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# ***From African consciousness to sub-conscious inculturation***

## ***A study into African Independent Churches (AICs) in Nyanza/Kenya***

*Based on a research done with interview partners from 22 AICs.*

*Conducted during the months of January and February 2001.*

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**APPENDIX : INTERVIEWS**

## Introduction: Approaching matter and motivation

The primary subject of this work is the so-called AICs. I am putting the abbreviation before the explanation, since it so happens, that the “I” in the middle of the three letters can stand for a number of words, all of which throw a different and yet equally appropriate light on the subject. If we designate those religious movements that are being studied here as African *Indigenous* Churches, the stress is on the fact, that these churches have a strong tendency toward being something originally African, stemming from the African soil, that is from its cultural background. Whether therefore they also touch the soul of the African people more and deeper than the so-called “mission churches” is a question to be explored.

If we use the term African *Initiated* or African *Instituted* Churches, we lay the emphasis on the criterion that differentiates. The most easily identifiable difference, that in this work is going to be used as a kind of definition, between the AICs and the “mission churches” is that they have been founded in Africa by Africans and have therefore *not* been started on African soil as offsets of European or North American churches by missionaries sent for that purpose. The OAIC in Nairobi, which is an important umbrella organisation having many AICs as members is calling itself the “Organisation of African Instituted Churches”.

All along the history of research about this particular group of religious communities the expression African *Independent* Churches has been the most commonly used term. It has however been opposed for its alleged suggestion of political implications (association with the political struggle for independence by African states) by members and leaders of AICs themselves and for another reason by members and leaders of the so-called mission churches: The latter claim that with the emergence of African leadership and local administrative structures, those churches once “planted” by foreigners have now become independent as well, so that “independence” from overseas is no longer a feature fit for distinction. I will however stick to the term “independent” in the majority of cases, while I have no objection to using any of the alternatives and will also use them occasionally.

Since I want to concentrate here on the development and the current facts in Nyanza only, it is important to state that the structural patterns of the phenomenon in this East African region can be seen as exemplary for the whole of sub-Sahara Africa, with the important difference, that Kenya is the home of a larger number of AICs than many other African countries are. One can also find a great number of them in for example Nigeria and the countries of Southern Africa, while there are not very many in Tanzania or Uganda, both immediate neighbours of Kenya.

Likewise Sierra Leone or other countries in West Africa have not seen a great move towards “independency”<sup>1</sup>.

It was only during the time of conducting this particular study, that I realized: While the heavy presence of independent churches in Nyanza had always struck me as -at the very least- “interesting” during my five years of life and work in this part of the world, their history and practice of faith is in fact of utmost significance for the understanding of the developments of the church in Africa as a whole. Naturally this applies especially to the subject of “independency” in African Christianity. Adrian Hastings put it a bit briefer: “The Nyanza region has a special significance for African Church history”<sup>2</sup>.

It is my hope that regarding this, the work presented here is of some interest for those concerned with research on as well as to those working with AICs – to people concerned with religious science in general on the one and to people concerned and indeed involved with AICs in Kenya on the other hand. The latter implies especially to those that I met in the Nyanza region and in Nairobi during my research.

In order to “serve” both I may at one point or the other have to include details or other information that might seem very obvious and therefore uninteresting to the one party while it may be news for the other.

It has become a truism by now, that research (at least) within the field of social science that is disinterested and therefore unbiased does not exist. I can hence “feel free” to disclose my own motives to conduct a research on AICs, especially in the manner in which they appear in Luo-Nyanza, that part of Western Kenya that borders Lake Victoria and expands around the headquarters of church and state in that region: Kisumu town.

When I first arrived in Kenya in 1991 to start a voluntary year with a Catholic congregation of religious brothers, I lived in a very rural and remote place in South Nyanza, right at the shore of “Nam Lolwe” - the Luo Name for the big Lake. Already on the first day driving into the little fishing village of Roo in Kagsingiri Bay (now in Suba District) I heard a lot of what I probably then only recognized as “indistinguishable noise” at that time coming out of a small mud building, that could only be identified as a church by the cross above the door. It furthermore had a coloured flag attached on a stick standing next to it.

It was clear that this had something to do with Christianity, as much as it was clear that it was not a church built by a missionary.

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<sup>1</sup> This term has been in common use for a long time to indicate the phenomenon that we are concerned with here. It has however most prominently been used by David B. Barrett in his well known work “Schism and Renewal in Africa”, Nairobi 1968

<sup>2</sup> Hastings, Adrian, *The church in Africa : 1450 – 1950*, Oxford 1994, P. 890

By the looks of it, for the European missionaries around me it was clearly a familiar thing what had seemed so strange to me. At the same time I had the impression that they themselves did not know much about what was exactly happening at the small church in the village. So the impression of an indigenous church building including the sounds coming out of it was one of my first experiences when coming to Africa. Later – during the years I lived and worked in Kisumu – seeing the processions and waving of flags of some of the indigenous churches on Sunday along the Ring Road passing the shanty areas of Nyalenda became a regular part of my Sunday routine. And the loud singing and praying – not to mention the beating of the drums and the very common “bell” – are hard to ignore if one lives and works around those peri-urban parts of town. At the same time it was quite common to meet people who were members of one or the other indigenous church, e.g. by means of them visiting their Catholic relatives staying at the same centre as I did. To recognize them was often made easy by the particular way they dressed or at least by the men wearing a characteristic cap. The women often wore a veil with a shape not unlike the ones worn by Catholic nuns. Through this I also learnt, that it is not rare to have as many different types of church membership in one family as there are children.

Although I was very interested in knowing more about these Christians that seemed to practice their faith so differently from the Catholics around me, I never quite managed to get deeper into their specific ways and teachings. I was, apart from my day to day work with a development project, quite busy trying to understand my fellow Catholics in their specifically African way of practising their faith. At the same time it was not easy to get much information from my African friends and colleagues who are Catholics themselves. What I knew from my German home showed itself to be a world-wide problem: Members of different Christian denominations (and even more so of different religions) often know very little about each other, even though they may be immediate neighbours.

One question that revolved in my mind was: If those indigenous churches are able to attract so many people, especially within Luo-land, does that not mean that they have achieved to strike a cord in their followers’ heart that the Catholic church has tried to strike by ways of “inculturation”? And secondly: May they be more successful in their effort to give an African face to Christianity?

It would clearly go beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the efforts of Catholic theologians in achieving to inculturate the Christian faith into the African context. So much only: There is strong reason to question how much of the respective concepts being worked out at Catholic higher institutions of learning are actually finding their way down to the parishes and therefore to the “ordinary” church members.

My own experience shows me that in the field of the Catholic liturgy and the “africanization” of leadership, much has been done. Other ideas however, like the inculturation of rites and sacraments, seem to exist in the minds of scholars rather than in the practice of local parishes.

Another issue that often occupied my mind was in how far the indigenous churches are connected to the Evangelical or Pentecostal groups being introduced mostly by American missionaries. The experience of meeting Christians who say that they are “saved” is a very common one for everybody in Kenya. I was familiar with the charismatic nature of the worship of Pentecostal groups as well as with their literal approach to the bible through various encounters in Germany. Whether the Pentecostal movement in Kenya included the indigenous churches or not was not quite clear to me. This question seemed relevant especially because of the way Pentecostal and Evangelical groups stand towards the involvement of the church and of individual Christians in matters of justice and politics. While this issue is relevant everywhere in the world it is even more so in the poor countries of the southern hemisphere. In Kenya the political establishment has so little opposition from people who are truly concerned about the welfare of the wanainchi<sup>3</sup>, that those raising their voice from the standpoint of the Christian faith seem to resemble the well known “voice in the desert”(Mk 1:3). One of the issues dealt with intensively in this work will therefore be the question of political involvement of the church – and of the AICs of Nyanza in particular.

In their well known work “A place to feel at home”, F.B. Welbourn and B.A. Ogot have tried to show, that the emersion of independent churches in Nyanza lead to a “localization” or “idigenization” of Christianity in the region. By being a local response to the problem of how to translate the Christian dogma to the African world of thinking and worshipping and especially by being churches on a smaller scale, ready to adopt to local problems, the two authors hold that these churches have become a “place to feel at home” for the local Christians. According to their findings, the independent churches could “because they were small, and local, and led by Africans, [...] preach a message which was at all points felt to be relevant to the social and material problems of its members. “They could provide homes in which mythological and empirical factors were felt, as in traditional society, to be inextricably linked.”<sup>4</sup>

The two independent churches that Welbourn’s and Ogot’s research is based on (the African Israel Church Nineveh and the Church of Christ in Africa) also appear in the work here presented.

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<sup>3</sup> Swahili expression commonly used for the “ordinary citizens“.

Following Ogot and Welbourn, one can therefore conclude, that there was and is a conscious effort of AIC to look for answers to the challenge of cultural change in Africa. A challenge that leaves so many people “homeless” in spiritual and emotional terms, but also in concrete social terms. It will be the intention of this work to look closer at the shape of this answer, which will naturally be preceded by the question, whether this answer is really given by AICs in Nyanza today.

Other features that will play an important role here are issues such as the history of the particular churches involved in the study, the ways of worshipping, the specific teaching and doctrines, the gender issue and the ways of evangelizing.

The first part of the work here presented will attempt to provide an overview of the background to the history of AICs in Western Kenya and to an understanding of the whole “phenomenon” of independent churches in Africa. The parts following that will then be concerned with the survey conducted in Nyanza during the months of December 2000 – February 2001 and with the conclusions drawn from it.

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<sup>4</sup> Welbourn, F.B., Ogot, B.A., *A place to feel at home*, London 1966, P. 143.

# **I The significance of the geographical setting- The Nyanza region and it's history of churches**

Only in the course of time it became clear to me that the region where I was first placed<sup>5</sup> and where I was always based during my five years in Africa<sup>6</sup>, has got such a “special significance for African church history”<sup>7</sup>.

Not only was this area the entry point for both the Anglican Missionaries as well as the Catholics for their renewed mission efforts at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was also the place, where the emergence of independent churches has been as vigorous as in hardly any other area in Africa, producing at the same time a great number of different denominations.

## **I.1 The movements of the missionaries and the ethnic groups of the region**

The beginning of the modern era of missionary work in Kenya is commonly regarded as being the arrival of Ludwig Krapf and Johann Rebmann in 1844 and 1846 respectively. These “pioneers” came on behalf of the Anglican Church Mission Society (CMS) and established the famous mission at Rabai near Mombasa. Slowly and reluctantly the movement of trying to convert the people of the coast into Christianity moved westward. It was only the construction of the all important railway line (having started in 1896 from Mombasa and reaching Port Florence (Kisumu) in 1901) that gave new ardour to this effort. This immensely important infra-structural factor, responsible for the movement from east to west<sup>8</sup> had it's parallel in another “conducive environment” located at the northern shore of Lake Victoria and responsible for the movement of Mission efforts from the opposite direction: The kingdom of Buganda with its royal court of the Kabaka (King), provided the type of organizational structure that could be utilized very effectively. Already in 1877 a group of Anglican missionaries reached Mengo, the royal hill at what is now the city of Kampala. The Catholics followed soon after in the shape of the White Fathers (French speaking) and the Mill Hill Fathers (English speaking). It was therefore from that direction that the Missionaries moved into Western Kenya, which was in fact

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<sup>5</sup> As a volunteer on a mission station in what is now Suba District, South Nyanza.

<sup>6</sup> Apart from the first year the base has always been Kisumu.

<sup>7</sup> Hastings, 1994, P. 890.

<sup>8</sup> The exact direction is from south-east to north-west.

Eastern Uganda” by the turn of the century. Nyanza and Rift Valley only ceased to be part of the Uganda Protectorate by 1902, when they were transferred to Kenya<sup>9</sup>.

The area we are concerned with here was by that time called Kavirondo and very soon, Kisumu became its undisputed capital. Also the people living at the shores of Lake Victoria were called “Kavirondo” until well into the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The relationship of this large Nilotic group, now called the Luo, with its neighbours is one of the decisive factors in the political history as well as in the history of the church in the area. Especially the relationship with the Luhya<sup>10</sup>, their Bantu-speaking northern neighbours, has been reason for much fruitful exchange as well as for clashes and tension. One example of the difficulties can be the ambivalent role of the Anglican Bishop Festo Olang’, who became auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Mombasa in 1955 and was put in charge of the Nyanza region<sup>11</sup>. He had grown up among the Luo and his name sounds very much like a Luo name. Being a Luhya by tribe and having such strong ties with the Luo<sup>12</sup> seemed to make him an ideal candidate for the leadership of the Anglican Church in the area. The fact that he “really” was a Luhya became significant in the year of his appointment: He was accused of discriminating against the Luo when he made his first decisions concerning personnel. “[...] It was decided to retire compulsorily several elderly Luo clergy [...]. This was done at a time when many Luyia clergy who were just as old were receiving promotion.”<sup>13</sup>

An example of the peaceful and friendly relationship between Luhya and Luo is the membership of the Israel Nineveh Church. Again a Luhya<sup>14</sup> “by tribe” but very familiar with the Luo language and culture, the founder has from the early days been able to attract and welcome members of both ethnic communities.

Around the central land of the Nilotic Luo<sup>15</sup>, bordering the shores of the big lake in the west, one can describe the ethnic geography in the following rough way: there are the Kisii in the south, the Luhya in the north and the Kalenjin<sup>16</sup> in the east.

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<sup>9</sup> Rather a bold move, considering that through this the border was shifted more than 300 km to the west – from Naivasha to Busia.

<sup>10</sup> Any written work mentioning the names of Kenyan ethnic groups can’t do without a note on orthography: I have chosen to use the spellings that seem to be most commonly used today: Luhya (not Luyia), Kikuyu (not Gikuyu), Massai (not Maasai or Maassai), Kisii (not Gusii). The prefixes A- or Aba or Ba- indicating Bantu groups will be omitted. The spelling of other names like Luo, Kalenjin, Nandi etc. is unequivocal.

