

Interlude

Locations in 'Pentecost'

The reader may wonder why we have chosen such disparate ethnographic locations for our endeavour of 'locating Pentecost': Luanda (Angola), Port Vila (Vanuatu) and Kiriwina (Trobriand Islands). They are not even the 'classic' sites usually approached to study Pentecostalism – Brazil, Nigeria, North America etc. Beyond the fact that they are geographically set in coastal regions of the global south, they seem to have very little in common. Indeed, they represent very distinct geographical scenarios – from the hyper-urban configuration of the postcolonial African city of Luanda to the rural/urban confluence of Port Vila and finally to the rural, insular landscape of Kiriwina. Furthermore, they bear distinct histories and relationships with the European and Western colonial endeavours and, particularly, with Western Christian mission. Luanda harbours a long, century-old history of both contact with Christian missions, the emergence of 'African Independent Churches' and participation in the transnationalization of southern Christianities (Sarró and Blanes 2009). Kiriwina likewise has a century of contact with missionaries, both European and Polynesian, with the more recent arrival of a 'revival' Christianity. Similarly, Port Vila (and Vanuatu more broadly) has its own distinct history of missionary encounters and conversion.

This diversity, however, is a case in point: we believe that this contextual heterogeneity is a necessary challenge to overarching assumptions concerning the phenomenon of Pentecostalism as a unified 'global movement' (Anderson et al. 2010). The anthropology of Christianity, and Pentecostalism in particular, has debated the way in which

Pentecostalism, as an ideological narrative or social critique (Eriksen 2009), relies upon a globalizing, transcultural (or often supra-cultural) configuration yet is simultaneously able to identify and address specific localized problems, thus becoming 'local' in its refashioning of social relations, without losing its universalizing stance (see e.g. Anderson 2004; Coleman and Hackett 2015; Poewe 1994; Sanneh 1993; Robbins and Engelke 2010). In fact, as has been argued elsewhere, part of Pentecostalism's success can be credited to its plasticity, its pragmatic unfolding of morality, or its lack of theological discipline due to the new covenantal approach it often conveys. This makes Pentecostalism, in a way, the epitome of globalization: an example of circulation, re-territorialization, acceleration and positioning (see Aasmundsen 2013 for an example). But, as emphasized in the previous chapter, it is also local in its pragmatic unfolding and locating of community and in its identifying of alterity and foreign-ness. Recent arguments in this direction, for instance, speak about the 'ethnification of Pentecostalism' in contexts of migration (e.g. Griera 2013), its production of religious strangerhood (Van Dijk 1997) or its production of and participation in 'micropolitics' (Lindhardt 2011). This alterity will necessarily shift according to the context: it can be secularism (Europe), Catholicism (Brazil), witchcraft (Africa) etc.

In our three locations we travel through movements and sites that have diverse institutional histories, and we respond differently to the category of 'church' as an institution. While some of the sites we mention may respond to recognizable 'Pentecostal forms' such as Assembly of God or the (neo-Pentecostal) Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, other spaces and movements do not necessarily comply with the paradigm and may not even be considered churches *per se*. But they all share the importance given of the charismatic attribution – i.e. the presence and role of the Holy Spirit – and its effects in their existence as a community. More than identifying a specific pneumatology, these are lived spaces, where our interlocutors somehow relate to the effects of the Holy Spirit.

In what follows we will perform historical and geographical descriptions of our ethnographic sites and the particular churches we present in the following chapters, in order to help the reader visualize and grasp the particularities, similarities and (mostly) differences between them.

Luanda

Luanda is a coastline southern African metropolis of about five million people of multiple ethnic backgrounds (the locals, kaluandas,

are very few) and a growing expat community – most commonly Portuguese, Cuban, Brazilian, Congolese, Chinese etc. – fuelled by an oil and diamond economy that, since the armistice of 2002 that ended a thirty-plus-year-old civil war, has made the city one of the most expensive in the world. The city conjugates several movements that make it particularly complex from an urban design point of view. If the bay and downtown areas are the traditional locations of the colonial (pre-1975) Luanda, the surrounding areas witnessed a dramatic growth of so-called *musseques* ('red sands', i.e. slums) in the late colonial and postcolonial periods. After 2002, both the old colonial town and the areas beyond the *musseques*, to the east and south of the city, became progressively known as the areas of the New Luanda, where expensive condos and middle-class neighbourhoods sprouted thanks to Chinese construction.

