the periphery, and in so doing challenges the validity of all boundaries and peripheries.”¹⁷ Of course, such a full-bodied claim concerning all of Christendom can only be maintained against the background of hundreds of micro-analyses which Ward can refer to. A suitable definition of the socio-cultural concept of frontier is given by David Chidester:

Following comparative research, I define a frontier as a zone of contact, rather than a line, a border or a boundary. By this definition, a frontier is a region of intercultural relations between intrusive and indigenous people. Those cultural relations, however, are also power relations. A frontier zone opens with the contact between two or more previously distinct societies and remains open as long as power relations are unstable and contested, with no one group or coalition able to establish dominance. A frontier zone closes when a single political authority succeeds in establishing its hegemony over the area. In an open frontier zone, contact can produce conflict, but it can also occasion new forms of cooperation and exchange. Attention to conflict has been most prominent. More recently, historians have also tried to identify areas of cooperative innovation in frontier social and economic relations. For our interests, however, the open frontier can be reexplored not only as a zone of conflict and cooperation but also as a contested arena for the production of knowledge about religion

and religions. Religion, rather than race or ethnicity, provided the basic vocabulary of difference in the intercultural human relations of the frontier. The practices of comparative religion [and Christian denomination, M. F.] in frontier situations tracked the presence or absence of religion, and the similarities and differences among religions, within an open, contested zone of intercultural contact... Enemies and friends were not divided into rigid, static categories... On every southern African frontier, an open zone of intercultural contact closed with the establishment of some form of European colonial hegemony."¹⁸

The German historian, Jürgen Osterhammel, endeavours to use the term "frontier" from the Anglophone scientific discourse, which has long been in common usage in international sociology:

In relation to the city the frontier is the 'periphery'. In the town [mother congregation] finally the control and the power over the frontier [diasporic mission-field] will be organized. If new cities are founded on the frontier [and new congregations in their context], the zone of contact towards the new environment will be moved further outside; new established trading bases will be erected (e.g. house-churches in camps for asylum-seekers; neighborhood-congregations and prayer-cells are basements for further expansion).¹⁹

The following two examples show that this kind of analysis is suitable for the historical deconstruction of Nzambe Malamu. In 2008, the former national director of FEPACO-Nzambe Malamu in Germany travelled twice to the Romanian capital, Bucharest, to evaluate the chances of church planting. Although he was not successful immediately in terms of founding a new congregation there and enlarging the catchment area of Nzambe Malamu towards Eastern Europe, he used existing contacts of Congolese living in exile who were already religiously affiliated members of Nzambe Malamu while living in the DRC. The eastern part of Europe, in which there were hitherto few members of Pentecostals from Africa,

is emerging as an attractive metropolitan area for diaspora communities.²⁰

The second example refers to Nzambe Malamu's most important daughter-churches. The head of the GBG congregation ("Gemeinde-Barmherziger-Gott" being the literal German translation of "Nzambe Malamu") in Nuremberg regularly visits asylum seekers in the homes in the city. Quite a few of the church members were reached where they were concentrated and included in a home circle. Several refugees became church-members because they felt looked after. Some gathered even in Prayer and Bible study groups. Even some Arabs (former Muslims) and (a few) Asian people got attracted. The formal initiation into the Christian faith was manifested by their baptism in a small river near Nuremberg. This was another decisive step leading to the formation of the congregation.²¹ These two case-studies or examples prove the following insight:

The frontier isn't a passive periphery. Along its invisible lines, certain interests, identities, life-designs and types of personalities arise (e.g. those of the Evangelist, the Missionary or the Apostle), which feather back to the centers. Along the periphery (in the diaspora- and partner-congregations of the global south) the city (central-church) may recognize its counter-type.²²

When we talk about "networks" we try to define transnational ecclesial "webs of relations." This means something which undergoes constant changes with its intersections, which materialize by personal or institutional contacts and relational entanglements. Especially here actions are planned, visions are reported, and performative actions take place in public services. In contrast, or even as a supplement of an easily structurally slightly ambiguous term, "network", I am concerned with the religious or cultural spaces, which its new inhabitants have to open up to and to "colonize." This takes place at the frontiers after these migrants have overcome the frontiers or frontier strongholds. The latter can be culturally, nationally, ethnically, sexually, age-related or geographically coded in various forms. Especially

the term "nation" is very likely in use. With this identity-marker, a large part of personal and communal aspects of the respective "self" can certainly be determined, as Norbert Elias' intercultural critique of globalization points out with his concept of "Transnational Social Spaces" (TSS)²³:

