

Enhancing Spiritual Security in Berlin's Asian Bazaars

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Abstract

Reunited Germany is increasingly characterized by new groups of immigrants, particularly since the recent arrival of refugees from Syria and various other places. Like many migrants before, they bring along religious imaginaries and practices, thereby contributing to the diversification of the religious landscape. Churches, mosques, shrines, temples and other places of worship function as new markers of place-making in the urban sacred.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork among migrants in multi-ethnic bazaars in Berlin, this paper seeks to explore the performance of religious practices in superdiverse marketplaces, where Vietnamese and other ethnic groups ask spirits and gods for protection in localities increasingly characterised by economic insecurities. Simultaneously, traders from various countries respect and tolerate each other's diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds, thereby enacting cosmopolitan sociability in the hustling and bustling Berlin *Asiatowns*.

Keywords: religious diversity, transnationalism, migration, Asiatown, bazaar, Berlin, Vietnam

Introduction

In 2006, a group of Vietnamese Charismatic Pentecostal Christians gathered in the *Asia Pacific Center*, a global trade centre in the eastern part of Berlin that opened its doors in 2004 and was managed by Vietnamese. On the site of one of the former headquarters of the East German intelligence service, this group, members of the *Holy Spirit Church*, rented a hall to proselytize traders and visitors in the multi-ethnic bazaar. One of the church's pastors, who had been invited from the western part of Germany as a guest preacher, pointed to the many small altars inside the trading halls, most of them located near the cash box, where they serve as places for worshipping the god of wealth and the god of the place. Vietnamese traders decorate these altars with fruit, cigarettes, alcohol, and incense. The pastor, however, considered these religious objects to be dwellings of demons and the devil,

representing evil and therefore needing to be eradicated.

A year later, a Vietnamese Buddhist pagoda was inaugurated in that same bazaar. About two hundred Vietnamese participated in the ritual, and monks were flown in from Paris to consecrate what was the first Vietnamese Buddhist pagoda in Berlin-Hohenschönhausen. Religious objects such as Buddha statues had been shipped to the pagoda from as far away as Ho Chi Minh City, and, still wrapped in cellophane paper, were waiting to be unpacked during the ceremony. In the course of the ritual, participants burned incense and decorated the main altar with food and fruit for deities and spirits. Moreover, various altars were established in a side room of the new pagoda, displaying photographs of the departed. Traders and clients visit this place to ask the spirits for protection and good business. On special occasions, Buddhist monks pray for

the deceased, and families join them on other days that are personally meaningful, such as on the anniversary of the death of one's father. Besides Vietnamese, who no longer form the ethnic majority in Berlin's *Asiatowns*, there are Muslims from India, Pakistan and Turkey who also perform religious practices in the bazaar; Similar to Sikhs, they pray in their shops before they start their business each day.

There is a growing awareness that, over the past two decades, globalization and transnational migration have altered the face of ethnic and religious diversity in societies all over the world. Like many other cities, the city of Berlin, due to the fall of the Berlin Wall and its diffuse nature of migration flows since the early 1990s, has experienced an increase of new groups of people who bring along religious imaginaries and religious practices from a variety of countries. Therefore, the multiculturalism of an earlier era, conceptualized broadly as an ethnic minority paradigm, has been replaced by what Steven Vertovec (2007) calls "super-diversity", characterized by an increase of different categories of migrants, nationalities, languages and religions. Taking this research perspective into account, I will focus on migrant-run marketplaces in Germany's capital that have been established in the past ten years. By exploring a variety of religious practices in these multi-ethnic localities, I argue that the bazaar is not only a place for economic exchange, but a site where religious performances are conducted on a regular basis, in particular by praying to gods and spirits for health and wealth, to compensate economic and existential insecurities. However, without referring to the politics and religious practices in the respective homelands and to transnational social, cultural and religious ties, we cannot grasp the impact and significance of religious diversity in the host country.

This article investigates religious diversity in a particular place, namely the bazaar, by taking

into account the dynamic interplay of religious practitioners among an increasing number of "new, small and scattered, multiple origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants" (Vertovec 2007: 1024), who have arrived in Germany in the last decades, both before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall.¹ It was not until many years after the reunification of Germany that the German authorities slowly began to realize that Germany had become a country of immigration. Only recently, at the end of 2015, when hundreds of thousands of refugees were arriving from Syria and other regions, did the authorities gain awareness that German society would dramatically change over the next few years, becoming much more diverse than ever before in terms of ethnic but also religious diversity.