Traditionally, Luanda was a Catholic town – a fact that can be ascertained by the multiple Catholic churches and cathedrals that are part of the city's heritage. The Protestant missions that entered the Angolan territory in the late nineteenth century worked mostly in the hinterland. However, since the late 1990s – when the regime began accommodating religious institutions and developing strategic collaborations with them – a new form of religious architecture began to emerge, due to the installation of new branches of Christianity in the city – i.e. Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal arriving from the Lusophone Atlantic space (Brazil, Portugal) and from the DR Congo. Many such churches made public statements in the Luanda landscape, building massive cathedrals and worship centres. In the meantime, several autochthon religious movements also appeared, namely of a prophetic/messianic and 'holy spirit' type.

Within this framework, the Tokoist Church – one of the movements we will read about more often in this book – appears as a unique yet relevant case in point. Founded in the late colonial period by Simão Gonçalves Toko (1918–1984), a former student of the Baptist Missionary Society, it quickly became a beacon of anticolonial resistance, due to the persecution that the colonial authorities effected upon the followers. While being founded in 1949 as what is described as a Pentecostal moment (the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Toko and thirty-five of his followers), throughout its history it cultivated a prophetic culture of spiritual inhabitation that is subject to ritual discipline and seclusion. The church's services are known for their aesthetic formalism, predetermination and discipline.

Today, the Tokoist Church is one of the main religious actors in the country, with an estimated one million followers throughout the country and transcending ethnic allegiances that often characterize

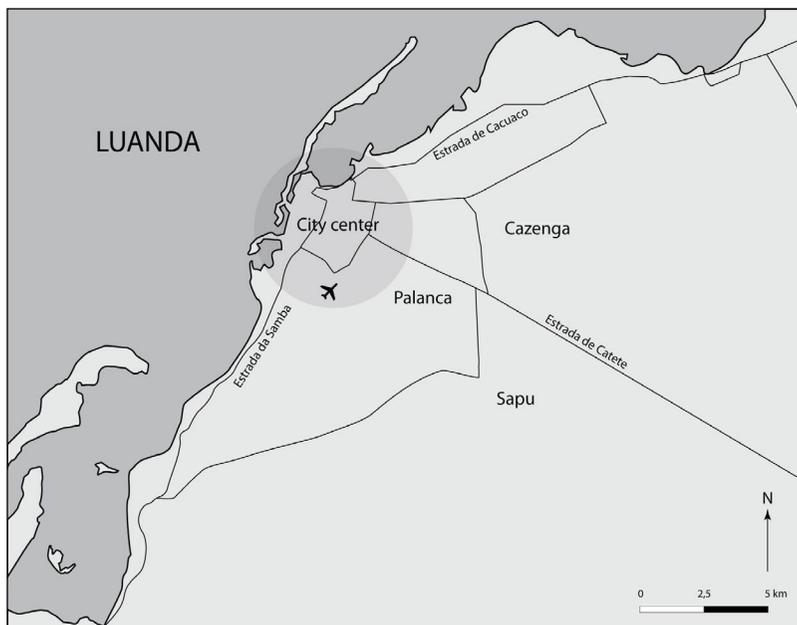


Figure 0.1 Map of Luanda, Angola. Created by Nina Bergheim Dahl (University of Bergen), used with permission.

many churches in this country. In 2012, it inaugurated what is claimed to be the biggest Christian cathedral in Africa, in the eastern part of Luanda. From this perspective, religion is a very public issue in a city like Luanda. Beyond the above-mentioned architectural developments, religion is present in the local media and locally in the neighbourhoods.

