Place and the (un-)making of religious peripheries

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Place and the (un-)making of religious peripheries:

Weddings among Kenyan Pentecostals in London

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> We live in a neighborhood with other religions. Here it's Islam. They proclaim it five times a day. Young people are converting to become Muslims. Their words are in the atmosphere. Let us saturate the atmosphere with positive words, with words of life. Then we can claim back the city, reduce murder, evil things. It's possible if we understand who we are. It can have national and international effects, but you have to start in your home. You need revolution in your house first. [18 January 2015]

This excerpt from a Kenyan Pentecostal service in London captures several themes explored in this chapter.[1] In their commitment to 'winning souls for Jesus', Kenyan Pentecostals see London as a place in need of much work, and this work begins 'in your house'. For Pentecostals, married couples are the smallest spiritual and social unit of the church and, along with their children, constitute the bedrock of a given society. To carry out God's work, believers attempt to re-make London by forging strong marriages and raising morally upright children. With marriage serving as a bridge between the church and society, they can reach out to convert 'others'.

Weddings are important to Kenyan Pentecostal projects of person- and

community-making. Drawing on Massey's (1993) notion of place as articulated moments in networks of social relations, I approach the weddings of Kenyan Pentecostals marrying in London as a place-making practice and ask what kind of place(s) they try to make (and un-make) through such celebratory occasions. As rituals marking a significant moment in individual and familial lifecycles, weddings may seem like an unexpected means through which to 're-claim' London. Yet I will suggest that their intimate and personal nature is one of numerous 'inversions' integral to Kenyan Pentecostal place-making (Chidester and Linenthal, 1996: 15-19).

At the core of their place-making is an apparent contradiction: although Kenya remains the cultural reference point for their weddings and London is seen as a morally inferior place, many Kenyan Pentecostals nonetheless marry in London. When asked why, they said that their weddings 'here' (London) are just like those they have 'there' (Kenya), suggesting that where their weddings take place does not matter in any meaningful way to the occasion. This sentiment, however, obscures the fact that marrying in Kenya requires the right to leave and re-enter the United Kingdom; for Kenyan Pentecostals, this kind of mobility cannot be taken for granted. Rather, they must contend with a differentiated mobility regime that restricts their movement and arguably contributes to their efforts to un-make Kenya as a place integral to the marriage process (Massey, 1993: 63). In *Expectations of Modernity,* James Ferguson makes the point that, while connection is central to globalization, so is disconnection; it 'implies a relation and not the absence of a relation (1999: 238). Following Ferguson (1999), I want to suggest

that rendering place(s) socially irrelevant comes about through specific structures and processes of disconnection. More specifically, I will show how Kenyan Pentecostals dis-connect from and un-make places (London and Kenya), at the same time as they seek to (re-)make a place for themselves.

My focus on Pentecostal weddings as a means of religious place-making in a global city like London coincides with renewed interest in urban religion and the relationship between religion and cities. Robert Orsi comments that 'urban religion comes about from the 'dynamic engagement of religious traditions [….] with specific features of the industrial and post-industrial cityscapes and with the social conditions of city life' (1999: 43). The areas of East London where many Kenyan Pentecostals live, work, and pray are undergoing rapid and significant demographic, social, and economic change. In Barking and Dagenham on the outermost eastern edge of London, for example, multiple forces compete to re-make the borough, including private developers, long-term white working class residents, and new (migrant) residents, many of whom are from Africa. Though Saskia Sassen (1996) asked, 'whose city is it?' 20 years ago, the question resonates today and can be heard in the pastor's call to 'claim back the city'.