Due to the process of globalization, the conventional comparative analysis of different states, or geographical and social entities, no longer suffices to explain interlacing coherence networks²⁴, constituting new social facts that emerged outside the unit of analysis of national societies or their local representations. Rather than simple comparative studies, simultaneous multi-site research with due regard to trans-local social spaces is required. In fact, this constitutes a basic insight of the TSS concept and the general methodological working hypothesis of this paper which should be tested in subsequent case studies.²⁵

Nzambe Malamu is, in spite of its relatively big size, just one of several strongly growing churches in the DRC. As a member of the ecumenical Congolese church-body, the *Église du Christ au Congo* (ECC), which is instituted by state-law to regulate Christian religious organizations, FEPACO is officially registered and classified as a church, (*Église* in French) – subordinated to the *Communauté des Assemblées de Dieu au Congo* (CADC)²⁶ as its main theologian, Moyengo Loleka explains.²⁷ The FEPACO is registered by the number 37.²⁸ Loleka, who died in 2008 after my interview with him, was the head of the theological seminary of Nzambe Malamu, situated in Kinshasa. He compiled for me a list of 22 churches²⁹ which he titled "*les dissidents de la FEPACO*" (dissenters of FEPACO). Moyengo stressed: "... but there are even several more churches. Nearly all of their heads have not only been influential members but co-workers of Nzambe Malamu under the leadership of Aidini Abala." I was told, "We all are children of Aidini Abala!" for several times by Congolese and Angolan (mainly Lingala speaking) Pentecostals, who converted to the Pentecostal faith in the nearly 40 years of the work of the

founder of their church. Even those who in the meantime had already joined another Pentecostal Church or founded a church of their own, refer, in the construction of their own identity, to Abala as their founder. One identity-marker of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement is their extremely high rate of church-splits. This also affects Nzambe Malamu time and again.

Here in Germany, one of Nzambe Malamu's daughter churches, the Portuguese-speaking IFEPAA (Igreja de Fraternidade Evangélica Pentecostes na África, em Angola), whose headquarters are in Luanda, Angola, calls itself a *Gemeinde-Barmherziger-Gott*. The branch which is located in Germany is classified as a migration-church separated from the main body of the church since 2007, stressing its national Angolan identity with its church president residing in Luanda. By transposing the original term "Nzambe Malamu" out of Lingala into the German *Gott ist gutt* (translating "God is good"), the self-understanding of this church in its regional version becomes clear. The latter puts the stress on its international Character. The question is whether we can really grasp the phenomenon of the self-dissemination into the northern hemisphere by this church, representing the global south, and do justice to Nzambe Malamu if we label it with terms like "migrant church" or "Diaspora church."³⁰ We realize by this self-definition clearly that identity is much less shaped by the concept of the migrant church but much more by the level of a specific, transnational as well as regional interconnected webs of relationships. To underline this observation, we can read in the self-description of GBG the following:

It is the aim of the congregation to lead every human being – independently of his nationality, language and social context – to Jesus, so that everyone finally may "adore God in the spirit and the truth." The Holy Spirit guides us into intensive fasting and praying, so that we receive the strength for the street-evangelization, unity for the house-prayer-groups and love for the social work in the districts of the town. According to our vision we may visit men in prisons and hospitals and open up social facilities (schools, hospitals, old people's

homes etc.). Part of our vision is to spread out the Good News of Jesus all over (Matthew 24:14). Therefor we start to build up new congregations in other towns.³¹

Those migrants found in the diaspora churches, who plant branches of a mother church and build up congregational life, are bridge-builders: between the continents, between the society of the residence here and other migrants there, between various local conditions, which at a time are delocalized, globalized and again re-localized. Concerning its transnationality at GBG there are quite many Germans or Europeans by origin as pastors (male as well as female) in charge as well as co-workers and in leading positions.

The Practical-Theological: Performativity of the Pentecostal Ritual of Healing With Nzambe Malamu

Finally, we discuss the question: what cultural, social and political factors make a church like Nzambe Malamu as interesting as it seems? I investigated the certain role of performative actions, especially in healing-services with Nzambe Malamu. There are only a few examinations using methods of ritual sciences concerning a specific Pentecostal-charismatic performative praxis. There are, for example, studies which interpret rituals in Pentecostal migrant churches as cases of communicating action.³² By the analysis of concrete performances, I identified aspects of manufacturing and representation as well as tracing the processes of presenting and producing spiritual messages. Performances are like the putting on in a theatre or the carrying out of certain actions which involve and intermingle three aspects: the performer, the performed content as well as the audience are melded into one. We identify cultural processes, in which a collective subject of interactions are involved.³³ By the speech of the "interactive subject of utterance" we neglect the arbitrary differentiation between "collective" or interpersonal and "subjective" identity and try to overcome it where it where it rather obfuscates the contexts to be recognized rather than making them clear.

