

Branhamist *Kindoki*: Ethnographic Notes on Connectivity, Technology, and Urban Witchcraft in Contemporary Kinshasa

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter is concerned with the variety of expressions of witchcraft¹ (*kindoki* in Lingala, *sorcellerie*) in contemporary Kinshasa. The analytical lens will focus on the dialectics among the urban, technology, and Pentecostal imaginations of the occult. For Kinshasa's inhabitants, *kindoki* references a wide variety of skills, practices, actions, and conditions, the origins, sources, causes, and roots of which are located in a mystical, hidden, second world (see also Blanes, this volume). *Kindoki* can be innate, immaterial, material, consciously or unconsciously acquired, and can be expelled through discursive or physical operations. *Magie*, or the use of tools to influence reality, is a particular type of *kindoki*. Different types of *magie* exist among Kinshasa's Pentecostal Christians, ranging from *fétiches* (*nkisi*, or power objects) used by diviners, magicians, and

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their clients, and constituting the tools of an ancestral type of magic, to Western-based forms of *magie*. Many Kinois hold that *magie* as such originated in the West but was brought to Congo by colonists and missionaries (Pype 2012: 50–51). Here, the secret societies of Freemasons and Rosicrucians, reputed for extending their tentacles into academic, military, and political circles, are identified as the major spaces where this kind of *magie* is performed. New Age spiritualism and popular culture representations of *kindoki* (such as the Harry Potter films or the American TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Bewitched*) are also very popular in Kinshasa, and one can expect that these media products have expanded Kinshasa's Christians' imaginings of *kindoki*.

In a Christian context, any type of *kindoki* is held to be diabolical and is opposed to the miraculous healing powers of the Holy Spirit (*Molimo Mosanto*). This is the basic explanation of how Kinshasa's Pentecostal-charismatic Christians understand *kindoki*. However, there is much uncertainty as to what tools and objects are useful in *kindoki* practices, and how they actually transmit occult powers.

I will mainly focus on Branhamist Christianity, one of the many variants of Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity (hereafter PCC) in Kinshasa.² Outsiders call followers of the American prophet William Marion Branham (1909–1965)³ *Branhamistes*, though most of these reject the appellation as it suggests that they venerate a human being instead of the Christian God. In previous research, I have mainly worked with the so-called Awakening churches (*églises du réveil*), and from the beginning of my field research in Kinshasa (begun in 2003), Kinois have spoken about a rift within the Branhamist Christian community. Indeed, the contemporary “Branhamist Christian scene” in Kinshasa is diverse, and, while many dividing lines must be drawn among Kinshasa's many Branhamist Christian communities (according to the pastor's ethnicity for instance),⁴ for most Kinois (inhabitants of Kinshasa) the Branhamist Christian community is mainly split into two camps, separated by their different approaches towards modern communication technologies.⁵ Branhamist Christianity in Kinshasa thus includes churches that diabolize all electronic technologies outright, while other Branhamist Christians advocate a more pragmatic point of view and even set up their own media ministries. This material allows me to contribute to the ever-expanding scholarship on witchcraft in postcolonial societies by linking themes of the urban with the technological. Overall, the main question I intend to address here is how Pentecostal communities' novel forms of urban witchcraft are imagined, addressed, and “lived with”. As the following

vignette illustrates, technology (and in particular information and communication technologies – ICT) occupies a major role within debates about *kindoki* among Branhamist Christians.

Kinshasa, 19 August 2014. I visited Fabrice, a young man of 22, at one of Kinshasa’s largest markets, *the Freedom Market* (*Marché de la Liberté*). For more than 6 months, Fabrice had been employed in selling smartphones (Lingala *tshombo*) and accessories. That day, as was generally the case, clients constantly interrupted our conversation. The following encounter stood out in my fieldnotes:

A mother and a teenage girl arrived at the counter. In a very self-assured manner, the mother shouts “Nani azoteka (who sells here)?” Fabrice asks my permission to suspend our conversation and turns towards the prospective clients. The young girl was promised a smartphone because she succeeded in the state exam (*exétat*). To my surprise, I hear Fabrice advising against purchasing a smartphone. He embarks on the “dangers” (*ya mabe*, “bad things”) that girls are exposed to “when surfing on the net, chatting with strangers, and seeing images that do not suit their age”. During Fabrice’s anti-sales pitch, I notice that the young girl is growing increasingly nervous. After some time, and having apparently become really annoyed, she interrupts Fabrice and tells her mother not to listen to him. “We can buy the smartphone somewhere else,” she states. Fabrice, who fears losing a client, quickly changes his game and showcases a few smartphones on sale.

After Fabrice finally sells a second-hand smartphone to the mother, he returns to me. When I confront him about his strange marketing strategies, Fabrice mentions his religious identity. In his church, Shekinah Tabernacle, youth are only allowed to use smartphones from 22 years of age. I had known Fabrice for over a few months by then, and I was visiting him because I knew he was “born and grew up in the Message” (*akoli na Message*). The idiom, “to have grown up in the Message,” suggests that Fabrice’s parents were already followers of Branham before he was born.⁶ Along with many Branhamist Christians, Fabrice claims that radios, television sets, and telephones can set *kindoki* in motion if improperly used. “Children have little idea of the occult possibilities of mobile phones and the Internet,” he argues, and therefore prohibiting the usage of these tools is a measure of protection against the potentially devilish outcomes of the medium.

Accompanied by a friend from his church, Fabrice visited me in my house that same evening, and our conversation came to be dominated

by the two friends' reflections on Branhamist Christians' take on *kindoki*. They had brought a pamphlet (*brochure*), *La Télévision selon William Marrion Branham*, published in French in Kinshasa. The document contained a transcription of William Branham's teachings on television. Very spontaneously, and in a fashion very familiar to me because of previous research among proselytizers, this visit turned into a teaching session, during which Fabrice and his friend, in turn, read out excerpts from the pamphlet and then rephrased the main ideas in their own words or illustrated them with personal anecdotes.

The pamphlet's overall implication was that a television set is a tool that the Devil has used to enter into domestic spaces and thus turn American souls away from the Christian God (*Nzambe ya Cristu*). Set in late 1950s or early 1960s US, and speaking exclusively about American society, the text emphasizes how makeup and miniskirts, worn by media celebrities and showcased in commercials, diverted the minds of American spectators away from the good and the moral. Fabrice and his friend agreed, and, referring to contemporary Kinshasa society, added that time spent watching television is the time a Christian should ideally spend in church. The young men emphasized the importance of *bearing* the word of the Bible 'live', thus echoing Branham's warnings that many televangelists also counter the work of the Divine (*Musantu*).

Referring to a US source in order to explain *kindoki* and the spiritual battle unsettles taken-for-granted assumptions about "Pentecostal witchcraft" on the African continent. Fabrice and his friend did not mention the classic ingredients of African Pentecostal witchcraft such as "tradition" (*biloko ya bakoko*), "the village" (*mboka*), "*féticheurs*", "the elderly" or *nkisi* (power objects used by witch doctors); rather they used analogies with American society to explain Kinshasa's spiritual insecurity. And technology was central: television was the theme of the pamphlet, while smartphones and the Internet dominated our conversations.