In the face of urban restructuring, African Pentecostals have generally settled in outer London suburbs and edge cities, while establishing places of worship in unexpected spaces, such as, warehouses in post-industrial estates and former cinemas (Krause, 2008). Though these atypical worship sites are located on London's geographic peripheries, they can nonetheless be re-imagined as spiritual centres of African Pentecostalism. The large number of Pentecostal churches,

especially the Nigerian-initiated Redeemed Christian Church of God, which has more than 670 churches in the United Kingdom, attests to the centrality of such areas for born-again worship, as do the international religious conferences that are held on the fringes of London and which feature pastors, bishops, and evangelists from Africa, North America, and elsewhere in Europe and can attract thousands of worshippers (Garbin, 2013; Burgess, 2009).[2] What Thomas Csordas refers to as the 'portable practices' and 'transposable messages' of travelling religions like Pentecostalism further facilitate the ongoing reconfiguration of 'centre' and 'periphery' wherever believers find themselves (2007: 261).[3]

The chapter also addresses two subjects – place-making and weddings – that have not been considered together in the literature on Pentecostalism, particularly in the African diaspora. Those interested in Pentecostal place-making have explored the politics and poetics of space, focusing on questions of self-representation and (in)visibility (Adogame, 2010; Garbin, 2013) and strategies of re-territorialization, particularly through church-planting (Fesenmyer, forthcoming; van der Meulen, 2009; Knibbe, 2009, 2011); and on lived, embodied experiences of space (Meyer, 2010; Krause, 2008; Coleman, 2000). Meanwhile, scholars interested in Pentecostal marriage in the diaspora have looked at it as a means for constituting gendered persons (Maier 2012), garnering recognition and rights (van Dijk 2004), and disentangling from transnational familial obligations (Fesenmyer, forthcoming 2016; van Dijk 2002). If weddings forge sacred bonds between born-again women and men, thus forming the foundational building block of a 'saved' society, then Pentecostal marriage in a diasporic context plays an

important role in creating a morally and emotionally significant community of belonging among believers. Accordingly, weddings offer a privileged lens through which to examine the kind of place(s) Kenyan Pentecostals seek to create.

In this chapter, I begin with a discussion of the various peripheries – social, existential, structural, and spatial – Kenyan Pentecostals experienced prior to migration, as well as those they encounter in London. I then examine the centrality of weddings to processes of Pentecostal self- and community-making among migrant Kenyans, before considering how Kenyan Pentecostals go about de-centring and dis-connecting from Kenya[4] and London discursively and in practice. I conclude by discussing how they seek to position themselves at the centre of the spiritual and social map by re-connecting London to God's kingdom.

A. (Migrant) Kenyans on the periphery

Migrant Kenyans in London came of age in Kenya during an era of neoliberal structural adjustment and subsequent insecurity in the 1980s and 1990s. The promises of modernity – university educations, well-paying white-collar jobs, such as, civil service positions, and materially comfortable lives – had become increasingly unattainable, though they were always unevenly accessible. Intimately entangled with these promises were their aspirations to marry, start families, and establish households, each of which is integrally tied to ideas of personhood (Lonsdale, 2003: 19-21). Jomo (then Johnstone) Kenyatta captured (and reified) these ideas when he wrote in his ethnography of Kikuyu-speaking people that 'a good leader begins in his own homestead' and 'a man is judged by his household'

([1938] 1953: 76, 175). Their predicament felt like the fate of an entire generation, both rural and urban young people, both those from middle class and poorer backgrounds. However, the United Kingdom beckoned – a seemingly familiar place whose history they had studied in school. In imagining it to be the centre of civilization and, thus a place of opportunity, they feared being confined to life's periphery if they could not leave Kenya. Migration abroad thus emerged as a means to pursue social becoming, not unlike the way that moving to Nairobi had been for many of their parents in the post-independence era of the 1960s and early 1970s.

