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FROM CAMP TO ENCOMPASSMENT:
 DISCOURSES OF TRANSSUBJECTIVITY IN THE
 GHANAIAN PENTECOSTAL DIASPORA¹

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1. Introduction

This article examines the role of religion in identity formation in situations where individuals are engaged in intercontinental diasporic movement. Such diasporic movement involves the crossing of political and cultural boundaries. It thereby fosters the production of conceptions of strangerhood in host societies. In exploring the relationship between religion and the process of becoming a stranger in other cultural and political domains, this contribution starts from Werbner's notion that religion and strangerhood transform together (Werbner 1989: 223). I will investigate this intertwined relationship within elements of identity formation processes in Africans who travel to Europe. More specifically, I highlight the diaspora of Ghanaians to the Netherlands and the role Ghanaian Pentecostalism appears to play in the forming of their identity as strangers in Dutch society.²

In the recent literature on the black diaspora, considerable attention has been devoted to processes of identity formation, to representation of the community and to the logic of movement (see for instance Gilroy 1993, Adjaye 1994, Holloway 1994). A number of recent anthropological studies (see Appadurai 1991, Glick Schiller et al. 1992, Basch et al. 1994, Clifford 1994, Shami 1995) investigate how identities are formed in situations where—as a result of migration, diasporic flows and modern state formation—communities and neighbourhoods arise that seem neither to have a firm 'geographical' anchorage nor to furnish the means for the production of the individual as a local subject: 'actors who properly belong to a situated community of kin, neighbours, friends and enemies' (Appadurai 1995: 205). Particularly in modern processes of state formation in both Africa and the West, the (labour)

migrant, the refugee, the tourist and the traveller form indeterminate categories and localities. In one sense they may still belong to a particular nation state, but from another point of view they remain 'uncaptured.' Appadurai proposes that indeterminate communities of this nature should be termed 'trans-localities,' and he calls for an anthropology that can deal with all such 'deterritorialized' processes of identity formation (Appadurai 1995: 204, 213).

The present-day intercontinental migration of Africans demonstrates the significance of this indeterminacy and uncapturedness for migrants in the context of the Western nation state. On the political side of this indeterminacy, Clifford argues that the meaning of 'diaspora,' as a signifier of contestation, relates to the urge to maintain a connection with a homeland, an 'elsewhere,' which can be used to counteract the nation state's political project of assimilation, integration and erasure of identity. (Clifford 1994: 308). Yet, as Kazmi (1994) in his study of multiculturalism rightly points out, processes of emigration and immigration, the movement of populations across recognized territories and boundaries, is not new. What is different now is the *meaning of the stranger* in an intercontinental perspective. The present sociopolitical context of the modern state is such that the stranger remains a perpetual stranger—a person who constantly 'disturbs the smooth evenness of our familiar social and cultural landscape by a persistent incongruity in it' (Kazmi 1994: 66). To the modern nation state the 'stranger' is a threat, a category that calls into question, and escapes from, established schemes, social grids and routines, and upsets the tranquillity of social arrangements and formations by becoming a potential alternative. As an alternative the stranger shows up the established way of life as arbitrary and biased, thus posing a threat to the political legitimization of social power. Not only does the stranger experience disciplinary actions taken by the nation state as it intervenes in diasporic flows. The production of identity is affected too, as the construction of translocalities proceeds.

The meaning of strangerhood for Ghanaian migrants involved in intercontinental travel today has altered considerably as compared to the notions of strangerhood which Werbner described for Ghana. In the situation he depicted, migrants were moving on a far more limited, regional scale, which in most cases did not extend beyond Ghana's present-day state boundaries (Werbner: 227-229). My article is based on the assumption that if notions of strangerhood have been transforming from the regional to the intercontinental level, so too will religion have changed in order to accommodate and facilitate new processes of identity formation. On the religious side, the issue is how religious

forms, concepts and organizations address the modern predicaments of the stranger as described by Kazmi, and how they offer the individual the means and the techniques to create a subject identity that fits the condition of translocality—of not being part of a geographically fixed community and of belonging to a category that is perceived to threaten the 'smooth evenness' of everyday life.

I propose to use the term transsubjectivity to indicate those processes by which religion deals, in one way or another, with strangerhood as shaped by the power of the modern African and Western nation state. In the construction of the stranger, in other words, power and transsubjectivity are intertwined. Transsubjectivity thus refers primarily to those elements in the social role, in the self, of the stranger, which relate to passage, to the exteriority of identity, to the extraneous sources of self-representation—in short, to a shared history of displacement as the single most important identity marker (see Clifford 1994: 306). In their social roles, the stranger, the broker, the conjurer, the trickster, the shaman all share the cultural location and experience of what is at once internal and external, what is internalized and externalized, what is alternative and beyond established schemes of experience and explanation.

This transsubjectivity of migrated Ghanaians can profitably be examined by taking a closer look at the formation of religious groups within the Ghanaian communities of Amsterdam and The Hague. Both in Amsterdam and The Hague many Ghanaians have joined one of the numerous Christian fundamentalist or Pentecostal bodies that have emerged over the past decade. The linkage between Christian fundamentalism/Pentecostalism and Ghanaian intercontinental labour migration appears deep and multifaceted, and it seems to hold a special message for the representation, reflection and critical apprehension of strangerhood in Dutch society. We can study within these groups the construction of transsubjectivity in the face of the Dutch/Western nation state; but, as this paper intends to show, such an exploration needs to start within Ghanaian society itself, as it experiences its interconnectedness with the West. In broad terms, two discourses can be distinguished in present-day Ghanaian Pentecostalism which create and determine the framework for the subject's involvement in Pentecostal transnational relations. These two discourses and their practices form the core of the present contribution.