Technology figures prominently not only in my fieldnotes about my interactions with Fabrice but also in most of the contemporary witchcraft stories documented in ethnographies of African cities. Key elements of modernity such as the car, the airplane, and pharmaceutical drugs are integrated in the quest for success and power (Geschiere 1997; Meyer 1998; De Boeck 2005; Bonhomme 2012; Englund 2007). These objects are identified as carriers, tools, or vehicles used by *bandoki* (Sg. *ndoki*, witches, and sorcerers). Geschiere (1997, 2013: 5–6) understands the embedment of objects of electronic modernity within the

occult imagination as a manifestation of globalization: witchcraft adapts to changing living conditions. In the contemporary global age, where new types of physical and virtual mobility expand people's social worlds,⁷ the tentacles of witchcraft stretch as well, just as the tools and objects associated with occult practices constantly change. For Meyer (1998), diabolizing commodities such as pens, cars, makeup, and other objects that can be purchased on the market, combined with promoting the Christian prayer as a necessary and most efficient ritual to divest these objects of their diabolic powers, represent symbolic strategies Pentecostal Christians deploy to tame these exogenous goods and allow African subjects to participate in the global economy despite global structural inequalities (see also Introduction this volume). In this chapter, I propose to move beyond a symbolic and pragmatic analysis of the consumption of a global commodities culture. I take the urban rather than the global as a scale of reference and ask what the animization of ICT goods reveals about what it means to live in an African city today. ICT, *kindoki*, and urban sociality triangulate in contemporary Kinshasa. I will argue that the increased possibilities of connectivity, i.e. the possibility of establishing new social relations, expanding one's social network, and connecting to invisible realms of knowledge, are the very elements that induce fear among most Branhamist Christians in Kinshasa, leading Pentecostal Christians to immoralize ICT. This allows me to make two claims: first, I claim that the study of witchcraft should pay greater attention to connectivity as a crucial mode of social personhood. And second, I formulate the notion of "the witchcraft complex" in order to do justice to the heterogeneity of the material and affective dimensions of witchcraft.

The article is structured as follows: first, I explore the role of technology in the Kinois imagination of the occult as well as the embedment of ICT (mobile phones, cellular companies, and mobile communication) in social networking and the formation of "the Christian subject". Second, I explore Branhamist Christians' understandings of scientific knowledge and the ways in which knowledge and information connect humans to invisible worlds. This will be complemented with an analysis of the variations regarding *kindoki* among Branhamist and other Pentecostal Christians. Here, I propose to approach the imagination of *kindoki* as a "complex". In the conclusion, I bring the discussion back to the urban. Material is derived from ethnographic fieldwork in Kinshasa. Since 2003, I have been working with evangelizers from Awakening Churches (Pype 2006, 2011, 2012). Since 2011, I have begun conducting

research among Kimbanguist (Pype 2014a) and Branhamist Christian communities.

WITCHCRAFT, TECHNOLOGY AND THE AFRICAN CITY

The dialectical relationship between witchcraft and the city has fascinated many Africanist anthropologists. The changing role of the city in the experience of the occult is poignantly addressed in Geschiere's most recent work on witchcraft, intimacy, and trust (2013), which draws on almost 50 years of ethnographic research on the imagination of witchcraft in Cameroon. In the beginning of his research, in the 1960s and 1970s, Geschiere found that Maka Cameroonians believed themselves to be safe from witchcraft in the city; moving to the city, moving away from *djambe*, or "witchcraft from the village", constituted a sufficient strategy for escaping the dangers of witchcraft. However, urban centres were increasingly affected by the spiritual powers of witches. Trying to establish a physical distance between the city and the village very soon proved useless because of the "increasing mobility attributed to [the occult] forces and thus the increasing scope of the witchcraft of the house". *Djambe* also played out in the city, thus generating "translocal forms of witchcraft". By the early 1990s, *urban* forms of witchcraft, such as *ekong* or *famla*, appeared and were eventually "imported from the city to the village" (Geschiere 2013: 45). Geschiere analyses these transformations through the lens of muted interactions between the village and the city following modernization, urbanization, and the cash economy.

The ethnography of Congolese witchcraft also offers interesting insights into how urban life can generate new forms of occult practices. Based on a return visit she made to the Lele of the Kasai region in 1987, after initial fieldwork started in the mid-twentieth century, Mary Douglas (1999) provides a compelling overview of the transformations of witchcraft-related⁸ practices such as accusations, cleansing rituals, and protection strategies among the Lele. For Douglas, intergenerational tensions had drastically altered the dialectics between city-dwellers and villagers, structuring changes in the imagination of evil. Lele elderly remained in their villages, while younger generations had moved away to towns, where they became relatively successful in trade and other professions. As the elderly imagined city-dwelling Lele to be wealthy, sorcery became an important mediator in the articulation of responsibilities between the generations. Douglas expected city Lele to define the village as a space

of witchcraft, but, much to her surprise, she quickly learned that the urban Lele were accused of witchcraft by their village relatives. Similar to what Geschiere documented for Cameroon, in the Lele context, the city became imagined as a space full of occult activity. Though Douglas did not explore the ways in which Lele villagers discussed urban occult conniving further, De Boeck's ethnographic work in Kinshasa (2005) provides a lengthy discussion of the novel forms of *kindoki* generated in the urban context. He characterizes the emergence of child witchcraft as the outcome of changing structures of power and authority *in* the city itself. With children increasingly becoming important economic actors, and gerontocracy losing its power and control over their urban offspring, younger generations are readily identified as *ndoki*.

In the case of Kinshasa's child witches, the transfer of occult powers still remains within the "house" (Geschiere 2013), that is to say, within intimate spheres of belonging (chiefly, the extended family). In a more recent transformation of *kindoki*, urban others (mainly neighbours) are readily identified as potential witches whose victims do not belong to their consanguine or affinal networks. To a certain extent we can claim that these co-residents are still part of people's intimate lifeworlds. Yet, other forms of witchcraft, occurring outside the space of (fictional) kinship, have been documented in urban Africa as well. One such example is the case of the penis snatchers. As Bonhomme (2012: 212) reminds us, penis snatching "occur[s] in public settings, but never in the intimacy of the home." Crowded spaces such as markets, minivan taxis, streets, and open squares are the locales of these incidents. Unsurprisingly, they are also spaces where the urban public, filled with "intimate strangers" (Nyamjoh and Brudvig 2014), assembles. Urban anonymity proves to be a fecund breeding ground for new forms of occult powers. Other new types include bewitchment through satanic text messages, unidentified phone calls, and the reception of anonymous gifts. As will become clear in the remainder of this chapter, ICT increase the possibility of encountering anonymous others and enable invisible, unknown, and "strange" powers to circulate.

