

Kinshasa's Evangelising Teleserials as Cultural and Religious Palimpsests. Reflections on Cosmopolitanism, Pentecostalism and Popular Culture

Katrien Pype¹

¹University of Birmingham, Centre of West African Studies, Birmingham , UK

Katrien.Pype@soc.kuleuven.be

This presentation deals with the Pentecostal cosmopolitanism as expressed in Kinshasa's popular culture, in particular in locally produced evangelising TV serials. These reference Nigerian witchcraft films, American soaps, Biblical tales, rumours, local epic tales, and Congolese rumba (urban dance music). Despite the various cultural influences, the television serials present a very local, urban lifeworld, one which is very familiar both for the television actors and their audiences.

I take the different layers of the evangelising teleserials and the various cultural borrowings that make up the fictive worlds of television drama as a starting point to reflect on the design of Kinshasa's Pentecostal popular culture.

African Pentecostalism is said to be utterly global, borrowing from Western, capitalist worlds while diabolising and thus jettisoning local, 'traditional' realities. The forceful rejection of ancestral and 'old' ways of being-in-the-world is nevertheless also a way of recuperating these practices, be it in the negative. Although Pentecostalism promotes a particular lifestyle based on 'Pentecostal universals', in each society where Pentecostalism is being practiced, it blends with local beliefs and lifestyles, thus allowing the emergence of historical and vernacular versions of Pentecostalism. Kinshasa's Pentecostal popular culture upholds a cosmopolitanism inspired by Western, Congolese and Nigerian images and sounds. It is this interplay of local and global, African and non-African texts and images, religious and cultural, that will be scrutinized in this presentation in order to further our knowledge of African types of Pentecostalism and also the hybridity of contemporary African media products.