2. *Transnational relations in Ghanaian Pentecostalism*

In the recent literature on globalization and the importance of transnational linkages in identity formation, a special argument has been made for the role of religion (see for instance Ranger 1993, Poewe 1994, Van der Veer 1996, Rudolph & Piscatori [forthcoming]). The central line of reasoning is two-pronged: religion and particularly those movements operating on wider geographical scales, has increasingly developed homogenizing forms of organization and worship, and seems to emphasize the creation of global communities of believers to which locals have access. Especially within some Christian movements, scopes of identification are offered to the local members which extend far beyond their local communities and culture. As such they problematize both local religious forms and local appropriations of global religious manifestations such as mission Christianity. The growth and influx of global Pentecostalism and its localized representations, particularly in Africa has become the focus of a number of recent studies (see Ojo 1988, Gifford 1993, 1994, Marshall 1991, Meyer 1992, 1995, Van Dijk 1992, 1993, 1995). Their prime aim is to investigate in various cultural contexts how and why this form of Christianity seems to offer answers to the predicament of Africans who live in communities confronted by modern processes of state formation and their local power manifestations, by their inclusion in world systems of market capitalism and consumerism, and by the effects of migration and diasporic movement.

If we take a closer look at Ghanaian Pentecostalism in the current context of globalization, we can begin to see some answers to these questions. The modern context of Ghanaian global labour migration is such that more than 12% of the entire Ghanaian population is presently living abroad (Peil 1995, Nimako 1993). Major communities of Ghanaians can be found in the USA, the UK, other Western European countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, and within the Western African region itself. As Peil has shown, citizenship in the host country is seldom sought, even in the case of intra-African migration, while links to Ghana are claimed for such Ghanaian communities even by second or third generation families whose members have never had a chance to physically visit their country of origin (Peil 1995: 346, 360).

In the Netherlands, the official population figure for the Ghanaian community, which is concentrated in Amsterdam, The Hague and to a lesser extent Rotterdam, stands at 15.000, including both legals and illegals. The unofficial figure, however, suggests a total of up to 30.000. As well as a growing number of social and cultural societies and volun-

tary associations, this community has seen a sharp rise in Christian fundamentalist and Pentecostal churches since the late 1970s. At present over 25 Ghanaian churches of these origins can be found in Amsterdam, varying in membership from 50 to 600 adults (see Ter Haar 1995). Most of these churches are characterized by a youthful leadership and membership, and they include both legals and illegals among their congregations.

The linkage between the intercontinental labour migration and Pentecostalism really took form when, in the late 1970's, a new, charismatic type of Pentecostal churches began developing in the two largest cities of Ghana. They catered predominantly to the young, mobile and educated but more or less deprived urban middle classes. As Ter Haar (1994), Gifford (1994) and Peil (1994) have also been indicating, the appeal of this type of churches to the young was and is largely based on an element of individualism, personal success and clientelism in their leaders; a combination of personal success with successful business ventures; an international network of contacts and of an international outlook and image in the churches' operation and symbolism; the way they have effectuated this international outlook and networking by setting up international branches and training liaisons for their personnel and other members, as well as by securing financial support; and their promulgation of a prosperity gospel with the aid of modern means of communication. Urban Pentecostalism has very much become a window to the world.

Rural Pentecostalism in Ghana, on the other hand, as studied by Meyer (1992, 1995) in particular, can better be approached by exploring the answers it offers in a context where people have a partial apprehension of the global forces which govern and determine their present local context of production and consumption—forces which condition the village's interaction with the estranging outer world of the modern nation state and modern citizenship, but which exert a simultaneous attraction to participate in these modernisms. This dialectic and tension, Meyer argues, produces all sorts of fantasies and fears, which are reflected in representations of evil and diabolical powers. Pentecostalism seems especially able to cater to these tensions by providing a space and a place where people can express and come to terms with such anxieties.

Urban and rural Pentecostalism in Ghana and elsewhere (see Van Dijk [1995] for Malawi) seem to differ in their 'programmes' for including the subject in modernity's social and economic relations, and for mediating the understanding of such relations. The growth of

Pentecostalism should hence be understood primarily in terms of the differentiated responses it is able to offer to local attempts of coming to grips with wider national and international processes and contexts of global capitalism and state formation. It constructs a differentiated response to what is and should be considered evil, what can and should be desired, and what can and should be denounced in all those things that intrudes from the world into the local fabric of social life.

In a way this development of urban and rural Pentecostalism in response to the globalization of African and Ghanaian society has formed the 'natural' continuation of the project of local appropriation and Africanization of global mission Christianity, Ghanaian Pentecostalism was already engaged in earlier (see Meyer 1995). Though I do not intend to recapitulate here the entire history of Christian influence in Ghanaian society since the inception of the missionary effort, it is clear that Pentecostalism has increasingly 'popularized' certain Christian notions within Ghanaian popular culture. From the turn of the century, the mission Pentecostal churches had rapidly become 'syncretic' and had Africanized at a much faster pace than the established, mainline Christian churches. When the mission Pentecostal churches were placed entirely in the hands of African leadership in the 1930s and the 1950s, that leadership accommodated to notions of the spirit world, the ways in which individual subjects were affected by such influences and forces, and it developed distinct ideas on how such afflicting forces could be counteracted in prayer-healing, speaking in tongues and similar rituals.

The early Pentecostal churches in Ghana—all stemming from missionary efforts, such as the Apostolic Church, the Church of Pentecost, the Christ Apostolic and the Assemblies of God—engaged in a cultural dialectic on two fronts. They challenged mainline Christianity on the issue of the perception of evil, the diabolization of key elements of the existing cosmology and the way to act against witchcraft and evil spirits. Mainline Christianity, Presbyterianism, Catholicism, Methodism and Anglicanism, all maintained rigid barriers to any kind of accommodation with and absorption of such cosmological elements. They wished to prevent 'contamination' of the pure faith, which might have resulted from allowing for, and having to deal with, such 'devilish' occult forces.