TECHNOLOGY AND "AFRICAN WITCHCRAFT"

Although, as Geschiere (2013: 10) observes, in academic writing, "[w]itchcraft often presents itself as the very opposite of science, as the archetypes of everything that is secret and opposed to transparency", various forms of Pentecostal Christianity, Branhamist Christianity included, emphasize the

commonalities between science and witchcraft. William Branham fulminated powerfully against education and science. One of his many quotes on the subject is: “Knowledge, science, education, is the greatest hindrance that God ever had. It is of the devil.”⁹ Branham’s suspicion of the diabolical origins of science coincides strikingly with Pentecostal popular discourse in Africa about intellectual leaders, scientific experiments, and technological innovations. In his pamphlet, *Delivered from the Powers of Darkness*, the programmatic text of the 1990s’ Pentecostal imagination in urban Africa, Emmanuel Eni explicitly formulates the connection between science and the occult. At the bottom of the sea, where Mami Wata reigns, Eni places a scientific laboratory “where scientists and psychiatrists have joined forces to design ‘flashy cars’, the ‘latest weapons’, ‘cloth, perfumes and assorted types of cosmetics’, ‘electronics, computers and alarms’” (Eni 1988: 18 in Meyer 1998: 765). In Luanda (Blanes this volume), *ndoki* are “cloaking devices”, that render objects, agents or actions invisible or conceal them. He makes a striking parallel with “technologies devised in sci-fi productions” (Blanes this volume, footnote 23). For the Melanesian context, and in particular the eastern highlands of PNG, Andersen (this volume) shows the commensurability of medical training (in the case of nurses) and beliefs in occult action. As illustrated in Taylor’s (2016: 7–8) research on mobile phones and power dynamics in Vanuatu, esoteric forms of agency are assumed to be facilitated by the handsets, to the extent that Vanuatu women turn their mobile phones off during the night out of fear that magical attacks can occur through these. Curses as well remain powerful even when transmitted over cellular technologies. Strong’s (this volume) research participants in PNG also mentioned modern technology, or “computerised systems” as a “particular type of witchcraft”, which is opposing generations against one another because of the youth’s assumed possession of required skills to work with these modern technologies. In Kinshasa too, technology and science play a central role in the imagination of and discourse about the occult.

First, among Kinois, distinctions between so-called African and Western *kindoki* are explained according to differences in technology. In Kinois parlance, engine and electricity powered technologies are defined as the “witchcraft of white men” (*kindoki ya mindele*). Examples include motorcars, airplanes, kitchen robots, mobile phones, and the computer. “African witchcraft” (*kindoki ya biso*, ‘our witchcraft’), by contrast, refers to the occult practices that witches and so-called traditional healers activate. Scholars of witchcraft in Accra (Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu 2007), Abidjan (Newell 2007), and Cameroon (Geschiere 2013) mention the

same division. This distinction does not necessarily attribute spiritual powers to these objects; rather the concept of witchcraft here suggests “knowledge”, “techne”, and craftsmanship. The concept of *nganga* can encompass witches (*ndoki*), but can also refer to a (medical) “doctor”, a “professor” (or teacher), an engineer or a scientist. The *nganga* qualities of those involved in modern science refer to the occult world from which these experts draw their knowledge, insights, and mastery. While a *ndoki* usually is attributed evil *intentions*, which set in motion (destructive) *kindoki*, these other kinds of *nganga* have connected their souls to the occult in order to heal, invent, and explain. Ashforth (2005: 146) writes similarly, for South Africa, that “‘African science’ [secret African knowledge and skills] in everyday talk occupies a place alongside the miracles of Scripture and the magic of what is usually referred to as Western or White science in its ability to transform the world in mysterious ways.”

Second, electric and motor-driven technologies appear in the confessions of former witches in southern and central Africa (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993, 1999; De Boeck 2005; Geschiere 1997). Following the time-space compression brought about by the technologies of globalization (with electronic media at the forefront), and the uneven distribution of wealth and riches, analogue and digital media are interpreted as technologies for mediating access to occult powers, which in turn produce an increase in capital, as well as greater mystification of the circulation of money and consumer goods. This has been explained as a way of incorporating western modernity, which remains out of reach for many. Situating these tools as key drivers of occult worlds and activities represent symbolic actions that position these same tools in the immortal domain, and are thus symbolic ways of downplaying their attractiveness (see also Strong this volume).

Third, electric and motor-driven technologies are also regarded as crucial tools in setting *kindoki* into motion and/or transferring spiritual powers. In Kinshasa (Pype 2012, 2014a, *fc.*), members of the Awakening Churches regard the television, the radio, and the mobile phone as objects that mediate spiritual powers (divine and demonic). As do other religious groups, Kinshasa’s Pentecostals insert technology into contemporary debates about urban (im)morality and personhood. According to many Kinois, *les anti-valeurs règnent à Kin[shasa]* (“anti-values reign in Kin”). The concept of *anti-valeurs* refers to asocial actions like corruption, immodesty, and looseness, and are connected to the quality of one’s personal relationships, be they with the nuclear and extended family, friends, neighbours, and business

partners. Various authorities (parents, husbands, pastors, political leaders, etc.) who stress “*anti-valeurs*” in Kinshasa society want to limit the “potentially liberating and revolutionary” fantasies that electronic technologies carry with them by voicing concerns about the “right” usage of technology. This is not to say that Kinshasa’s Pentecostals have an entirely negative view of technology or only see its asocial consequences. Rather, most Pentecostal Christians will agree that ICT, and the mobile phone, in particular, occupies a central role in communication with friends and relatives elsewhere in the country and in the diaspora, in the transfer of money for living costs and education, and in the maintenance of amicable and romantic relations. In addition, many Pentecostals also read Bible verses on their smartphones and participate in prayer chats. Yet, these approved ways of handling electronic communication technologies are not topics of public debates and moral anxieties as they are expressed in Kinshasa’s (semi-) public spheres. Moral anxieties about ICT-related *kindoki* dominate public discourse in Kinshasa’s Pentecostal worlds (see Pype *fc.*).

The heterodox Branhamist Christian discourse suggests a unique conception of *kindoki* and technology in which evil spirits seem to be absent. The following is a condensed version of Fabrice’s explanation of Branhamist Christian principles concerning the dangers of television:

Brother Branham has instructed us that the devil put television sets in households, in order to reach viewers’ souls. [...] Branham also shows that Christians will suffer with their eyes. People who watch too much television, those who sit in front of the TV set all day, will need glasses. They will not be able to rub their eyes to see better. Rather, the devil has taken television. He knows that the television set will ruin people’s eyes, and that they will be looking for drugs to heal their eyes. The Bible says that the [Holy] Spirit will come in a time of corruption; at a time when people will be crazy ... we are living this now... there is so much destruction in the minds of children. They suffer from a mental deficiency. It is because the devil has put the TV set in your home. But we want to see Jesus. People stay in their houses and watch television. They do not go to church anymore. God has made us long for Him. But the devil has put the TV set in front of them, ... the pleasure that the TV set offers forbids people from meeting up with other Christians in the church.