My contribution focuses on particular localities, namely Berlin's new *Asiatowns*, which are trading sites located in the eastern part of the city and run by migrants. I explore different religious practices in these multi-ethnic locations, which are characterized by high levels of trans-

¹ I am very grateful to Professor Dr. Steven Vertovec of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Department of Socio-Cultural Diversity, for giving me the opportunity to work on multiethnic bazaars in post-socialist cities in 2010/11 in Göttingen. I would also like to thank Professor Dr. Peter van der Veer for inviting me to the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Department of Religious Diversity, to complete articles on transnational religious networks of Vietnamese in Berlin and Hanoi in 2009/10.

This contribution is based on results from various research projects I directed since 2005: "Transnational Networks, Religion and New Migration", 2005-2010, funded by the German Research Foundation; HU 1019/2-2; and "The Global Bazaar – marketplaces as spaces of economic and social inclusion", 2011-2015, funded by the German Research Foundation; HU 1019/3-1). I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Berlin as well as among transnational Vietnamese in Warsaw, Prague and Hanoi. My current research project on "Religion, Media and Materiality: Spiritual Economies in Southeast Asia" (German Research Foundation, 2015-2018; HU 1019/4-1) explores the relationship between religious practices, market socialism and booming capitalism and includes the transfer of religious objects and messages from Asia to Europe.

national migration. In doing so, I refer to ideas about the increasing complexity of variables in view of the everyday lives of people in particular places. These notions are in conjunction with Steven Vertovec's and other scholars' more recent thoughts on diversity in the marketplace (Hiebert et al. 2015). I argue that looking at religious practices in a particular place, namely the bazaar, broadens the perspective of the marketplace as a pure economic locality, as trader's beliefs and practices suggest engagement with powerful realms beyond this world. Due to massive insecurities in migrants' lives, in particular with regard to residence permits, health issues and economic activities, performing religious rituals will help to compensate risk-taking behaviour in the marketplace.

Over the past ten years, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork among Vietnamese in East and West Germany and in North and South Vietnam, while participating in religious rituals in various contexts, including Pentecostal networks and Catholic churches in Berlin and Hanoi as well as in many Vietnamese Buddhist pagodas. I took part in spirit possession performances, ancestor veneration rituals and sessions with diviners. As many Vietnamese are engaged in trading, I carried out fieldwork in a number of marketplaces in Hanoi and in Berlin, thereby focussing on religious practices performed in bazaars. It is exactly in these locations that diasporic Vietnamese encounter Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and others who are also trading in these places and performing prayers and rituals to enhance economic success, health, and family happiness. As the bazaars under consideration were established by Vietnamese investors in the eastern part of Berlin after the fall of the Berlin Wall, I proceed by focussing on different groups of Vietnamese in Germany and their respective religious orientations.

North/South Vietnamese in East/West Germany

In exploring what makes Berlin a unique place for the encounter of both boat people from South Vietnam and contract workers, a majority from

North Vietnam, I will briefly focus on the different histories of Vietnamese immigration to the two Germanies, which has certain impacts on the different groups' religious practices in the now reunified host country. Long before the arrival of *boat people* in the late 1970s and *contract workers* in the 1980s, a small number of former students from socialist North Vietnam had spent a seminal period of their lives in East Germany. Known as 'die Moritzburger', these 300 children of communist cadres were sent to Moritzburg near Dresden in the 1950s and were educated according to East German standards (Hüwelmeier forthcoming). Later, a number of them returned to study at East German Universities. Together, with thousands of students from Vietnam and young people from different socialist fraternal countries, they were trained at East German universities, while many others studied in China, the USSR, Poland or various countries in Eastern Europe. Transnational connections fostered and maintained by Vietnamese students, apprentices, interns and contract workers in the socialist past contributed to the strengthening of economic and social ties that exist to this day between locals in former East Germany and Vietnam (Hüwelmeier 2011; Schwenkel 2015) as well as between people in other socialist countries, such as the Czech Republic and Vietnam (Alamgir and Schwenkel 2016; Hüwelmeier 2015b) and Poland and Vietnam (Szymanska-Matusiewicz 2014; Hüwelmeier 2015a). Consequently, in particular in consideration of the "importance of networks in former socialist countries" (Hardy 2002: 476), the cross-border connections which had been established during the Cold War became extraordinarily significant after 1989, when tens of thousands of Vietnamese contract workers lost their jobs and housing in the GDR and large numbers of Vietnamese from former eastern bloc countries entered reunified Germany as asylum seekers or as non-documented migrants. They settled beside former refugees from Vietnam, who had come to West Germany as *boat people* in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Baumann 2000; Bui 2003; Hüwelmeier 2008),

and whose mutual relationships with respect to religious affiliations, for example to Pentecostal networks, contributed to the outreach of Pentecostalism from West Germany to East Germany, from there to the Czech Republic, to Poland, to Vietnam, and from there to Thailand, Laos and Cambodia.