Migrating from the 1990s onwards, they joined a growing and diversifying African diaspora in London (Koser, 2003). Their migration coincided with increased net inflows of migrants more generally and the diversification of the countries of origin from which they came; in other words, their moves converged with and contributed to the emergence of super-diversity in the capital (Vertovec, 2007: 1028-1029). Many first settled in the East London borough of Newham, a historic place of arrival due to the presence of the Royal Docks. Upon arrival, migrant Kenyans found themselves to be the objects of imagination by those they encountered – they were a racial minority, if not also seen as 'uncivilized' and 'backward'. Many migrated with the hopes of continuing their studies, but the fees were too expensive given the high cost of living and their transnational obligations to those who remained in Kenya. Setting aside their studies, they joined their peers working in the service and care sectors as hotel porters and receptionists, kitchen and wait staff, shop clerks, security guards, nursing aides, and elder care workers. Like migrants from diverse backgrounds, they found themselves in low-status, low-

paid work, supporting their better-off contemporaries in the (global) City (Wills et al., 2010). Though many continue to hold these kinds of jobs, some have resumed their studies and/ or started small businesses (such as, security, catering, and photography), while others yearn to do so. The kind of entrepreneurialism, and the discipline and focus it demands, is highly valued among Pentecostals generally (van Dijk, 2010).

Over time, many Kenyan migrants, especially young families, moved to Barking and Dagenham to the east of Newham attracted by the borough's lower property prices. They joined other migrants, including those from Eastern Europe, in buying what was once social housing (mostly family-sized council homes, rather than flats), but was now available on the private market, thus contributing to rapid demographic and social change. African migrants from Kenya, as well as Nigeria and Ghana, have founded Pentecostal churches in the borough, appropriating empty shops, old cinemas, and defunct pubs, as well as buildings on predominantly residential streets (see also Daswani, 2015). Though Kenyans tend to predominate in Kenyan-initiated Pentecostal churches, many of their pastors seek to create multicultural churches that reflect the diversity of London, not to mention God's kingdom. Thus, their ethno-religious encapsulation must be seen as (awkwardly) co-existing with aspirations and practices that encourage engagement across racial, ethnic, and national lines.

Alongside such developments during the 2000s has been the continued scaling back of operations of the Ford Motor Company factory, leaving many long-time residents unemployed and the borough struggling economically.

Compounding matters has been the rise of the British National Party (BNP) in Barking and Dagenham in the mid-2000s when the racist and anti-immigrant party became a political force in the local council. Though the BNP's electoral popularity has declined, a sense of unease and suspicion remains that often plays out along lines of race. However, that is only part of the picture: neoliberal re-structuring has affected the lives of both old and new (migrant) residents, leaving them to struggle over the same (welfare) resources and space (Keith, 2008).

While Kenyans migrated to London, which they believed to be the centre of modernity and site of possibility, they have seemingly found themselves on the social, structural, and spatial periphery of the city. Yet, from their perspective, London and the United Kingdom more generally have left the Kingdom of God. In embarking on a mission to bring the city 'back into the light', they envision themselves as the centre of the social and spiritual map.

A. Centring: The making of persons and community

As the pastor whose words opened the chapter intoned, the work of reclaiming London for Jesus begins at home. But even before Kenyan migrants can establish proper Christian homes, they must begin by (re-)making themselves into dedicated Christians, into gendered Pentecostal selves. To understand these social and spiritual processes of self- and community-making, it is important to note that marrying among Kenyan Pentecostals entails more than a religious ceremony followed by a festive reception; and, the process begins well before one meets one's future spouse. Singles and courting couples are expected to attend relationship

forums and, once engaged, participate in marriage counseling.[5] Moreover, in deciding to marry, couples negotiate bridewealth (which I will return to later) and organize pre-wedding activities in order to raise the money needed to hold what they refer to as 'community weddings', large-scale events to which the 'whole community' is invited. Every aspect of the marrying process offers an occasion to demonstrate one's character and, at the same time, to have one's demeanor and actions scrutinized by others.