<sup>11</sup> In 1970 he was elected Archbishop of Kenya.

<sup>12</sup> He naturally spoke both languages – as so many people in the area do.

<sup>13</sup> Welbourn, Ogot, 1966, P. 40.

<sup>14</sup> The Luhya are really an agglomeration of many smaller ethnic groups that speak Bantu languages closely related to each other. An attempt to develop a “Standard Luhya“ language has found little response among the speakers. One of those smaller groups is the Ragoli sub-tribe bordering the Luo area north of Kisumu.

<sup>15</sup> The Luo in Kenya have a population of an estimated three million, which is very close to the total population figure of the Luhya. One rather large section of the “tribal land“ of the Luo is across the southern border of Kenya in Tanzania. Though obviously related to the other Nilotic groups in Kenya like the Kalenjin or the Massai, the Luo

## I.2 The Anglican and Catholic missions

In 1894 the authorities in Rome created the Catholic “Vicariate of the Upper Nile”, that stretched all the way from Kampala up to Mount Kenya and even included large parts of the northern deserts. It was entrusted to the Mill Hill Missionaries under Bishop Henry Hanlon. Although the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the coming (and going) of many different Catholic Societies of Missionaries and although the strict division of spheres of influence softened in the course of time: The decisions and divisions made more than a hundred years ago still show their influence today. The Mill Hill Missionaries still have many mission stations in Eastern Uganda and Western Kenya and they still consider this particular area as their special concern<sup>17</sup>.

The early years of work clearly concentrated on the western part of the new Vicariate and it was only in 1903 that Bishop Hanlon was able to turn his attention to Kavirondo: The first Mission was established in Kisumu<sup>18</sup>. One year later the Luhya had their first Catholics among them when the mission at Mumias was opened. In 1911 Fathers G. Brandsma and J. Wall started the first mission among the Kisii at Nyabururu.

The strategy at all these new places looked more or less the same: A centre was established by the missionaries with the aid of African catechists who belonged to tribes that already had a good number of people converted to Christianity. The Luo were converted with the help of Ganda<sup>19</sup> catechists, the Kisii and the Nandi with the help of Luo Christians. Apart from the central mission station, the “outstation” formed an important part of the *modus operandi*. Here the “catechists” were responsible for the day to day running of affairs while the white missionaries could only travel there from time to time. The mission stations themselves were the centres of the conversion – not only of individuals, but of their surroundings as well.<sup>20</sup> “Some missions, like Aluor and Asumbi and Nyabururu were veritable Citadels of God, with hundreds of white-clad inhabitants living in long rows of houses, away from the wicked world. The catechumens stayed there for one or two years. They learnt the Catechism in preparation for

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find their closer relatives – at least in terms of language similarities – in some tribes of Uganda like the Lango, Acholi, Alur or Padhola.

<sup>16</sup> “Kalenjin“, much like “Luhya“ is a term used for a number of ethnic groups arranged together on the merit of their respective languages being closely related. Among the Kalenjin sub-tribes that are immediate neighbours of the Luo and Luhya, the Nandi and the Kipsigis are the most significant.

<sup>17</sup> In his book “The way the Catholic Church started in Western Kenya“ (Nairobi, 1990) Hans Burgman gives a detailed account of the events between 1895, the year when the first Mill Hill Caravan moved on foot from Mombasa to the royal court at Mengo, and 1988, when there were eight dioceses in the area originally assigned to that first group.

<sup>18</sup> Which was still called “Port Florence“ by then.

<sup>19</sup> The ethnic entity of the Ganda gave name to the kingdom of Buganda, the language Luganda and later the Republic of Uganda. The tribe is also known as the Baganda.

<sup>20</sup> See Burgman, 1990, P. 161.

Baptism, worked in the gardens and around the houses. Their stay in the City of God would seem to them like a long retreat, detaching them from their old pagan surroundings and giving them the feeling of having started a new life in becoming Christians. [...] Widows and orphans too found a shelter in the mission compound. The citadel had its own by-laws. In some of them the readers were not allowed to go to church to attend services before their baptism; or they were not allowed to wear the rosary-beads around their necks: they had to carry them in their hands.”<sup>21</sup>

In terms of church administration, the developments have gone a long way since the establishment of the East African “Vicariates” at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: Kisumu was elevated to the centre of the Prefecture of Kavirondo by 1925 and of an own Vicariate in 1932. The next step was the creation of the Diocese of Kisumu in 1953. The year 1953 was important not only for Kisumu but for the whole of the Catholic Church in Kenya: The bishops were no longer holding “their” territories in trust for the Pope in Rome, the “Vicariates” became “Dioceses”, Nairobi was made an archdiocese<sup>22</sup>.

The next big step was by the year 1990 the establishment of four Archdioceses in Kenya, with Kisumu being one of them.

From the territory of the old “Vicariate of Kisumu” (1932) a whole number of smaller dioceses has been carved out, whereby the borders many times clearly follow the demarcations of tribal land: 1959 Eldoret (detached from Kisumu), 1960 Kisii (detached from Kisumu), 1968 Nakuru (detached from Eldoret, from Kisumu, and from Nairobi), 1976 Ngong (detached from Nairobi, and from Kisumu), 1978 Lodwar (detached from Eldoret), 1978 Kakamega (detached from Kisumu), 1987 Bungoma (detached from Kakamega), 1993 Homa Bay (detached from Kisii), 1995 Kericho (detached from Nakuru), 1998 Kitale (detached from Eldoret).

In terms of African leadership, the first big step was made in 1957, when Maurice Otunga, the son of a Bukusu<sup>23</sup> chief, became the first African in the rank of a bishop. He was consecrated auxiliary bishop of Kisumu in that year and became the first African Archbishop of Kenya in 1971 (Archdiocese of Nairobi)<sup>24</sup>. In 1973 he was appointed Cardinal by Pope Paul VI.

In 1977 Philip Sulumeti was the first African in charge of Kisumu diocese and when he was moved to Kakamega in 1978, Zacchaeus Okoth became the fourth bishop of Kisumu.

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<sup>21</sup> Burgman, 1990, P. 161-162.

<sup>22</sup> See Burgman, 1990, P. 242.

<sup>23</sup> A northern sub-tribe of the Luhya.

<sup>24</sup> Before moving to Nairobi, he was the bishop of Kisii Diocese from 1960 to 1969.

H. Burgman describes the move to African leadership: “[...] When the majestic dark figure of Philip Sulumeti sat down on the venerable throne of Kisumu on Mach 19<sup>th</sup> 1977, guided by good Bp. Hall, everybody knew what had happened”.

A very difficult chapter which is not yet closed by today, is the question at which speed the Catholic Church in Africa as a whole should be “Africanised” and to which extent the European missionaries should still play a role in the local church. The attitude of the missionaries of the past towards the indigenous people is a topic of much concern to the church historian as well as to those interested in the emergence of AICs.

Catholic theologians in Africa have been investing a lot of thought in the issue of “inculturation” and as to how it can be filled with life and translated down to the level of the local parishes. How much these thoughts and ideas have really “trickled down” is a very significant question, which has not been considered enough by the ones working on this subject. It is significant also when one looks at the independent churches as an effort to be “more African” than the traditional mission churches. On top of that, the Catholic Church in Nyanza has a “competitor” that has broken away from it and is by its very existence and the great number of followers a constant challenge and question: The Church of “Maria Legio”<sup>25</sup>.

The history of the Anglican Church in Western Kenya is going to be of even more significance for this work than the one of the Catholics, since the emergence of independent churches is more closely interwoven with it.

As mentioned above the missionary pioneers Ludwig Krapf and Johann Rebmann<sup>26</sup> came to Kenya 1844 and 1846 on behalf of the Church Mission Society. This Institution was to be the main agent of the spread of the Anglican faith in East Africa.

There was rapid growth of the congregation and already in 1885 the first Africans were ordained to the priesthood. The first area to be “explored” after the coastal strip was naturally the land of the Kamba (Ukambani).

But before the movement from the coast along the railway line had begun, the CMS took the same route, that the Catholic Missionaries were to take a little later: Long walking caravans moved slowly and under much constraint from the coast to Buganda. 1884 Bishop Hannington was sent to be bishop of East Africa, seven years after the first colleagues had reached the Kabaka’s court. In 1897, two separate dioceses were created : Mombasa and Uganda, with

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<sup>25</sup> Official name: Legio Maria of African Church Mission.

<sup>26</sup> Krapf and Rebmann were German pastors from Wuerttemberg. They stem from the Pietist tradition of the local Lutheran Church. The British CMS gave them the possibility of being missionaries in Africa. It seems to have been normal for the CMS to also recruit non-Anglican missionaries. Krapf was later commissioned for another mission among the Galla (Oromo) by the British United Methodists.

Kavirondo being naturally part of the latter. They were directly responsible to the Archbishop of Canterbury. This situation did not change until 1960, when the Province of East Africa was established. It got divided again into the separate provinces of Kenya and Tanzania in 1970. The Anglican Church in Kenya was thus known as the CPK, the “Church of the Province of Kenya” for thirty years, until in the year 2000 when it changed its name into “Anglican Church of Kenya” (ACK). By that time, all but two Bishops were Africans and the leadership in Western Kenya was entirely “africanized”.

What Ojolla and Aluor was for the Catholics, the Anglicans found in Maseno: The big mission centre where all the lines of command came together during the early years. Founded in 1906 it lends its name still to three present dioceses in Kenya: Those of Maseno South, Maseno North and Maseno West.

The other dioceses of Western Kenya by the year 2001 are the following: Bungoma, Butere, Eldoret, Katakwa, Kitale. Mbeere, Mumias, Nambale, Southern Nyanza,

In Kavirondo, the activities of one particular missionary greatly influenced the scene of the early 1920s: Archdeacon Owen committed himself to the rights of the African majority and started the Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association, aiming at civic education and economic progress. By 1930 however most missions were considered to be against the African people in their attitudes.<sup>27</sup>

The first two Kenyan Bishops were consecrated in 1955, one of whom was Festo Olang’ who was to play such an important role for the history of the church in Nyanza and who was so strongly involved in the events that led to the secession of the Church of Christ in Africa in 1957.

Taking things one step back again, the situation was as follows: In the year 1906 the Reverend J. J. Willis was sent to direct his special attention to Western Kenya. It was the Uganda Mission that had sent him and the connection to Uganda proved to be strong for a very long time. Although the administrative shift from Uganda to “British East Africa” was already done in 1902, Western Kenya (the “Nyanza Archdeaconry”) still remained part of the Diocese of Uganda until 1921 when it came under the bishop of Mombasa. This had important implications, especially since the methods of work and the general attitude towards indigenous staff varied greatly in the two dioceses. While Willis and Owen followed the “Ugandan” policy of opposing the paternalistic attitudes of most missionaries and shifting the responsibility as much as possible to the Africans among the clergy and the laity, the policy in the Diocese of

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<sup>27</sup> See Kenya Churches Handbook, Kisumu, 1973, edited by David D. Barrett, P. 34.

Mombasa was that the European missionaries were to retain the power. At the same time those responsible in Mombasa were very reluctant in training many African clergy. One main reason for this church policy was most probably the fact, that the white settlers in Kenya were keen on obtaining the leadership in an emerging country and would have seen an Anglican Church governed by indigenous leaders as a possible obstacle for their political goals<sup>28</sup>.

Kavirondo continued to play a somewhat ambiguous role in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and – as it is so often – such historical heritage keeps on influencing the scene long after the historical facts have been forgotten by most people.

From the geographical, political and linguistic point of view, Western Kenya was part of British East Africa. The links of the two big mission churches however and consequently of their educational institutions<sup>29</sup> were much stronger with Uganda. This position in-between gave the Anglican Church in Kavirondo a rather independent stance.<sup>30</sup>

An important issue, that can not be explored deeply here, is the relationship of the Anglican Church in Nyanza with those independent churches, that have directly broken away from it. Can there be co-existence without friction? Is the big mission church simply trying to ignore the smaller “competitors”? Or could there be even co-operation of churches with similar attitudes? This work is going to show that there are in fact a few examples of co-operation, especially in the field of involvement in “secular” politics and in the course of organizing big “crusades” in Kisumu town.

### **I.3 More mission churches**

At a very early stage, around the same time as the two big mission churches established themselves in Nyanza, came the American preachers of the Quakers. In 1902 they settled at Kaimosi among the Maragoli, where up to today one can find American missionaries with the typical outer appearance of the “Friends”. Their official name was “Friends Africa Industrial Mission” and industrial they were: Development activities like education, teachers-training, hospital work, printing activities, agriculture and many others were essential part of their

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<sup>28</sup> See Welbourn, Ogot, 1966, P. 20-24.

<sup>29</sup> The role the churches played in the field of education can hardly be overestimated. The efforts in this field were in their hands alone in the beginning and even to date a large portion of the schools in Kenya and Uganda is run by churches. In the early days, Maseno High School played a particularly important role introducing a kind of “elite education” under J.J. Willis as headmaster.

<sup>30</sup> This could be seen as one of the factors that led to the tensions between a section of the church leaders in Nyanza and the leadership of the diocese of Mombasa which in turn contributed to the secession of the Church of Christ in Africa in 1957.

missionary work<sup>31</sup>. Also in the field of politics they were very active: In 1932 they organized the first association among the Luhya to stand in for the interest of the indigenous people. Influenced by the “Kavirondo Taxpayers’ Welfare Association” of W.E. Owen, they called it the “North Kavirondo Central Association”.

The mission at Kaimosi was renowned in the early years mainly for two reasons: It attracted the world’s largest “Yearly meeting of friends” and it was the site of the famous “outpouring of the Spirit” in the year 1927. The latter event is especially important in connection with the history of “Revival” and of the independent churches, since it was the cradle of the Luhya branch of the Holy Spirit or “Roho” churches<sup>32</sup>.

