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Engaging with Theories of Neoliberalism and Prosperity

Pentecostalism has often been understood and theorized as the religion that epitomizes neoliberal economic strategies and what has been termed ‘casino capitalism’. The focus on quick and manifold returns, and the almost magical means through which such returns are created, are identified as key characteristics of Pentecostalism, especially where notions of the prosperity gospel or Word of Faith movements are present. In these theories, tithing and seed money are defining features, as these are the basis for bountiful returns in health and wealth. However, by looking closely at the ‘theory from Pentecost’, as developed through the ethnographies presented in Chapter 2, we can read another story. Life in ‘Pentecost’ is not primarily about the prosperity gospel as a means to become rich. Rather, being in ‘Pentecost’ represents a deeper shift: a new significance given to life in the present and a move away from death. The focus is oriented primarily on the here and now, which becomes much more prioritized as a site of productivity and exchange over the dead, the past and so on, which, we will argue, signals a cosmology wherein the cyclical nature of life and death is reoriented to a more linear one. In Pentecost, we find what we might call the ‘life gospel’; it is a theory about why it is necessary to focus on the living, and why the move away from a focus on the ancestors and elaborate kinship ceremonies are necessary and desirable. It is a theory that fundamentally changes cosmological perceptions. In this chapter, we will look at what this turn to life represents, why it is significant and how this ‘theory from

the field' can provide a corrective to the dominant understandings of economism in Pentecostalism.

Firstly, we will briefly revisit some of the main threads developed in Chapter 2 in order to move into another level of comparison wherein the local ideas and concepts that seek to explain significant changes in the ritual practice come into dialogue with the major relevant theories from the discipline. In Chapter 2 we identified a local discourse in 'Pentecost' around the wasteful/productive dichotomy and the need to focus resources on 'the living' (especially the nuclear family and church congregation) rather than 'the dead' (ancestors, recently deceased relatives). This shift is not necessarily articulated as one of economy, in a narrow sense, but ideas of saving and making money are often most clearly articulated. We will therefore start the frontal analyses (Canda 2016) by looking at the (mainly anthropological) literature that sees economic change as foundational for conversions to Pentecostal forms of Christianity. In particular, we engage with the well-known debates around Pentecostalism as a corollary of neoliberal economic restructuring in developing and postcolonial regions, perhaps best exemplified by the work of Jean and John Comaroff. Together with such arguments, we look to the literature examining the so-called Health and Wealth Gospel, prosperity gospel or Word of Faith movement, in which God wants his faithful to prosper, but believers must speak and/or act in the right way to access the riches they rightly deserve. These movements are part and parcel of many (but not all) Pentecostal messages, especially in the American mega-church and celebrity pastor milieu, and such messages have, in one form or another, resonances in our respective field sites. Our primary question in comparing these analyses with locally based understandings of what it means to live in 'Pentecost' is: What are the similarities between the local discourses of usefulness/wastefulness in 'Pentecost' and anthropological understandings of the relationship between Pentecostalism and neoliberalism? In this chapter we will show that local 'Pentecost' discourses may help us move beyond reductionist economic arguments without leaving economy out of the picture.

The Theory from the Field: 'Why Should We Waste Our Time on These Useless Things?'

In Chapter 2, we explored the ways in which many Trobriand Islanders talked about *doba*, which had previously been an essential component in elaborate exchange rituals following the death of a close relative. Trobriand Islanders stressed that using *doba* was a waste of time,

resources and even money. It is backwards, dirty and unproductive, as against productive behaviour or activities such as cleaning and washing, sewing, weaving mats, growing and preparing food or selling things at the market. They pointed out that the production of *doba* and the practice of *sagali* meant that too many resources were spent on the dead, at the expense of the living. If they stopped wasting time on *sagali*, they reasoned, Trobriand Islanders could be more developed and materially well-off. They would also be better Christians if they focused on prioritizing the nuclear family and their church congregation rather than their extended kinship ties. Furthermore, the focus should be on the here and now and not on the past and the ancestors. Local discourses on notions of productivity as against waste(fulness) or uselessness were then explored in Port Vila and Luanda to develop a theory of the importance of productivity and to explore what that means in the context of 'Pentecost'. When taken in comparison with similar if distinctive notions about productivity and the focus on the here and now in Port Vila and the Palanca, a theory 'from the field' emerges. We have suggested that within 'Pentecost', redefining what is a productive use of time and resources is seen as a step towards redefining which kinship obligations should be prioritized, how the domestic moral economy should work and ideals of 'living well'.