The neighbourhood Ruy Blanes works in is located on the outskirts of the 'old Luanda', the traditional colonial centre that covered the coastline. It is also on the other side of the 'new Luanda', the new, modern neighbourhoods mushrooming outside the new expressway that encircles the city. What lies in between both these Luandas is, generally speaking, the musseque Luanda, or in other words, the slum and settler areas that emerged in the decades after independence in 1975, mostly due to refugee movements produced out of the decade-long civil war that lasted until 2002. Most of these neighbourhoods respond to the stereotype of informality, precariousness, chaos, dust, noise and so on.

Regarding the Palanca in particular, although it is usually referred to as a musseque, it has distinctive features that make it a singular neighbourhood: firstly, its linear and perpendicular urban grid, originally planned by the Portuguese colonial authorities as a semi-urban neighbourhood; secondly, its homogenous ethnic composition of Bakongo

families and networks that started occupying the area in the 1980s. Thirdly, and related to the prior statement, its reputation as a 'super-market' ('everything can be bought or sold in the Palanca') and as a religious and spiritual centre, with a multiplicity of movements and churches that compete side by side in the already burgeoning streets of the neighbourhood.

It is mostly in neighbourhoods like Palanca or Cazenga that we find the so-called *mpeve ya nlongo* ('Holy Spirit') movements, more or less informal churches of Bakongo ethnicity, led by prophets or charismatic leaders that in most cases arrive from the DR Congo and convey a theology of deliverance, while placing healing activities at the centre of their ritual and liturgical displays. Many such churches operate in makeshift and somewhat reclusive locations of these neighbourhoods and are often externally framed as resulting from a process of conversion of former 'traditional witchdoctors' (*feiticeiros* or *kimbandeiros*) into a Christian template. In this framework, the EKWESA (or ICUES, Igreja Cristã de União do Espírito Santo – Christian Church of the Union of the Holy Spirit) appears as an interesting case in point. While framing itself as a deliverance-based holy spirit church, it bears a more institutional and public history than many of its counterparts. Founded in the DRC by prophet Ngonda Wassilu Wangitukulu, a former member of the Kimbanguist Church, it became known for cultivating a tradition of spiritual inhabitation and healing ministry – which, unlike the more 'disciplined' Kimbanguist Church, often occurs in the context of their weekly services. The movement arrived in Angola in 1976 by the hands of Angolan members of the church, such as pastor Nunes Sungo, the current leader.

Port Vila

Port Vila is the capital of Vanuatu, on the island of Efate, in the central part of the Vanuatu archipelago in the South West Pacific. The archipelago consists of about eighty bigger and smaller islands dispersed over a distance of 850 kilometres in a Y formation (Figure 0.2). It is situated east of Australia and north of New Caledonia and south of the Solomon Islands. Vanuatu was the former New Hebrides under the colonial rule of the joint English and French condominium. The colony was created in 1906, which is fairly late compared to other European colonies in the region.

At the end of the nineteenth century, when European nations were controlling the Pacific, and had annexed all the islands, Vanuatu