On another front the Pentecostal churches developed a dialectic with the many spiritual-healing churches in Ghana (see for example the work of Wyllie 1980). The latter also recognized such forces, but offered healing to afflicted persons through the use of all sorts of objects and substances. Whilst including Christian doctrines and teachings in their

practices, churches such as the Nazarene Healing Church and the Musama Disco Christo Church offered healing by employing objects which clearly originated from sources and ritual practices rooted in the veneration of *abosom* (family and ancestral spirits) and the worship of them through *okomfoo*, the associated fetish-priests. The use of herbs, candles, oil, baths, concoctions, magical rings and the like belonged very much to this realm. It was 'translated' into the spiritual churches' symbolic practices and, especially in the 1940s and 1950s, it appeared quite appealing to a larger public.

From the 1950s onwards, however, the Pentecostal churches gained momentum in membership growth. According to the National Church Survey, the Church of Pentecost has now become the largest single church in Ghana, with a steady membership of nearly 260,000 persons in just under 3600 congregations (by comparison: the Presbyterian church has a steady membership of about 180,000 divided over 1900 assemblies). Pentecostalism in Ghana has also been 'institutionalized' in the establishment of a large umbrella body, the Ghana Pentecostal Council, which now serves to 90 different Pentecostal churches.

The larger Pentecostal churches were certainly represented in Ghana's urban areas and could claim a wide variety of international links, partly through the establishment of international branches (the Church of Pentecost has branches in 17 African countries, 7 European countries, the USA, Canada and Israel). In the late 1970s, however, a new type of Pentecostalism was emerging, which in contrast to earlier Pentecostal churches was focusing on the educated middle classes (see Gifford 1994). This new Pentecostalism in cities such as Accra and Kumasi—generally referred to as 'charismatic'—appears strongly inspired by American fundamentalism and some of its charismatic leaders, as well as by strong missionary efforts by American churches launched via Nigeria. Starting in 1979 with Duncan William's Action Faith Ministries—also directly linked to a Nigerian predecessor—a type of charismatic Pentecostalism emerged in which personalism in worship, leadership and organization was strongly emphasized. Firmly situated within the prosperity gospel, it propounded the notion of combined spiritual and socio-economic success of the person. Leaders presented themselves as persons who emanate great charismatic power, and simultaneously as persons who show acumen in business relationships.

Another salient feature from the mid-1980s onwards was the international self-representation of these churches. The 'global claim' came to feature prominently in them. It showed that they are not confined to the limits of the present nation state, but actively seek inter-penetration

with other cultural contexts beyond its borders and cultural boundaries, giving these a place in their ideology, organization and further religious experience. The claim is not just that Ghana is 'a too small a place for our message,' but that inter-penetration with other cultural contexts deepens, enriches and essentializes the religious experience of Pentecostal communities.

Actively and swiftly, often operating either from Accra or Kumasi, these churches began setting up branches outside Ghana, particularly in Western Europe and the USA. They linked up profusely with international Pentecostal circles and organizations, promoting an extensive exchange and flow of persons and material to and from Ghana through these channels. In Accra and Kumasi, churches were adding terms such as 'international,' 'global' and 'world' to their names, thus indicating a promise of religiously inspired access to transnationalism. Examples are the well known International Central Gospel Church (Accra), the Global Revival Outreach (Accra), the Harvest Ministries International (Accra) and the World Miracle Church (Accra). In some of these churches, the international frame of operation is represented symbolically by putting up flags near the pulpits from each country to which the church has branched out. In addition, some leaders also began publishing books that became internationally available (among them Mensa Otabil, leader of International Central Gospel Church [1992], and Charles Agyin Asare of the World Miracle Church [1992]).

Conversely, Pentecostal churches also originated within diasporic Ghanaian communities abroad which ploughed their way back into Ghana. In other words, alongside Pentecostal churches set up among Ghanaian communities in places like Amsterdam and The Hague as branches of churches in Ghana, in the diaspora full-fledged Ghanaian Pentecostal churches originated in foreign cities which had no such formal links. Examples from Holland are the True Teachings of God Temple (Amsterdam) and the Acts Revival Church (The Hague). In Hamburg (Germany), the Christian Outreach Mission Church was founded, and later spread to The Hague and to Accra.

The point is that, similarly to what Shami has shown for Islam (1995), Pentecostalism is historically a transnational phenomenon, which in its modern forms is reproduced in its local diversity through a highly accelerated circulation of goods, ideas and people. The new charismatic type of Pentecostalism creates a moral and physical geography whose domain is one of transnational cultural inter-penetration and flow. It is made and remade through travel, movement and encounter. The growth and flux of Ghanaian Pentecostalism in transnational inter-

change should hence be considered in the light of the bi-focality it realizes as it serves the spiritual and other needs of many thousands of Ghanaian intercontinental migrants.

3. *Flows and blockades: needs of the migrant*

Broadly speaking, two discourses and practices can be distinguished in present-day Ghanaian Pentecostalism which serve shape to its transnational relations and cater to the needs of Ghanaian migrants. The first of these involves the so-called prayer camps in Ghana, to which (prospective) migrants may turn for spiritual help and protection in their transnational travel. I will call this the *sending discourse*. The second discourse relates to the figure of the Pentecostal leader in the diaspora who represents the *abusua panyin*, the family head who, in similar conditions of movement, provides an all-encompassing model of close personal assistance and support. This I will call the *receiving discourse*. Although not mutually exclusive, the two discourses are located in relatively separate domains within broader Ghanaian Pentecostalism. I will start here by exploring the first of them: the prayer camps.