In 'Pentecost', life is what matters. Death is the end; the end of obligations, the end of meaningful relationships. A focus on death draws one away from living a good life here and now. By 'wasting time' on unproductive activities, or simply being idle, or failing to make profits when one could be doing so, people keep themselves 'in the dark' – in poverty (spiritual and material), less developed and isolated from the rest of the world. Furthermore, idleness or time-wasting is not truly Christian and will not contribute to giving one a Good Life. In such a theory, *doba* becomes a metaphor and a material representation of the old, the dirty and the useless. By getting rid of it (and, concomitantly, by using those resources of time and energy to more productive ends to provide food for the family and tithes and offerings to the church), people show that they are ready to embrace a new and better way of living in Christ. Crying or otherwise putting resources into the dead/funerals may be seen as similar metaphors. In 'Pentecost', death is not elaborate.

Going back to the specific case of the Trobriands, Annette Weiner made the bundles and skirts manufactured from dried banana leaves, collectively called *doba* in the Kilivila language, a classic case in anthropology for the importance of a gender perspective and attention to women's role in exchange. She saw them as physical representations of the matrilineage and thus demonstrative of the importance of what she

referred to as 'women's wealth', which to her demonstrated 'women's power over cosmic (ahistorical) time [which] is singularly within their domain' (1976: 231). These grass skirts and bundles, the major objects of value on display in huge quantities and given away to members of other clans at the time of a death of a close kinsperson, she argued, were so symbolically 'dense' and charged with meaning as representative of the very mother's milk of the clan that they could not be substituted or replaced, despite the fact that already during her fieldwork their distribution at mortuary feasts was supplemented with lengths of printed calico. And yet, Chapter 2 described how, in some Trobriand ('Pentecost') villages, collective or clan-based decisions have been made (and largely adhered to) which limit the size and scale of mortuary distributions. In many villages, this means much less focus on the banana leaf textiles locally manufactured by women, and in some villages the use of bundles and skirts has been completely eradicated. Those living in the (still very many) villages that continue to exchange *doba* in vast quantities at each death regularly debate its worth, and most villages have had community meetings to discuss and debate the merits of continuing this aspect of Trobriand exchange versus the benefits to be gained by giving it up. While at the time of writing more villages continue its manufacture and distribution relative to those that eschew it, its continued use is by no means a foregone conclusion. The current discourses about waste and uselessness suggest new moral as well as economic imperatives to reorient exchange activities, which this ethnographic project sets out to examine more closely.

Pentecostalism as Neoliberalism

Comaroff and Comaroff's (1999, 2000) analyses of 'occult economies' and 'millennial capitalism' are among the most influential and debated contributions to what we might call an economy-centred understanding of Pentecostalism. They suggest that Pentecostal denominations are especially close to the new neoliberal spirit (2000: 314). As Coleman (2011: 31) has it, 'millennial capitalism is said to contain a confusing and contradictory blend of hope and hopelessness, alongside a privatized sense of religious participation in relation to a market whose benefits remain ever more unattainable, constituted through rapid flows of value across space and time'. In contexts where vast wealth appears to concentrate in the hands of just a few citizens, the market becomes a container of mysterious mechanisms of accumulation and distribution (Coleman 2011: 29–30). Brouwer, Gifford and Rose (1996: 179) have

argued that Pentecostalism is attractive to many in economically vulnerable areas by giving them a means of control over seemingly uncontrollable circumstances through following strict protocols of ‘right living’. The spiritual and personal authority of the pastor provides guidance, and believers can access miracles to help them face the uncertainties and difficulties of life.

The Comaroffs’ version of the neo-Protestant ethic involves the ability to gain wealth without perceptible production, but it also implies – to those at the bottom of the economic pile – the working of insidious forces and even sorcery as means of accumulation (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 282). For them, occult economies have two dimensions: a material aspect wherein efforts to conjure wealth, or to account for its accumulation, are attempted by appeal to techniques that fall outside practical reason or conventional market practices; and an ethical aspect ‘grounded in the moral discourses and (re)actions sparked by the (real or imagined) production of value through such “magical” means’ (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000: 310). Occult economies are seen by the Comaroffs to have close parallels with new religious movements, especially Holy Spirit-based faiths, as they move across the planet and perhaps especially into the global south. They provide as an example the neo-Pentecostal Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus), the Brazilian-originating denomination whose members were among Ruy’s interlocutors in the Palanca. They argue that this church

reforms the Protestant ethic with enterprise and urbanity, fulsomely embracing the material world. It ... promises swift payback to those who embrace Christ, denounce Satan, and ‘make their faith practical’ by ‘sacrificing’ all they can to the movement. Here Pentecostalism meets neoliberal enterprise. In its African churches, most of them (literally) storefronts, prayer meetings respond to frankly mercenary desires, offering everything from cures for depression through financial advice to remedies for unemployment; casual passersby, clients really, select the services they require. ... The ability to deliver in the here and now, itself a potent form of space-time compression, is offered as the measure of a genuinely global God ... [T]he Second Coming evokes not a Jesus who saves, but one who pays dividends. Or, more accurately, one who promises a miraculous return on a limited spiritual investment. (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000: 314–15)