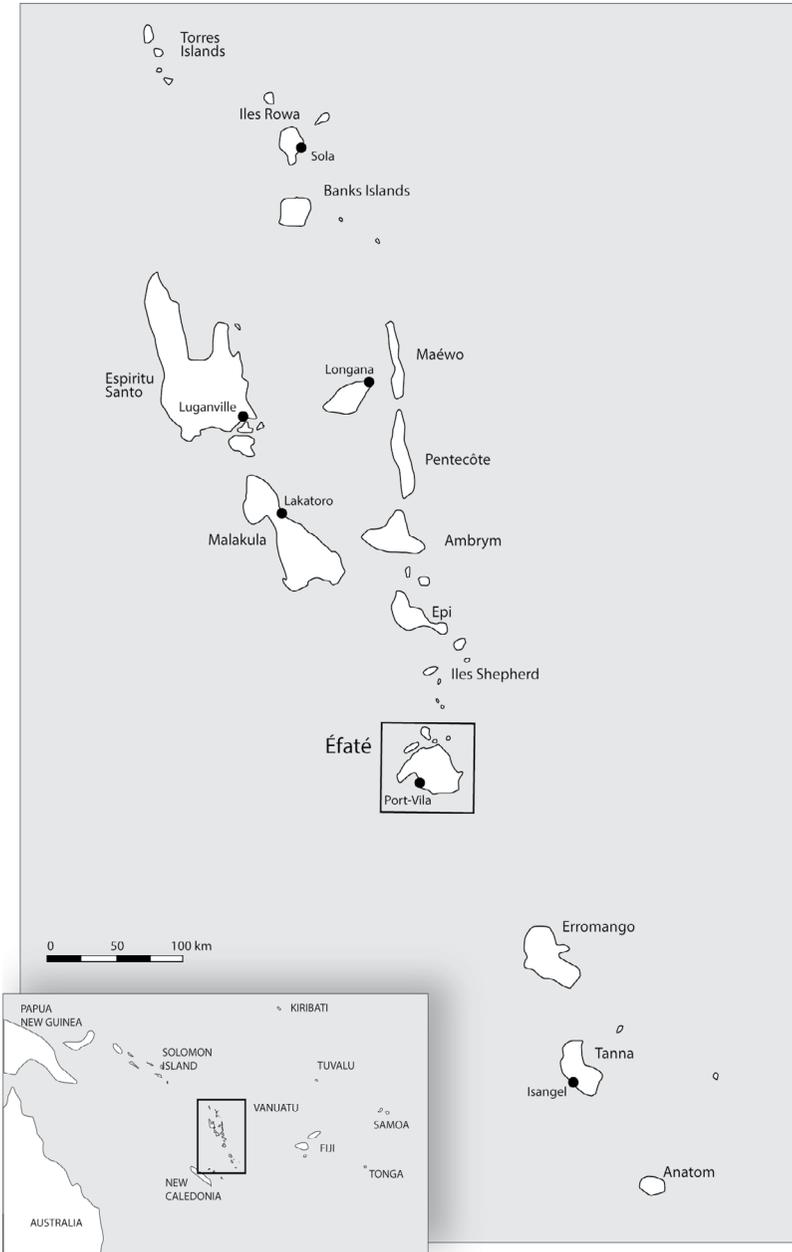


Figure 0.2 Map of Vanuatu and relative location of Port Vila. Created by Nina Bergheim Dahl (University of Bergen), used with permission.

remained outside any sovereign jurisdiction. Both Great Britain as well as France had economic interests in the archipelago, and both English and French settlers were expanding their land interests on the islands. The British and the French nationals pressured their respective governments to annex the archipelago as a colony and thereby secure their economic interest. On the British side, it was mainly Australian business interests that were being defended by preventing the French sovereign control in the archipelago. In 1906 a condominium of joint government was agreed upon between Britain and France, establishing a joint court, which had jurisdiction over land matters.

The period around Independence in 1980 clearly divided the population of Vanuatu into an either Francophone or an Anglophone side, and thus polarized the population along condominium lines. There was much turbulence during the decade before independence and the first years proceeding it. The first wave of Pentecostalism arrived in Vanuatu around this time, in the early 1970s; for instance, the Assemblies of God (see also Eriksen 2008 and 2009). After decades of independent government, the colonial churches still have a strong position in Vanuatu and are among the churches with the largest congregations. However, new Pentecostal-inspired churches, explicitly emphasizing their independent status in relation to the colonially established churches, are steadily growing (see also Eriksen 2008). The common characteristic of these new churches is their emphasis on speaking in tongues and healing.

Today the new nation state is divided into six administrative units; Malampa, Penama, Sanma, Shefa, Tafea, Torba, and local councils administer the relation between the local and regional level. A national council of chiefs was installed around independence and operates as an advisory body to the Parliament, in particular on matters relating to *kastom* (in brief: customary matters).