For quite some time now, the Church of Pentecost has reserved special places among its leadership for individuals who have shown themselves to possess a charisma for healing and deliverance. Like some of the other 'older' Pentecostal churches, the Church of Pentecost incorporates prayer camps at which specific healing and deliverance rituals are performed by gifted prayer leaders. Usually the lengthy sessions held there take on a strongly exorcistical character: most physical and other problems that people lay before the prayer leaders are considered to result from demonic and devilish forces of which the bonds that 'knot' the person to such evil powers must be broken and evil spirits cast out.

At various places throughout the country, residential camps have been set up by prayer leaders, where people can stay for any length of time in order to be healed or have their problems solved through nearness to the benevolent powers that emanate from the presence of the prayer leader. Large prayer camps have been in operation at Edumfa (the first one to be incorporated already in the Church of Pentecost's structure back in the 1960s), at Sunyani (the well-known Bethel Prayer Camp) at Sepe (Kumasi) and at Ablekuma (Accra). As I have witnessed at different locations, the visiting of prayer camps as a means of getting any sort of problem solved is practised on a grand scale. At these camps, hundreds flock to the prayer hours and fasting times on a daily

basis, and scores of people seek admission to the residential quarters to be able to benefit from a longer stay. The sick, insane and those accused of witchcraft are brought there, and their care is placed in the hands of the prayer leader and his or her team of assistants. In some cases, relatives stay at the camps as well to take care of the persons brought there; in other instances money is given to the leader for their upkeep; sadly, in other cases, neither is available and the person brought to the camp is abandoned by their family.

The prayer leaders of the camps have developed into influential figures within the Church of Pentecost structure. Some even claim that the current popularity of the church is a direct result of the significance of the prayer camps in issues of healing, exorcism, deliverance, problem-solving and the like. Certainly at one level the general success of prayer camps can be explained by their common practice of having day-to-day prayer services for the general public, where people can present their problems and have them addressed by the powerful prayers of the leader—while they also stand a chance of being admitted to the camp for a stay longer than one day or one meeting. They can then have their problem presented to the prayer leader who may decide that longer attention is required for its resolution.

At another level, the great variety of problems brought forward at the camps, ranging from ill health or barrenness to unemployment, business failure, and many others are subjected to a set pattern of demonization in which they are diagnosed as being caused by the Devil's accomplices for which the cure is the superior power of the Holy Spirit and the 'blood of Christ.' That is to say a past: present, inferior: superior discourse is produced, which powerfully disengages, or rather disentangles, individuals from their previous existence, their previous bonds and relations, constituting them anew to which the meaning of being 'born-again' refers.

The influential position of the prayer leaders can be understood further in the role they play in intercontinental relations. This aspect of their power was brought home to me in a visit I paid to a prayer camp led by Sister Kate Tenkorang at Ablekuma, Accra. This is a residential prayer camp located on a hilltop in the Ablekuma suburban area of Accra. It offers residence to 200 persons for a longer stay, but on a day-to-day basis 500 people flock to the healing and deliverance sessions. Sister Kate's administration keeps admission books containing entries for all those persons who have lodged there for a minimum length of stay of 7 days. The secretary of the camp showed me the book covering the period from 17-6-1995 to 7-11-1995; it contained

1128 entries. For each entry the reason for admission was recorded in categories such as severe marital problems, birth, barrenness, weak penis, business and business protection. For 125 persons, however, I found entries such as 'travel,' 'passport' or 'visa.' Sister Kate confirmed that admission to the residential camp for problems relating to transnational travel has been increasing rapidly. From this category of people, moreover, the signs of gratitude for her powerful prayers have been substantial. Indeed, those who succeeded in obtaining their papers to travel to the West, and who had settled in Europe, would usually send a 'thanksgiving' to Sister Kate in the form of money or other material tokens of their appreciation (Sister Kate showed me letters to that effect).

This pattern by which people who wish to engage in transnational travel also try to secure their papers through lengthy prayers and fasting at residential camps is a very common phenomenon. Some would claim that over half of intercontinental migrants have gone through one of the many Church of Pentecost prayer camps. This means the prayer camps deal not only with those who are members of the Church of Pentecost; their attraction is far wider.

Once a migrant has made it to Europe, close relatives might occasionally come and stay at the prayer camps to engage in prayer and fasting for the success and protection of the one who has travelled abroad. This practice is closely linked to the notion of social investment that a family makes in one of its younger members to allow him (or less often a female member) to travel to the West to send home revenues. It is thus considered a deep family crisis whenever such a family member sends no money or other signs of their well-being such as letters or cassettes. Such a crisis might again prompt family members to stay at a prayer camp to mollify the heavenly powers that they may change the spirit of the migrant or cast out the demon that is blocking the flow of substances sent home.

A third important area in which the prayer camps serve the needs of the intercontinental migrant is sickness. Intercontinental migrants return to the prayer camps to seek healing and deliverance, especially when Western medical treatment has not been able to alleviate such crises. A sizable number of people admitted to the residential camps suffer from severe physical ailments, and their hope and expectation is that the power of prayer, exorcism and fasting will deliver them from their demons and improve their conditions. As I have witnessed, some people in such serious straits are flown in from places like Hamburg, London or Amsterdam to receive the spiritual care of the prayer leader. For conditions categorized as 'mental,' the prayer camps offer specific

care as well. Usually the mentally disturbed and those accused of witchcraft are kept apart behind locked doors or even put in chains (as was the case especially at the Sepe prayer camp). They may either walk about chained hand and foot or, alternatively, are fettered to heavy metal to restrict their movement.

