Mediating the Apocalypse: the disaster of the Titanic in Vietnamese pentecostal discourse


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Abstract

Global Pentecostalism is one of the fastest growing religious movements in contemporary Vietnam, attracting people in the highlands, in the city of Hanoi, and in the diaspora. While gathering in underground churches in Vietnam, adherents worship by speaking in tongues as well as by being touched and healed by the Holy Spirit. These meetings as well as „crusades“ and prayer camps are recorded by church members using digital cameras and various other technologies, citing the miraculous healings as well as the charismatic authority of the pastors as evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit. By focussing on sermons and visualisations of the disaster of the Titanic, this paper explores how different places and religious actors become connected through the use of media technology such as cameras, video and audio cassettes, and the subsequent circulation of religious messages. The paper argues that religious agents and imaginations are shaped by transnational media circuits, generating people’s emotions and memories, in particular with regard to the flight and displacement of Vietnamese refugees. Moreover, by listening to sermons and viewing videos of religious events that take place elsewhere, people participate in more than one local context and create transnational ways of religious belonging.