The capital Port Vila has today about fifty thousand inhabitants, most of them from the different islands of the archipelago, but there are also Chinese entrepreneurs, workers and businessmen as well as an expat colonial population from mainly Australian and New Zealand, mostly in the main city centre areas of Port Vila. The neighbourhoods we visit frequently in this book, Fresh Wota and Ohlen (which are actually connected and feel and seem like the same neighbourhood), were constructed for the 'indigenous population' by the colonial authorities in the late sixties and seventies. Part of the area was initially a plantation, and the houses were built for labourers from around Efate as well as elsewhere in the archipelago. In the period leading up to independence, and continuing into the post-independence period, houses were set up in this area for the migrant population from other islands in the



Figure 0.3 Typical household in Ohlen neighbourhood, Port Vila. Photo by Annelin Eriksen.

archipelago. The idea was that the large migrant population from the different islands should live in Western-style houses, with kitchens and small gardens. Today, only some of these original, colonial houses exist, and most houses are more temporary buildings, built mostly from corrugated iron.

Figure 0.3 is a typical household in Ohlen. The green hedge separates the house from the main street. The household consists of a kitchen house and a sleeping house, and most cooking and social activities take place in the areas between these houses.

Kiriwina

The Trobriand Islands (see map below) are comprised of nine inhabited islands and over one hundred small uninhabited islands and islets in the Solomon Sea, about 160 km from the east coast of mainland PNG. The total population of the Trobriand rural district was 37,511 according to a 2011 census, with this population spread across thirty-three wards and over ninety villages. The largest island, Kiriwina, is 43 km long and between 3 and 13 km wide and is home to more than thirty thousand people, about 80 per cent of the total population within the Kiriwina Local Level Government (LLG). The next three most populous

islands – Kitava, Kaileuna and Vakuta – have a total population of about five thousand, with no more than eight villages on any one of the islands. The rest of the islands have only one or very few villages each. The Trobriands are located in Milne Bay Province and they, along with the neighbouring islands of the d'Entrecasteaux group, Marshall-Bennett, Muyua and the Louisiades, make up an area known collectively (by anthropologists and other scholars, more so than by the inhabitants themselves) as the Massim.

The flat coral islands of the Trobriands are covered with a rich soil, well suited for the cultivation of yams and taro. Other crops include sweet potatoes, bananas, sugar cane, leafy greens, beans, tapioca, squash, coconuts and areca (betel nut) palms. Hamlet, garden, bush and beach lands are held by various founding *dala* (matrilineages) and are controlled by the lineage's chief or hamlet leader (Weiner 1976; Malinowski 1984 [1922]). Trobrianders keep small numbers of pigs, but pork is eaten only on special occasions. Fish are the major protein source and are abundant in coastal villages. Canned fish and meat from trade stores supplement the local protein sources but are infrequent inclusions in the diets of subsistence farmers; only those working for money (for example, public servants) can regularly afford such luxuries. Participation in the cash economy is limited to involvement in tourism, a few small business ventures, public service, mission stations and receiving remittances from kin working elsewhere in PNG or overseas. Much exchange activity also takes place outside the cash economy. Shell valuables, yams, pigs, stone axes, cloth, tobacco, betel nut, cooking pots, banana leaf bundles and trade store foods supplement cash as forms of wealth, although not all can be used interchangeably, and some are gender-specific. For example, stone axe blades are men's wealth, while banana leaf bundles are women's wealth (Hermkens 2013; MacCarthy 2017; Weiner 1976).

Yalumgwa village, where Michelle was based for most of her nearly twenty-four months of fieldwork since 2009, is one of three large villages that make up Yalumgwa Ward, along with Mweliligilagi (to the south) and Obwelia (to the north). The ward is administered by an elected ward councillor, who reports to the Kiriwina Rural Local Level Government (KRLLG) President. The north-western section of Kiriwina stretching from Mweliligilagi village to Kaibola on the northern coast, where Yalumgwa village is located, is in the region referred to as Kilivila. Its residents consider it the home of 'real' Trobriand culture, as here one finds Omarakana, the village of the Paramount Chief of the Trobriand Islands. The language spoken is also often referred to as Kilivila, sometimes Kiriwina or, more colloquially, *biga yakidasi* (our language).