I do not intend to go into further depth here on the issue of the conditions of care at such prayer camps, nor into the diversity of afflictions, spiritual or otherwise, that are considered to fall within the healing powers of the prayer leaders. The point here is that 'travel,' 'passport' and 'visa' are perceived as belonging to the same realm and discourse of treatment and healing as other types of affliction and misfortune, thus qualifying as topics for the attention of prayer leaders. Important in the perspective of this paper, moreover, is the incorporation of the prayer camps in the transnational operation of Ghanaian Pentecostalism—they reach out so, as it were, to other cultural contexts in which Ghanaians in the diaspora happen to live.

In this regard, however, the whole existence of prayer camps in Ghana became the subject of a fierce public debate in the second half of 1995, revolving in particular around the transnational relations of the prayer leader of the well-known Sunyani Bethel Prayer Camp, Paul Owusu Tabiri. Having established a prayer camp in Sunyani in 1989 which was incorporated into the Church of Pentecost of that region, Paul Owusu Tabiri, a former police officer, worked his way up the Church's hierarchy and became a recognized 'Evangelist' with a specific mission in overseas relations. Those who went through his prayer camp and ended up in Germany, Italy, the UK and Holland were organized by Paul Owusu into local prayer fellowships. These were incorporated into a structure which would help to finance his prayer camp in Ghana and its overseas operations. In a relatively short period of time, the wealth that Paul Owusu had accumulated and the scale of his international travel and networking outstripped that of the leadership of the Church of Pentecost itself and its official Department for Overseas Relations.

The leadership started an inquiry and began to question publicly, through some of Ghana's newspapers, the honesty and integrity of Paul Owusu and the wealth he had built up. The rumour spread that in 1993 he succeeded in collecting through his international network a sum of \$280,000,—and in addition had been given a brand-new white BMW by his followers in Italy. In his defence, Paul Owusu turned to the newspapers as well (see *Free Press*, October 20, 1995), accusing the national leadership of similar practices. As the prayer camp operation

became increasingly scandalized and the conflict within the leadership of Ghana's single largest church was drawing a lot of unfavourable public attention, Paul Owusu eventually decided to resign his position as Evangelist. He has now turned the Sunyani Bethel Prayer Camp into an independent organization (Bethel Prayer Ministries International) including its overseas branches in Europe.

I am recounting these events to show how prayer camps in Ghana interact with and inter-penetrate transnational relations. This occurs not only at the level of a 'set of practices' but also as a discourse which embraces and foregrounds a series of conceptions and, importantly, debates about the person, subjectivity, affliction and healing in the context of intercultural travel. As a Church of Pentecost leader has indicated in a recent booklet (see Opoku Onyinah 1995), the prayer camps are central in the need to overcome demons, to be protected in the course of travel, and to be constituted and strengthened as an individual embarking on such an adventure without direct support from immediate relatives. However, matters as those recorded of Paul Owusu have turned the centrality of prayer camps into a subject of debate. Opoku Onyinah, currently the International Missions Director of the Church of Pentecost and as such responsible for many of the church's overseas policies, writes that in overcoming demons certain extremes have to be avoided, one of which is 'too much emphasis on healing, deliverance, miracles and prayer camps.' He writes:

Prayer camps may be foreign to some people. Prayer camps are not prayer meetings or prayer towers where people come to pray and then leave. Prayer camps are places where people who want healing, deliverance or a miracle for a special need in their life come, camp and pray. It is centred around a person who becomes a spiritual leader and consultant. He or she gives directives to the participants, either to fast, to be watchful about a particular thing or person and so on. Many who attend the camp seek to be touched by the leader. This is a practice going on in some countries in West-Africa. (1995: 98)

And he continues with a warning:

What made the 'traditions of the elders' become doctrine and cause shipwreck in the churches is firstly extremes. Too much emphasis on anything... becomes a dogma. Many times the devil and his demons lurk behind these dogmas and extremes, and operate. (1995: 88)

In our dispensation, we are not to make gods of our leaders. (1995: 99)

To recapitulate: in this section I have explored some of the key features of the existence of prayer camps as a discourse and as a set of practices, both of which are tied up with the desire for involvement in intercontinental travel and settlement in the West. This has implications for how this intercontinental movement affects the person, and how

prayer camps offer a model of 'incubation' before travel is undertaken, as well as a prospect of healing and care spanning intercontinental trajectories. But the prayer camp discourse is also bound up with the public debate that has erupted about the economic underpinnings of the prayer camp system and the position of its leaders. Though a lot more should be said about the cultural historicity of the prayer camp model in the Ghanaian context (for which the present paper unfortunately offers no room), it is the current discourse enveloping this debate as indicated above that I will elaborate upon further now.

In the more recent and 'younger' Pentecostal churches which are termed 'charismatic,' the discourse on the prayer camps much demonstrates what can be called a counter discourse—a discourse of *receiving* (the migrant, the assistance offered, the safe environment) rather than *sending*. Such churches, which originated at a later date, do not operate prayer camps, nor do they intend to do so. In many conversations with their leaders, I found that they viewed prayer camps extremely critically as places where demons flock, where occult powers of prayer leaders may be present, where individuals are deluded into false hopes and defiling forms of healing. Not that these leaders do not value prayer, deliverance, healing and miracles; but in their view it is not imperative that a place—and time-bound setting should be present for the working of heavenly benevolent powers on the problems and afflictions of their followers.

Secondly and most interestingly, these leaders emphasized a person-bound initiation into their own, personal all-encompassing network for purposes of healing, deliverance and problem-solving. When it comes to intercontinental travel, therefore, the issue is more one of channelling the migrant from a safe, personalistic network in Ghana into a similar safe, personalistic context in the host country, the Netherlands for instance. For these leaders, the transnationality of Pentecostalism is crucial as the centres that produce modern-day Ghanaian Pentecostalism are located not only in Ghana but in Amsterdam, London and Hamburg too. The global 'strength' of Pentecostalism is put centre stage; it is to this strength that a person can gain access through involvement in the leaders' immediate social environment in the diaspora.