Fabrice’s explanation strikingly omits the interference of spirits. The sole actor is the devil, who works through technology. No human agents are inserted as mediators, nor does the common trope of the gift—as a social

act that transmits occult powers—appear in the story. This understanding of *kindoki*, which we can take as the official Branhamist Christian explanation of *kindoki* through television, is somewhat different from Awakening Churches’ explanations of how media is positioned in spiritual warfare. For the latter, viewing experiences (emotional unrest, social discord, etc.) are said to be indicative of either divine or demonic powers, which audiovisual footage transmits. Born-Again Christians refer to the Spirit of Hatred (*molimo ya likunya*), Jealousy (*molimu ya zuwa*), Sexual Deviation (*molimo ya kindumba*), etc. which are transmitted through images of Harry Potter, wrestling shows, science fiction, and music video clips of worldly and folkloric music. Shouting out Jesus’s name and changing the channel to a Christian TV station are strategies that Pentecostals of the Awakening Churches deem powerful enough to counter the footage’s negative influence (Pype 2012).

Many Branhamist Christians, such as Fabrice, his parents, his pastor, and his friend, eschew television. While Fabrice does have a TV set at home, his family does not watch any television stations. Rather, they use the set together with a DVD player to watch DVDs and videotapes of sermons delivered by *Brother* Branham. Fabrice is more lenient towards the telephone—an object about which *Brother* Branham did not preach. Still, usage is monitored closely, and, according to Fabrice, the same logic that shapes ideas about the devil’s hand in the television set are at play with the smartphone. “Good usage” is perceived as crucial. Yet, not everybody knows what this “good usage” entails, nor are there ready-made instructions about this. Confusion regarding the possibilities of new technologies thus renders these objects suspicious in a religious scheme.

URBAN CONNECTIVITIES

Pentecostal anxieties about “proper” use of technology such as television, radio, and the smartphone draw our attention to the role of connection, or ties, among individuals, between the individual and the larger world, and the consequences for one’s spiritual well-being. This takes us into the domain of urban sociality. Therefore, quite apart from consumption, connectivity should have a more prominent place in the analysis of witchcraft in Africa. Various technological artefacts (satellites, antennae, television and radio sets, and the mobile phone) have become prime objects in the social and moral imagination of contemporary Kinshasa

and have inspired a new vocabulary for speaking about social, economic, and spiritual personhood. In popular parlance, the ideal for a city-dweller is to be *branché* (to be well connected), meaning to be able to move around in various social worlds and have a well-established network. This network made up of people who can help one find a job, a partner, money, and solutions for ad hoc problems, is called *le réseau*, just like the telephone infrastructure of network operators. The *réseau* constitutes the most important social space of belonging in an urban context, where kinship ties are weaker and usually described in terms of responsibilities and duties (Pype 2012: 65). *Contacts* are individuals with whom one has (weak or strong) ties, which can be mobilized when needed. Other idiomatic expressions that illustrate how ICT shapes reflections of social identity are: *kozala na baunité* (having plenty of phone credit) refers to being physically big, which is a token of material and social success; *kozala lowbatt* (low battery) means barely having enough money; a *carte sim blanche* (a SIM card without a phone number attached to it; something you acquire when your mobile phone is stolen and that helps you to maintain your old phone number) refers to a girl who has plenty of boyfriends but no steady lover. In Christian discourse, the SIM card references the soul, and *déverouiller la carte sim* (as into unlock a locked smartphone) means delivering someone from *kindoki*.

If we return to the vignette with Fabrice above, we see that he considers the smartphone dangerous because of the new connections girls can potentially make through phone conversations. Fabrice reminded me about two particular types of mobile phone usage. The first one is the practice of masking, in which callers' names, conversation histories, and received and sent text messages are hidden or deleted, yet retained in the shared histories of anticipated or actual sexual partners. These strategies counter the public ideals of monogamy, fidelity, and honesty. The second set of practices could be glossed as "securitizing practices". Allowing or forbidding someone to use a mobile phone, controlling the contacts they make through mobile communication, and gifting airtime are practices that aim at securing the social connections of others. Both practices participate in wider sets of anonymizing and securitizing technologies, including architectural design and rituals that Kinosis can mobilize when controlling the social networks of their wives, sisters, and daughters. The connective capacities enabled by the new information and communication technologies lead to new fantasies and practices that can be either morally approved or rejected. These refusals and acceptances vary from

one society to another and need to be traced alongside other spaces and transformations. These moral debates about technology among Kinois amplify social transformations in contemporary urban Kinshasa, and particularly the increased mobility of its youth.

The ICT-induced possibilities for penetrating deeper into the social fabric of intimate relations show striking parallels with how *kindoki* itself actually works. The workings of both ICT and *kindoki* are couched in obscure, invisible, and difficult to define powers.¹⁰ This is not unique to the sub-Saharan African context. A text message circulated in Vanuatu stating “Digicel [one of the local telephone companies]—Devil Is Getting In Control of Everyone’s Life” (Taylor 2016: 6). Here, a connection is made between cellular technologies, corporate logics, and the occult. Also for most Kinois, there is no doubt that telecom corporations such as Vodacom, Airtel, Tigo, and Africell have ties with occult forces. Around town, one hears many stories about how gaining entrance into these companies is only possible after initiation, which usually involves sexual intercourse (stories about homosexuality, in particular, abound) and the obligatory participation in secret meetings in Freemason temples. Secret societies, like the Freemasons and Rosicrucians, which arrived in DR Congo during colonial times, are said to include not only politicians among their members, but also the heads of Vodacom, Tigo, and the like. In these secret societies, the latter also meet businessmen from other successful corporations, banks in particular. Private groups where industrialists, wealthy entrepreneurs, and politicians meet, such as the Rotary Club, may well have colonial origins, but they are perceived as urban spaces, intimately connected to hidden powers. Magic and the occult reign in these circles, it is commonly argued. Such suspicions about these companies’ employees’ and stakeholders’ involvement in diabolical schemes also further Christians’ suspicions about urban sociality in general given that these companies actually provide the basic infrastructure of contemporary ideal personhood, i.e. being well connected (*branché*). Such suspicions of connections between occult, hidden, worlds and flourishing economic initiatives disclose the levelling mechanisms that Geschiere (1997) suggests are at play in witchcraft accusations in general. Here, the levelling takes the form of a moral distancing from those who have gained access to wealth and luxury by being hired at these companies. As previously mentioned, those who are lucky enough to be employed in the offices of these companies are the objects of much suspicion. Usually, their salaries are better and more regular than those

earned at other, local, enterprises. A man in his mid-30s hired as an engineer for Tigo earned 1500 US\$ per month after 3 years of work, which is far more than any NGO, the state, or another company could pay. Working at the reception of the Airtel central office in the city centre promises a monthly income of 600 US\$. These wages and in particular the lifestyles of telecom employees make these firms very attractive to young Kinois, especially those who have passed the secondary school state examination. So, aside from attraction, there is much suspicion, due to the fierce competition for gaining employment at one of the various cellular companies in town.