Methodists (now the United Church) established the first mission here in 1894, and a Catholic mission followed in the 1930s. The arrival of Pentecostalism, or Revival Christianity (Trobrianders use these terms interchangeably), in the Trobriand Islands began in the mid 1980s. According to Kulaleku, the ward councillor for Kwebwaga (the first village on Kiriwina to build a Pentecostal church), a need for a new and stronger faith had been locally identified in part because of the number of sorcery deaths. People were ready to embrace a change and bring relief to villagers who lived in fear of *bwagau* (black magic, sorcery). When a few Kwebwaga men went to Moresby, they were introduced to the Christian Revival Church (CRC) and Rhema churches and felt that this ‘strong’ faith (*peula tapwaroru*) was needed back at home. An American pastor came to preach in 1986, and those suspected of being sorcerers were encouraged to pray and join the new church and to

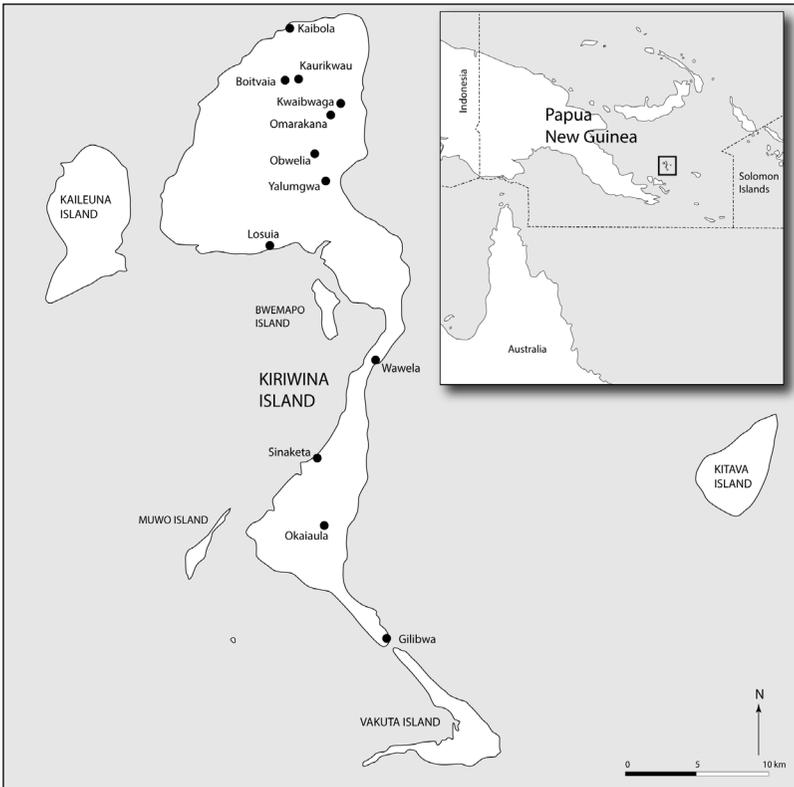


Figure 0.4 Map of Kiriwina and other major islands in the Trobriand Islands, Papua New Guinea. Created by Nina Bergheim Dahl (University of Bergen), used with permission.

renounce old ways. Sylvester, a Kwebwaga man, went to Bible College in Port Moresby and returned as the new CRC church's first pastor in 1989. People quickly joined the new church in great numbers; Kulaleku estimates 80 to 85 per cent of the village's population left the United Church to join CRC, while the current pastor of the church, Rodney, suggests that the number is over 90 per cent. This caused a rift between the two churches, but people say that because the sorcery deaths were seen to diminish rapidly with the arrival of the new church, people believed in the efficacy of the new faith and the church remained strong.

Once the new, 'Revived' churches were established on the island, there was a good deal of movement back and forth, in which people tried out the new churches, and in some cases returned to the longer-established United or Catholic congregations. Even today, marriages or disputes with church leaders can encourage people to begin attending services of a different denomination. This is not seen as problematic, since, as people say: '*komwedodasi tadubumisa yaubada tetala/we all believe in one God*'. While the Catholic Church continues to be set apart in its highly hierarchical structure and more sedate hymns and prayers, most United Churches now practise a 'Revival' form of Christianity, which is scantily differentiable from the Pentecostal (in the theological sense) beliefs and styles of worship (e.g. Van Heekeren 2014).

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