It is here that the notion of 'surrogate family head,' as opposed to place-bound prayer leader, becomes important. A constant flow of information and ideas is maintained between the networks of charismatic Pentecostal leaders in Accra and Kumasi, and those in the West, such as the ones I am most familiar with, in Amsterdam and The Hague. Letters are sent from Ghana through these channels to inform the lead-

ers in Holland of the coming of this or that person, their needs with regard to a marriage or funeral, or with regard to papers and relations with authorities. Pentecostal leaders in Amsterdam and The Hague are being approached by their members on a day-to-day basis to assist in all sorts of issues, which may range from unemployment and problems in legal status, to ill health or marital problems. All such needs make possible a deep penetration into the private lives of members, especially in such settings of strangerhood in a host society.

At the level of externally oriented relations, Pentecostal leaders both in Ghana and in the Netherlands tend to act as *brokers*. They link information and interaction flows between different cultural contexts, and they fulfil an intermediary role between their networks and the wider society. They alleviate and accommodate some of the adverse effects of strangerhood in Dutch society by providing practical assistance to people in difficulty (such as collecting money, contacting lawyers or hospitals, visiting prisons if a Ghanaian member is to be deported etc.). Brokerage and a position of accommodation are combined in this external function.

In internal relations, the position of surrogate family head seems to imply a de-fetishization of the family. Both in Ghana and in the diaspora, the constituting of the person as an individual subject severs their relationship with the *abosom*, the ancestral spirits worshipped through the family head and elders, whose veneration intersects a person's life at various fixed points (name-giving, initiation, marriage etc.). Charismatic Pentecostal leaders denounce the *abosom* as demons, and worshipping them as devilish. The pouring of libations at name-giving ceremonies as an act of satisfying the ancestors is strongly repudiated by them. These leaders place the person instead entirely under the protection of the superior Holy Spirit.

This thinking is not specific to the newer, charismatic type of Pentecostal churches and it certainly also belongs to the idiom of the older Pentecostal churches (as I have pointed out, the various discourses are not mutually exclusive). What *is* specific is that in the newer churches strong emphasis is put on initiation of members into what can be called the new de-fetishized Pentecostal 'family.' Failing this initiation, the Pentecostal leader in Amsterdam or The Hague will not recognize the newly arrived migrant as a 'member,' and will subsequently not feel inclined to take on the role of *abusua panyim* (family head) in the care that should or might be extended to this person.

Crucially located therefore, are the so-called 'Bible schools'—every full-fledged charismatic church is supposed to have one—which operate

as initiation schools for the newly converted. In Bible schools, the basic tenets of Pentecostalism are mastered; above-all, the secrets of the charismata of healing and speaking in tongues are introduced and experienced. The schools serve furthermore as a training ground for new recruits who may eventually come to serve as new leaders in the various church branches. It should also be noted that these Bible schools are organized on a transnational basis. Thus they are also held in the Netherlands, and some Pentecostal leaders and teachers are flown in occasionally from Ghana to conduct them.

One situation in which both the external and internal aspects of the *abusua panyin* discourse converge is transnational marriage. When a Ghanaian man in the Netherlands wishes to marry a woman living in Ghana and have the wedding officiated in and through the church, the Pentecostal leaders may go to great lengths to mediate between the families and between the couple and the authorities to enable the newlyweds to live together in the Netherlands. Since ordained Pentecostal ministers in Ghana can pronounce legally binding marriages in church, and since this might then be used in the Netherlands to secure a residence permit which might involve the Pentecostal leader in Amsterdam or The Hague (for example as an official witness), these leaders tend to monitor things very closely indeed. Through the Pentecostal network with Ghana, they seek assurance prior to the marriage ceremony about the nature of the proposed marriage: whether the two families have performed the customary obligations at what is called the 'engagement'—involving usually an elaborate exchange of gifts—and what the moral status of the man and the wife is. The Pentecostal leader in Ghana will generally make inquiries about the prospective husband through the Pentecostal network in Holland, while the other way round the Dutch Ghanaian leader will make such inquiries in Ghana. Such a period of inquiry, together with a period of marriage-counselling, can easily take up to 6 months before the marriage can finally be celebrated in a Pentecostal church in Ghana.

Sometimes, as in a case I encountered in the Christian Revival Outreach Centre in The Hague, the leader will ask for a video tape of the engagement and wedding ceremony, in addition to the papers and the marriage certificate, so that he becomes a witness to what has happened in Ghana. Only then will he be prepared to acknowledge to the Dutch authorities that the couple who have appeared before him are genuinely and lawfully wedded.

The involvement of the Pentecostal leader in the diaspora in marriage matters exemplifies some key features of what I have proposed

to call the receiving, encompassing discourse. The leader is not only involved in receiving the migrant into the Netherlands, and the migrant receiving subsequent assistance and benevolent spiritual support from the leader, he is also engaged in 'translating' such activities into methods of dealing with the circumstances, imperatives and impediments of the Western nation state. By penetrating into the lives of those that receive and intend to receive the support, the leader as *abusua panyin* helps formulate new interpretations of identity. The receiving of such support functions as a moment of identification in which it becomes clear to the migrant that he/she has succeeded in gaining access to Pentecostalism-in-diaspora thus becoming a Pentecostal who is capable of dealing with, or who has found the (global) strength to cope with, the implications of living in the context of a Western, secularized nation state. In contradistinction from the sending discourse which foregrounds *desire* (the desire to participate in transnational travel, wealth, success etc.), the receiving discourse emphasizes moments of identification with a global Pentecostalism whose aim is to constitute the individual as a Pentecostal member in the diaspora.