Another church of American origin which has all along played an important role in Nyanza is the one of the “Seventh-day Adventists” (SDA). Their big mission Gendia near Kendu Bay was founded in 1906. From there, they spread their message mainly into South Nyanza, where they have the strongest following up to today, while also having some congregations in other parts of Western Kenya and indeed of the whole country. It is very likely, that their celebration of Saturday as the Lord’s day has had considerable influence on the sabbatarian movement among independent churches.

Remarkable is also their famous printing press at Gendia and the big mission hospital which is known far and wide for its service to the people of the area.

In 1921 the Salvation Army came with its military style and attire. They too laid a heavy emphasis on the “baptism of the Spirit” – which for them is their swearing in ceremony – replacing water baptism. Their main area of mission was among the Maragoli and Tiriki<sup>33</sup>. The habit of conducting large processions on the streets and paths has later been an example to follow for some independent churches, especially the African Israel Church Nineveh.

Also the US Southern Baptists began to work in Nyanza. In 1956 they founded the Baptist Mission of East Africa. “They promoted the acceptance of the Bible according to a fundamentalist Interpretation”<sup>34</sup>.

While the Methodists and the Presbyterian Church, who were very active in central Kenya, did not reach the West, the Lutheran Church did. Their missionaries came from Scandinavian countries mainly. Swedish Lutherans “Of a strictly conservative variety”<sup>35</sup> took the lead. And up

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<sup>31</sup> See Burgman, 1990, PP. 288, 289.

<sup>32</sup> In how far this Luhya-branch of the Roho movement stands in connection with the one of Alfayo Odongo Mango among the Luo is a question to be more closely explored.

<sup>33</sup> Sub-tribes of the Luhya.

<sup>34</sup> Burgman, 1990, P. 291.

<sup>35</sup> Hastings, 1994, P. 891.

to today the Lutheran centre in Kisumu is strongly supported by missionaries and other personnel from Finland.

The first Pentecostal church that also bears this name, came again with missionaries of North America. In 1924 the “Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada” (later known as the “Pentecostal Assemblies of God”) took over the Mission at Nyang’ori from an even earlier group from Iowa, USA. This earlier group had started in 1912.

A number of other Pentecostal mission, or “Assemblies” as they are mostly called, followed later.

The mission at Nyang’ori is situated just a few kilometres north of Kisumu and almost exactly on the boundary between the tribal land of the Luo and the Luhya. It has an extraordinary significance for the history of the AIC’s, since it “gave birth” to two of the large representatives: The African Israel Church Nineveh and the African Divine Church.

What we know today as the African Inland Church (AIC)<sup>36</sup>, and what is one of Kenyas influential “mainline churches”, came here as the fruit of an interdenominational movement<sup>37</sup> started in 1890 in America. Only five years later the first missionaries were sent to East Africa. Peter C. Scott reached Machakos in 1895. In 1911 a mission at Nyakach<sup>38</sup> was started, while the headquarters at Ogada, north of Kisumu got strongly involved also in the struggles around the foundation of the first independent churches. What was then known as the African Inland Mission (AIM) laid a heavy emphasis on evangelism. It consequently invested a lot of energy in publications (“Kesho Publications”), radio programmes etc.

In 1971 the AIM gave birth to the autonomous Africa Inland Church.

Also the Greek Orthodox Church has been sending missionaries so that this old “eastern” type of Christianity took some roots in Western Kenya as well. Their main area of concern however was Nairobi and Kikuyuland. After some time, they left Nyanza again, but were succeeded by church personnel of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

From their centre in Nairobi, they in turn organized the building of a centre at Nyamasaria, just a little east of Kisumu, ultimately responsible to the “Holy See of St. Mark” in Egypt.

At Kima in Luhya-land we find the centre of the “Church of God”. Though being an American congregation they founded Kima in 1905 with the help of A.W. Baker from Johannesburg, South Africa and his daughter. In 1923 missionaries from Indiana, USA took over the work in

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<sup>36</sup> Obviously an abbreviation easy to confuse with the one for “African Independent/Indigenous/Initiated Churches”.

<sup>37</sup> See Burgman, 1990, P. 290.

<sup>38</sup> Luo area south of Kisumu on the way to Kisii-land.

the shape of a couple of missionaries called Ludwig. A very important institution up to date is the “Kima International School of Theology”.

Miss Baker brought along a black missionary from South Africa called Yohanna Mbila, who is known for having introduced the modern hoe in Nyanza.

While in the early years, the use of the Anglican Common Book of prayer ensured the more “orderly” way of service, the coming of Mrs. Ludwig brought a clear shift to the Pentecostal type. She laid great emphasis on the Holy Spirit and her son attested her immense spiritual powers: “When she prayed for rain we reached for umbrellas”<sup>39</sup>.

The shift in emphasis that took place at Kima was a reflection (or at least a parallel) to the changes within the “Church of God” as a whole. It started 1888 in the United States as a “holiness movement that subsequently adopted the pentecostal message from William J. Seymour’s Asuza Street Revival<sup>40</sup>. It is currently the largest black pentecostal movement in the world, and has been present in Kenya almost since its beginnings as a pentecostal movement in 1905<sup>41</sup>”

According to A. Hastings, “western Missionaries of this type were not unknown in the Nyanza region, a fact to remember when trying to explain the emergence of an Independent Church movement in the area.”<sup>42</sup>

For him “*Western Kenya with Kisumu as the centre increasingly became a home to one particular brand of Protestantism: Fundamentalism*. Here Evangelicals, Lutheran Confessionalists and of course the Church of God, as well as others, managed to toughen each other along the Fundamentalist road. It was probably no wonder, given this rich mixture of Churches with lively traditions of singing, using instruments, speaking in tongues and exuberant services, that western Kenya should have become the *origo* – the breeding ground – for charismatic Independent Churches, in Kenya usually called ‘Spirit Churches’ “<sup>43</sup>

Those Spirit Churches come into focus whenever one takes a look at independent churches in Kenya. They appear as the most advanced form of a merger between Pentecostalism and independency. But even when looking at those churches that have not gone that far, the overall impression remains: Evangelical practice of faith, Pentecostal tradition and a fundamentalist approach to the bible are dominating the Christian milieu in Nyanza so strongly that they even penetrate deeply into the traditionally temperate and less passionate Anglican and Catholic congregations.

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<sup>39</sup> Hastings, 1994, P. 897.

<sup>40</sup> See page 94.

<sup>41</sup> Shorter, Njiru, 2001, P. 28.

<sup>42</sup> See Hastings (1994), P. 897.

<sup>43</sup> Hastings, 1994, P. 891-892.

## I.4 Missionary attitudes and impact

To most sub-Saharan Africa, Christianity was brought by missionaries from Western Europe and North America. A fact that still prevails in a number of areas of the continent and of which one important exception exists: Ethiopia has been among the countries christianised very early (in any case earlier than the Central European countries). The roots of missionary activities there go back to the middle of the first millennium after Christ.

The first big influx of missionaries in Kenya however came only in the second half of the nineteenth century. Driven by the idea that the faith and culture they brought from Europe was fit to be of benefit for all mankind, most of those first missionaries had little time for the ideas that today we would summarise under the term „inculturation“. They set up the local congregations and structures of the church parallel to what they were familiar with at their home countries.

*For the purpose of being able to spread the “good news” more effectively, many of them were ready to go through the hardship of learning the indigenous languages with no grammar books and dictionaries available and there must have been a lot of genuine concern for the understanding of the local culture and heritage. Despite that one has to decry the widespread racism that often influenced the daily work as well as the general attitude of the white clergymen sent to spread Christianity in a world perceived as savage and utterly uncivilised.*

It was the age of new imperialism and many African Christians were able to see through the mixture of concern for the gospel and concern for the colonisation of their people, which in some cases made them to leave the church and in some of those cases again to start an own Christian movement, using the familiar structures and offices on a much smaller scale. Often it was such critical minds –coupled with charismatic talents of leadership – that brought into being the African Independent Churches.

Doing justice to the historical facts is not very easy when looking at the attitudes and activities of the early missionaries. Many of them displayed fundamental human weaknesses behaving cruelly and harshly. Others again stood firmly at the side of “their” people and were ready to speak out loud against their fellow Europeans in the colonial government or from the white settler community<sup>44</sup>. The conclusion, that “most are remembered for their love and self-sacrifice<sup>45</sup>” is a general consensus among the Christians in Kenya.

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<sup>44</sup> The shining example for this is W.E. Owen from the Anglican church, who was considered by many white settlers to be a traitor. He used the press in Britain to lobby for the rights of the Africans. He became so unpopular with the CMS and the government, that in 1930 he had to resign and go back to England.

<sup>45</sup> Kenya Churches Handbook, 1973, P. 34.

There is no doubt that at least the “pioneers” among them had to endure great hardships in order to do their work and for the lack of modern medicine, many had to pay with their very lives for their enthusiasm.

Despite this, it is important to look at some of the more difficult parts of the story in order to understand the urge for independency better.

Being a Christian in the early years meant to a great extent to be estranged from the native environment. It was not only a change of religious beliefs, but of a whole life-style. Wearing clothes used not to be very common – even in Kisumu town- before the missionaries arrived, neither was going to schools, visiting clinics or doctors etc. “Christians looked different, used different music, played different games, and even smelled different from their neighbours”<sup>46</sup>.

In his novel “the river between”, Kenya’s best known author Ngugi wa Thiong’o paints the very drastic picture of a large chasm dividing the Christian converts and their fellow tribesmen and – women who have remained followers of the traditional faith and life<sup>47</sup>.

For him the message is clear: If the churchmen are able to turn brothers into enemies, their motives can’t be the genuine concern for the indigenous people. They are really agents of an ideology that puts everything European first, including the political power.

When there was need to get into contact with the leadership of the local people, the missionaries turned to the chiefs of the respective areas. These chiefs were to a large extent appointed by the colonial government and therefore the legitimacy of their office was in doubt. Most of them welcomed the missions which also meant additional power to them. The mission schools were at first regarded as schools “for the chiefs’ sons”.

At the same time, the missionaries took “chiefly functions” of their own by having acquired relatively large pieces of land, employing many people and providing important institutions.<sup>48</sup>

Among the issues bringing about a lot of controversies was the question as to whether members of polygamous families could become Christians, i.e. could be baptized. Polygamy was especially common in Western Kenya and was such an integral part of the local culture, that the people must have been completely bewildered by the idea, that there should be anything wrong with it. The hard stance that the main mission churches took towards the issue was the source of a lot of grief and annoyance. It was not only the polygamous men that were excluded from baptism in many cases, but also the second, third, fourth wives etc. and even their children. A kind of strange “compromise” was the not uncommon practice to recognize the first wives as “official” while the others were rejected.

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<sup>46</sup> Kenya Churches Handbook, 1973, P. 34.

<sup>47</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong’o: The River between, London 1989.

*The attitude of the missionaries towards the indigenous culture and religion was generally disastrous. Nakedness was a sin by itself and if those nearly naked people started to shake their bodies to the rhythm of traditional dance, it was inevitable to the men of God, that only Satan himself could be the driving force behind such action. To integrate parts of such “primitive” culture into the theology and practice of Christian faith seemed impossible to them. There was no awareness of the fact that the Christianity they brought to Africa had integrated a lot of the values and customs of the European tribes it had been brought to some centuries earlier. The faith of the first Christians to the Middle East had been inculturized first into the Roman and Hellenistic culture, later into the cultural contexts to the Goths, Franks, Germans, Anglo-Saxons etc.*

*In the age of imperialism however it seemed impossible to again inculturize it into the culture of the Africans.*

“Deep below the surface the profound chasm between the White and the Black people remained present through the years. It was basically the old Greek -vs- Barbaros complex: those that do not speak Greek are Brabblers and sub-human therefore. Deep inside themselves the Europeans cherished the prejudice that they themselves had civilisation and our ancestors had not”<sup>49</sup>

*This also explains, why the ancient religions of the local people were not studied very much by the missionaries. It seemed to them a kind of sub-standard faith that needed no attention except when condemning it. The veneration of ancestors that is so important all over Africa was not respectable to them and all the “small” elements of daily religious life like oracles, divination, taboos and repulsion of demons were regarded as superstition.*

The good news of the gospel were therefore endangered from two sides:

The division between the different backgrounds of Christian denominations and even countries of the missionaries’ origin watered down the power of the Christian message from the very beginning. It seemed like different churches and mission societies preached different “Christianities” – most missionaries of the early years probably did not even know the spelling of “ecumenism”. At the same time the cultural “superiority-complex” of the Europeans did a lot of harm to the effective spread and deep penetration of the good news.

H. Burgman mentions one “big redeeming feature, one big bridge across the gap”<sup>50</sup>: The indigenous languages. The missionaries took great interest in them and proved to be enthusiastic linguists. And obviously learning someone’s language will not only help to communicate, but also to understand his or her thinking and reasoning a great deal better.

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<sup>48</sup> See Hastings, 1994, P. 892.

<sup>49</sup> Burgman, 1990, P. 167.

<sup>50</sup> Burgman, 1990, P. 168.

The question of culture and inculturation remains a field with many varied features, a colourful picture with many dark spots and also a good number of pleasant colours. And it remains the greatest challenge for all concerned with the development of African Christianity both in (theological) theory and (pastoral) practice.

## **I.5 The Revival Fellowship in Nyanza**

Several examples have been mentioned of the “Ugandan” influence on Western Kenya. The movement of “Revival” is another one. This time however the influence came “via” Uganda as it were and originated even further west. From Nyanza it then moved further east and affected the whole of the Kenyan church very strongly.