Mobile phones and mobile conversations are also embedded within the practices of invisible agents. Pentecostal pastors integrate cellular phones within the logic of *kindoki* and warn people that conversations, or accepting handsets or phone credit, can produce ties between them and unchristian others. Outside of church settings too, Kinois interpret certain mobile phone conversations as the performances of occult agents. One example is Kinois' reactions to phone calls I initiated through Skype. The person called would either see "private number" (*numéro privé*) or "unknown number" (*numéro inconnu*) appear on the phone display, or a strange number formation would appear (for instance one informant told me that one of my calls had given the sign "11111111"). People uninformed about how different Internet-mediated telephone conversations might present themselves on their small phone screen might not pick up the phone. The man who saw my caller ID as "11111111" told me he had been afraid that this was a satanic phone call. Thus, in Kinshasa, although less prominently than in other sub-Saharan African countries (like Nigeria, Gabon, and Malawi, see Bonhomme 2012 and Englund 2007), mobile phones are inserted into the occult economy.

Crucial to Pentecostals' take on the dangers of ICT is the importance of responsibility and the necessity of knowing how to take responsibility for one's technologically mediated moral subjectivity. How, in other words, should one act morally in a world of technological objects? As was clear from Fabrice's narrative, it is not so much the actual possession of technological objects (mobile phones, television sets, cameras) that is at stake, but what people choose to do with the technologies. Specifically, the concern is with the relationships that are mediated by these material objects, which can lead to confusion, mistrust, and uncertainty, and which push many Pentecostal Kinois to think about

“appropriate” and “inappropriate” ways of interacting with and through ICT.

This emphasis on responsibility contrasts with the more familiar Pentecostal approach to taming electronic commodities or goods coming from the West. Usually, prayer over an object breaks its occult ties (see Meyer 1998). Fabrice did not suggest prayer as a strategy to make the smartphone safer. Rather, the user was supposed to possess sufficient Christian knowledge to handle the technology in a moral way. Therefore, along with “mediation”, a currently hot topic in the anthropology of technology, “connectivity” deserves greater theoretical investigation. Both “mediation” and “connectivity” emphasize interaction (social or spiritual) and allow room for agency; yet, while “mediation” emphasizes the in-between, the transfer of communication, power, and value, and at times even suggests the resolution of conflict, “connectivity” attends to the relationships generated, to “accessibility” or “availability”, and to the possibility of entering into a relationship with an Other (socially and/or spiritually), whether technologically mediated or not. In Kinois terms, it is “*you* who open the door” (*ofungoli porte*)—a familiar idiom to describe one’s receptiveness to the Holy Spirit or to bad spirits. Witches are not just mediators of evil powers; they also connect the souls of their victims to demonic powers. Through *kindoki*, bewitched people have access to new, invisible, realms of identity, success, and power. Witches open the doors between the visible and invisible worlds. Very much like ICT, therefore, witches connect people with other worlds, even as people are not always aware of the consequences of entering therein.

Telling in this regard is the name attributed to the ingredients of the medicine *bugota* used in magic by Sukuma farmers in Tanzania (Stroeken, this volume): *shingila*, entrances. As Stroeken describes, the power of this medicine depends on its relatedness to others parts of culture. “Wherever ‘magic’ works in the world, the reason is a sense of differential relatedness”. Via the medicine, the patient is connected to multiple worlds. This complex state of belonging defies homogenization and total control and is characterized by ambiguity and negotiations. According to Stroeken, who draws on Gluckman’s distinction between simplex and complex societies, Pentecostal Christianity cannot accept the multiplexity of people’s relationships and tries to reduce the ties between people.

Pentecostal discourses emphasizes one’s responsibility in “opening the door” via technology. The ways in which “connectivity” or

“accessibility” is debated in contemporary technological cultures are of utmost importance for anthropologists, as this allows us to reflect on issues of personhood, subjectivity, and sociality. This draws attention to the dividuality of personhood (Marriott 1976; LiPuma 1998; Strathern 1988; Pype 2011) and opens up new realms for the study of agency, social (im)mobility, and power (De Bruijn and Van Dijk 2012). While personhood, the self, and interactions with Others (often spiritual others) have been studied within the medical and religious spheres, Pentecostal reflections on communication technologies force us to perceive the ways in which “contact” with Others (social and/or spiritual) can be initiated, mediated, evaluated, broken off, and even repaired. The attribution of moral and/or immoral meanings to the possibilities of “connecting”, as analysed here, foregrounds the importance, precisely, of “being accessible” as an essential feature of the social person.

SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

“Electricity,” said Pastor Dominique, a Branhamist Christian pastor, during a formal interview, “can be used for good, that is, to cook, to have light, to use machinery, but it can also lead to death; when you touch electrical wires, it can lead to an accident. The word of God contains only good; technology can be good and bad.” The pastor continued that “life” (*bomoyi*) is only captured in the word of God (*liloba ya Nzambe*). The good side of technology is nonetheless always empty (*vide, ya pamba*). This emptiness is the consequence of technology’s cosmological position: it is the outcome of the snake’s knowledge. In the Garden of Eden, mankind did not need technology; the contemporary material world, however, does require technology.

Pastor Dieudonné, who uses big plasma screens, microphones powered with electricity, and even audiovisual footage and live online streaming (when connecting, for instance, with a Branhamist Christian church in the German city of Krefeld) in preaching, stressed that technology is morally ambiguous. Although, for him, the knowledge that leads to technological innovation is de facto diabolical. When I asked Pastor Dieudonné for clarifications, following a Sunday morning sermon at which his assistant pastor taught that “we should know that all knowledge of these technologies is the consequence of the Snake (*le Serpent, nyoka*)”, the pastor explained that “*kindoki* and science are not useful for a child of God (*mwana ya Nzambe*). The knowledge (*mayele*) that

has allowed people to make microphones, satellites, and even nuclear energy is diabolical. The only way scientists have obtained this knowledge is through an engagement with death.” Pastor Dieudonné earned a *Licence* degree in physics (equivalent of an M.A.) from the University of Kinshasa (UNIKIN). After working as a teaching assistant at the university for a few years, he abandoned the academic world because he found it increasingly difficult to reconcile his faith with his work as a scientific researcher. For Pentecostal Christians, any knowledge that distracts the Christian from God’s path is perceived as anti-Christian. Knowledge in itself is not diabolical or divine, rather the difference lies in the *source* of knowledge. Some knowledge is God-given (*cuti epay ya Nzambe*). Most Christians have received this gift of knowledge (*bwanya ya Nzambe*), which allows them to understand the world, to interpret signs of the material world as metonyms of invisible powers and spirits, and act upon it (Pype 2012: 112–115). However, other kinds of knowledge are inspired by the devil (*ya Satani*). To understand whether certain knowledge is “Christian” or not, one should look into its consequences: does it sow death, as, for instance, the atomic bomb? Or does it harm people, as do weapons, for example?

The types of knowledge that do not “come from God” are abstract and irrelevant for daily social life. Pastor Dieudonné explained how he had refused to continue his postgraduate studies at the university. Having finished his *Licence* degree with a dissertation on metallurgy, he felt uncomfortable with the level of abstraction that studies in physics entail. The mysteries of abstract thinking undoubtedly lead to the devil. According to pastor Dieudonné:

There were certain demands that I could not perform. Especially things that you cannot grasp with your five senses. We have five senses, but some scientific experiments rely on another sense. As a Christian, my 6th sense is my faith. If I cannot feel, taste, hear, see, or smell something then I need to believe that God is there. But, I know that in those sciences, people do not rely on God.