To summarize the line of reasoning in this section: I have explored two different discourses existing within the Ghanaian Pentecostal frame of transnational relations. The first, which relates to the prayer camps, can be called the sending discourse. The second, which relates to the notion of the *abusua panyin*, can be called a receiving discourse. Although they belong to one and the same 'Pentecostal environment,' these discourses exhibit different features at the two poles of the transnational relationship. They 'inject' the person differently into transnational interconnectedness, and they deal differently with the body personal and the ways techniques of the self (cf. Foucault 1988) are employed in constructing the subjectivity of the Ghanaian as migrant and stranger. In the final section I will offer further interpretations of the meaning and significance of these differences.

4. Interpretation

Two major lines of interpretation need to be explored if we wish to answer the question of why Pentecostalism takes on a significant position in diasporic movement and in the construction of transsubjective strangerhood. The first refers back to the early studies of Herskovits on the importance of syncretism in the African diaspora in the Americas. The second relates to Werbner's notion of the sacred crossing of strangers in West Africa's territorial cults.

The first line of inquiry, as established in Herskovits' work on diasporic movement and the syncretism of black slave religion in the West Indies, focuses attention on the continuity of African cosmologies across intercontinental linkages. The issue of aboriginality, of the primordial Africanness of elements in the black slave religion assumes a prominent place in his work. In Surinam and other Caribbean areas where the slave trade from West Africa was concentrated, a search was undertaken for the recognizable and authentic elements in the cosmologies of slave communities. He developed a 'Scale of Intensities of New World Africanisms' (see also Apter 1991: 239) in which such elements were scaled from 'very African, quite African, little African to not African.' In recent studies such as these of Price (1983), Fernandez (1990), Apter (1991), Scott (1991) and others, it has been recognized, first that the existence of a variety of cosmological notions side-by-side should not be regarded as peculiar to the diaspora circumstances. In the 'pristine' situation in West Africa, this diversity was the case from the outset.

Second, it has been argued that syncretism within the New World context should be explored as a strategy of appropriation and empowerment. Within the Caribbean context of colonial and Catholic hegemony, syncretism necessarily involves both the unmaking and remaking of hegemony, and is thus intrinsically political. As Apter writes:

By appropriating the categories of the dominant classes, ranging from official Catholicism to more nuanced markers of social status and cultural style and by resisting the dominant disciplines of bodily reform through the 'hysterical fits' . . . of spirit possession, New World blacks empowered their bodies and souls to remake their place within Caribbean societies.

.....

Boldly stated, the revisionary power of syncretic religions derives from West African hermeneutical traditions which disseminated through the slave trade and took shape in black communities to remake the New World in the idioms of the old (Apter 1991: 255).

By looking at the spread of Ghanaian Pentecostalism to the West from this perspective, we may highlight the issues of empowerment and appropriation in the migrants' attempts to come to grips with the host society. These insights on power and syncretism were gained in the context of the study of involuntary intercontinental travel (the slave-trade). Indeed, the modern context of West-African labour migration, the capitalist mode of production and its encroachment on African society as well as the modern imperatives to acquiesce in such relations (through SAPs) all leave little to ponder as to the issue of free will. There is a

strong feeling among migrants that they *must* participate in intercontinental labour migration for the survival of themselves and their families. This first line of interpretation can therefore be summarized as syncretism as a trajectory for resistance to conditions of deprivation.

If we compare along this line the two discourses of 'sending the migrant' and 'receiving the migrant' (in the hosting Dutch society) we can indeed uncover what role syncretism has played as a 'trajectory' for the empowerment of individual Pentecostal members. In this light, the incorporation into Pentecostalism, from the 1960s onwards, of locations where spiritual help and support is offered—the prayer-camps—should be seen as a form of syncretism. Pentecostalism, though rigidly demonizing the influence of spirits other than the Holy Spirit, has embodied venues where possession and ecstasy can be experienced which resonate deeply within local cultural cosmology. Ancestral veneration, the pouring of libations, the mediating activities of the *okomfoo*, and all such practices which affirm the locality of cosmology had become deeply despised within Pentecostalism. The prayer camps reintroduced the emphasis on the locality of cosmology. Furthermore, with reference to Apter and other writers, this syncretism signifies personal empowerment as the prayer camps' regimes of praying, fasting, healing, ecstatic sessions and speaking in tongues bring about corporal renewal and spiritual strengthening.

At the same time, in defining syncretism as empowerment, as Apter proposes, we need to see that the sending discourse of the prayer camps also reflects an absorption of crucial elements of the modern nation state into the realm of spiritual power. Prayer camps deal with the appropriation of the markers of the modern nation state in the form of passports, visas, the revenues in money and goods sent home through transnational channels, and the healing of persons sent home across nation- and culture-bound medical practices. Syncretism here is empowerment by the *inclusion* of elements belonging to the secular nation state. The empowerment at the prayer camps can be viewed as a period of preparation and incubation prior to moving to the West. It is a preparation that addresses the insecurities of living within the modern Western nation state in terms of status, work, unemployment, racism, and the moral decay anticipated in places like Amsterdam (where it is considered to be rampant). Estrangement from one's own society and culture begins 'at home,' so to speak, as the migrant becomes incubated and thus isolated from immediate kinship ties, as he or she 'tunes in' to what it means to live under such conditions. Praying, fasting, staying

at a camp for a length of time to prepare for travel constitutes the person as an individual stranger, with emphasis on 'individual': a person who is spiritually 'strengthened' to be able to cope with the conditions created by the nation state's barriers, borders, regulations and secularized moral decay.