The Comaroffs note the allure of accruing wealth from nothing; that is to say, the promises of vast returns on offerings given in faith as per the prosperity gospel (or in Ponzi schemes such as U-Vistract or Money Rain in PNG, see Cox 2011, 2013; Cox and Macintyre 2014). Indeed, Comaroff and Comaroff (2000) examine prosperity gospels alongside

pyramid or Ponzi schemes in the postcolonies in their discussion of the 'money magic' of 'millennial capitalism', which they describe as 'a capitalism that presents itself as a gospel of salvation ... invested with the capacity wholly to transform the universe of the marginalized and disempowered' (2000: 292). Similarly, political scientist Isabelle V. Barker argues that Pentecostalism 'fosters norms and behaviours that harmonize with neoliberal economic restructuring' (2007: 407), a reaction to weakened state governance relative to neoliberal trade and fiscal policy. She states, 'I suggest that Pentecostalism has embedded the self-regulated aspects of neoliberal capitalism ... [and] that Pentecostalism has the capacity to embed neoliberal economic activities by integrating these activities into society' (Barker 2007: 407, 409). The argument goes that, especially in developing countries, Pentecostal churches fill the gaps left by failures of the state to provide for essential social needs (Barker 2007: 409; see also Eriksen 2009; Maxwell 1998). Moreover, Barker argues that the individualist theology, charismatic practices and the new kinds of community fostered by Pentecostal worship instigate shifting modes of production and support the informalization of the labour market, increased labour migration and the rapid transformation of local communities (2007: 409; see also Carrette and King 2005). Likewise, Maxwell (1998: 351) argues that Pentecostalism is seen by members of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God as a way to cope with rapid social change, achieve social mobility and avoid falling into poverty and destitution by following a well-defined moral code. For the Comaroffs, Barker and others, then, 'occult economies' and prosperity gospels are responses to inequality and the inability of the state to provide for its citizens, and to new forms of capitalism, so-called 'casino-capitalism', the notion that capitalism is essentially speculative and little more than a system of big and small bets in a grand game of chance.

The Gospel of Prosperity

Before we can turn back to what a comparison with the theory from 'Pentecost' can add to such an understanding of prosperity gospels and the economic-oriented analyses of Pentecostal Christianity, a brief explanation of what is entailed in the 'health and wealth' and related gospels is necessary. The Word of Faith movement (alternatively, Faith Theology, the 'health and wealth' gospel or the 'name it and claim it' gospel) originates with the notion of 'positive confession' to articulate one's needs such that God will provide. Kenneth Hagin, an influential Charismatic American preacher, is a key figure in this movement. Hagin claims to

have been raised from his deathbed in 1934 by 'the revelation of faith in God's Word'. He began preaching and evangelizing, first at Assemblies of God churches throughout Texas, and developed the notion of positive confession into the Word of Faith movement. Proponents of the Word of Faith doctrine influenced by Hagin's teaching include Oral Roberts, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Jerry Savelle, Charles Capps, Bill Winston, Creflo Dollar, Charles Nieman, Benny Hinn, Joel Osteen, Joyce Meyer, T.D. Jakes and Marilyn Hickey, among others. Word of Faith teaching holds that God wants the faithful to be prosperous, in terms of finances, good health and good marriages and relationships. Its practitioners promise physical, emotional, financial, relational and spiritual healing or prosperity for anyone who has the right belief-filled confession, in which believers have the power to speak things into being. The prosperity gospel is a particular offshoot of the Word of Faith movement, teaching that gifts of money are as important as visualization and positive confession in achieving the wealth (material and spiritual) that God wants for his followers.

Not all Pentecostal-Charismatic congregations adhere to the prosperity gospel, which interprets health and material prosperity as evidence of the strength of one's faith. Although such gospels are not always explicitly promoted in our particular case studies, Word of Faith crusades are well known, and general ideas about the health and wealth gospels are common in local discourse. Health and wealth are seen as gifts of the Spirit and the rightful rewards of believers, and one has to speak and ask for those things that will materially help their lives. Those who do not receive blessings of wealth and health must have failed in their faith, made negative confessions or otherwise come up short in meeting their obligations to God; for example, by not investing their 'seeds' or giving generously enough to the church or charitable endeavours. In the sites in 'Pentecost' we have examined, prosperity gospel and the Word of Faith message are not a primary point of orientation, but the messages and ideals inherent in them are certainly a part of people's understanding of the potential benefits of true belief, especially as they relate to health and wellbeing. In other words, in Kiriwina, Palanca and Port Vila, the health gospel in a general sense and not capital (the wealth gospel) is especially salient, though there is a concomitant hope for improved material conditions to also follow with the appropriate investments, both in terms of the moral investment in being a productive Christian and the economic investment of making seed offerings to the church.