From 1927 onwards the kingdom of Rwanda saw the rise of an African lay revival movement. Among the main characteristics of the movement were its loose organizational structure and its heavy stress on the conversion of the individual into a “saved” person. “Saved” meaning primarily to have been washed with the blood of Christ and therefore to be born again in him. Public confession of sins was important from the beginning as it leads to spiritual cleansing. The “Brethren”<sup>51</sup> (as the Revivalists usually called themselves) believed that the act of being “born again” takes place through a deep personal experience of conversion. Christ is being “accepted as one’s personal saviour” and the status of being “saved” starts at the time of that experience. Many biblical passages speak of this status: i.e. Matthew 19:25, Mark 13:13, Luke 7:50, Acts 2:47, Acts 16:30, Romans 5:9, Romans 10:9, 1 Corinthians 1:18, Ephesians 2:8, 2 Thessalonians 2:10.

In the context presented here it becomes a near certainty, basically irrevocable once it has been achieved.

The new movement from Rwanda swept through Uganda and its large Anglican Church during the early years of the 1930s and had a very strong impact there<sup>52</sup>. By 1937/38 the first envoys of it reached Western Kenya where they inspired their fellow Anglicans at Maseno. Several Ugandan teams visited Maseno subsequently, while at the same time teams from Rwanda

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<sup>51</sup> “Wandugu” in Kiswahili. In Luganda the word “balokole” (saved ones) is used. In Dholuo the word “lalruok” was used for “fellowship”, though this originally indicated the conspiracy of people who are planning a crime. The saved one in Dholuo are the “JoMowar”.

<sup>52</sup> The roots of the Revival in East Africa can be traced to the “Oxford Movement” in England and to the “Keshwick Convention”, which goes back as far as 1870. In Uganda, the Anglican missionary George Pilkington came from that background and greatly promoted the spread of the Revival movement. See Shorter, Njiru, 2001, P. 17.

ventured into the central areas of Kenya holding successful preaching services in Nairobi (Pumwani) and Kabete.

From the beginning the movement also had to face stiff opposition from the established mission churches. The authorities, especially within the Anglican church that was strongly affected, always swayed between fascination and rejection. Sometimes members of the Revival were excluded from “normal” church activities. Especially the habit of public confession of sins and the constant claim of being “born again” (while the other church members are not) met a lot of hostility.

Some missionaries referred to Revival as “the Rwandan Heresy”. It was only after World War II that it became accepted more and more by the leadership of the Anglican Church (as well as the one of the Methodist and the Presbyterian Church). From 1947 big meetings were organised in main centres like Kikuyu, Kabete or Maseno that were called “conventions”. The Maseno Convention of 1951 attracted 6,000 Christians, “Maseno 2” in 1956 saw the attendance of 12,000.<sup>53</sup>

In Nyanza the spread of Revival moved fast from the original spiritual home of the Anglican church to other centres. Maybe this was already the first shift from the centre to “outside” the church. The most important place was now Ramba (on the way to Bondo) under the leadership of Ishmael Noo. Small “armies” toured the whole of Bondo Division, preaching at all the market places with the help of microphones and enthusiastic hymns.

“So successful were Noo and his followers that the second and third wives of polygamous marriages started to desert their non-Christian husbands; and many wives of monogamous marriages left their ‘unsaved’ husbands to obey the call.”<sup>54</sup>

Very soon however, Noo himself and his close allies were accused of sexual excesses, which were allegedly taking place at Ramba involving the ladies mentioned above. And it was indeed the conviction of Noo’s followers, that there could be nothing wrong with women and men sleeping together at the Revival centre, since “to the pure all things are pure”<sup>55</sup>. Their indisputable state of salvation put them above such petty laws and rules as standard moral conduct or traditional taboos.

The self-evident disturbances these happenings brought about were to lead Revival in Nyanza into a crisis: The reverend A. Stanway rejected Noo and his teachings, while at the same time another group following the Kikuyu preacher Bildad Kaggia emerged and contradicted the established Revival movement with his own views and teachings. What else could have been a

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<sup>53</sup> Kenya Churches Handbook, 1973, P. 113.

<sup>54</sup> Welbourn, Ogot, 1966, P. 30.

<sup>55</sup> Welbourn, Ogot, 1966, P. 30.

remedy to this situation than to turn back to the direction where the movement came from? A group of Revivalists sent a mission to Uganda in order to seek counsel from the leaders there. And the counsel they got proved to be a blessing to their movement back in Nyanza: The period from 1948 to 1952 saw Revival at its peak, spreading quickly to almost all other places in Kenya and even venturing into Tanzania.

The Uganda brethren had among other things advised their fellows from Western Kenya to firmly reject the teachings of Noo and Kaggia, to always stress the element of conversion and (public) confession and to conduct the revival *within* the church.

At a big convention at Nyabondo in Nyakach 1948 Noo and his followers split with the rest of the Revival movement and formed an own independent church<sup>56</sup>. The struggles with Kaggia's movement also resulted into the registration of a new church.

The result of the Uganda consultation mentioned last – the one of staying within the church – was a very crucial one which was to put its stamp on the discussion for a long time. For it seems not a far-fetched thought that people who believe in the certainty of having been saved should stop to rely on an institution of such “worldly” nature as the church is. After all, elections of leaders, power struggles between the clergy, financial problems and administrative worries should be things that the saved ones are far beyond. On the other hand, the Anglican Church and its Christians have been the natural place for the spread of Revival in Nyanza all along. The question whether to remain within or to move out of the church was not only discussed, it also brought forth respective action. At a public meeting in Sakwa in 1953, the “Kuhama” movement was launched. The followers were known in Swahili as “Wahamaji” in Dholuo as “Joremo” and in English as “the Separatists”. More and more emphasis was placed by this group on the blood of Jesus having cleansed the saved ones from sin. It was not only the sinful church they left, but also their traditional ways of mixing with their fellow tribesmen and women. The family ties, that are so important in the traditional society, became rather irrelevant to them, since only the community of the saved ones could be their true family. Also involvement in politics was a worldly matter for them that they did not want to have anything to do with. Funerals of non-saved people were left unattended by them just as any other celebration was. For them it became clear: People who are cleansed by the blood can not mix at all with those who are still in the darkness of sin, however “un-African” or contradictory to the ways of the Luo and Luhya that may be.

“Kuhama”, or “Dar” in Dholuo, means to emigrate, to move out. And again the movement of the migration let many to Ramba, which became the headquarters. Here the Anglican Church at

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<sup>56</sup> The “Christian Universal Evangelical Union“.

Maseno found its greatest challenge. Already Revival as such had been in danger of taking away a lot of authority from the official leaders. Now the even more radical “Kuhama” movement took over the leadership among the Revivalists and soon had a vast majority within their ranks<sup>57</sup>. Naturally, the clergy and the “lay-readers” were strongly opposed to the movement in the first place. But within the course of time they realized, that a showdown would mean the danger of losing the bulk of the church members. Slowly but surely the leadership, shifted sides and consequently stood against another group that should have been the natural ally: The “Johera”, the people of love, was a movement based at Maseno and pleading for revival *within* the church. It was first supported by the top level leaders, among them Festo Olang’, who later became bishop. An argument broke out between them and the “Kuhama” movement. The two sections of Revival fundamentally disagreed on the consequences of salvation and the dispute grew stronger and stronger in the first half of the 1950s.

The ultimate result was the break-away of the “Church of Christ in Africa” under the leadership of Matthew Ajuoga and Meshak Owira. The most significant mixture of doctrinal issues and the quest for African leadership has to be further explored in the next chapter. But so much already here: This break-away can be seen as a paradigm for so many others and as one of the most crucial ones in African church history.

There is another matter still in connection with the issue of Revival, that needs attention. From what I have portrayed so far, one can easily identify the Revival movement as a Christ-centred one. To welcome Christ in one’s soul and life and to be washed by his blood are the paramount components of faith.

There was however –having started earlier and existing parallel – a movement of revival that revolved around the gifts of the *Spirit*. Owing much to the Pentecostals and the “Roho (Spirit) Churches” among the Luhya and the Luo, this type of revival began to influence the people at Ramba and at Maseno likewise. Speaking in tongues and being possessed by the Holy Ghost was what mattered most for the “Spirit Revival” and their forms of worship found their way into the service of Revival as it had been known thus far by the Anglicans. Up to today it is the origin of much controversy whether speaking in tongues, praying and singing in a state of frenzy should have a place in those churches that stand in the tradition of celebrating their services in a more quiet and orderly way. Catholics turn into Charismatics, Evangelicals become Pentecostals.

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<sup>57</sup> Barrett, 1968, P. 11-12: “Like Abraham and Moses migrating from Egypt, large numbers of Revival brethren migrated out of the mission churches in search of a more spiritual religion. Scores of Luo Anglicans and evangelists left with the saying *adar gi yesu* (‘I migrate with Jesus, I migrate from the church, I migrate from all secular councils’). A large-scale organized secession was narrowly averted and the Revival remained within the church when in 1955 four of its leaders were consecrated as the first Anglican bishops by the Archbishop of Canterbury”.

There is a point in history that shows us the immense power of the Spirit-centred revival: In 1927 the Friends at Kaimosi celebrated one of their big meetings, during which happened the famous “outpouring of the Spirit”.

The Reverend Arthur Chilson was a missionary with the Friends and during his time back home in America had been in contact with Pentecostals. He quickly became inspired by their way of worship and when he came to Kaimosi again he “disclosed to his avid listeners, only too prepared to comply, that his Church ‘back home’ in the United States was indeed a group of ‘Shakers’<sup>58</sup>”. During the big meeting some time later it happened that the “shaking” somehow got out of control and the Spirit possessed so many, that this event is known as the “outpouring of the Spirit” and the beginning of the “Holy Spirit Revival” within the Friends African Mission. Differences as to whether such frenzy is compatible with the faith of the Quakers prompted the breakaway of a large section of Christians to start the Roho Church among the Luhya. Whether or not they knew about the Roho Revival that had led to great disturbances within the Anglican Church already some ten years before is a question that seems to be open or is answered differently by different people. Alfayo Odongo Mango had been the leader of this movement among the Luo. His name has to be mentioned closely in connection with the founding of the “ Ruwe Holy Ghost” and the “ Musanda Holy Ghost Church”.

The time of the big “conventions” is over and gone are the times when “over 90 per cent of all clergy in the Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist churches<sup>59</sup>” belonged to the Revival fellowship. Big “crusades” in public places are the order of the day and the place, where people expect revival to come from, is no longer Uganda but countries much further west and to the north across the Atlantic.

The Revival fellowship nevertheless plays an important role still in the life of older church members and its historical influence on the Protestant, Pentecostal and independent churches in Western Kenya today can not be overestimated.

## **I.6 The emergence of the independent churches in Nyanza**

The first major secession in Nyanza happened already in 1914: The one of the Nomiya Luo Mission from the Anglican Church. The founder of Nomiya (‘God has given (it) to me’), Yohana Owalo had been the first Luo baptised at the Catholic Mission of Ojolla<sup>60</sup> and later became a catechist. After he fell in disgrace with the Catholics he had contact with the Quakers

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<sup>58</sup> Hastings, 1994, P. 896.

<sup>59</sup> Kenya Churches Handbook, 1973, P. 117.

<sup>60</sup> See Burgman, 1990, P. 288.

at Kaimosi and while staying at Mombasa adopted parts of the Muslim faith<sup>61</sup>. He then joined the Anglican church and gathered followers among his local congregation. His church claims that it was founded in 1907, the official registration however took place in 1914. Having emerged before the coming of the Revival movement, the Nomiya church was not influenced by Pentecostal and Evangelical theology. It appears as a merger between Christianity in its Anglican and Catholic form, having some considerable influence of Islamic doctrine and giving much room to Luo tradition and customs. From “Nomiya Luo Mission”, the name changed to “Nomiya Luo Church” and later to “Nomiya Church” only. Numerous splits happened within the course of time, as it is so common with AICs.

The next major secession happened as a result of the above mentioned Spirit revival movements. The Spirit Churches, mostly recognizable by the cross adorning the typical clothes, started among the Luhya as a result of the Kaimosi events in 1927, while among the Luo the origins trace back to the year 1916, when the Anglican preacher Alfayo Odongo Mango started the Spirit revival around his home in Musanda (Ugenya)<sup>62</sup>. It stayed within the Anglican Church until the disturbances of 1934: Grave collision between his followers and opponents led to the murder of Odongo, who had by then reached the rank of a pastor. He perished in his hut that had been set on fire. Some of his close associates, best known among them Lawi Obonyo, were also killed. The Musanda Holy Ghost Church was immediately founded and led to a mass exodus from the Anglican Church. In 1939 the Ruwe Holy Ghost Church was the first split that was followed by so many<sup>63</sup>. Looking at the situation now it seems almost impossible to keep track of

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<sup>61</sup> Mombasa, the capital of the Kenyan Coast by that time was by far the largest town in Kenya. It is now surpassed in size only by Nairobi. The whole coastal strip from Somalia to Mozambique was and is up to today heavily influenced by Islam. Through intensive trade with the Arab world (Oman, Yemen etc.) but also with Egypt and the region of the Persian Gulf, the Kenya Coast with its centres at Mombasa, Lamu and Malindi, had contact with Islam as early as in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. At around that time these towns were founded by Arab traders. Through this it happened, that the coast of Kenya took a completely different route in history than the “hinterland”. Mission efforts of Islam were not very strong for a long time and up to today the Muslims are a small minority in Central and Western Kenya. There are however local exceptions of this rule. Mumias for example is a town in Western Kenya, which is up to today dominated by Muslims. The historic reason for this is that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century a local “king” of chief had converted to Islam and made his subjects also to leave their native religion. The North Eastern Province of Kenya, which is very scarcely populated, also has a majority of Muslim inhabitants, which is due to its proximity to the coast in the South and to Somalia in the East. Out of Kenya’s total population in the year 2000, 7% were Muslims. The custom of polygamy is not an Influence of the Arab culture, but has been a common practice in all parts of Africa all along.

<sup>62</sup> Northern Part of Luo-land, in Siaya District.