Intersubjective faith-healing as practiced in churches like Nzambe Malamu is, in cultural studies, termed “rituals of revitalization.” These are performed mainly in consequence of an instructing sermon and in reference to certain paragraphs of the bible which are referred to as the script of the whole performance and “in the name of Jesus.” Rites are repetitions in its original sense: Referring to a primary cause, which is repeated and presented. Form, procedure and the involved persons with their specific functions are fixed constitutively in order to maintain a higher order to which the whole refers and relates. But they are not only committed to the past, but as a basic religious act clearly have a prospective, future-opening element. Christian charismatic healing services have transcendent references to “performances of hope.”³⁴ By the performance of its Healing-rituals Nzambe Malamu “invents” itself at certain places and times again and again. Regarding their content these rituals are performed mainly to overcome an identity crisis of a single person or of a whole group.³⁵ This is in regard to the changes to which the ritual is subject to as well as it is depending on contextual factors like the time, the place and the social clientele. Being concentrated on the performance of the healing-ritual I recognized certain continuities or principles of a structure. These are highly meaningful because they stand in opposition to the permanent changes of the social contexts. The experience of contingency and of historical and cultural circumstances within those rituals is transferring the experience of empowerment and life in abundance. Healing-rituals are transmitted via cultural practices which also are labelled as “transferring rituals.” The latter can be observed by the point of view of an outsider in a diachronic perspective. From the point of view of the insider who is directly involved in the ritual, it is comprehended synchronically in its effectiveness. The liminality of the healing-ritual and its three successive sequences have been identified and described by Arnold van Gennep in his *Les Rites de Passage*. Our special regard is concerning the second or middle of the three ritual phases of that system.³⁶ The “virtual text” which is scripted into any liminal ritual – which even is counted as a social drama³⁷ – is quoted even in ritual Pentecostal healing performances.

The question of the "dynamics" of rituals is answered by cultural studies by recognizing them as "meaningful transformative performances."³⁸ Not only our investigations concerning Alexandre Aidini Abala and the healing-ritual of the Pentecostal movement are comparable with examples of worldwide cultures and their religions. The significance of the role of the conductor of a ritual as a performer is mostly evident. His ability to "refine the body" shall give access to the "primal powers of the human persona are to be made accessible, which can then be awakened in the audience in the auditorium".³⁹ One has to give attention not only to these who are directly involved into the ritual and their resonance which is visible in their bodily techniques which are stimulating their perception, but even to those who seem to be passive. They do grant not only the frame of the plot but react on the whole in its visible dimension and in those aspects which are from the outside invisible. The identity-founding effectiveness of a performance co-constitutes as "power," the "world" and "faith." It depends crucially on the coding of the frame, in which the performance is practiced.

In my opinion, the healing rituals of Nzambe Malamu, contrary to explicit self-expression, are not so much about achieving certain healing successes as about implicit self-consecration as a church. As a latter Nzambe Malamu finds itself especially as a migration-church in a permanently extremely fragile situation. Healing rituals do have a centripetal power which is of high importance for the cohesion of such diasporic churches which understand themselves as institutions of salvation. The founders of the churches do have central positions as was in the case of Aidini-Abala. This position was attributed to him until the end of his life and, in addition, until the present. At the moment of his death in a hospital in Durban, South Africa, the following sacred healing miracle is reported by which his fame was strengthened and he virtually was canonized to be a saint: Many sick persons got healed at the very same instant when he passed away, raised out of their beds healthy and they could leave the clinic. The martyr-like death of Abala is associated with mythical magic in the sense of the following lexeme which we might interpret in a Christo-

logical way: "And by his wounds [his death] we are healed!" (Isaiah 53: 5, 1 Peter 2:24).

Conclusion: How a Church-Founder of a Transnationally Entangled
Pentecostal Church, Operating "in and Out of Africa", Receives the
Nimbus of a Martyr.