B. Making gendered persons

Singles forums are a staple of the educational programming of Kenyan-initiated Pentecostal churches. They are open to both women and men, and to those who have never been married, those who are divorced, and those who are courting. An important Pentecostal message that runs contrary to much western ideology surrounding marriage is that there is no such thing as 'a soulmate who completes you'. During one forum I attended, the pastor emphasized that everyone is complete in him- or herself, but it is necessary to develop oneself and be successful so that, when a man and a woman come together in marriage, they can make a strong couple. This 'transitional' time prior to marrying is thus understood as a productive one, in which singles can 'work' on themselves, while also devoting themselves to God's work before they become so busy with marital and familial responsibilities. Consequently, even though not all Pentecostals have (yet) achieved the ideal of being married, each person is understood as being on the path to marriage and is thus incorporated into the moral community.

These forums, which usually meet monthly or bi-monthly depending on the number of interested participants, provide a space for women and men to share their experiences and ask for and offer advice. For example, Tracy, a stylish woman in her late 20s, described at one meeting her experience with a man she met through a friend. She said she found him charming and kind, yet he was often short of money, which he attributed to being focused on completing his studies in business management. In talking about starting a business together, he suggested that she explore taking out a loan from her bank. At this point, Tracy told us, she hesitated and began to reflect on other instances in which she felt he was using her, eventually deciding to break off contact with him. She commented that, when she sees that kind of behavior in her friends' relationships, she feels as a Christian that she must urge them to be wary. In such forums, Tracy and her contemporaries both invite, and submit themselves to, scrutiny.

If relationship forums assist singles in navigating gender-specific pitfalls in the world of dating, then the giving of gifts during wedding receptions helps them to cultivate their skills in fulfilling their gender-specific roles. Weddings are important not only for what they express, but also for what they constitute; they produce a set of performances and practices, rather than solely reflect a set of representations (Bourdieu 1977; Ortner 1984). The giving of gifts at receptions begins after people have finished eating. The parents and parents-in-law of the bride come forward to give her a series of gifts to help her fulfil her role as wife and eventually mother, as traditionally understood. For example, at one wedding I attended, the mother-in-law gave her new daughter-in-law a *kiondo* for carrying

vegetables from the market; a *gitariuro*, a sisal sieve for cleaning rice; and a *kijiko*, a long-handled wooden cooking spoon. Other items given at weddings include cooking pots, ideally at least two because wives 'should' always cook more than one dish in case unexpected visitors turn up people, and a plastic jug for carrying water, among other items.[6] With each gift, the bride mimicked how she would use the utensils. In doing so, she symbolically demonstrated in front of the guests her ability and willingness to carry out her new duties as a wife. Much of what happens at weddings then focuses on making visible actions and statuses not considered achieved until they are seen by others.

B. Making a moral community

In deciding to have a 'community wedding', couples typically begin by visiting other Kenyan-initiated Pentecostal churches and letting people know of their intentions to marry. A couple I spoke with described how important it was for them to do so because, while she was active in the church where they were to marry and knew many people, this was not the case for her then fiancé. Together, they set out to make themselves known to other Kenyans, travelling all over London and beyond to visit churches. Sundays were particularly busy days for them: in the months leading up to their wedding, they would attend an early morning service at one church, then a later service at another, followed by a third service in the afternoon, and maybe even a fourth in the evening. At each church, the pastor would ask them to come forward to introduce themselves and address the congregation. With the hope of showing people they were genuine in their plans to

marry, they gave testimonies about being born-again Christians intent on fulfilling God's plan for them to wed and start a family. They also handed out printed cards, inviting people to attend a pre-wedding fundraising event to be held several months later. In this way, their travels can be seen as drawing the boundaries of a diasporic public space for Kenyan Pentecostals.

In talking about their experience, the husband mentioned 'come-we-stay' couples, that is, cohabiting couples, whose delay in marrying can prompt people to wonder once they announce their intentions to marry, 'are you genuinely getting married or are you doing it for the money?' In his view, some couples have been together for a long time and then decide to get married because 'they want the money.' He and other Pentecostal couples claim that in contrast they are respectable individuals who honor traditions, offering as evidence their pre-wedding efforts that show them to be the kind of people on whom others can rely. By deciding to marry, cohabitors then submit themselves to this kind of normative gaze.