Based on a bilateral agreement between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the GDR in 1981, thousands of contract workers, most of them coming from the northern part of Vietnam, went to work in GDR state-owned companies (Dennis 2005). They remained in the GDR for four to five years, living in special housing under the control of the East German state authorities and the Vietnamese embassy. When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and Germany was reunited in 1990, the fate of the Vietnamese contract workers still living in eastern Germany was up in the air. During this time of great insecurity, the government of the newly reunited Germany sought political solutions for the migrants, including financial incentives for returning to Vietnam and temporary legal guidelines for those who did not wish to return to their home country (Hüwelmeier 2010).

The political division of Germany into West and East therefore affected the destinations of migrants from different parts of Vietnam: while boat people, mainly from southern Vietnam, sought refuge in West Germany, other Vietnamese migrants, mainly from northern Vietnam, arrived in East Germany as contract workers. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, other groups of migrants, namely Vietnamese asylum seekers who had been contract workers in other former socialist countries, entered reunited Germany as well. Internal differences among Vietnamese in Germany are mainly based on pre-migration political differences, and continue to shape the interactions among Vietnamese communities in Germany today. Post-1990 immigration from various regions in Vietnam and very recent migration from rural localities highlight the increasing complexity of diversification such as date of arrival, city and rural background, legal status

and gender, as has been noted in reference to the term super-diversity (Vertovec 2007). A number of Vietnamese encounter each other in the new Asian marketplaces in Berlin, as well as people from various other groups, and therefore these multi-ethnic localities are perfect places for doing ethnographic fieldwork on ethnic and religious diversity.

Germany underwent a tremendous economic and political transformation after the fall of the Berlin Wall, bringing with it social insecurities for an increasingly large part of the population, which included migrants. Vietnam has changed its economic system as well. Since 1986, when economic reforms were introduced in a period known as *đổi mới*, Vietnamese society has undergone dramatic diversification, not only in terms of its transformation towards a socialist market economy, but also with regard to the resurgence of ritual and religious practices following this economic developments. Worshipping gods, deities and national heroes can be observed in many places in contemporary urban Vietnam (Salemink 2015), including in its marketplaces (Hüwelmeier 2016). As these processes are connected with the proliferation of capitalism in the Socialist country, one has to closely look on the specificities of the local practices in all places of ethnographic research in order to understand its transnational outreach and its backlash to the home country.

Marketplaces are likely to be conceptualized as predominantly secular, almost exclusively economic places, where traders and clients alike organize their daily business. Referring to recent discussions on religion in urban spaces in general (Becci et al. 2013; van der Veer 2013), I will explore bazaars as urban places where vendors and clients pray before they sell and buy. After a number of small trading places, which were established in the 1990s by Vietnamese former contract workers, the first global trade centre in Berlin, the *Asia Pacific Center*, opened its doors in 2004, followed a year later by the *Dong Xuan Center*. From the start, these locations were not only places of commerce and trade, but also

places where different groups of Vietnamese encountered other groups, such as vendors from India, Pakistan, China and Turkey, and visitors from Poland, Russia, Germany, and many other countries. At the very beginning, both bazaars were dominated by Vietnamese traders, but over the course of several years the ethnic composition of traders has changed dramatically as a result of new migration flows and of people mixing and mingling in many places. This change in demographics is reflected in the efforts of the owner of the *Dong Xuan Center*, a former Vietnamese contract worker, to change the name of the global bazaar to *Asiatown*. He told me that some traders proposed the term *Vietnamtown*, in order to differentiate this bazaar from the many Chinatowns worldwide, but he considers the label *Vietnamtown* inappropriate, seeing as the Vietnamese have become a minority in the market over the last few years, while Indians, Pakistanis, Chinese, and vendors from other Asian countries now make up the majority of ethnic groups among the stallholders (Hüwelmeier 2013b).