In this context of migration, the receiving discourse of the surrogate family head living in the Netherlands can be seen to move one step further in mediating the multiculturalism of the Western nation state. 'Multiculturalism,' as the modern secular equivalent of syncretism in Apter's sense, is also tied up with notions of empowerment (see also Van der Veer [1994] on the comparability of syncretism and multiculturalism). The activities of the charismatic Pentecostal leaders demonstrate that religion and spirituality are capable of dealing with the conditions multiculturalism brings about, and that much is to be achieved by adopting some elements of the Western nation states' codes of conduct towards the migrant. The leaders therefore actively seek the aid of lawyers to contest decisions, they visit police stations and prisons, they deal with the paperwork required for residing in the Netherlands, for being lawfully wedded and for getting the necessary permits. They do not remain passive vis-à-vis the narrow space that 'multiculturalism' defines in Dutch society for the Ghanaian community. They actively seek 'white' engagement and membership in their religious bodies (something that many of them say they fail to achieve).

In sporadic cases Pentecostal leaders themselves even buck the nation state's regulations regarding the papers required for a legal stay in the Netherlands. A telling example here is that of pastor X of the Ghanaian Pentecostal X X Church, Amsterdam branch. He lives in hiding within this community, to escape deportation. But at the same time he zealously serves the interests of members of his group by attempting to broaden the church's activities to various parts of the city. This 28 year old leader of the branch arrived in Amsterdam 6 years ago from Ghana and has never succeeded in obtaining the necessary documents. Through friends, relatives and other contacts he was still maintaining in his home town, his name was mentioned to the international church leader in Ghana. This leader decided to appoint him pastor of the Dutch branch after a successful 'crusade' X managed to organise in Amsterdam in early 1995, at which the international leader happened to be present. Having experienced 'the growth in the Spirit' and having been constituted a 'crusader in the Spirit,' he is now, as a new pastor, confident of his 'citizenship within the Pentecostal community' as distinguished from the citizenship acquired through 'papers.' A legal case to obtain

the latter form of citizenship is now being pursued with the support of the whole church.

The identity as a stranger which is produced for the incoming migrant at the receiving end is not that of preparation and incubation, not that of being constituted as an individual beginning to experience strangerhood 'at home.' It is that of becoming 'secularized' through religion, religious experiences and religious leadership. Rather than becoming or being 'syncretic,' Pentecostal churches in Amsterdam and The Hague seek to be 'multicultural' (a Ghanaian international church in Amsterdam, for example, claims Surinamese, Caribbean, North African and Iranian membership) and they seek to be 'rational' in their dealings with the nation state. If I may exaggerate the difference here for the sake of argument: if prayer leaders in the camps stress the need for prayer and fasting to obtain papers, Pentecostal leaders in the Netherlands stress instead the need for contacting lawyers and collecting the necessary funds if one of their members needs to engage in such costly affairs.

The second line of interpretation I would like to propose, focuses on the meaning and function of religion in West African transregional relations. Werbner draws attention, in particular for the Ghanaian context, to those regional cults which, from pre-colonial times, accompanied and guided the traveller who traversed large distances by providing ritually protected corridors and a cosmology that incorporated the local and the ancestral into the regional (Werbner 1989: 223-244). The Akan in particular are known to have had a politically endorsed system and network of royal roads, travel shrines, professional travellers, a logic of time-reckoning based on the covering of specified distances, and an articulated mode of distance trading, upon which a specific cosmology was grounded (see Wilks 1992). The sacred crossing of strangers included the notion that within these regionalized cosmologies the stranger was allowed a circumscribed space for protection, ancestral veneration, safe travel and the like.

As power relations changed in Akan society, so too did religious forms change, to the point where 'external' strangers no longer occupied an indeterminate space in the cosmology, did not disturb the tranquillity of the system of ancestral veneration at the level of the micro-cosmos, and did not become an alternative, and thus a threat, to existing, legitimate relations. They became 'internal,' and the religious forms which provided security and protection in the context of travel and strangerhood no longer upheld an inside and outside geography for such ritual services. Rather than belonging to a system of place-bound shrines offering security and protection based on clear-cut 'borders,' such services

became person-bound, as cults came to be more 'regionalized.' Borders disappeared and 'strangers' were thus enveloped within a much wider frame of reference.

The question, therefore, is whether Ghanaian Pentecostalism in its spread to the West amounts to transcontinental adaptation of these earlier regional cults which focused on the sacred crossing of strangers. Does Ghanaian Pentecostalism offer a subjectivity in which 'being a stranger' is *not* problematized, and not essentialized as the alternative to the taken-for-granted order of social existence?

The sending discourse represented by the prayer camps would seem to be more 'place-bound' in Werbner's sense in that it stresses the borders and cultural barriers which are involved in transnational travel and which necessitate the prayer leaders' spiritual, benevolent involvement. The inside-and-outside dichotomy plays a more central role here in constituting transsubjectivity than it does within the receiving discourse of the diasporic Pentecostal leaders. The latter actively seek engagement with a multiculturalism which downplays the cultural divides between people.

As proposed by Werbner, the essential difference between the two discourses may well be located in their perspective on transsubjectivity: being or becoming an *external* stranger in contrast to an *internal* stranger. The prayer camp model seems to convey the notion to prospective migrants that they will become external strangers, who need to be 'charged' with protecting powers from a specific locality. The Pentecostal leaders in the diaspora, on the other hand, tend to view Pentecostalism as a global strength to which anybody, once having gained admission, can become 'internal' even after travelling intercontinental distances. They may consider the protective force emanating from a specific locality to be obsolete; their protection is constituted by and through the identification of the person (the migrant) with another person (the Pentecostal leader).

The protected crossing of strangers as portrayed by Werbner, I would like to propose, has been transformed. In its dynamics of subjectivity and of internality versus externality, it has developed in broad lines from regional security cults to transnational Pentecostalism in modern-day Ghana. This is typified by the movement described here from the prayer camps to a wider encompassment as provided by the new charismatic leaders.

NOTES

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