<sup>63</sup> In the interview with a pastor of the Ruwe Holy Ghost Church (see appendix: Interview 11) a different view was stated. According to him, the Ruwe Church was the earlier one, from which the Musanda Holy Ghost Church split. Interviews 16 (with a bishop from the Musanda Church) and 18 (Bethsaida Roho Matakatiifu Church) however claim the opposite.

I here refer to the information given in the Kenya Churches Handbook, which states:

„In 1939 the founder [of the Ruwe Holy Ghost Church] was forced out of Musanda Holy Ghost Church of which he was then archbishop, in a dispute over compelling members to wear uniforms glorifying the martyred founder Alfayo Odongo-Mango. A large number of followers seceded with him. Rival headquarters were then opened at Ruwe“. Kenya Churches Handbook, 1973, P. 249.

all the different smaller and larger groups that have seceded again and again from one or the other *Roho* Church. It makes much more sense to look at them as one big movement of indigenous Spirit Churches that differ here and there in some minor doctrinal questions, more often however only in the question as to who is the leader and what is the rule of dressing. The Spirit churches at the same time have had an immense influence on the other independent churches, since they – together with the Pentecostal Missionaries – have planted the heavy emphasis on the “gifts of the Spirit” so deeply into the religious soil of Kenya.

Another very significant group was the Dini ya Msambwa, the “Religion<sup>64</sup> of the Ancestral Spirits”. It should be termed a nativistic movement rather than a Christian church, since it went back to the religion of the ancestors. At the same time Christian influences can not be overlooked either. Elija Masinde started it in 1944 when he was still a member of the Friends African Mission. In their zealotry, he and his followers turned very violent, especially against the Europeans and their movement was proscribed four years later by the colonial authorities. After Independence in 1963 it was registered as a legal society and again proscribed by the government in 1968. In the shape of the Dini ya Msambwa, the struggle between the new and the old religion became clearer than ever before or after. To take Mt. Elgon as Zion was the straight road back. Not a diversion and not a detour.

Next in line of the big breakaways was the one of the Church of Christ in Africa (CCA). It was at the same time the most powerful and challenging one, since it was carried out by young intellectuals who had already climbed into high ranks among the pastors of the Anglican church and knew their doctrines and their theology extremely well. And interesting enough, they claim that it was their desire to save the church from proceeding on the wrong path, that made them to disagree so fundamentally with their leaders.

They were the “Johera<sup>65</sup>” faction of the Revival fellowship as mentioned above and had their centre at Maseno. “Love” for them meant not to exclude and antagonize all those who are not “saved”. They were against the total detachment of the “Jomowar” from their neighbours, their clans and their community as a whole. Love also meant the opposite of condemnation and the persuasion, that God wants everybody to come and share the blessings of being a member of the church community, whatever her/his state of salvation may be.

The bishop of Mombasa found himself unable to solve the conflict in a satisfactory way and although the “Johera” were clearly the group trying to protect the church and its organisation by advocating “Revival within the church”, the events of the time and the political twists and turns

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<sup>64</sup> The Swahili word „dini“ can be translated as “creed”, “faith”, “religion” or “worship”.

<sup>65</sup> Dholuo for „People of Love“.

did not favour them. “Gradually the Johera found that the tables were being turned on them.<sup>66</sup>” The top leadership more and more supported Ramba and the “Joremo” and even put an ultimatum to the Johera that all clergy participating in further meetings would be suspended. When seven of them<sup>67</sup> - under the leadership of Matthew Ajuoga and Meshak Owira – refused to comply and were really suspended, the schism became inevitable. A huge exodus of some 16,000 Luo Anglicans followed immediately and the number of followers grew rapidly within the first years. Initially the suspended clergy saw themselves as the leaders of the true Anglican Church and did not want to leave it. After they were advised by government authorities to register as a separate church, they did so in January 1958. The Church of Christ in Africa (CCA) was formed and by 1967 claimed to have grown to a membership of 75,000<sup>68</sup>.

Looking at the story of the CCA as narrated and analysed by B.A. Ogot<sup>69</sup>, one gets the impression that not only the complex “political” situation of the Anglican Church in Nyanza at the time with its warring factions of Revival caused the split, but also the lack of readiness on the side of the CMS to advance African leadership. The leaders of the CCA saw themselves also as the spearhead of the long overdue africanization of the church.

A further split cutting painfully into the substance of the new church happened in 1960 when the two bishops Ajuoga and Owira differed over leadership issues. As a result Owira segregated founding the Holy Trinity Church in Africa and taking along around 1000 Christians.

Up to today the CCA stands firm in the tradition of Anglicanism, using the book of common prayer and following the traditional order of the church service. Anybody unaware of the differences in clothing (of the clergy mainly) would probably be unable to distinguish an Anglican service from one of the Johera. Matthew Ajuoga is still the leader – now holding the title of an Archbishop – and the headquarters are still at “Dala Hera” (the home of love) next to the Kibos road in Kisumu.

That “Church of Christ *in Africa*” is not only a name, but also a manifesto is obvious. Like a whole number of independent churches having the element “Africa” or “African” as part of their names, the CCA wanted to be a church for the people of a much wider than their “tribal” area. To be conscious of the African heritage was a concern even more important for the Christians of all churches in the 1950s and 60s than it is now. That the ideals of Panafricanism and nationalism have by now subsided again behind the tribal factor is a sad shift of priorities, even more so if one looks at it from the background of Christian ideals of solidarity and fellowship.

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<sup>66</sup> Barrett, 1968, P. 12.

<sup>67</sup> See Barrett, 1968, P. 12.

<sup>68</sup> See Barrett, 1968, P. 13.

<sup>69</sup> Welbourn, Ogot, 1966, PP 21-70.

The story of the first big “wave” of secessions would not be complete without mentioning the breakaways that affected the non-Anglican churches in Nyanza.

In 1942 it was the time of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada to suffer the first split, although the word “suffer” might not imply to this case as much as it does to others. The Pentecostal churches after all, have always been much less attached to rigid structures than the two big churches, constituting themselves more in the form of movements or – to use their own term – in “assemblies”. This fact is easy to comprehend if one looks at their pre-occupation with “not being of this world” (John 8:23; 18:36), but part of the chosen few and marked by the Holy Ghost. Much like the Revival fellowship, the “assemblies” care little about the complex issues of “being church” and involving themselves in “earthly matters” of that kind. It therefore only seems consequent that Otto Keller, the leader of the Pentecostal mission at Nyang’ori at the time gave leave – and even his blessings – to Zakayo Kivuli when the latter decided to form his own organization and to move away from the leadership of the Canadian<sup>70</sup> missionary. This at least is the version of the story as was told by Kivuli himself and how the history-conscious of the members tell it to date<sup>71</sup>. Where it corresponds with the facts in the strict sense of historical science is a question explored in great detail by F.B. Welbourn in 1966<sup>72</sup>.

The newly founded church, in any case, spread like a bushfire among the Luhya and Luo and established its headquarters near Nyang’ori at the church built on the land of Kivuli. The place was called Nineveh and lent its name to the new foundation: African Israel Church Nineveh (AICN). Some of the typical characteristics include the taking of Friday as the holy day (preceded by a period of penance every Thursday evening), the strong emphasis on symbols (flags, white dresses, etc.) and the procession along the roads on Sundays. Exorcisms and spirit possession are also strong elements up to now and as a whole one can term the AICN as a Pentecostal church with an African face.

This African face is by no means only represented by the church members being Africans. It was, much as in the case of the CCA, all important that the quest for African leadership and self-reliance could be put into practice and be given an ideological background. African culture, whole-sale condemned by most of the missionaries, was given room to interpret the Christian traditions anew. Whether this was done in full conscience and knowledge is an important question to be further explored.

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<sup>70</sup> In actual terms, Keller – a German born emigrant – was a citizen of the USA, working for the PA of Canada.

<sup>71</sup> „Such a move would have been by no means out of accord with the independent tradition of the Pentecostal Churches“ F.B. Welbourn, A place to feel at home, P. 80

<sup>72</sup> Welbourn, Ogot, 1966, PP 73-112.

The form of Christianity pre-occupied with the gifts of the Spirit now had a second independent driving force after the Roho churches and in the course of the numerous splits from AICN the two traditions often influenced each other.

From the same mission at Nyang'ori came another AIC in 1952: The African Divine Church (ADC). Again the pursuit of self-determination for the African leaders played a major role. Saul Chabuga led a section of the congregation away and established the centre for "his" new church at Gamalenga. Today the ADC is one of the most dynamic and growing churches, mainly because its evangelists are so industrious in preaching, singing and dancing at market places.

Also other big churches like the African Inland Mission, the Church of God or the Seventh-day Adventists found themselves faced with the situation of breakaways and there is indeed no major mission church that has not been affected by the "wave" of independency in Western Kenya.

The Roman Catholic Church does not have such a tradition of "giving birth" to many different new denominations as Protestantism has. It is at least partly due to this historical background that the Catholic missionaries in Africa saw relatively few independent churches breaking away from their missions.

In Nyanza however we have one of the exceptions – and it is a very significant one : The Church of Maria Legio<sup>73</sup>. A considerable number of scientists and researchers have been attracted by this extraordinary display of traditional Luo culture married with the colourful rites and customs of Catholicism.

"Catholic leaders were inclined to look [at the break-away movements] with faint amusement and dismiss them as a typical Protestant hereditary affliction bred through generations of deficient discipline. These leaders had not fathomed the pull of popular revival and of venerable local customs, and of national feelings."<sup>74</sup>

The Catholic Christians of Nyanza in the 1960s "shared the prevailing religious views of the time: that it was normal that charismatic persons should start their own churches; that there was undue domination by Europeans, also in the churches; that Uhuru would bring fantastic blessings, no more restrictive laws, no more bwanas (masters) to be bowed for, and maybe even ready cash for all."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Official name: „Legio Maria of African Church Mission“.

<sup>74</sup> Burgman, 1990, P. 293.

<sup>75</sup> Burgman, 1990, P. 295.

The search for “why did it happen?” is naturally conducted even more seriously in the case of Legio Maria, since it is considered so unusual<sup>76</sup>. One of the roots is clearly a popular movement among Catholics of the time, which was directing its devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Rosary prayer: “The Legion of Mary” was founded in Dublin, Ireland in 1921<sup>77</sup> and brought to East Africa by Edel Quinn, a charismatic missionary, who gathered followers in Catholic circles wherever she went. It is certainly no coincidence, that this movement, which had swept across the Catholic Church of Nyanza in the mid 50s, was bearing the same name as the independent church took later. One could not go greatly amiss terming this movement another one of the revivals<sup>78</sup>. And neither can it be a coincidence that one of the leaders of the Legion of Mary, one Joseph Manyonyi, is reported to have had “Pentecostal tastes”<sup>79</sup>.

Three very colourful figures were involved in the leadership and the foundation of Maria Legio<sup>80</sup>: Gaudencia Aoko, “Holy Father” Simeon Ondeto and his “spiritual mother” Maria<sup>81</sup>. All three of them had powerful dreams, visions and calls and had already before the break-away been practising exorcisms, gathering followers around them.

Legio Maria was founded in December 1963 – after some dispute with Catholic Missionaries – the same month that saw the independence of the Republic of Kenya officially proclaimed. “Uhuru”, freedom, brought so much hope to the people of Kenya. And just as self-governance was the political order of the day, so the followers of this new “African Catholicism” clearly expressed their desire for independence from the domination by European churchmen. A lot of co-operation – at least unofficially and at a regional level – between the political advocates of Uhuru and the leaders of “Legio” was the result. Jaramogi Oginga Odinga was the most prominent among the Luo politicians. He supported the new nationalist church seeking to strengthen his stance in Nyanza and Kenya as a whole. He seemed to find “in religious symbolism, a power of political resistance to central government<sup>82</sup>”. And just like Odinga soon fell out of grace with the Kenyatta Government, the Legio Maria also started to defy government orders and clashed with police many times during the early years. In a strange contrast this seems to stand with the other-worldly attitude displayed by their members and

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<sup>76</sup> „An almost unique example of a modern separation from Rome“. Welbourn, Ogot, 1966, P. 147.

<sup>77</sup> Frank Duff, a Catholic layman who dedicated his life to the „true devotion of the Blessed Virgin Mary“, is considered the founder of the movement. Its early formation was influenced by the model of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. From it was adopted the weekly meeting with its definite ritual of prayer and its organizational structure. The main aim has been and still is the dedication of the life of the members to Mary, which includes a strong spirituality around the Rosary prayer.

<sup>78</sup> After the Spirit-centred and the Christ-centred now a Mary-centred revival in Nyanza?

<sup>79</sup> See Burgman, 1990, P. 293.

<sup>80</sup> The use of „Maria Legio“ or „Legio Maria“ will within this work indicate the independent church, not the Catholic Lay movement.

<sup>81</sup> who was unmarried and claims that Simeon was her son and a virgin-birth.

<sup>82</sup> Welbourn, Ogot, 1966, P. 148.

clergy many times, which incorporates the official condemnation of Christian involvement in politics.

It was and it is a church remarkable in many ways. Apart from being the only major break-away from the Catholic church it is also the only representative in Western Kenya of the messianic type of independent churches. Ondeto was not just the founder and first “pope”. For the members of Legio Maria he was the black Christ who had come back to deliver Africa and the whole world.

“And so, all of a sudden this new religion was there, as large as life. And not just a flash in the pan, not just a straw fire, but a real community of often poor, insecure or frustrated small people. A community with a flashy cult of symbols, rites and taboos suggesting a new life. A community of agreement, equality and common activities, where full active participation led to firm commitment. A community full of African relevance: spirit world, healing, ecstasies, dreams, tolerance of polygamy and Christianised witchcraft.<sup>83</sup>”

How does all this correspond however with the fact, that it were the Christians of the Legio Maria, who vigorously fought the remnants of traditional religion (like the practice of traditional Luo diviners), destroyed so many places and symbols of the ancient cult? Again the issue of “africanization” takes the look of a very complex matter where issues of leadership (self-determination) culture (traditional religion) and the difference between conscious and unconscious action need to be carefully and separately considered.