Religious diversity in Berlin's Asiatowns

Multi-ethnic marketplaces in post-socialist Berlin are only small parts of the city, but these locations are nonetheless perfect places to carry out ethnographic fieldwork in eastern Berlin neighbourhoods and to investigate religious diversity in a multi-ethnic surrounding, where Germans, Russians, Vietnamese and others live together in *Plattenbauten* (socialist block apartments) built by the GDR in the 1970s and 1980s. It is in these neighbourhoods where migrant-run marketplaces were established almost ten years ago. A number of the apartment buildings' residents, mostly poor people, visit the bazaars on a regular basis, as they consider these marketplaces as sites where they can buy cheap products and where they can afford to visit the Vietnamese hairdresser. According to the traders I talked with during my periods of fieldwork, the majority of Vietnamese clients are former contract workers in the GDR, former GDR students, or recently

arriving newcomers, while some customers are boat people from the western part of Berlin who also buy products in these marketplaces. A small number of the clients have a Chinese-Vietnamese background.

Most of the boat people in West Germany identified themselves as Catholic or Buddhist when they arrived (Baumann 2000: 44), while contract workers who lived and worked in the former GDR and other Eastern European Countries considered themselves as not belonging to any "official" religion. It is important to note here that there is usually a strict line drawn in Vietnam between formal, institutionalized religions, based on scriptural traditions (*tôn giáo*) on the one hand, and folk beliefs and practices (*tín ngưỡng*) on the other (Salemink 2008:149). The communist government considered the latter as superstitious beliefs and practices (*mê tín dị đoan*), and therefore suppressed its performances for decades. On the level of everyday religious practices, however, a partial syncretism can be observed in many places in contemporary Vietnam. Spirit mediumship is performed in various temples, shrines dedicated to the Mother Goddess are decorated in Buddhist pagodas, and Buddha statues can be found on family altars, next to the images of the deceased. In Germany, Vietnamese perform ancestor veneration, visit Buddhist pagodas or convert to Christianity. However, political tensions between boat people and contract workers are still relevant today and are represented in religious congregations, such as separate Catholic and Buddhist communities in western and eastern Germany as well as in the western and eastern part of Berlin. Admittedly, Pentecostal churches may serve as places where political tensions, legal status, access to the labour market and historically different experiences, are being reconciled to a certain extent (Hüwelmeier 2011). This, however, is only one side of the coin, as over the last few years a number of boat refugees have left Vietnamese Pentecostal churches after the political "others", former contract workers, joined the churches.

“Praise the Lord!” – Charismatic Christianity in the marketplace

About a hundred followers of the *Holy Spirit Church* gathered in the *Asia Pacific Center* in 2006, joined by some curious visitors and traders in the bazaar. As mentioned in the vignette in the beginning of this chapter, the church had specially invited ritual experts, such as a pastor from the US with Chinese background who was in Berlin for this proselytizing event, held in the global trade centre. Attracted by the music and prayers amplified through the sound system, as is practiced in many charismatic Pentecostal churches all around the world (Oosterbaan 2009), some traders and clients in the bazaar participated in a faith healing ritual. Only few of the newcomers had ever heard about the *health and wealth gospel* so prominent in Pentecostalism.

The global explosion of Pentecostalism (Robbins 2004; Vásquez and Marquardt 2003) as well as its close connection to money and consumption (Meyer 2007) is part of a larger phenomenon that scholars have witnessed in the past two decades, namely the emergence of religious movements across borders (Hühelmeier und Krause 2010). Notably, scholarly work on Pentecostal Vietnamese in Europe is a neglected issue, in particular when it comes to questioning how religious agents in Europe create and maintain transborder ties to Southeast Asia. As early as the 1980s, the first Vietnamese Pentecostal church emerged in West Germany. Founded by a boat refugee who had been born again in a refugee camp in Southeast Asia, the church spread through his and his co-ethnics' proselytizing activities. By the end of the 1980s, several branches and house churches had been created in Hamburg, Hannover, Stuttgart, Munich, and various small towns and villages in West Germany. I first encountered the *Holy Spirit Church* in 2006 via a Vietnamese trader in a small flower shop in Prenzlauer Berg, in the eastern part of Berlin. The trader was proselytizing in this neighbourhood by distributing flyers in his shop. After I had participated in various Sunday gatherings, the church organized an evangelization cam-

paign in the *Asia Pacific Center*, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. At the time, about one hundred vendors, a majority of them of Vietnamese background, were trading in textiles, fruit, vegetables, electronics and other goods in this marketplace. The *Holy Spirit Church* rented a hall on the grounds of the market after they had invited a preacher with Chinese background from the US, who, according to the Vietnamese pastor, was well-known for his gift of exorcism and who was also very successful in healing people from various diseases.