The notion of Seed-Faith, developed by the American preacher Oral Roberts, asserts that money and material goods donated in faith are the

seeds of prosperity and material blessings from God and that the Bible assures believers that He promises to multiply in miraculous ways whatever is given. Critics refer to it as a get-rich-quick scheme that appeals mainly to the poor, disadvantaged and desperate. The Seed-Faith principle has supported vast networks of televangelists who vie for their viewers' money with fervent promises of 'miracles', usually in the form of material wellbeing. Although people living in Trobriand Island villages lack electricity and running water, let alone a television and access to the Trinity Broadcasting Network or other media outlets where such televangelists preach their message, more than one Trobriand Islander reeled off the names of such celebrity pastors as Creflo Dollar, Joyce Meyer, Jesse Duplantis and Jerry Savelle (all in one way or another associated with the Word of Faith or prosperity gospel movements) and Tim Hall (known for laying hands and healing in the Spirit) – many of whom have, in fact, preached at crusades in Port Moresby or at the very least have their TV broadcasts made available on one of PNG's two free-to-air television channels. Whether by giving tithes and offerings in hopes of manifold returns, by keeping a small store as a moral obligation to be responsible with money or giving up previous obligations to widespread kin networks, aspects of this message are present throughout our field sites. What is more, the emphasis on speaking and acting in the proper way to achieve desired outcomes is also emphasized.

Inequality, poverty, a lack of adequate government services and food insecurity long predate the arrival of Pentecostal forms of Christianity in the communities where we have worked. Indeed, Catholic and Methodist missions of a century ago provided the education and health-care that the government often did not, though the general quality of government services and infrastructure in much of PNG (and in many postcolonial nations) declined with the transition to independence and ongoing problems of corruption and inefficiencies in government at all levels. However, the reasons Trobriand Islanders gave for embracing a new 'life in Pentecost', as we are phrasing it, had not in the first case to do with the structural inequalities and conditions of poverty they faced, but rather it was a response to rampant sorcery deaths and the inability of mainline religion to combat such evil forces (MacCarthy 2017b) (though of course, increased sorcery also often follows particularly stressful social conditions such as drought or severe storms, which further threaten food security and available infrastructure). However, there are other reasons to doubt that an explanation purely focused on individual economic success and/or shortcomings in government services can account for spiritual and social change in the Kiriwina case, as well as in 'Pentecost' more generally.

Haynes (2013) has argued that the economy of Pentecostalism is not necessarily capitalist and inherently antisocial. Essential to the prosperity gospel is the notion of giving gifts – to the church (and the pastors who embody the church) – to others less fortunate or for specific funding drives. The notion of gifting – and of getting something in return in the form of material and/or spiritual blessings – is hardly far-fetched in the Trobriands, as it has long been used as a model for reciprocal (and often delayed) exchange relations, such as in the famed *kula* ring (Damon 1980, 2002; Kuehling 2005; Malinowski 1920, 1984 [1922] and many others) and also in terms of mortuary exchanges (MacCarthy 2017a; Weiner 1976, 1978, 1994). Furthermore, in an agricultural society, which places huge emphasis on planting, weeding, tending and nurturing (and eventually, harvesting, gifting, and consuming) garden produce, the idea of seed offerings or seed money that when given in faith to Godly purpose will eventually result in a ‘harvest’ for those who sow them is perhaps of particular resonance. In discussing Pentecostal economics on the Zambian Copperbelt, Haynes (2013) argues that seed offerings there represent both faith-inspired sacrifices to God *and* socially productive gifts to church leaders that ‘work together to create and protect the kinds of social ties that people in urban Zambia consider most important’ (Haynes 2013: 86). She notes that this means emphasizing holiness and proper Christian conduct as well as gifts of money as a prerequisite to prosperity.

We take this argument a step further to suggest that not only are social relations nurtured by gifts of tithes, offerings and prayers but that this reflects larger concerns of a focus on life, specifically ‘the good life’ (morally and materially), at the expense of an interest in or concern with death. A priority on immediate returns (a capitalist approach to a health and wealth gospel) is not an accurate representation of what our interlocutors suggest. Rather, the ethnography shows that the necessity of being productive, sowing seeds and living a Godly life is a sort of ‘life gospel’ that focuses on the kinds of relationships that matter in a world where death and the relationships associated with death (ancestors, affines, distant kin) are no longer particularly meaningful or important. This contrasts with recent work by Mosko (2017), which emphasizes just such relationships, especially with *baloma* (spirits, ancestors), in Trobriand cosmology. Where Mosko sees little substantive change with Christianity, we stress that Pentecostalism indeed marks a cosmological shift.