In this scheme of things, scientific knowledge is the devil’s knowledge, the consequence of the alliance between the *Serpent* and Eve. The pastor’s words lead us into the domain of scientific innovation, scientific expertise, and the position of the researcher in the religious context. As the body is God-given, the five senses are what people can and should

rely on in order to make statements and claims about the human and non-human environment. However, once we enter into the domain of the impalpable, or the immaterial, confusion arises. How is scholarship related to the religious world? Pastor Dieudonné explains faith as “believing without having seen”. How do physicians believe/understand/explain scientific musings? While certain phenomena and causalities in the physical domain can be explained through “pragmatics”, there is a whole domain of physics that lies beyond the pragmatic. Here, the pastor questions the use of this kind of knowledge.

Just as Kinois Christians (Branhamist Christians included) are suspicious of the knowledge that diviners, magicians, and healers can mobilize, they also question the spiritual qualities of scientific expertise and the origins of scholarly excellence. Rumours abound concerning the occult ties of Kinshasa’s scholars and professors. Stickers pasted on professors’ cars, the rings or hats they wear, or even the book collections they display in their houses, are read as signals of their adherence to secret societies such as Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism.

Well-known pastors with academic degrees are also met with suspicion, and the slightest word or phrase that could hint at affiliation with mystical societies are exploited by their competitors as signs of alliances with diabolic occult powers. Obviously, these arguments are made in the context of competition over authority and influence, and aim at downgrading the elite status of one’s rivals.

Pastor Dieudonné told me that some of his colleagues had refused to continue doctoral research because they had been invited to be initiated into secret societies. Rumours abound about Freemasons operating on university campuses, recruiting students, and passing on knowledge and intelligence to them by way of special initiations.¹¹ Most Kinois believe that many, if not all, outstanding students procure their intelligence in the occult world. “Naturally” intelligent students are envied by others and may become the targets of madness (*liboma*), a spiritual affliction thrown at them by jealous fellow students and *féticheurs*. In addition, it is taken as common knowledge that many professors of local universities have either a mad son or daughter in their families. These psychological illnesses are interpreted as the outcomes of sacrificial *kindoki* (Pype 2010), in which a father offers his son’s/daughter’s wisdom or mental health to the devil in order to secure his own academic position.

The suspicion about the dangers of abstract academic and scientific knowledge also informs the movements of Christians on campus.

Pentecostal students regard libraries as spaces of danger. Jeremy, a medical student in his late 20s nearing the completion of his degree, told me that one can leave books on a table in the university library for weeks on end without fearing that someone might steal them. Books could be technologies of initiation into occult societies, not only because of the mysteries they describe and explain but also because of the spirits that accompany them. If one does not know the spiritual identity of the person who has laid the books on the table, opening a book and starting to read puts one at risk of bewitchment through letters and drawings. Jeremy related how one of his friends had given him a new book, an updated version of what they were studying at the university. For one reason or another, Jeremy never managed to actually open the book and start reading. A month later, his friend asked Jeremy what he thought about the book. Jeremy lied and said he liked it very much. His friend said: “You are lying. I see you have not read a single word of the book. If you had, you would have responded differently.” This reply triggered Jeremy’s curiosity, and that same evening he decided to start reading. However, very quickly, perhaps after 15 min, Jeremy began suffering from a headache and had to go to bed. His mother, who often wakes up in the night when she hears her son going to bed, went into his room and told him that she had dreamt that someone was initiating her son. She warned him to be careful. Jeremy became worried. He understood his mother’s warning, the headache, the frequent power cuts, and the fatigue that had continued to plague him as he tried to read the book, as divine interventions to protect him. That book obviously contained occult knowledge, Jeremy thought. And he feared that further reading would tie his soul to the devil. The next day, Jeremy returned the book to its previous owner and told him not to give him anything any more.

These anxieties about book knowledge, and schools and universities as hotbeds of occult activities are not limited to Kinshasa, and neither are they new (Bastian 2001; Tonda 2000; Ndaya 2008). Yet, they are often ignored in the study of Pentecostal witchcraft, which is biased by a tendency to examine the occult origins of customary rituals. Yet, the concerns over the acquisition of “right” and “spiritually safe” knowledge seems crucial among Pentecostals, and, all over Africa, PCC leaders are establishing Pentecostal universities. These offer a Christian environment to students and train them to become leaders in the Christian community, and also, often, in the nation where the university has been planted.¹²

Books have much in common with electronic communication technologies. Just like mobile phones, and radio and television sets, books and other written media are objects with which users (readers/listeners/viewers) engage in a sensual way in order to acquire information. People hold these objects, use their hands to turn pages, make notes, alter frequencies, or carry them around. The book, the smartphone, and the television share an emphasis on the ocular as the main entrance point into the invisible, immaterial, realms of the Real. By means of reading and watching, the recipient's soul becomes connected to images, ideas, and desires that escape total control or delineation.

Connectivity is more than merely expanding one's social network; humans are connected to non-humans, spirits, imaginations, and other temporalities and locations. ICT and books mediate these connections; yet people can choose the worlds into which they want to enter—or not enter. Pastor Dieudonné's choice to abandon academia was motivated by his desire to not be connected to potentially harmful occult realms. In a way, in order to preserve his ties with the Divine, the pastor closed that door; just as Jeremy literally closed his friend's book after supernatural signs informed him about potentially harmful effects to his soul should he continue to read it.

More fundamentally, the ethnographic material draws our attention to the literally *formative* possibilities of information circulation and knowledge acquisition. For Kinois Pentecostals, the Bible, the pamphlets and audiovisual recordings containing sermons, as well as e-prayer groups, digital Bible verses, and online healing connect users' souls to the divine realm and offer strategies for healing, instructing, and blessing. Other forms of information, whether transmitted through paper or electronic media, transform the soul by spiritually killing it, linking it to the devil, and connecting it to a realm of anti-social, potentially disruptive powers. Here as well, we see how mediation and connectivity represent two complementary explanatory modes for the imagination of human entanglements with invisible and visible realms, and with the social and the spiritual.

THE WITCHCRAFT COMPLEX

In this last part, I wish to render the analysis of Branhamist Christians' understandings of *kindoki* even more complex. At certain times, especially during evangelization campaigns, Branhamist leaders in Kinshasa

articulate a very “classic” Pentecostal approach to *kindoki*, that is one centred around objects of the past (*ya bakoko*). During these sessions, the pastors do not rehearse the dogma of the Branhamist church: that television and other media are bad, and that women should avoid wearing trousers or putting on makeup. They rather lean heavily on the concepts of *fétiches* and *magie*, and on their demoniac natures: a mask, a rope to put around the waist, a bracelet, a *nkisi* statue, or a bundle of herbs that women in the market place under their baskets in order to attract clients.