Among the group of people who came to participate in the religious service of the *Holy Spirit Church* in the *Asia Pacific Center*, a number of Vietnamese complained about various health problems they were suffering from. As the religious gathering had been explicitly announced as a faith healing event, the pastors, together with a group of close followers known as the apostles, listened to the stories of about 30 people who came to the front to pray and to publicly report their physical and emotional problems. The *health and wealth gospel* of Pentecostalism includes the idea that deliverance from evil spirits can be achieved by practices of exorcism, while it simultaneously promises economic success to those who believe in God. With regard to economic issues, Pentecostal Vietnamese, the majority of whom were small entrepreneurs at the time when I was carrying out ethnographic fieldwork in different churches, recounted numerous stories of how they established a shop in Berlin, found a job in a restaurant, or received money from the German welfare state – which was considered lucky by some of the poor church followers – in the course of successive religious gatherings.

Alerted to the event by the sound system in the hall of the *Asia Pacific Center*, some clients and traders arrived, curious about what was happening in the marketplace. Moreover, the rhythm of the church's loud music band greatly differed from what they were used to in Vietnam's marketplaces. At first some onlookers even thought they were witnessing a *karaoke* gathering, a

group activity that is very popular in Vietnam. *Karaoke* is an interactive entertainment whereby ordinary people sing along with recorded music using a microphone. The music typically consists of well-known popular songs without the lead vocal. The lyrics are displayed on a video screen, along with moving symbols, such as landscapes, mostly from Vietnam. However, the visitors soon realized that it was not a karaoke performance, but a Vietnamese Pentecostal Church performing a religious gathering in the bazaar which aimed at bringing "Jesus to the people". By using microphones, laptops and beamers to project the lyrics to the screen, there is a strong resemblance to the *karaoke* bars in Vietnam. Admittedly, in the Pentecostal context, noise is a crucial issue in all churches, as the sound system is an essential piece of equipment for casting out demons and thus purifying the space (Oosterbaan 2009).

In the case described here, Pentecostal Vietnamese performed a proselytizing campaign in a marketplace, which is not an empty space like abandoned post-industrial areas, considered to be spiritually neutral (Krause 2008). On the contrary, the bazaar is an ideal place for evangelizing activities, first because many people visit this locality and new followers may be attracted by the power of the Holy Spirit, as they would say. Second, new followers may be lured by the narratives recounted by church members about how they suddenly became rich in their lives. Here, in this marketplace, commodities and money circulate with amazing rapidity. Touched by the life stories of economically successful traders and church members, the bazaar is an ideal place for proselytizing activities, a place in which conspicuous consumption takes place, and where the casting out of demons may be considered by some as a "spiritual theatre", by others, however, as the efficacy of the Holy Spirit. Finally, health and wealth as well as economic risk are prominent issues in the lives of migrant entrepreneurs. The search for spiritual security in times of neoliberalism and increasing uncertainty is performed in a *karaoke*-like church gatherings, whereas *karaoke* fits very well into what many Vietnamese

know as a cultural practice in their country of origin; many even perform this with friends in their homes in Berlin. While some similarities between prosperity cults in Vietnam (Salemink 2008:152), with its focus on health and wealth and the prosperity gospel in Vietnamese Pentecostal churches are striking, there are a number of differences, in particular with regard to devils and demons, which, according to pastors and church members, are hiding in the small altars to be found in many salesrooms in Berlin's *Asiatowns*.

Spirits in the global trade centre

In the *Dong Xuan Center* in Berlin as well as in the *Asia Pacific Center*, most Vietnamese traders set up altars at the entrance of their respective salesroom to protect the business place from evil forces. Vendors told me that deities, venerated in the altar, ensure prosperity and a happy family, and that *Ông Địa* in particular would safeguard the territory of the trading place, simultaneously protecting the shop from attacks and robbery and shelter the place of business from burglary. While walking around in the Asia Pacific Center before the "crusade" started, Pentecostal pastors and church followers deemed the many small altars near the cash boxes in Berlin's *Asiatowns* as the work of the devil. One pastor told me, these altars must be considered blasphemy, as they offend the first commandment: "You shall have no other Gods beside me." Therefore, Pentecostal adherents have to destroy images and altars before they can become born-again. The destruction of altars is quite a difficult effort in proselytizing activities, as the majority of Vietnamese business owners establish these religious objects in their halls and offices, making offerings of fruit and alcohol to *the God of Wealth (Ông Thần Tài)* and the *God of the Earth (Ông Địa)* in their respective salesrooms every day (Hüwelmeier 2008:140), just as they do in shops and marketplaces in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (Leshkovich 2014). In one of the offices in the *Dong Xuan Center*, I recognized an altar that had been set up next to a desktop computer. It was decorated with flowers, fruit