Through such activities, couples generate reciprocal moral relations with those who contribute to and attend their weddings. Their guests are the people to whom couples will turn for advice and support if their marriages encounter difficulties, rather than their families who often have not attended the weddings, do not know their sons- or daughters-in-law very well, if at all, and typically live too faraway (in Kenya) to intervene. This community is thus an emotionally and morally significant one, which offers not only care and sociality, but also censure.

A. De-centring: The un-making of place(s)

By saying that 'everything we have there [Kenya], we have here London]', and 'nothing is different', Kenyan Pentecostals maintain that it does not matter where they marry. I explore in this section how they render 'place' insignificant, focusing in particular on London and Kenya. Building on the previous discussion, I suggest that their weddings serve as moral commentary and practice, which de-centre London and Kenya on their social and spiritual map.

I want to begin by highlighting an important point regarding their decision of where to marry, which their own explanations tend to obscure. The possibility of marrying in Kenya hinges on whether or not one can leave and re-enter the United Kingdom, a freedom that migrant Kenyans cannot take for granted. Having largely migrated on a student or visitor visa[7] during an era when the British government introduced a series of increasingly restrictive immigration rules,[8] most have found it challenging to regularize their immigration status, if only because steep hikes in fees, which have accompanied regulatory changes, require that they have to save more money before being able to apply for settlement. Nonetheless, some inevitably remain undocumented; for them, deciding to marry in Kenya would most likely mean relinquishing their lives in London because they would be unable to return, a painful irony given that marrying is crucial to what they hope to achieve in their lives. However, it is not only undocumented Kenyans who are unable to travel. Those who plan to apply for permanent residency in the future or who are in the process of doing so worry that leaving the United Kingdom for any length of time could jeopardize their plans to regularize their status. Precarity of

this kind, especially for those who are undocumented, places them on the legal periphery of British society. Despite this, few explicitly acknowledge the ways in which their migration and legal statuses might inform their thinking about where to marry. Perhaps it is for this very reason that those who marry in London seek to render the location socially irrelevant. Just as they are legally disconnected from the British state, they actively detach their weddings from the actual place where they occur.

Though couples may dream of different 'perfect' locations in which to marry, it is unlikely that a church above an auto garage at the edge of a motorway ranks high on many people's list. Nonetheless, this is exactly the kind of venue where some Kenyan Pentecostals have married in London. While the geographical locations and actual venues of their weddings often reflect a spatial periphery, couples and their guests largely ignore the material conditions of their surroundings: the pastor at one wedding I attended conducted the ceremony over the sound of grating metal and a revving car engine without anyone seeming to take any notice. In fact, like the Ghanaian Pentecostals among whom Kristine Krause (2008) works, they make a virtue of such places, indicating a potent 'inversion' of spaces. She makes the point that non-religious places are often preferable because they are believed to be free of malevolent spirits, unlike old churches (Krause, 2008: 120-121).

As alluded to earlier, Kenyan Pentecostals perceive London to be a place of moral corruption and decay. This perception feeds their sense of being engaged in a spiritual battle both with people of other or no faiths, as well as with the

immorality of many practices they observe; I focus here on the latter. In church services and casual conversation, they make reference to what they perceive as the heavy drinking culture that dominates British social life and contributes to promiscuity and infidelity. They comment on high crime rates in the city, attributing them to 'broken families' and especially 'absentee fathers'. The cultural acceptance of homosexuality and particularly gay marriage is felt to be shocking, since marriage between two men is considered an abomination. Yet, in a further 'inversion', London's appeal can be found in its moral dubiousness. Marrying in god-less London becomes an expression of their moral distinction and ultimately superiority. They are encouraged to stand 'in the gap', by which is meant they are needed to pray and fast on behalf of those who cannot or will not do so.