*The story of schism and the initiation of ever more new churches is continuing until the present day in Western Kenya. The break-aways are however not from the big mission churches any more, but from the independent churches themselves, leading to smaller and smaller splinter groups, all registered as societies holding government certificates.*

*The mission churches have followed the policy of africanization on a very serious note in the past decades and coming from Nairobi (and other big urban centres of the world) we see a new surge of religious movements emerging, which promises wealth and escape from poverty to the believer in Christ, but has nothing much to do with African culture.*

*In between these developments, the AICs will have to find their place, possible not without redefining their role in religion and society that has to be a quite different one than in the 1950s, 60s and 70s during their time of advent.*

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<sup>83</sup> Burgman, 1990, P. 295.

## I.7      **Independency in Africa**

Western Kenya is the “cradle” of independent churches in East Africa. To give an overview of the history and development of AICs however can not be complete without looking at the situation in other parts of the country and the continent and at the “phenomenon” as it presents itself in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole.

David B. Barrett in his classical work “Schism and Renewal in Africa” (1968) sees the emergence of the phenomenon of “independency” as somewhat inevitable given certain underlying factors in the historical situation of a particular African tribe.

He notes that, looking at the numerous publications already existing in 1968 that describe independent churches in Africa, “in most cases observers were reporting each on a single movement or region and were under the impression that it was an isolated but dangerous outbreak arising out of some local misunderstanding of the Christian faith while very few authors in the first half the 20<sup>th</sup> century “realized that they were witnessing the local manifestations of a continent-wide phenomenon.”<sup>84</sup>”

Always concentrating on the tribal unit within which the development of an AIC takes place, he devised a scale of “religious tension”, which he calls “The tribal Zeitgeist”. If a tribal unit has reached a certain level on the scale, secession from mission churches becomes inescapable according to this model. Factors determining the scale include questions like “Did colonial rule arrive more than 100 years ago?”, “Did the missions arrive more than 60 years ago?”, “Has the bible been published?”, or “Is there independency in any physically adjoining tribe?”<sup>85</sup>.

This view of causative factors would lead away from the idea that local schisms are the outcome of incidental clashes between African charismatic personalities and individual missionaries ignorant of the spiritual needs that exist among the congregation they lead.

Despite his heavy emphasis on figures and statistics<sup>86</sup>, Barrett later comes to a rather emotional conclusion, in that he regards “a failure in love” to be the common root cause of independency: “The root cause common to the entire movement of independency, therefore, may be seen in this on aspect of culture clash: *a failure in sensitivity, the failure of missions at one small point to demonstrate consistently the fullness of the biblical concept of love as sensitive*

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<sup>84</sup> Barrett, 1968, P. 38.

<sup>85</sup> Barrett, 1968, P. 108.

<sup>86</sup> Once an aeronautical engineer he quit his profession in 1952 to train for the Church of England priesthood, expressing hope the church could make use of his mathematics expertise and pioneering computer work. "Forget science completely," his bishop advised. But Barrett could not. Since adding a religion doctorate from Columbia University to his technical background, he has spent 40 years systematizing information on world religions, a calling he discovered while assigned as an Anglican missionary in Nyanza. When the Anglicans first posted him to Kenya in 1957, he was supposed to work alongside an African priest, Matthew Ajuoga. But Ajuoga

*understanding towards others as equals, the failure to study and understand African society, religion and psychology in any depth, together with a dawning African perception from the vernacular scriptures of the catastrophic nature of the failure and of the urgent necessity to remedy it in order that Christianity might survive on African soil.*<sup>87</sup>”

African Initiated Churches by now have a history of well over 100 years. Is it therefore still appropriate to talk of a “phenomenon”, as if they were something new and odd that needs to be studied first before any sensible conclusion can be reached? Stephen Hayes believes that it is not<sup>88</sup>. He concedes that researchers and scholars have to stake out the area of concern and consequently distinguish between the “mission” churches or “historical churches” and the AICs. At the same time however, “the ‘demarcation of the field’ can so easily become a watertight barrier of exclusion.” Hayes cites the example of the “Ethiopian Church” in South Africa: “The problem with this view becomes clearer if we remember that the Ethiopian Church broke away from the Methodist Church about 100 years after the Methodist movement itself had broken away from the Church of England and that a similar period has now passed since the Ethiopian Church broke away in 1892. The Ethiopian Church therefore has at least as much claim to be “historical” as the Methodist Church itself did in 1892.”

From this point of view, AICs could be seen as an African continuation of the long tradition of schisms in the history of the Christian church, especially the ones within Protestantism.

Hastings phrased it like this: “African Catholics were being good Catholics (putting the unity and authority of the Church first), African Protestants were being good Protestants, members of a tradition in which Church unity had always taken second place.”<sup>89</sup>”

That when taking a closer look, enough particular phenomena – regarding location and particular church (tradition) – are still to be found and examined, is obvious.

Among the causative factors, attention has to be drawn to two issues linked to each other: The reading of the bible and the search for an “active” God.

Barrett sees the publication of the Holy Scriptures in the vernacular languages as so important, since for a long time it was impossible for the African converts to draw from this most important source of our faith.

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had just formed the CCA. So Barrett encountered at the very beginning of his missionary assignment the rise of “Schism and Renewal”.

<sup>87</sup> Barrett, 1968, P. 156.

<sup>88</sup> Stephen Hayes, The African Independent Churches: Judgement Through Terminology? in:

Missionalia, the journal of the Southern African Missiological Society, Vol.20 No. 2 (August 1992), pp 139-146.

<sup>89</sup>Hastings, 1994, P. 528.

For this again there were various reasons: One was that the scriptures had to be translated first into the numerous languages<sup>90</sup>, which obviously took some time<sup>91</sup>. Secondly the wrong notion of superiority made many missionaries to think that they were the only ones to interpret the scriptures, while the “natives” had to follow their interpretation. Some of them even withheld the text of the bible thinking that it could have “dangerous” consequences to leave such interpretation to the “simple minds” of their subordinates.

A third reason applies to the Catholic Church: For a very long time it was not common at all for ordinary Catholics to possess a bible. Tradition was all that mattered and the scriptures were left entirely to scholars. When the New and the Old Testament finally did appear in the vernacular African languages – which was undoubtedly the merit of missionaries – this usually had a great impact on the readers. Elisabeth Isichei writes: “ They found in the world of the Bible, a world of victory over sickness and death, of mastery over evil spirits [...]. The emphasis on healing and miracles was not wholly absent from the mission churches, but, typically, they interpreted disease in a rationalist-scientific way, and relied more on hospitals than prayer to solve health problems<sup>92</sup>.” She quotes the Shona prophet Johane Masowe: "When we were in these synagogues [churches] we used to read about the works of Jesus Christ, cripples were made to walk and the dead were brought to life, evil spirits driven out. That was what was being done in Jerusalem. We Africans, however, who were being instructed by white people, never did anything like that. We were taught to read the Bible, but we ourselves never did what the people of the Bible used to do<sup>93</sup>."

*The way a convert from Traditional African Religion to Christianity is inclined to look at Christ is therefore not so much the image of one who stands by his side in his daily constraints as the one suffering on the cross, but the image of the one who won the battle against demon possession and the one who was able to perform miracles.*

“The AICs, it is felt, evidence the fact that Africans at the grassroots level gravitate towards a Christ as deliverer from all oppressive forces, i.e. diseases both physical and mental, poverty,

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<sup>90</sup> In Kenya alone there are well over 50 of them spoken. It is a very common misinformation, that they are just local „dialects“ that only differ in the way for example the „tribal“ dialects of Germany do. The languages of the Luo and Luhya for instance differ at least as much as Danish and Spanish, while the ones of the Luo and the Kalenjin might resemble in the manner French and Italian do. Would anybody call French and Italian mere “dialects” of the same language? Or maybe English and Dutch?

<sup>91</sup> The New Testament was usually published first before some years later the translation of the whole bible was available.

<sup>92</sup> Isichei, 1995, P. 254.

<sup>93</sup> Isichei, 1995, P. 256.

barrenness, etc. This can be understood as a grassroots level understanding of the Christus Victor model of Christology, the Christology of the early church”<sup>94</sup>.

Also the God of the Old Testament, who shows his power in defeating the enemies of Israel and the prophets, was much more what fitted into this picture. The world of the Old testament is full of taboos and traditions (i.e. wife inheritance, the right of the first-born, spiritual uncleanness during menstruation, etc.), very similar to what one can find in many ethnic groups of Africa. It was hard to understand why polygamy should be forbidden for Christians while it was a very normal part of the Old Testament cultural practices which the New Testament does not reject. The fight against demons and witches again, that is so much part of the African world of thinking, where diseases have spiritual causes and cures, is much closer to the Biblical world than to the western world. The missionaries were children of the enlightenment and looked at the world with the typical western scientific eyes.

Putting the general view of a great many of African Christians a bit more bluntly, one could ask: *What is the use of a new faith that proclaims God as the one to whom we can only pray for help, with no certainty of deliverance from our daily reality of poverty and illness. A God who no longer casts out the demons possessing us and our fellows? A Christ who performed miraculous healing in Galilee and Jerusalem but to us only leave doctors and hospitals?*

To give a geographical overview on the situation, the other “centre” of independency in Kenya could be a starting point: Kikuyuland.

The churches that could be termed “nationalist” had an especially difficult stand here, since they were very easily associated with the freedom fighters among the Kikuyu. The “Mau Mau” insurrection was only the most radical of movements. Also in general terms, the Kikuyu were much more active in the struggle for “Uhuru” than most other ethnic groups in Kenya, since the white settlers had occupied large pieces of their tribal land. Most nationalist churches emerged during the struggles of the 1920s and 30s. Another issue was very crucial in Kikuyuland: Female circumcision<sup>95</sup>. This cultural practice was very strongly opposed and indeed combated by the missionaries<sup>96</sup>, which in turn led to a considerable exodus from the mission churches. This issue could not play a role for the emergence of independent churches among the Luo, since they do not practice circumcision as a rite of initiation.

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<sup>94</sup> Richie, Ian, „The Messiah whose nose knows. Or: Survivals of African Religion in Christianized Kenya: The Legio Maria as Case Study”. Presented to conference “African Christianity: Past, Present, Future”. Wycliffe College, Toronto, 1998. Available at <http://www3.sympatico.ca/ian.ritchie/Legio.htm>. Quoted from the internet on 01.11.2001.

<sup>95</sup> Meanwhile the more appropriate term „female genital mutilation“ is in common use.

<sup>96</sup> In Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s novel „the river between“ this is one of the central problems.

Apart from the nationalist churches, the AICs with strong Pentecostal inclination are most prominent. The development went up to a stage, when the same Spirit Churches emerged, that we can find in Western Kenya. The members of these are known as the “Akurinu” or “Aroti” (Dreamers). Many of them are wearing characteristic turbans.

Some Kikuyu Spirit Churches are linked to the Roho churches of Western Kenya, most of them however are entirely separate. Though their history of evolution is slightly different, the number of different AICs and the number of members compared to the total population in this central part of Kenya almost equals the proportions found in the western part of the country.

A look at the historical development of AICs in the Republic (formerly the Union) of South Africa is giving an insight at the same time into the general classification of “types” of independent churches that have emerged also in other parts of Africa.

South Africa has been a primary “study field” for researchers on AICs due to the great number of different churches, comparable only to Kenya. Bengt Sundkler's “Bantu prophets in South Africa”, published in 1948, was one of the first monographs to deal systematically with what we know today as the African Independent Churches<sup>97</sup>. Sundkler himself was a Lutheran missionary at the time and could, like Barrett in Kenya, combine his interest as a researcher with his everyday missionary work.

The history of secession from mission authority started already in 1884, when Nehemia Tile and his followers split from the Wesleyan Mission Church<sup>98</sup>. In 1892, again a split from the Weslyans, Mangena M. Mokone founded the “Ethiopian Church”. This choice of name was of great significance. It refers to biblical passages like Ps 68:31 or Acts 8:27ff and at the same time the historical fact that Ethiopia is the only country in Africa, that has never been colonized. It did, on the contrary, successfully repel any attempts of Europeans to control it entirely<sup>99</sup>. At the beginning of the “Ethiopian Church” reference was made mainly to Abyssinia or Ethiopia as the great country that is ruled by the only African Christian king<sup>100</sup>. Cush, son of Ham, is regarded as the first ancestor of the Africans while Ethiopia and Cush are considered to be the same<sup>101</sup>. This Ethiopian mythology shows the way to the cause of secession: What mattered was the question of control over the churches.

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<sup>97</sup> Sundkler, Bengt, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, Oxford 1961 (second edition).

<sup>98</sup> Methodists.

<sup>99</sup> There was the battle at Adowa in 1896 and, most important, the Italo-Abyssinian war of 1935.

<sup>100</sup> See Sundkler, 1961, P. 56.

This ideology was later picked up by the panafricanist movement of the “Rastafaris”. They declared “Ras Tafari” Haile Selassie (1892-1975), the Ethiopian Emperor, to be a reincarnation of Christ, the Lion of Judah, King of Kings, Prince of Peace.

<sup>101</sup> Genesis 10:6, 1 Chronicles 1:8, Isaiah 11:11, Isaiah 20:3

And since the South African settler racism prevented any hope for African leadership also in the religious field, the search for self-government of Africans in the Christian churches was even stronger than, e.g. in Nigeria, where Anti-colonialism and African nationalism also led to the foundation of “Ethiopian” churches.

The second “type” of independent churches is represented in South Africa by the “Zionists”. Their main reference is to another myth connected to a geographical place: The Holy Land and its holy mountain of Zion. The elements “Apostolic” of “Jerusalem” in names of churches also indicate their being part of the “Zionistic” movement<sup>102</sup>. Baptism by full immersion in a pool or river representing Jordan is a central element.