and cigarettes, and most interestingly, with *Rotkäppchen Sekt*, a famous sparkling wine once produced in the GDR and one of the few East German products to be very successful after the reunification of Germany. The placing of German sparkling wine on the altar illustrates how people in the diaspora appropriate local consumer products in order to give them as offerings to the spirits from their country of origin. Furthermore, due to the position of the altar next to the desktop computer, all messages being sent and received are protected by the spirits. Akin to ICT networks (Information and communications technology) used by migrants in various other cities such as London (Garbin and Vasquez 2012), the connection of technology with the spiritual realm plays a crucial role in performing religious rituals in Berlin's new bazaars. While some traders and clients purchase altars and statues as well as small cups for providing fresh water to the deities in the food section of the *Dong Xuan Center*, other traders prefer a different style of altars, religious objects, they bring along from Vietnam. Some Vietnamese businessmen buy these objects in Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City when they travel there to meet relatives or business partners. A much greater variety of small altars is available in these cities. The owner of a restaurant on the grounds of one of the Berlin bazaars told me that he particularly preferred the altars (*bàn thờ*) decorated with blinking bulbs, as he was convinced that this object, charged with electricity, is more powerful than other altars. Technologies such as electricity are believed to have a strong impact on the relationship between humans and the divine and therefore play a crucial role in performing rituals, which was also analysed for European cultures (Schüttpelz 2015). As the *bàn thờ* has a prominent place in the restaurant, the visitor's attention is attracted by the object, and because of its affective powers, the owner is convinced, customers will come back and bring more clients, which in the end is very good for his business. The Vietnamese manager of the *Dong Xuan Center* decorated his altar with the most expensive whiskey and red wine from various coun-

tries. While I was present, he sprayed expensive *Armani* perfume on the altar, commenting that the deities are greatly pleased by this scent. As this example illustrates, smell and other senses are an intriguing part of popular religious practices (Meyer 2009).

Every day, before opening up for business, traders will perform rituals to please the spirits. Some people even bring the *bàn thờ* to the pagoda to be consecrated by Buddhist monks or nuns. When I attended a religious gathering at the Vietnamese Buddhist *Linh Thửu* pagoda in the western part of Berlin, I noticed a Vietnamese couple asking the Vietnamese Buddhist nun to bless the new altar they had just purchased. As Vietnamese Buddhism lacks systematized orthodox practice (Soucy 2012) and consequently many Vietnamese do not experience folk beliefs as being in conflict with other religious traditions, the blessing of the altar is part of a religious ritual in a Buddhist pagoda.

Bazaar pagodas

As previously mentioned in the vignette, the first Vietnamese Buddhist pagoda in the eastern part of Berlin was established in the gatehouse of the *Asian Pacific Center*, on the former grounds of part of the East German State Security Service (*Staatssicherheitsdienst*). The Vietnamese owner of the market provided part of her office to a lay Buddhist group as a place for performing religious practices. She felt committed to do so, as she became very rich in Germany and, according to her narratives, she wanted to give back some of her wealth to Buddha, the deities and to poor people. In addition to setting up the garden around the gatehouse with several Buddha statues in its centre, lay group members installed a kitchen to prepare meals to be shared after religious gatherings. Similar to Vietnam, the performance of religious rituals often concludes with a common meal (Soucy 2012).

An inauguration ceremony was held on the grounds of the newly established pagoda, with about two hundred Vietnamese participating in the ritual and Vietnamese monks arriving from

France specially for the event. Food was prepared by the lay group and placed on the altar and later on long tables, where a common meal was shared among the participants. In the following months a female Buddhist nun from another Vietnamese Buddhist pagoda in the western part of Germany was invited to live on the grounds of the pagoda. However, due to conflicts between the congregation and the market manager about the ownership of the money in the donation box, the nun left the bazaar pagoda and founded another pagoda (*chùa*) near the *Dong Xuan Center*, which is located just a few kilometres away. She rented space in an office building on the grounds of a former industrial area. In this pagoda, several altars were established with Buddhist statues and a separate shrine was decorated with images of the departed to honour them and to be prayed for on special occasions. Buddhist teachings and prayers were also performed on the grounds of the *Dong Xuan Center* itself, where a lay Buddhist group invited Vietnamese monks for special occasions to celebrate Buddhist festivals (Hüwelmeier 2013a).