While they render London insignificant through several ideological inversions, they do so with regard to Kenya through processes of differentiation and replication. More specifically, they bring 'Kenya' to London by differentiating 'culture' from 'religion' (see Piot, 2010: 112) and replicating selective marriage customs and traditions, which they deem morally acceptable or, at least, unproblematic. Doing so allows them to continue to participate in some traditions and retain some values, glossing them as non-religious, while forsaking others (see Yang and Ebaugh, 2001: 280; Yep et al., 1998). For example, the wedding reception gifts discussed earlier are largely symbolic for London-based brides (not to mention many of their Nairobi counterparts). Their lives do not entail carrying food home from the market in a basket strapped on their heads, or fetching water from a stream. Nonetheless, these kinds of 'home-making' gifts – pots and cooking

utensils – readily align with Pentecostal ideas of gender complementarity in which women are seen as men's 'helpmates' who support their endeavors as part of their own obedience to God (Marshall, 1991; Frahm-Arp, 2010; Soothill, 2007). The gifts are easy to integrate into these occasions and into their new lives as wives.

Notably, most couples I know engaged in bridewealth negotiations as part of the marrying process. Though they acknowledged that it could be interpreted as 'buying' another person, they certainly did not view it in those terms and justified their participation in the practice by emphasizing its cultural importance. One woman explained to me, 'we do it for our elders. They enjoy arguing and negotiating.' As a 'cultural' practice, it is considered marginal compared to 'real religion'. This re-classification allows Kenyan Pentecostals to assert their 'respect for [some] traditions', while shifting the moral significance attached to them. Pentecostal pastors also acquiesce on the subject of bridewealth. During a Sunday service focused on generational curses, one pastor said grooms often ask him if they should pay bridewealth: "'Yes,' I tell them, 'do what is supposed to be done. Get the blessing of your father. That is what's important. What is £1000 compared to your life?'" Believers can thus rely on Pentecostal thought to rationalize such practices without compromising their moral standing.

It is worthwhile considering what, or rather whom, is left behind when they marry in London. Although Kenyan Pentecostals see weddings as familial as well as community occasions, couples marrying in London often do so without immediate, much less extended, family members in attendance. Their absence typically results from one or more factors, including a couples' legal status

preventing them from inviting relatives to London in the first place; family members being denied visas by the British High Commission in Kenya; and/ or couples' lack of financial resources to cover the myriad travel, accommodation, and other expenses of their visiting relatives. Though their absence is undoubtedly emotionally painful and saddening, it does help couples to sustain the 'break from the past', which Pentecostalism insists upon when converts become born again (Meyer, 1998). More specifically, and as I have argued elsewhere (Fesenmyer, forthcoming 2016), marrying in London facilitates couples' efforts to disentangle themselves from their extended families, especially regarding material obligations, and begin fostering the development of their own nuclear family. However, this consequence is not discursively acknowledged.

Thus, Kenyan Pentecostals differentiate between religion and culture and de-couple practices from 'place', allowing them to maintain that 'nothing is different' about a wedding in London from one held in Kenya. Through such processes of differentiation and replication, along with the inversions mentioned earlier, they engage in de-centring London and Kenya.

A. Conclusion: Re-centring

In exploring the weddings of Kenyan Pentecostals, I began by considering how they can be seen to inhabit numerous peripheries: they are migrants from a socio-politically weak country who largely work in low-wage, low-status jobs and live in

some of the poorer parts of London. While we cannot ignore objective material conditions, we also cannot presume to understand a priori how people make sense of them. A compelling aspect of Pentecostalism is the way in which it encourages believers to re-narrativize their lives (see Maxwell, 2005: 20), re-value themselves and their experiences and, in doing so, cultivate a sense of agency. As God's children, they have a duty to re-claim the city and bring it 'back into the light'. Phrased in James Ferguson's terms, they seek to 're-connect' it to God's kingdom. Doing so from London's social, structural and spatial periphery re-positions them at the centre of this (spiritual) battle. Through these efforts, they assert that it is *their* city, a claim which is a moral, not a legal, one, through which they join those who are also engaged in making and re-making the city.