Zionist churches are mainly found among the Zulu and Swazi and have their roots in Protestant Christianity, just like their “Ethiopian” counterparts. They originally stem from a church founded by American missionaries and have for a long time had strong links with the American Zionist Church (Illinois, near Chicago). Very soon however, most Zionistic churches were entirely led by Zulu and Swazi leaders with no more reference to Illinois<sup>103</sup>.

Faith healing and speaking with tongues are important characteristics which shows clearly that Zionism is a South African form of Pentecostalism, although the elements of Traditional African Religion (TAR) – especially the ones connected to spirit possession and the like – have been given ample space for integration into this type of churches, which again distinguishes them from the “Ethiopians”. Further differentiation could be made to describe the “prophetic” and the “messianic” churches separately. Sundkler however clearly groups them under the term “Zionist”, since they share the main characteristics<sup>104</sup>.

A very important Zionist church, which has just those prophetic and messianic features also, is the church of the “Nazarites” (ama Nazaretha). Their charismatic first leader and founder Isiah Shembe seceded from the African National Baptist Church in 1911. He was given messianic attributes by his followers<sup>105</sup>.

Because of the strong driving force of the Spirit, the Zionists have proved to be an extremely dynamic movement that has influenced the Ethiopian Churches more than they in turn have passed ideas and ideologies to the Zionists.

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<sup>102</sup> Which by the way has nothing to do with the Jewish movement of Zionism (Theodor Herzl and others).

<sup>103</sup> A few of them so however still keep strong links with Zion Illinois up to today– for example the „Zion Evangelical Ministries of Africa“.

<sup>104</sup> Sundkler, 1961, P. 59.

<sup>105</sup> Like in many similar cases, it is difficult to determine whether he himself supported or promoted this idea.

One could state that in Nyanza, this type of AICs is represented by the Roho-Churches, while the CCA could be termed an “Ethiopian” church<sup>106</sup>.

In a way, this distinction of “Ethiopians” and “Zionists” in South Africa provides a paradigm for the understanding of how and why there are different kinds of AICs.

The marked absence of spirit filled enthusiasm and dancing often associated with indigenous churches is found with probably the largest AIC on the continent: The “Eglise de Jésus Christ sur la terre par le prophète Simon Kimbangu” (EJCSK). This church originated in Belgian Congo in the 1920s and is generally referred to as the “Kimbanguists”. Simon Kimbangu began a ministry of faith healing in 1921, but became suspect to the oppressive colonial authorities, since he draw large crowds to him. For fear of nationalistic rebellion, Kimbangu was arrested and imprisoned. He died in 1951, still a prisoner. His followers were persecuted in a brutal way by the Belgian Colonialists, which made the church to operate underground for a long time. This in turn provided a strong myth and a powerful force of solidarity. Kimbangu’s youngest son, Joseph Diangienda led the new church into the era of independence, joining the World Council of Churches in 1970. Again some messianic tendencies, ascribed to Kimbangu after his death, can be observed within this church. Kimbanguists can now be found in many places of the continent and outside Africa, where Congolese immigrants have settled, though the Democratic Republic of Congo (former Zaire) is still the centre.

In English speaking West Africa, it was again the Anglican tradition to become the origin of big independent churches. The church history of Nigeria has an especially interesting story to tell: The one of Samuel Ajayi Crowther.

Crowther, from the ethnic group of the Yoruba, was captured by slave traders during the early 1820s. He was liberated by a British cruiser intercepting the way of the slave ship and brought to Freetown, Sierra Leone. In Freetown, Ajayi entered a school run by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and was baptized a Christian in 1825, taking the name Samuel Crowther. He was subsequently educated in Sierra Leone and England and because of his extraordinary capability elevated to a high leadership position in his church. In 1864 he became the first African (sub-Sahara) to be consecrated as a bishop. He was posted in his home land in Nigeria, where he had to persevere through many difficulties, but did excellent work among his native Yoruba people. “Some years later, however, at the time of the new imperialism, a new breed of British missionaries arrived in West Africa.

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<sup>106</sup> This would of course overlook the fact that the CCA also split due to doctrinal differences and not „only“

They were imbued with the notions of European (and in particular British) superiority and regarded Crowther's consecration as a bishop as premature. [...] To them it was very significant indeed that Crowther was black”.

This revisionist view “dominated the CMS headquarters, and came to dominate the church in Africa for the next seventy years<sup>107</sup>”.

This story is in the view of many observers directly linked to the emergence of independent churches in Nigeria. The frustration about this type of behaviour by the white missionaries made many Yoruba Christians to completely lose faith in the integrity of the former. Secession would seem a “natural” reaction.

One big break-away is the “Church of the Lord”, popularly called “Aladura”<sup>108</sup>. In the 1930s, Joseph Babalola had a multitude of visions and led a revival movement within the Anglican Church. After the CMS broke with him, he gathered thousands of Yoruba to join the new independent church. The term “Aladura” now sums up a whole number of different churches.

Many more examples of larger and smaller AICs could be cited here from West, East and Southern Africa. The question remains how the future of this dynamic “movement” of independency, that has its origins in the colonial times, will look like in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Will further splits resulting in ever smaller factions water down the impetus of it all? Will (at least the larger) AICs become “historical”, “established” churches co-existing without friction beside the old mission churches? Or will a complete redefinition of the role of these churches lead to a new stimulus of expanding in membership and administration?

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because of the pursuit of nationalism and self-government.

<sup>107</sup> Stephen Hayes, 1992, P.140.

<sup>108</sup> See Barrett, 1968, P. 19.

## II The interview process

### II.1 The interviewed churches

The interviews building the basis for this work were conducted during the months of January and February 2001 in and around Kisumu. It was my aim to include

- the oldest and largest AICs in Nyanza as well as some of the smaller ones.
- At the same time I tried to cover the different “types” of AICs – see table 1.
- A third criterion was to cover smaller AICs that had split from larger ones in order to see the differences that had prompted the split. (Interviews 4, 2, 12)

The following table gives a quick overview of possible “categories” of AICs that I developed during the evaluation of the interviews.

The abbreviations indicated in the table are continuously going to be used from this point onward.

<b>Table 1</b> <i>Categories of AICs and the interviewed churches</i>
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<i>Interview No.</i>		<i>Abbreviation</i>
	<b><u>Anglican Tradition</u></b>	
<b>1</b>	<b>Church of Christ in African (Johera)</b>	CCA
<b>9</b>	<b>Holy Trinity Church in Africa</b>	HTCA
<b>2</b>	<b>Mercy and Holy Ghost Church</b>	MHGC
	<b><u>Tradition of Africa Inland Mission</u></b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Church of Peace in Africa</b>	CPA
	<b><u>Catholic Tradition</u></b>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Legio Maria of African Church Mission (Mamboleo)</b>	Legio
<b>8</b>	<b>Legio Maria of African Church Mission (Manyatta)</b>	Legio

*Interview No.*

*Abbreviation*

**"Spirit-Centred Churches"**

*a) Pentecostal Tradition*

<b>10</b>	<b>African Israel Church Nineveh</b>	AICN
<b>5</b>	<b>African Divine Church</b>	ADC

*b) Roho Churches*

<b>16</b>	<b>Musanda Holy Ghost Church of E. A.</b>	Musanda
<b>11</b>	<b>Ruwe Holy Ghost Church of East Africa</b>	Ruwe
<b>14</b>	<b>Musanda Christian Church of Kenya</b>	MCCK
<b>6</b>	<b>Roho Israel Church of God in Africa</b>	Roho Israel
<b>18</b>	<b>Bethsaida Roho Matakafu Church</b>	Bethsaida
<b>17</b>	<b>Sayun Church of God East Africa</b>	Sayun
<b>19</b>	<b>Roho Fueny Maler Church</b>	RFMC
<b>20</b>	<b>Roho Revelation Church</b>	RRC

*c) "Spirit-Centred Churches" from Anglican or Catholic Tradition*

<b>2</b>	<b>Mercy and Holy Ghost Church</b>	MHGC
<b>4</b>	<b>Legio Maria of African Church Mission (Mamboleo)</b>	Legio
<b>8</b>	<b>Legio Maria of African Church Mission (Manyatta)</b>	Legio

**Nomiya Churches**

<b>7</b>	<b>Nomiya Church</b>	Nomiya
<b>12</b>	<b>Nomiya Fueny Maler</b>	NFM

**"Churches closely resembling American Evangelicals"**

<b>15</b>	<b>Voice of Salvation and Healing</b>	VOSH
<b>21</b>	<b>Power of Jesus Around the World</b>	Power
<b>13</b>	<b>Miracles and Wonders Church</b>	MWC

**(Coptic Church)**

<b>(22</b>	<b>Coptic Orthodox Church)</b>	Coptic
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Two of the churches listed under “Anglican Tradition” and under “The Tradition of the Africa Inland Mission”, namely the CCA, the HTCA, and the CPA, could be termed “nationalist churches”. Also the expression “Ethiopian Churches” would be appropriate, in case one wants to apply Sundkler’s terminology that was “made” for the South African Situation. Consequently the South African “Zionists” could then be associated with what I termed “Spirit-Centred Churches”.

Historical background of the different groups of AICs is provided in chapter I.6: “The emergence of the independent churches in Nyanza” (P. 24-31)

Two interviews were taken with pastors from Legio Maria: I had heard that a split had occurred within this church and I was brought to both of the alleged factions. It was however not possible to determine during the interviews who had split from who and what had been the reasons. Neither did the two factions bear different names. I therefore wrote in brackets the location of the centres of the two groups: One in Mamboleo, just outside Kisumu and one in the part of town which is known as Manyatta. The latter was clearly the older centre while the former gave the impression of still being built up.

“Legio Maria” and the “Mercy and Holy Ghost Church” appear twice in table 1, since they represent the tradition of a large mission church and at the same time show the characteristics of the “Spirit-centred” AICs.

The choice of churches to be incorporated in the study was not easy to make. It was questionable whether the “Power of Jesus around the World Church” and the “Voice of Salvation and Healing Church” should be included, since they clearly fit the definition of being “African instituted”, but in their ways of worshipping and preaching resemble North American Evangelicals and Pentecostals so much, that they seem to have little in common with the other AICs of “Ethiopian-Nationalist” or “Spirit-centred” type. Another untypical characteristic of them is the strong link, especially in terms of finances, to similar church groups in the North, while the rest of the AICs largely rely only on the funds they can raise locally and among their members – in most cases very little indeed.

I did in the end decide to incorporate “Power” and “VOSH”, because of the fact that despite the outside influence they are still to be considered independent in their decisions and because they have clearly been founded by Africans and are being headed by Africans.

A particular case is also the one of the Coptic Orthodox Church. It refers to the See of St. Mark in Egypt, to the Pope of Alexandria<sup>109</sup> and is therefore part of a very old tradition that started in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century<sup>110</sup>. This church has been very instrumental in the establishment of the OAIC, being one of its founder members. Since Egypt is geographically part of Africa, it is a church *instituted in Africa*.

I do however feel, that having such an immense length history and tradition, it does not fit into the group of churches to be reflected on here. One of the main characteristics of the AICs that are part of this study is that they have been founded during the last 15 decades – roughly speaking. The “split” of the Coptic Church however is to be traced back more than 150 decades and it is therefore clearly a “historic” church, even though it did not reach Western Kenya until the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

I am adding the interview with a deacon from the Coptic Orthodox Church at the end of the list, but I do not include the contents of it in the following investigations. The total number of interviews being evaluated here is therefore 21, with the 22<sup>nd</sup> added for additional reference only.

Together with my companion I also visited the headquarters of a church just outside Kisumu called the “Holy Ghost Coptic Church”, where we were welcomed by the leader. He gave us some information about his church and the specific doctrines and customs, but was not ready to have us interview one of the pastors or local leaders. Instead he insisted on being interviewed himself. I considered the offer not very promising, since it would have been out of accord with the range of pastors or people in leadership positions interviewed from the other churches.

During my research I learnt that the “Holy Ghost Coptic Church” really owes much more of its beliefs and practices to the Catholic tradition rather than to the Coptic one and that the Coptic Orthodox Church had in the past challenged its right to bear the name “Coptic” – also in court.

I am aware that the question, whether to call a particular church an “AIC” or not, can lead to considerable controversy, since the “demarcation of the field” is based on rather flexible criteria<sup>111</sup>.

The examples here mentioned show, how difficult it is to draw a line of demarcation between the churches to be included and the ones to be excluded in a research about AICs and I am sure that not everybody concerned and conversant with the issue will agree with my choices.

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<sup>109</sup> Currently Shenouda III.

<sup>110</sup> Because of the disagreements that followed the Council of Chalcedon 451 A.D.

<sup>111</sup> See Hayes, 1992, *The African Independent Churches: Judgement Through Terminology?*

The following table lists the churches according to the order in which the interviews were taken. The transcription of the interviews in this order is found in the appendix.