As a summary of my explanations I would like to make the following conclusion: Trans- national churches like Nzambe Malamu do not depict "the Pentecostal movement" as a whole, but one of its segments. This has so far eluded our observation because of its transnational origin and discourse history. In other words, the history of its emergence and its discourse was neglected. But from the perspective of a German researcher this is all the easier because we do meet this church in Europe in the shape of the so-called "migrant congregations" "at our doorsteps." While recognizing the historical-postcolonial, the sociologic-ecclesiological and the practical-theological contours of this segment, the (our) mainline-churches with their established theologies are forced to a constructive confrontation and more, to a vivid encounter. It remains to hope that both these kinds of "protestants" – the established-classical as well as the Pentecostal-charismatics – while struggling with the question: "What is a contemporary church?" do recognize the critical potential which is always hidden in the "other" version of the protest and use it, developing their own respective ecclesial identity. In this sense we all are forced by transnational Pentecostal churches to continue with our work on an entangled intercultural-interdenominational and ecumenical theology of migration.⁴⁰ But to do this here right now would transcend our original question concerning the transnationality of the Pentecostal movement with its migratory connections.

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1. Moritz Fischer, "Pfingstkirchenforschung Von den Anfängen zu aktuellen Schwerpunkten," *MD* 3/65 (2014): 43-47.
 2. The different ways of writing the name "Aidini", the second part of his threefold name, isn't with its three versions "Aidin", "Adini" and "Aidini" as irritating as it seems from a historically perspective. I prefer to use consequently "Aidini", the written form, which is also used in Abala's official biography, published by FEPACO. "Aidin", therefore, is something like the phoneme of his name. And "Adini" has its roots in a hearing error of an American informer of David J. Gerrard. See David J. Gerrard, "Adini-Abala," in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess (Grand Rapids: Alexandre, 2003), 308.
 3. Edi Mbongompati, interview by Moritz Fischer, 2009/07/26.
 4. Gerrard, "Adini-Abala," 309.
 5. *Aidini Abala Frankfurt* 96, vol.1/2.
 6. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993. See also Paul Gilroy, *"There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack": The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation*. London: Hutchinson, 1987.
 7. The term "Trans-Atlantic" and the connected perspective is also used in the following monography: R. Gerloff, *A Plea for British Black Theologies: The Black Church Movement in Britain in its Transatlantic, Cultural and Theological Interaction with Special Reference to the Pentecostal Oneness (Apostolic) and Sabbatarian Movements* (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1992).
 8. Personal communication via email from Anna Quaas to Moritz Fischer (2011/02/03). See also Anna Quaas, *Transnationale Pfingstkirchen: Christ Apostolic Church Und Redeemed Christian Church of God*. (Frankfurt am Main: Lembeck, 2011), 15-39, 194-301.
 9. Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe* (Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998), 24. Also Quaas, *Transnationale Pfingstkirchen*, 26.
 10. Nina Glick Schiller and Linda Green Basch, "Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration," in *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration, Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered*, ed. Schiller, Nina

- Glick and Linda Green Basch, (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1992), 19.
11. Claudia Währisch-Oblau, *The Missionary Self-Perception/Charismatic Church Leaders from the Global South in Europe: Bringing Back the Gospel* (Leiden, 2009). Währisch-Oblau speaks definitely about "new mission churches."
 12. Anna Quaas, *Transnationale Pfingstkirchen: Christ Apostolic Church Und Redeemed Christian Church of God* (Frankfurt am Main: Lembeck, 2011), 401f.
 13. Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 12.
 14. Währisch-Oblau uses in view on Migrant-churches explicitly the term "Pentecostal networks" (42). She combines therefore some definitions (43) and gives a list of certain discursive fields (44-45), by which Pentecostal-charismatic identity describes itself.
 15. Michael Bergunder, "Der "Cultural Turn" und die Erforschung der weltweiten Pfingstbewegung," *Evangelische Theologie* 4/69 (2009): 248-49.
 16. Joel Robbins, "The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004): 125.
 17. Kevin Ward, "Introduction," in *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999*, ed. Kevin Ward and B. Stanley (Grand Rapids: 2000), 3.
 18. David Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996), 26.
 19. Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19 Jahrhunderts* (München, CH Beck, 2009), 465.
 20. Mbongompasi, interview.
 21. Timoleon Adote, interview by Moritz Fischer, 2009/03/29.
 22. Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt*, 465.
 23. Ludger Pries, "Transnational Social Spaces: Do We Need a New Approach in Response to New Phenomena?," in *New Transnational Social Spaces*, ed. Ludger Pries, (London: Routledge, 2001).
 24. Pries, "Transnational Social Spaces," 3.
 25. Dirk Kohnert, "On the Renaissance of African Modes of Thought: The Example of the Belief in Magic and Witchcraft," in *Witchcraft in Modern Africa: Witches, Witch-hunts and Magical Imaginaries*, ed. B. Schmidt (Hamburg: Verlag Dokumentation and Buch, 2007), 43.
 26. This is the mission-agency of the US Pentecostal church, the Assemblies of God which has a foreign-department in Congo.
 27. Dieudonné Moyengo Loleka, "Le Développement et la Vocation Sociale de l'Église Fraternité Évangélique de Pentecôte en Afrique au Congo (Nzambe Malamu)" (PhD dissertation, UNISA, 2003), 73.
 28. Herewith FEPACO is counted under the Pentecostal Assemblies of God (USA) and among their "Division of Foreign Mission" (Springfield) without an own sovereignty. Cecilia Irvine, *The Church of Christ in Zaïre: A Handbook of Protestant Churches, Missions and Communities 1878-1978* (Indianapolis: Dept. of Africa, Division of Overseas Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), 1978), 11. The following mission-fields where the church is working, are mentioned: Kinshasa, Bandundu, Bas-Zaïre; as a Représentant Légal is referred to Rev. Kabanga-Mauidi. In this handbook are mentioned the US-America independent Elim-Missionary-Assemblies, which important for Aidini Abala's development: "Communauté Elim