In describing the 'city' as 'the historical site of creative destruction', David Harvey reflects on the notion that 'we change ourselves by changing our world and vice versa' (2003: 939). Harvey is not likely to have been thinking of the self- and community-making projects of Kenyan Pentecostals when he envisioned who might re-make a city like London, much less in what ways it might be re-made if they were to do so. After all, many Pentecostals are keen entrepreneurs, and Pentecostalism's prosperity gospel holds that material wealth and physical well-being will come to those who accept Jesus Christ as their personal saviour (Coleman, 2000; Gifford, 2009), both of which indicate an affinity with, rather than an antipathy to, capitalism. Nonetheless, Harvey's comment certainly resonates with their understanding of how to bring about personal and wider social change.

There are indications that their re-claiming is beginning to take more tangible and concrete forms of place-making – for example, the first Kenyan-initiated Pentecostal church bought its own building in 2010 (Fesenmyer, forthcoming) and others are also intent on doing so – as they engage in the familiar practice of territorialisation through church-planting. For now though, it is better understood as the self-fashioning of these born-again Christian through such practices as prayer, fasting, and bible study, and their coming together for church services and healing, in moments of celebration, at times of bereavement and illness, and in the routines of everyday life. In sharp contrast to their experiences on the peripheries of London, the 'place' they seek to create is one of social harmony, with which someone like Harvey might agree, albeit as 'brothers and sisters in Christ'. At the same time, they aspire to create a place of unambiguous moral uprightness, a utopian and highly normative aspiration that Harvey would be very unlikely to share. While Kenyan Pentecostals try to realize God's kingdom in this world, their religious convictions help them in the meantime to generate a critical distance from both London and Kenya (cf. van Dijk, 2002). Thus, their view of a global city like London and their positioning within it is the very inverse of what it might seem, just as personal, celebratory occasions, such as, their weddings, become (political) acts of re-claiming.

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[1] The analysis presented here draws on 14 months of fieldwork examining transnational familial life in London, Nairobi, and Kiambu District, Kenya in 2009 and 2010, as well as ongoing fieldwork in Kenyan-initiated Pentecostal churches in East London since autumn 2014. In addition to regularly attending church services, meetings, and activities, I have spent time with pastors and congregants outside of church, visiting them in their homes and attending weddings and other social gatherings. In the boroughs of Newham and Barking and Dagenham where many Kenyan Pentecostals live and where a number of Kenyan-initiated

Pentecostal churches are located, I have also met with staff and elected members of the local councils, representatives of faith, migrant, and community organizations, and non-Pentecostal Christian leaders.

[2] http://rccg.org/about/mission-and-vision Accessed 15 November 2015.

[3] According to Csordas, portable religious practices are 'rites that can be easily learned, require relatively little esoteric knowledge or paraphernalia, are not held as proprietary or necessarily linked to a specific cultural context, and can be performed without commitment to an elaborate ideological or institutional apparatus' (2007: 261).

[4] References to 'Kenya' in this chapter should be understood as encompassing several intertwined meanings that arise from my interlocutors' use of the term. Many invoke 'Kenya' generically to refer to 'how we do things at home', which reflects their memories, as well as imaginings, of particular (cultural) practices and ways of being. At the same time, 'Kenya' refers to their country of origin, while also incorporating the specific localities where they were raised and/or lived prior to migration. These areas include middle and working class estates and informal settlements, such as, Kasarani, Langata, Riruta, and Kawangware, as well as towns and villages in nearby Kiambu District (since 2010 it is referred to as Kiambu County).

[5] Churches also offer sessions for married couples intended to help them sustain strong marriages.

[6] While the actual gifts may vary depending on the ethnicity of the bride and groom, the nature of a bride's gifts is similar to those given at this wedding.

[7] Some Kenyans also sought asylum in the United Kingdom on the basis of political violence related to the introduction of multi-party elections in the 1990s, though the overwhelming majority of these applications were denied (Watson and Danzelman, 1998, 20).

[8] These include the Asylum and Immigration Acts of 1993, 1996, and 1999 and the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 (Shah, 2000).