The somewhat turbulent history of the market pagoda in the *Asia Pacific Center* went on. After the nun had left, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk came to live on the grounds of the pagoda. During our encounter he told me that he was influenced by the teachings of Thích Nhất Hạnh, a famous monk who had been exiled from Vietnam in the 1960s and who had founded a large Buddhist centre in France called 'plum village' (Chapman 2007: 305). One of the monk's missions was, according to his narrative, to practice *engaged Buddhism* in the tradition of Thích Nhất Hạnh. First and foremost, this included counselling Vietnamese in need who visited the pagoda to find relief. Many of the visitors, the monk reported, came to seek advice, in particular regarding marriage problems and difficulties with their children. A number of parents complained about a lack of respect from their kids. As children in Vietnam are expected to be obedient towards their parents due to the traditional values of Confucianism, parents in the German dias-

pora often feel they are not respected by their children, similar to intergenerational conflicts in Vietnamese families in Poland (Szymanska-Matusiewicz 2014). Vietnamese parents therefore consulted the Buddhist monk, who tried to also take into account the children's and young people's perspectives while asking the parents to carefully pay attention to and to respect their kids' needs as they grow up in a different culture. After consulting the monk, parents bring food to the altar, burn incense, pray and give some money as donation.

When I revisited the pagoda in early 2014, the monk had disappeared and another monk, this time from Vietnam, had recently arrived. The rumour goes that the former monk had founded a new pagoda in the eastern part of Berlin, with some followers. Only later people gossiped that he took the donation box before he left. The female manager of the market who provided space for the establishment of the pagoda, did not charge rent. However, since the space was provided at no cost, arrangements concerning the space were unclear and generated a number of conflicts. Issues arose, such as undetermined agreements about the rights to use the space, how to design the layout, arrangements about who is authorized to collect money, and what would eventually happen with the donations. Religious place making in the bazaar indicates that space is a contested issue and has to be negotiated between market manager, traders, believers and religious experts.

Paper votive offerings in Berlin's Asian bazaars

Besides the religious practices discussed above, Vietnamese in Berlin perform a number of folk beliefs in conjunction with Vietnamese religious everyday life in Vietnam, including trance mediumship, soul calling, and divinity. In the following, I focus on ancestor veneration, as this ritual is the most important religious practice to be fulfilled in the homeland and in the diaspora. In order to perform the rituals properly, people need certain material objects to decorate the ancestor altar at home. Food, fruit, flowers and

incense are among the offerings for the ancestors. Moreover, some Vietnamese purchase so-called spirit money and other votive paper offerings in Berlin's new *Asiatowns* and burn these items for the ancestors on Berlin's balconies and in backyards. Akin to Vietnam, paper votive offerings for the dead in Berlin include luxury products such as jewelry, glasses, lipstick, mobile phones and gold and silver (Hüwelmeier 2016). Sending sacrificial objects to the otherworld by the act of burning, spirits will be pleased and, in return, according to many traders I spoke with, contribute to the health and wealth of the ritual agent.

Votive paper offerings are part of what has been called the "re-enchantment of religion" in late socialist Vietnam (Taylor 2007). However, the growth in producing and consuming paper effigies is not unique to the Vietnamese case, but is embedded in the relationship between economic growth and prosperity cults in the greater (Southeast) Asian context (Kendall et al. 2010; Salemink 2008). In China, Singapore, and Vietnam, shops carry paper copies of luxury products such as Mercedes Benz, *Gucci* bags, villas, and TVs, together with everyday consumer goods such as cloth, rice cookers, glasses, and combs. Material objects made from paper are displayed in various marketplaces and shops in Hanoi, and some of the objects can also be purchased in Berlin's *Asiatowns*. The increasing variety of paper votive offerings in Vietnam highlights the creation and maintenance of links between religious practitioners and the spiritual realm. Most Vietnamese believe in the otherworld, which is imagined as a mirror image of this world. The duplication of the world and the objects within it in the form of paper effigies, the burning of ritual money and the production, consuming and sending modern consumer goods made from paper to the otherworld, reflect the proliferation of capitalism in the communist county, where the longing for consumer products is part of everyday discourse and practice. Gods are endowed with monetary and commercial interests and ancestor spirits are imagined as needy and sentient.