Juxtaposing this Branhamist understanding of *kindoki* with Fabrice’s explanation of *kindoki* illustrates the hybridity of the imagination of the occult within one form of Pentecostal Christianity. During evangelization campaigns, Kinosis Branhamist leaders define “African traditions” as demonic. As I argue in my work on the representations of *kindoki* in evangelizing teleserials produced by born-again Christians (Pype 2012: 46), we must approach the presentation of witches, fools, and pastors, and thus of *kindoki* and the occult, as intended constructions. This particular mode of (re-) presentation of witchcraft allows us to see how quoting Bayart (2005: 137), “the *imaginaire* is first of all an interaction”—not only an interaction between past, present, and future, but also “an interaction between social actors” (ibid.). Born-again Christians do not live in a vacuum and do not invent the metaphors and images of *kindoki*. (Re-) presentations of this material diverge from the existing dominant imaginary, which they present in a particular fashion, so as to sustain their own agendas. The discourse articulated in the evangelization campaign also draws our attention to the constructedness of *kindoki*. Messages can be adapted to particular crowds. Most probably, Branhamist pastors emphasized a classic type of Pentecostal witchcraft because they cater to a yet-to-be-converted crowd. In order not to frighten them too much (with the emphasis on the occult dimensions of new technology), they chose to play the familiar type of witchcraft suspicions card.

This observation and interpretation illustrate the heterogeneous aspect of witchcraft among Pentecostal communities. Just as the “Pentecostal” field is not unified, there is also no common Pentecostal definition of witchcraft. Major lines are drawn among Kinosis Pentecostal groups in terms of their different approaches to the substance of *kindoki*. While the majority of the PCCs in Kinshasa (especially those belonging to the *Eglise de Reveil du Congo*-Awakening Churches) ascribe an utterly spiritual aspect to *kindoki*, other churches (those said to be closer to the

ATRs) see *kindoki* as material as well. *Kindoki* here references a material substance located in the belly. Vomiting and physical extraction are unsurprisingly some of the more common purifying practices in these ATR churches, while the majority of PCCs claims that speaking out the name of Jesus and the discursive chasing off evil spirits are the only “Christian” practices for healing the afflicted.

Therefore, I propose the concept of “the witchcraft complex” in order to acknowledge the variety of Pentecostal understandings of witchcraft, strategies for cleansing and repairing, and entanglements with local and global scales of reference. A “complex” is at once (a) a composite bringing together many interconnected parts, an assemblage of associated things; (b) a fixed idea or obsessive notion; and (c) as used in psychology,¹³ a core pattern of emotions, memories, perceptions, and wishes in the personal unconscious organized around a common theme, such as power or status. The notion of the “complex” thus allows us to acknowledge the juxtaposition of objects and types of materiality that contrast “tradition” and “modernity” in the imagination of evil. Smartphones and *nkisi* statues can appear side by side in testimonies about *kindoki*. Planes, television sets, and Rolex watches are all potentially dangerous, just as the ritualistic paraphernalia of a customary chief. Objects assumed to be “traditional” seem to be quite hybrid as well. In her overview of demonization discourses in Africa, Hackett shows (2003: 62f) that the so-called “typically African” patterns of witchcraft often have trans-local origins. In particular, the demonology can be traced back from West- and East-Africa to the US, South Korea, and Brazil. The “Traditional” is “invented”, a transnational blend of images, names, props, and practices (Ibid.).

The second meaning of “complex” does justice to the fixation of PCC on witchcraft and the occult. In the Kinois context, PCC places greater emphasis on deliverance and the spiritual battle than on the gospel of health, wealth, and success. PCC is rejected by other Christian churches precisely because of Pentecostal communities’ consistent emphasis on *kindoki*. These same critics of PCC claim that the witchcraft confessions, sermons about how *kindoki* began and how one should protect oneself against witches, actually initiate Christians into the realm of the occult.

The third semantic layer of the notion of “the complex” draws attention to the affective dimensions of *kindoki*. For many types of *kindoki*, fear, jealousy, envy, desire, anger, hatred, and other anti-social emotions are considered to be at once constitutive of witchcraft and the outcome

of *kindoki*. A “complex” influences an individual’s attitude and behaviour. Fears, suspicions, and uncertainties about occult powers vested in objects or transmitted by others steer the ways people interact with each other and live with objects. These emotions can lead to asocial behaviour. Witches themselves can be said to suffer a “complex”, as their actions are also driven by feelings (mostly envy, jealousy, or hatred) and are socially disruptive. In turn, PCC structures emotional regimes in which “good” and “bad” emotions are identified according to their connections to the spiritual and their potential involvement in *kindoki* (Pype 2014b).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: URBAN SOCIALITY AND *KINDOKI*

In concluding, I bring the discussion back to the urban scale. If discourse about *kindoki* is about the present, and if it is an explanatory system for understanding the distress of the present, one could argue that the variety of *kindoki* explanations indexes the spiritual insecurity (see Ashforth 2005) that Kinois society is experiencing. Within the Branhamist discourses on *kindoki* presented in this article, we observe three major shifts away from recent academic interpretations of urban African witchcraft. First, Branhamist *kindoki* is largely impersonal. Both in the evangelization campaign in Lemba and in the interpretations of ICT enhanced *kindoki*, no emotions of jealousy, hatred, and envy or evil intentions are mentioned. The “classic” intermediaries (the maternal uncle who is looking for vengeance; the neighbour who has made a pact with the devil to enrich himself; etc.) are strikingly absent. The city is presented as an environment full of potentially harmful objects. This relates to the role of consumption in the city: everything needs to be purchased, and collecting material goods is a sign of success in the city. The city, with its array of commodities from the ancestors as well as high-tech goods from faraway countries, has become a space filled with contagious magic. Every single object has the ability to transfer occult powers.

Second, the centrality of ICT in recent interpretations of *kindoki* speaks to new forms of expanding one’s social network (see above) and also draws our attention to the “technologisation” of urban Kinois life, where ICT goods dominate everyday life (even when there are power cuts). One cannot underestimate the relevance of cellular technologies in everyday life in Kinshasa. The mobile phone as a commodity together with phone credit structure intergenerational (Pype 2017) and sexual

relations (Pype *fc.*); the cellular networks are also important job providers, contributing to the emergence of a middle class in urban Congo; they are major sponsors of Congolese entertainment (music festivals, TV shows, etc.); and, finally, these companies occasionally become political actors, as, for instance, when the internet is shut down due to government orders; when they communicate the results of the state exams (via text messaging), etc. Doubting the morality of ICT means critically observing the dominance of these new capitalist players, as well as devalorizing these technologies' contribution in rapidly expanding and difficult to control forms of urban sociality (see also Blanes this volume).

Third, and probably most striking, is the absence of the gift as a crucial performance in the transmission of spiritual powers, or in the bewitching act. A decade ago, De Boeck (2005) already argued that *kindoki* had left the lineage and had become random, although the gift continued to be an important intermediary act in the spiritual battle. Receiving a biscuit, money, or other commodities from strangers or relatives remains a major way of having one's soul captured and thus being tied to the Devil. Branhamist discourse about *kindoki* does not emphasize the gift.¹⁴ This impersonal variant of witchcraft as well as the variety of *kindoki* described by Branhamist Christians expresses total confusion. Both "the past", or "tradition", as metonymically represented in the *kindoki ya biso*, and "the present", or "modernity", as manifest in the *kindoki* of modern communication technologies, science and electricity are potentially harmful. The diffuse reactions within the Branhamist Christian scene in Kinshasa (some rejecting new technologies; others embracing them but fully controlling them) show how profound the uncertainties are. Also, the emphasis on personal responsibility (in handling the technologies), or the necessity of possessing the *bwanya ya Nzambe* in order to use the new technologies in spiritually safe ways, hint at the importance of the individual. One's spiritual well-being still depends on social others, but it is the Christian him- or herself who is ultimately accountable for his or her own spiritual health. This suggests an increasing degree of autonomy of the urban citizen. Such discourses show that people depend on *themselves* for survival, and to find jobs and prosper.