The Comparison: Living Well in Pentecost

Briefly, let us recap the main economic theories of Pentecostalism as per the Comaroffs and those who have argued along similar lines, which we have outlined above: Pentecostalism is a form of ‘occult economy’ that promises magical returns on (spiritual and material) investment. This is particularly manifested in adherence to the prosperity gospel in its various forms. It offers immediate, rather than delayed, returns for personal sacrifice and can be seen as having the functional purpose of filling the gaps wherein the state fails to meet the fundamental needs of its citizens. This suggests at the forefront an economic or material rationale for conversion, and using Pentecostal religion as a substitute for (or even a new form of?) magic, in order to help one control the uncontrollable. It is tempting to look at the lack of development and opportunity in a place like the Trobriand Islands, peri-urban Vanuatu or the shanty towns of Luanda and suggest that the promise of salvation and even immediate rewards to be enjoyed from gifts given to God are a direct result of desperation and a desire to get in on the wealth that clearly exists in the world but that the people we work with seem never quite able to access. Indeed, structural inequalities and barriers to economic success are certainly a factor in religious life. But such a theory essentially directly equates life in ‘Pentecost’ to that of a spiritual marketplace, where every transaction is a direct corollary of capitalist economic systems, which seems to be overstating the point. As Coleman (2011: 33) suggests, what is needed here is a more multidimensional understanding of how Faith practices articulate the connections between ‘religious’ and ‘economic’ spheres of activity.

Now, we must return to our theory from the field, the local discourses and understandings of ideas about productivity, to argue that such economic-focused arguments miss that money, prosperity and wellbeing are not necessarily the end-goal in and of themselves; they are rather a means to an end, in which money and the kinds of exchanges favoured in ‘Pentecost’ can be used to focus on what is really important: life. Not only the here and now – which indeed becomes much more prioritized as a site of productivity and exchange over the dead, the past and so on – but in fact a cosmology wherein the cyclical nature of life and death is reoriented to a more linear one.

Taken from the Trobriand perspective, this reflects, perhaps, a reorientation from the Trobriand view of death as is well known from the ethnographic literature, wherein spirits of the dead (*baloma*) are transported to the island of Tuma only to be regenerated as new members of

the same matriclan. Though today Trobrianders are well aware of the biological facts of reproduction, Malinowski reported that in the early twentieth century the following belief was 'universal' in Kiriwina:

When the *baloma* has grown old, his teeth fall out, his skin gets loose and wrinkled; he goes to the beach and bathes in the salt water; then he throws off his skin just as a snake would do, and becomes a young child again; really an embryo, a *waiwaia* – a term applied to children *in utero* and immediately after birth. A *baloma* woman sees this *waiwaia*; she takes it up, and puts it in a basket or a plaited and folded coconut leaf (*puatai*). She carries the small being to Kiriwina, and places it in the womb of some woman, inserting it *per vaginam*. Then that woman becomes pregnant (*nasusuma*). (Malinowski 1916: 403)

When I mentioned such a belief to my own Trobriand interlocutors, they looked confused, bemused or were almost irritated at the absurdity they saw in such a notion. And yet, under certain circumstances, references are still made to cases of impregnation caused by magic or by appealing to the *baloma*. Several more recent ethnographers such as Weiner (1976) and Lepani (2012) have likewise stressed the cyclical nature of the Trobriand life cycle, such that 'death' is only a temporary stage or phase that, while it is marked with major feasts and ceremonies, is not an 'end' as such but the transition to a new kind of life. Mosko (2014: 20) similarly points out that 'life' and 'death' are for Trobrianders differently conceived than in 'the West' or, perhaps more accurately, in the Judeo-Christian tradition. He stresses how 'the spirit world, Tuma, and the beings and entities inhabiting it are saturated with *momova*, the essence of life, on which the inhabitants of Boyowa [The living world of Trobrianders] depend for their very material existence'. There is a notion that the *baloma* in Tuma live as a 'mirror image' to life in the village, such that death is a transition to a new state of being and not an end.