Images of Amritsar and Muslim Prayers

In salesrooms run by Sikhs in the *Dong Xuan Center*, most of whom in the textile trade, visitors and clients see images of Amritsar, the spiritual centre of Sikhism in Punjab, India. Vendors told me that the image of the Golden Temple protect their business as well as their families. By displaying the images, Sikhs also commemorate the massacre of Amritsar in 1919, when British soldiers and *gurkhas* (Nepalis in the military service of the British and Indian armed forces) killed hundreds of Indian civilians. Via these images, memories of colonial power are mediated and one trader, living far away from home, showed me a video on his smartphone about the military operation ordered by Indira Gandhi in 1984. Many Sikhs died and some months later Gandhi was assassinated by two of her Sikh bodyguards, followed by anti-Sikh pogroms where more than 3,000 Sikhs were killed. In this case, the mobile phone as a media technology generates particular affects and memories, commemorating those who died in political-religious conflicts. This use of mobile technology points to the fact that new media play a crucial role in transmitting religious messages across borders (Garbin and Vasquez 2012).

Upon hearing a Muslim prayer call in a sales hall of the *Dong Xuan Center*, I noticed one shop owner sitting at the cash desk and listening to an imam on his tablet. This kind of religious soundscape has been reported from anthropologists in various other countries (Hirschkind 2006; Larkin 2013) and interpreted as Islamic counterpublics, with its embodiments in a wide array of practices. The trader in the market was absorbed in prayer and oblivious to potential buyers who entered the room while he fulfilled his religious duties. Clients left the salesroom to wait until he had finished his prayers. Another Muslim shopkeeper in a different hall took his prayer carpet to the furthest corner of his shop in order to pray while another employee took care of the business. Recently, Muslims from various ethnic and national backgrounds inaugurated a mosque in a building only a few meters away from the bazaar,

thereby further adding to the super-diversity in Berlin's physical and religious landscapes.

Conclusion

In this contribution I have explored migrants' religious diversity in the shared place of the bazaar. Berlin's new *Asiatowns*, part of the urban sacred (Knott et al. 2016; Lanwerd 2016), are located not in some no man's land, but were established in a peri-urban surrounding and in buildings that, due to their history, are situated in the former socialist part of Germany's capital. Over the past years, various groups have become engaged in trading in these localities while also using the bazaars for religious activities such as for performing prayers, establishing altars and building bazaar pagodas. Vietnamese, Pakistani, Indians and others venerate gods and deities in various ways in this multi-ethnic place. Characterized by a variety of status categories among migrants including ethnicity, date of arrival, gender, and legal status, I highlighted the plurality and diversity of migrant's religious practices in this particular urban space. Super-diversity accounts for the creation of an awareness about the multiplicity of languages, nationalities and ethnicities, which people have to deal with by sharing a common place, namely the bazaar. The term super-diversity (Vertovec 2007), which I do not so much consider as a concept, but as a research lens, offers new perspectives in looking not only at the variety of rituals concerning various ethnic groups in a place such as the bazaar. Moreover, it allows for considering internal religious differences within such groups, as I have illustrated in reference to various practices performed by Vietnamese. Like other ethnic groups in the bazaar, who also might be internally different, traders, clients and market managers ask supernatural powers for enhancing spiritual security in the bazaar, a place, which is characterized by uncertainties and economic risks. Due to economic crises in the past few years, a number of trad-

ers already lost their business and had to give up their salesrooms. Others strive for economic survival, considering health and wealth as crucial elements in religious practices, performing prayers and donating money to spirits and gods. Anthropological research on religious diversities among migrants requires knowledge about ritual activities in their respective homelands as well as religious-political and economic entanglements on a local, national and transnational level in order to better understand the impact of the "spirits of consumption" (Salemink 2008) in the marketplace and migrants' religious practices in general.

Bazaaris encounter each other with a kind of curiosity and create cosmopolitan sociability (Glick Schiller et al. 2011). They perform modes of openness and establish relations of commonality, including tolerance vis à vis their stall neighbours' religious performances and various other aspects of everyday life in the bazaar. The coexistence of a variety of religions in this migrant-dominated environment, a place characterized by living together on an everyday level, where women and men, documented and non-documented people, residents with long-term legal status and recently-arrived migrants live side by side, points to the willingness of people to perform practices of conviviality (Heil 2015), including respect, interaction, cooperation and the management of conflictual situations. As transnational migration has caused internal differentiations of religious traditions, it has also shaped spatial religious practices. Pentecostal's sound system, Buddhist gatherings, Muslim prayers, the establishment of altars and the veneration of spirits, burning incense, offering food, and other religious practices attract the senses in multi-ethnic bazaars and contribute to the transformation of the religious landscape in Berlin's *Asiatowns*, in Berlin's broader urban space, and in Germany more general, not least due to recent arrivals of more than one million refugees.

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