Indeed, most Kinois know that they should not expect that relatives, marital partners, or even offspring, will be able to help them in moments of need. Moreover, as the Pentecostal leaders argue, one ought to perhaps mistrust these intimate connections too. By focussing

on the possibility of being bewitched by any object whatsoever (be they from the ancestors or the high tech world), Branhamist Christians are reminded time and again that *kindoki* is epidemic, that the risk of contagious affliction is real and omnipresent, and that becoming and remaining “a good Christian” depends strongly on “good” connectivity.

NOTES

1. See Geschiere (2013: 7–13), who elaborates on the “pitfalls of [the] notion” of witchcraft and sketches the epistemological, ethical, and semantic problems that this category invokes. I am following his suggestion to stick as closely possible to local, emic, categories and unpack their various semantic layers.
2. Branhamist Christian communities frequently organize evangelization campaigns in Kinshasa, and a Branhamist Christian TV station (RTAE, *Radio Télévision Aigle de l’Eternel*) broadcasts old footage of Branham’s sermons. A Christian website claims that there are 2,000,000 followers of William Branham in DR Congo. It is unclear how the data were collected. <http://www.speroforum.com/a/49578/Protestants-in-DR-Congo-to-partner-with-USbased-ASCI#.Vp1lhjhAfE> consulted November 15 2015.
3. A synonym used in Kinshasa to refer to Branhamist Christianity as *la religion du Message* (the religion of the Message). The *Message* (*Le Message*), a synonym used for Branhamist Christianity mainly by Branhamist Christians themselves, is shorthand for *Le Message du Temps de la Fin* (Message of the End Times), which summarizes Branham’s understanding of the world.
4. While the origins of Branhamist Christianity are located in post-second world war US society, it has taken diverse arrival routes into Kinshasa. William Branham never visited central Africa (he visited South Africa in 1951) but American, German, and African evangelizers, who crusaded in Congo/Zaire, brought Branham’s pamphlets with them. Baruti Kasongo claims he first learned about William Branham when receiving a pamphlet from a deacon of the FEPACO-Nzambe Malamu Church (an independent Pentecostal Church set up in 1960s Congo by the Congolese preacher Ayidini Abala Alexandre). Similar *brochures* were distributed in Kinshasa’s Assemblies of God communities. During the late 1970s and 1980s, the Branhamist community remained rather confined. In the 1990s, when a general Pentecostal wave hit African urban centres, Branhamist Christianity gained influence in Kinshasa. While the initial phases of Branhamist Christianity in Kinshasa can be traced back

to the efforts of European and African evangelizers, an increasing number of Branhamist Christian prayer groups in Kinshasa have direct links with mother churches elsewhere in DR Congo. A large majority of the Branhamist Christian churches set up in Kinshasa in the last decade have strong ties with churches in Lubumbashi and, especially Mbuyi-Mayi. These two major cities in central Congo are commonly known to be in Luba-territory (an ethnic group). The origin stories of the newer Branhamist Christian churches in Kinshasa very often mention pastors or members of mother churches in Lubumbashi or Mbuyi-Mayi who relocated to Kinshasa, usually not in order to proselytize, but rather for personal (social and/or economic) reasons. Once in Kinshasa, they decided to set up a chapter of their mother church or their own church. Branhamist Christian churches whose genealogy runs through Luba-land, eagerly invite pastors and Branhamist Christian leaders from their home regions to participate in evangelization campaigns.

5. The major Branhamist Christian churches in Kinshasa are *Shekinah Tabernacle* (since 1990), *L'Assemblée Chrétienne de Righini* (since the 1980s), and *Eglise Tabernacle de Gloire*, although there are many more. Probably the best-known Branhamist pastor in Kinshasa is Baruti Kasongo. His church *L'Assemblée Chrétienne de Righini* is also popularly called "Baruti Tabernacle". Pasteur Baruti embraces modern technology and runs a TV station (RTAE) and a website, and frequently travels abroad to evangelize among diasporic Congolese communities (e.g. Dallas, Texas in 2013, Australia in 2015).
6. The American Prophet William Marion Branham (1909–1965) was a prominent figure of the 1940s–1950s US healing revival. While Branhamist Christianity lost relevance in contemporary American society, Branhamist Christianity is thriving in the DR Congo. Branhamist websites from Asia and Africa claim that DR Congo has the largest group of Branhamist Christians (as Branham's followers are popularly called) in the world. Weaver (2000: 153) mentions 25.000 followers in DR Congo, but the numbers have only increased since then. It is unclear how many Branhamist Christians are practicing in Kinshasa nowadays, although it is likely that most Congolese Branhamist Christians live in the capital city.
7. For excellent discussions of the ambiguous reception of the new forms of mobility enabled through mobile phones: for Inahmbane society in Mozambique Archambault (2012), and McIntosh (2010) on Malindi town, Kenya.
8. Douglas does not use any local terms in this article to refer to witchcraft and sorcery. She solely uses the noun "sorcerer" to indicate "witches, demon-possessed persons, or wizards supposed to have secret power

- to wreak harm, not like a robber might work, secretly at night, but by occult, supernatural means. Sorcerers are evildoers, and the context here is how believers try to combat them.” (Douglas 1999: 177)
9. Branham, 65-0801 M—The God of this Evil Age.
 10. I thank Knut Rio for drawing my attention to this.
 11. Bastian (2001: 76–81) discusses the same phenomenon (“campus cultism”) in Nigeria.
 12. Some examples: Pentecost University College in Ghana: <http://pentvars.edu.gh/about-us/core-values>; Pentecostal University in Uganda: <http://upu.ac.ug/>—both consulted 8 December 2015. Currently, in Kinshasa, Branhamist and Awakening churches have not yet set up their own educational institutions. The Kimbanguist community, by contrast, does have its own schools and even a university.
 13. From the Oxford English Dictionary: “A group of emotionally charged ideas or mental factors, unconsciously associated by the individual with a particular subject, arising from repressed instincts, fears, or desires and often resulting in mental abnormality; freq. with defining word prefixed, as *inferiority*, *Edipus complex*, etc.; hence *colloq.*, in vague use, a fixed mental tendency or obsession.”
 14. Meyer (1998: 752f1) remarks in a footnote that classic Pentecostal churches in rural and urban Ghana animate commodities, while recent waves of Pentecostalism since the 1980s which are popular among urban elites emphasize the gift in the demonization of objects and “appear to be less concerned with dangers imbued in commodities.”

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