This stands in contrast (while, in some ways, showing similarities) to Christian ideas of death, which may focus to a greater or lesser extent on ideas of heaven/hell and an eternal afterlife from which there is no earthly return. Death in the Christian view is the time of judgement when, based on criteria that may differ from one faith to another, one is either admitted to heaven or condemned to hell for all eternity. In general, such a judgement is based on one's moral goodness during life, and the moral imperative of 'living well' and being Godly is the basis for acceptance into heaven. In such a view, death is less a stage than an eternal state of being; one is either alive or dead, and life is a linear progression from birth until one's ultimate demise. In the Pentecostal

faith, the notion of being 'born again' or reborn in the spirit is a central tenet, such that there is a 'new beginning' in one's spiritual life when one embraces the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, in Pentecostal and many other Christian beliefs, the righteous (but not the damned) will ultimately be resurrected by the Second Coming of Jesus. Scriptural verses are recited to assure believers that death is in fact *not* a totally separate state of being: for example,

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. (John 11:25, 26)

The Christian view of death, whether seen in a binary relationship with life or as a more linear progression, is something quite apart from the Trobriand belief (predating its inclusion in the world of 'Pentecost') that life and death are a spiral that continuously regenerate the matrilineal clans identified and associated with founding ancestors and original places in the landscape across Kiriwina Island. On the contrary, in the Kiriwina we refer to as part of 'Pentecost', death becomes a form of unproductive accumulation (of ancestors, obligations and kinship ties as represented materially in decaying piles of *doba*).

As described in Chapter 2, Trobrianders who have forgone the use of *doba* feel that their lives have improved and that they have more to offer to their own families and churches now they have stopped 'wasting their time' with banana leaves. From the other side, Michelle's adoptive mother Vero (who is not born again and worships in the 'old style' at the Catholic church) complains that the members of the communities that have stopped using *doba* 'have it easy' compared to her. Indeed, the responsibility of providing that which is needed for a mortuary feast for one's close relatives – involving not only finding large amounts of *doba* but also calico cloth, other store goods, coins and notes in *kina* (the PNG currency) and yams, rice and pigs – is commonly referred to as *ula/la mwau* (my/his/her heavy load or burden). One can unburden oneself by denying the significance of death, by turning it from a major event to a simple absence and termination of obligation. If one, instead, puts one's faith in God to provide and shores up this responsibility by paying tithes and making generous seed offerings, one's load is lightened, in a way, as the rewards promised are both more immediate and more materially satisfying. This is not about personal accumulation, however, or necessarily even shirking obligations to share and give freely; it is rather a redirection of reciprocal obligations and a reorientation of priorities in terms of how one defines productivity and how the results of one's productive efforts should be distributed.

There is, perhaps, an interesting contradiction here. While on the one hand, life in ‘Pentecost’ can be thought of as providing one with boundless opportunities for personal growth, material wellbeing, spiritual development and so on – a vital and generative ethos – at the same time, a sense of obligation to be productive, to grow in defined ways, to reign in passions and ungodly behaviour and thoughts also significantly constrains the lives of our interlocutors. The focus is on life but also, in a way, on the responsibility one has to *do* something to make that life better, on a daily basis. In ‘Pentecost’ there are clear expectations of the proper kinds of work one should do and the proper channels and means of exchange and reciprocity. If death is the end of obligation it is also the end of opportunity (to be productive, Godly and an active participant in Christian life).

The concept of seed money and the reciprocal returns anticipated from tithes and offerings is part of the discourse in the parts of ‘Pentecost’ we have visited (see Chapter 2). Recall the words of the pastor who said, ‘God promises wealth, not only in money but in a big family, and other ways. Giving ties God’s hands to you. If you give from your heart, you will receive a reward. The pastor will pray for those who give freely, and blessings will come from God.’ This accords precisely with Haynes’ argument that giving seed offerings instils two kinds of expected returns or obligations: one in which God is indebted to them for their generous gifts; and the other, more worldly obligation of the pastor, who physically receives the gifts and has an obligation to pray for the giver. Thus, as Haynes (2013: 87) points out, we can look at seed offerings as operating on two levels of exchange: both as sacrificial offerings and as socially productive gifts. Further evidence of the social nature of exchange even in ‘Pentecost’ is the substitution of, or at least replication of, the kinds of redistribution and ceremonialized gifting in sagali, in the practice of the church offering collection drives called *semekai* and the move from socially productive church fundraisers to impersonal lotteries (but which still provide money to improve the church, even at the expense of other kinds of social interactions) in Port Vila, as described in Chapter 2. And in Luanda, we can see the orientation of funeral ceremonies towards redefining relationships among the living and a minimum of focus on the dead person as a sort of turn to life, at the expense of a direct focus on the dead and the afterlife. In all cases, we can see life (participation in the church community, for example, to provide support for the pastor and church infrastructure) as the focus rather than a ‘wasteful’ direction of resources – and useless, dirty, non-productive ones at that, in the case of *doba* – towards the dead. As noted in Chapter 2, Pastor Cedric put this perhaps as clearly as anyone when he stated, ‘My father already

looked after me when I was small. I don't have to pay anything back after I look after him when he is sick. Death is the end [of obligations]. These things [sagali] drain resources from the living.'