- Evangélique au Zaïre“ is the official designation with its center in Kinshasa, was founded on April 7th, 1975. It is officially designated as “Mission Elim Pentecôte au Zaïre,” without mentioning the main-responsible persons. The column which is scheduled for this information is empty. See Irvine, *The Church of Christ in Zaïre*, 18. Elim worked independently, but cooperated even with the AIM and other locally based Mission-agencies in Kenya, Emma Butler, *In The Shadow of Kilimanjaro: Pioneering the Pentecostal Testimony among the Maasai People* (New York, Pinecrest, 2002), 24.
29. Moyengo Loleka, interview by Moritz Fischer, 2007/03/02.
 30. Similar studies with focus on African presence in the West: Claudia Währisch-Oblau, *The Missionary Self-Perception/Charismatic Church Leaders*; Regina Jach, *Migration, Religion und Raum, Ghanaische Kirchen in Accra, Kumasi und Hamburg in Prozessen von Kon-tinuität und Kulturwandel* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2005); Benjamin Simon, *Afrikanische Kirchen in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Lembeck, 2003).
 31. “Congregation of Merciful God,” (www.gbg-ffm.de).
 32. Gerrie ter Haar, “Ritual as Communication: A study of African Communities in the Bijlmer District of Amsterdam,” in *Pluralism and Identity: Studies in Ritual Behaviour*, ed. Jan G. Platvoet and Karel Van Der Toorn (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 115-42.
 33. Erving Goffman, *Wir Alle Spielen Theater* (München: Piper, 1983); Erving Goffman, *Encounters* (Indianapolis, Ravenio Books, 1961). The contribution of Erving Goffman to Performativity Studies is described and analysed by Constanze Bausch, “Die Inszenierung des Sozialen. Erving Goffman und das Performative,” in *Grundlagen des Performativen*, ed. C. Wulf, (München: Weinheim, 2001), 203-25.
 34. See Theo Sundermeier, *Was Ist Religion? Religionswissenschaft Im Theologischen Kontext* (Gütersloh: Chr Kaiser Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999), 83ff.
 35. Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Religion: An Anthropological View* (New York: Random House, 1996), 107.
 36. Arnold Van Gennep, *Übergangsriten* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1986).
 37. Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu-Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967); Victor Turner, *The Drums of Affliction. A Study of Religious Processes among the Ndembu of Zambia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968); Victor Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage: Anthropological Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1985); Victor Turner, *Das Ritual: Struktur und Anti-Struktur* (Frankfurt am Main, Campus Verlag, 1989); Victor Turner, *Vom Ritual zum Theater: Der Ernst des Menschlichen Spiels* (Frankfurt am Main, Campus Verlag, 1989).
 38. Ursula Rao and Klaus-Peter Köpping, “Die ‘Performative Wende’ Leben – Ritual – Theater,” in *Im Rausch des Rituals: Gestaltung und Transformation der Wirklichkeit in Körperlicher Performanz*, ed. Ursula Rao and Klaus-Peter Köpping (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2000), 1-31.
 39. Rao and Köpping, “Die “Performative Wende,”” 13.
 40. Gemma Cruz, *An Intercultural Theology of Migration. Pilgrims in the Wilderness* (Leiden” Brill, 2010); Moritz Fischer, “Migrantennetzwerke,” *Verkündigung und Forschung* 2/57 (2012): 149-57.