It is clear that a move away from sagali and doba as much as a reduced willingness to pour resources into crying and funerals in Port Vila and the Palanca is a move away from looking to the ancestors and the temporally and spatially widespread kin linkages that connect members' extended kin networks. Doba itself has a short life cycle, and when it becomes old, dirty and smelly (like the corpse of the deceased) it no longer holds value. Both doba and dead relatives, in the logic of 'Pentecost', are 'useless' and a drain on available resources. What is more, the distributions of sagali traditionally carry on over several years, during which time and resources are repeatedly put towards the reciprocal relationships entailed in 'finishing' the exchanges encompassed by a death. In a sense, this focus on time stands in contrast to the way we have been thinking about 'Pentecost' as a space, in terms of a social landscape or place (houses, yards, hamlets, villages, churches, communities, islands, neighbourhoods, and even nations) as well as the 'space' of the individual body, especially that space 'inside' where evil or goodness may dwell. People in Kiriwina, Port Vila and the Palanca all repeatedly stressed the concept of 'wasting time' along with similar negative associations regarding 'looking backward' and being caught up in the 'old' ways of doing things, suggesting that in this case the spatial aspects of living in 'Pentecost' are intricately bound with temporal ones.

Indeed, doba is the essence of a moral problem in 'Pentecost' (as pointed out in Chapter 2); doba reminds people of another morality (and mortality) that is in direct contradiction to the idea of investing in life. Doba makes 'Pentecost' visible for us through its negative connotations of smelly, rotten substances present in the house, on the sides of the roads and even on the roads as women transport huge baskets of the leaves from one village to another (sometimes, the baskets are so big and heavy they cannot even be carried by the women but rather must be transported by truck). It is accumulated at the time of the death of a relative until such time as it can and should be recirculated and redistributed, but it is, in the eyes of those in Pentecostal Kiriwina, an unproductive and pointless accumulation. From this perspective, it is akin to death. In 'Pentecost', the focus and concentration of resources and energy are immediate and directed inwards such that the nuclear family is the epicentre, and the significant 'extended family' becomes centred more on one's church congregation or fellowship group than towards obligations to clan members. In such an orientation as we find in our examples in 'Pentecost', death is the end, as the soul goes to heaven at

God's discretion based on the deceased's moral behaviour during his or her life; there is nothing a clan member can do once their loved one has passed on except pray for the departed soul. A focus on 'life' instead of 'death', then, means a focus on ensuring material wellbeing and spiritual wholeness in the here and now and looking to the future rather than the past.

We see, then, that it is not just about moving away from *doba* and replacing it with money; nor is about the moral obligation to make money where one can by having a store in a corner of one's home in Fresh Wota or taking part in *kixikilas* (micro-saving ventures) in the Palanca. These things may indeed result in greater 'profit' and material wellbeing than either idleness or pouring one's energy into 'useless' endeavours (like making *doba*). But the point is not a replacement of 'traditional' exchanges with strictly monetary ones. Such an analysis falls short of representing the ongoing importance of gifts and exchanges, which are not replaced with a capitalist, money-focused economy but rather are redirected with new purpose. According to prevailing theories, the point of living in 'Pentecost' is to give one the means to control one's economy and meet one's needs in a failing state. But our ethnography suggests that there is an even more fundamental level, a deep cosmological restructuring of life and death. When the residents of 'Pentecost', whether in Luanda, Port Vila or Kiriwina, talk about 'living well' or 'really living', it means more than just spiritual and material wellbeing. It means, the theory from the field suggests, a cosmological reorientation that the economic arguments above do not account for. In 'Pentecost', life itself is the focus. Money, which emerges from turning one's attention to productive activity and exchange, is the means not only to feed and clothe one's family (and to meet obligations to pay tithes and offerings to the church, which will ensure high returns) but doing these things – as opposed to other things, like pouring resources into funerals, death rituals and exchanges that honour the dead and reinforce far-flung extended kin networks looking to the ancestors and the past – reorients the focus of productivity to the present and to a more linear understanding of life and death rather than a cyclical view of life as a spiral or continuum.

In a way, a focus on time (movement from life into death, focus on the ancestors, productive vs unproductive uses of time) in 'traditional' Trobriand exchange morphs into a focus on space in the Pentecostalized context, both in terms of place or landscape (as described above) and social relationships (the church, the Fellowship group, the markets and so on). The significance of those relationships and the exchanges they entail reflect a much broader consequence of the arrival of Pentecostal

Christianity than the number of congregants at a given church on a given Sunday might suggest. We could even argue that in 'Pentecost', death and the stockpiling of *doba* for distribution at mortuary feasts have both become seen as forms of unproductive accumulation that are no longer salient, as the social action they once achieved (reaffirming extended kinship obligations, honouring ancestors, demonstrating the strength of the matriclan and women's social productivity) has dimmed in importance. More immediate social relations, paying school fees and providing for immediate core families are now considered more significant.

Still, any accumulation of wealth is only temporary; as with *doba*, the goal in amassing wealth is to recirculate it, but now with new targets and aspirations. One gives to the church and the pastor to ensure spiritual returns and, ideally, material ones too. One feeds and nurtures one's nuclear family and downplays obligations to wide-ranging kin. Indeed, in the context of 'Pentecost', one focuses on life and the spaces in which it happens (home, church, open-air sermons, community meetings and so on) rather than death and the cyclical nature of time that has long been observed to anchor Trobriand sociality. Weiner (1976: 61) asserted that the rituals of Trobriand mourning ceremonies 'visually and symbolically diagram the social categories basic to the cultural system'. These 'basics' of the cultural system are now perhaps reordered in the Pentecostalized context, as exemplified in the devaluation of the manufacture and exchange of *doba*.

As the last section pointed out, much of the existing literature on prosperity and related gospels focuses on money, and on material returns. It is not at all original to point out that prosperity can (and does, in our case of 'Pentecost') reflect a broader spectrum of wellbeing or 'living well' than mere material wealth. Indeed, many pastors themselves focus on physical and spiritual health, family and marital relations and other markers of a good life in addition to monetary success, and anthropologists, too, have noted this. What we might argue is missing from these other analyses, though, and what our ethnographic exercise from 'Pentecost' illuminates is that a turn to 'living well' – being productive, avoiding wastefulness and idleness – also in a way necessitates a re-evaluation of what it means to die. If life is the central focus, death is not. If living well means ensuring material, physical and spiritual vitality in the here and now, then the distant future (the afterlife) and the distant past (the ancestors) are not so important. Pentecostal theology may or may not place importance on the idea of the Second Coming of Christ, but the primary focus is on the gifts of the Holy Spirit and one's personal and quotidian relationship with God. In 'Pentecost', this is manifested

in not only ideas about how to be a productive and devout Christian in a society where evil and corrupting influences (such as black magic or sorcery, witchcraft and other pre-Christian practices passed down from the ancestors) are omnipresent. It is also manifested in views about death, as the mirror image of life. If life is what matters, death is, indeed, nothing: 'the end', as Pastor Cedric put it.

As pointed out earlier, Weiner (1976) and Lepani (2012) have stressed the cyclical nature of Trobriand exchange; this could likely be extended to exchange in many localities situated in the global south that are not part of 'Pentecost'. One of the core arguments of Weiner's *Woman of Value, Men of Renown* is that in sagali the attempt to control human behaviour through the exchanges enacted are 'not limited to the sociopolitical sphere but include a cosmic order of time and space' (1976: 219). She argues that Trobriand women control immortality through the recapitulation of dala identity, such that women's power of cosmic or ahistorical time is singularly within their own domain. Men, in Weiner's schema, only control objects and persons that remain totally within a generational perspective of social time and space (1976: 231). In Pentecostal Kiriwina, this distinction loses salience. Exchanges are no longer so ahistorical, and women no longer have a particular power in this regard. The focus and concentration of resources and energy are directed inwards such that the nuclear family is the epicentre, and the significant 'extended family' becomes centred more on one's church congregation or fellowship group than towards obligations to the dala.

While Weiner saw it as a mistake to reduce exchange to an act set firmly in the present rather than comprising a system of generational regeneration (1976: 219–20), in the context of 'Pentecost' in Kiriwina, as well as in Port Vila and the Palanca, exchanges perhaps *do* become more immediate. It is not that the totality disappears but rather that the significant relationships become contracted or collapsed, both spatially and temporally. Death becomes unproductive, and life is focused on the connection between the household and the church. In the 'Pentecost' neighbourhoods we explore, embedding Pentecostal ideas in economic activities and keeping the household so that it reflects church teachings is paramount. We have argued, based on the view from within 'Pentecost', that not meeting traditional kinship obligations to extended networks of relatives and ancestors has major implications. It entails a reorientation of an entire cosmology, replacing a view backward (ancestors, customary exchange obligations) to a view focused on the present and living a good life. It also suggests a revaluation of particular acts of exchange as well as of the exchange objects themselves and the relationships those exchanges represent.

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