<b>Table 2</b> <i>List of interviewed churches</i>
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- 1**    Church of Christ in African (Johera)
- 2**    Mercy and Holy Ghost Church
- 3**    Church of Peace in Africa
- 4**    Legio Maria of African Church Mission (Mamboleo)
- 5**    African Divine Church
- 6**    Roho Israel Church of God in Africa
- 7**    Nomiya Church
- 8**    Legio Maria of African Church Mission (Manyatta)
- 9**    Holy Trinity Church in Africa
- 10**   African Israel Church Nineveh
- 11**   Ruwe Holy Ghost Church of East Africa
- 12**   Nomiya Fueny Maler Church
- 13**   Miracles and Wonders Church
- 14**   Musanda Christian Church of Kenya
- 15**   Voice of Salvation and Healing
- 16**   Musanda Holy Ghost Church of East Africa
- 17**   Sayun Church of God East Africa
- 18**   Betsaida Roho Matakatifu Church
- 19**   Roho Fueny Maler Church
- 20**   Roho Revelation Church
- 21**   Power of Jesus Around the World
- (22)** Coptic Orthodox Church)

## II.2 The interview method

The type of interviews I carried out was the one of “semi-structured interviews”. This means that I had a canon of questions that guided me through the talks with my vis-à-vis, but I did not have to stick too closely to the list and was able to react on something coming up by asking a question that I would otherwise have put forward at a later point. I nevertheless was eager to cover all the topics that I had chosen beforehand. The disadvantage of this method is that certain “side issues” are covered in some interviews, while in others the situation was different and they did not come up. For example: If I point out during the following passages, that 11 of the interviewees mentioned that during the church service people “speak in tongues”, then that does not mean with certainty that the remaining 10 do not have the habit of speaking in tongues in their churches, since it is possible, that out of those 10, three were not asked specifically about this issue. It can also be that having been asked about the personal history with the church, 19 people gave information as to which church they belonged to before joining an AIC, while two of them only mentioned how they joined the new church without saying where they were before. If they, as well as I, forgot to put forth this particular issue, it will somehow “spoil” the statistics.

It is therefore important to stress the qualitative nature of the applied interviewing method that can show trends and tendencies rather than a real qualitative set of figures.

Within empirical social research, the debate about the different advantages and disadvantages of quantitative and qualitative methods is an ongoing one. Quantitative research has its merits, where clear statistical figures are required about a particular problem. A main medium of quantitative research is the well-thought-about questionnaire, that the participants of the study have to fill in. The disadvantage of this is the comparatively low flexibility and the fact, that to consider the specific situation of the participants is almost impossible.

Subject oriented social science research therefore had to develop methods that enable the researcher to consider the background of the interviewed persons better (as well as the particular situation of the interview), while at the same time suffering the lack of exact figures and statistics.

In order to get an overview of the different methods and at the same time practical advice, I used works of Jürgen Bortz/Nicola Döring and of Uwe Flick<sup>112</sup>. It then became clear, that for the purpose of a study on AICs the interview methods of the qualitative methodology would be most appropriate. Here again there is a choice of doing “narrative” interviews, that give the interviewees maximum room for telling their personal story, or to do “semi-structured” interviews that all follow a set of questions in more or less the same order.

I decided to choose the narrative approach for my first question (with which I intended to learn something about the life history of the interviewee). The questions following after that were then asked within the framework of a semi-structured interview.

My work was greatly aided by a pastor of the African Israel Church Nineveh, who through his work with the OAIC is personally known to many of the church leaders and was able to advice me on who to visit and where to find the desired interview partners. With his help I reached the aim that I had set before: To interview pastors or people in leadership positions from about 20 different churches.

Most of the interviews were done in Dholuo, the language of the Luo people, which I am able to speak and understand to a passable extent. This language proficiency was of great help to me, it was however still indispensable to have the above mentioned companion, who would translate into English. Nine interviews were done entirely in English.

The interviews are all recorded on tape, save for a few shorter passages, where technical problems with the recording device led to some gaps. I was able to fill those either by visiting the particular interview partner again or by writing down the answer extracting from my memory and the one of my companion one day after the interview.

While still in Kenya I went through the process of putting all the interviews in writing. Hereby I followed the procedure of *summarizing* answers to my questions by putting them in the form of *statements*. I changed the words into third person, where the interview partner had said “I”.

There was of course no alteration of any of the opinions expressed whether they seemed plausible to me or not. My work was only to transcribe in a concise way the content of what the interviewed persons had said.

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<sup>112</sup> Bortz/Döring, *Forschungsmethoden und Evaluation*, Berlin 1995.

Flick, Uwe, *Qualitative Forschung : Theorie, Methoden, Anwendung in Psychologie und Sozialwissenschaften*, Hamburg 1995.

The first question I asked was aiming at learning something about the personal history of the interviewed person and to let him/her narrate this in as many words as he/she wished:

- **I would like to know something about your personal history in the church you are a member of. Please tell me when, how, and why you became a member and how your story has gone on up to now.**

After having listened to the narrated “story” I then asked some questions about issues that came up or requested for a more detailed account about one or the other topic.

The semi-structured part (standardised questions) consisted of a the following set of questions:

- **Which are the ways and forms of worship in your church? How do you celebrate when you come together for a church service?**
- **Which beliefs and teachings are important in your church, which major doctrines are there?**
- **What feasts and events do you celebrate?**
- **How did your church start? What is the history of your church?**
- **Is your church politically active? What about individual members? How does your church stand towards the "Ufungamano initiative"?**
- **Do you feel that the African culture and way of life is an important factor in your church? How does the African tradition reflect in your teachings and ways of worship?**
- **How do you evangelize and get new members of the church?**
- **What role do women play in your church?**
- **What differences and similarities with other churches do you see?**

The results of this interviews were subsequently grouped by me under the following headings:

- **Personal history of the interviewed person**
- **Ways of worshipping**
- **Beliefs, teachings, doctrines - Feasts and events**
- **History of the church**
- **Political activity**
- **African culture**
- **Evangelization**
- **Gender**
- **Differences and similarities with other churches**

## **III Interview evaluation**

During the interview evaluation I have counted statements of the interviewees that were identical and specified the respective figures. It is important to note here, that by doing this I do not intend to claim quantitative exactness but rather to show some interesting trends and tendencies. I therefore refrained from indicating figures through statistical graphs, the way they are used to visualize results of quantitative research.

### **III.1 Personal history**

#### **III.1.1 From mission church to AIC or born in AIC?**

- 9 interviewees stated that before joining the respective AIC, they were members of mission churches.
- 8 were either “born into” an AIC or followed their parents at childhood - before ever becoming part of a mission church or being baptized there.
- 3 had been members of a different AIC before joining the present one.
- 1 person did not mention which church he belonged to before he was “preached to” by an evangelizer of the AIC he then joined.

Out of the 8 that have always been in the AIC which they belong to now, 2 mentioned that also the parents or one of the parents were already “born into” the same, which means, that they are “third generation” members. 3 mentioned, that their parents were the ones who “defected”, in all three cases following the founder and leader. 3 did not mention whether they were 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation members.

#### **III.1.2 What makes the AIC attractive?**

In the following counts, one person can appear more than once:

- 7 of the interview persons mentioned that they got “saved” when listening to a preacher of an AIC.
- 4 said either that their heart or that the Holy Spirit showed them the way into the AIC.
- 8 narrated either an own experience of healing (miracle, spirit healing) or witnessed a close person being healed by the leader the AIC they consequently joined.
- 1 person stated, that the lively service and the Spirit that can be felt made the AIC attractive to him.

### **III.1.3 Position in the AIC**

- 19 of the interviewed people belong to the “clergy”. They are ministers or pastors or have climbed further: to Bishop, “chief minister”, “rural dean”, “archdeacon”, Archbishop, or to Cardinal.
- 2 of them are part of the “laity” and hold offices that are normally not occupied by pastors: secretary and vice-secretary.<sup>113</sup>

## **III.2 Ways of worshipping**

### **III.2.1 Liturgy**

- All the interviewed people gave information about a structured church service (liturgy) to which there is little or no alteration.
- 4 mentioned that there is a specific prayer book in use. The number of interviewed churches that use prayer books is probably much higher than 4. 2 mentioned the use of hymn books, the actual figure here is also much higher probably.
- 3 interview persons said that the service conducted in their church is entirely taken from the mission church it split from.

### **III.2.2 Healing, exorcism, testimony, prophecy**

- 5 of the interviewed mentioned that healing or exorcism (driving out of evil spirits/demons/Satan) is a regular part of the church service.
- 12 said that it is common that the congregation “speaks in tongues” during service.
- 11 said that prophecy or testimony is an integral part. This can either be that people testify on what they have experienced in their lives as “saved people” or what visions they have seen and what God has told them in dreams during the past week. It can also be an interpretation of what has been seen and heard during the ecstatic phase of the service: interpretation of the “words” spoken with tongues or the visions seen during the ecstatic shaking/possession by the Spirit.

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<sup>113</sup> Since the independent churches in Kenya are registered under the „societies act“, they are legally obliged to have secretary and treasurer and the respective deputies.

### **III.2.3 Music**

- 10 interviewees said that drums are used as musical instruments in their church.
- 7 mentioned also the characteristic “bells” (Dholuo: “olang”), i.e. metal rings beaten rhythmically.
- 6 said that no drums are used unless there is a choir singing. This statement was often accompanied by the remark that dancing, singing and clapping is done in a “moderate” way (avoiding a state of ecstasy and frenzy).

### **III.2.4 Bible reading and preaching**

- That a passage of the bible is read out during the church service was mentioned during many of the interviews (11). Mostly it was stated that the leader of the service chooses a passage “at random”, while in a few cases there is a fixed schedule of scripture reading for every week of the year. The former answer was mainly given by interviewees from the Roho Churches while the latter was commonly given by those who stand in the Anglican or the Catholic (Legio Maria) tradition.
- The bible reading was in all cases (when it was mentioned) connected to the process of preaching, in that the preaching has its foundation in the passage of the day.
- It was stated by a considerable number (7) of the interview persons, that the priest or pastor is not the only one preaching, teaching, addressing the congregation, but that there can be people from among the “ordinary” Christians participating as well. In some cases it was mentioned that the main preacher appoints certain people, others said that in their church those that want to partake in preaching just stand up and speak. A common answer was however that the main speaker is the last one to preach and has to “sum up” what the others have said before.

### **III.2.5 The Lord’s Supper**

“The Lord’s Supper” or the “Holy Communion” was an issue in most of the interviews.

- Only 3 of the interviewed persons said that it plays a central role and is celebrated often or even every Sunday.
- The most common answer (9) was that it is celebrated only occasionally. In one case these occasions are only Christmas and New Year. Otherwise the statement was “about once a month”.
- Only one said that the Lord’s Supper is never celebrated.

### **III.2.6 Holy day of the week**

The expression “Sabbato” is in common use among the members of AICs in Nyanza. It does not necessarily mean to be Saturday, but simply indicates the holy day of the week, the main day of worship.

- 4 interviewees mentioned that their main day is Saturday.
- One church covered has Friday as the Holy Day.
- It can be presumed that all the others have Sunday.

### **III.2.7 Other points that came up**

- The public confession of sins as an important part of the church service was mentioned often (7 times). Mostly it was stated that this is done at the beginning. Some said, that the Spirit can reveal sins that have not been confessed during the prophesying that comes later. One person mentioned that during confession, the door of the church is opened.
- A common way of organizing the church service seems to be to start at 9.00 AM and to end at 3.00 PM. This was mentioned by 3 people.
- 7 mentioned other common worship services in their church apart from the main one on “Sabbato”. Among the ones mentioned were: Services on weekdays, processions on Sundays, bible groups, and services for special occasions: Christmas, wedding, baptism, initiation.

### **III.3 Beliefs, teachings, doctrines – feasts and events**

#### **III.3.1 Foundations of faith and teaching**

- The faith in one God and/or in Jesus as the only saviour was mentioned as the foundation of faith in 5 interviews.
- 6 times the outstanding role of the Holy Spirit as the great teacher and leader was stressed.

N.B.: These two types of answers excluded each other.

- The faith in the Holy Trinity was mentioned 7 times.
- The bible as the centre of teaching and doctrines was mentioned 8 times.
- One interview leader, the one of the Nomiya Church, mentioned that his church does not believe in Jesus being God. In their teaching he is the “son of God” but does not share the divine nature of the Father.

#### **III.3.2 Moral teaching**

- 14 interview persons stated that their respective churches teach the total abstinence from alcohol.  
The prohibition of tobacco smoking appeared 6 times.
- 11 cited moral teaching around the issue of adultery and improper sexual behaviour.  
3 also mentioned that such improper behaviour includes going to discos.
- Moral teaching related to love and forgiveness, which includes the abstinence from fighting and quarrels appeared 7 times.
- 2 interviewees said that the teaching about polygamy in their AIC differs from the one of the mission churches.
- 2 said that their church teaches the proper way husband and wife should relate to each other.
- 1 mentioned that the teaching includes the prohibition of seeing a witchdoctor.

### **III.3.3 Salvation**

In most of the interviews it became clear, that the above mentioned moral teachings are strongly connected with the state of salvation of individual believers. That means, that if someone gets “saved” she/he will automatically not drink alcohol, commit adultery, go to disco halls etc.

- That the state of salvation is the central virtue of being a Christian was stated during seven of the interviews.

### **III.3.4 Sacraments**

- Baptism was mentioned 4 times as a central element in the life of the faithful of the particular AIC. 2 people said that this is always baptism by immersion (river baptism).
- Two interviewees said that the “holy communion” is a central element.

### **III.3.5 Rules and teachings attached to child birth**

A number of AICs have strong customs that have to be followed when a child is born: e.g. the child has to stay in the house for eight days before being brought to the sunlight during a special ceremony.

- Such commandments attached to childbirth appeared 4 times.

### **III.3.6 Dietary rules**

- Dietary commandments were mentioned 3 times. E.g. no consumption of goat meat, only mutton instead, no consumption of termites and ants, only certain lake fish are allowed while others are rejected.

### **III.3.7 Nomiya Churches**

The two interviews with pastors from Nomiya Churches revealed a whole set of commandments unique to this tradition only, as they are considered to have been directly revealed to the founder: circumcision of all males, purification rules after having become spiritually unclean, e.g. women during menstruation, people who have moved near a dead body etc.

### **III.3.8 Feasts and events**

- Easter as a yearly celebration was mentioned by 13 interviewed persons.
- Christmas 15 times.
- The celebration of New Years day: 5 times.

Christmas was generally considered more important than Easter. 1 person put it: “Christmas is bigger than Easter”. 1 could not think of the word “Pasaka” (Easter in Swahili), which could be an indication that it is not so much present in the mind as an important feast. If New Year was mentioned as a main feast day, it was put on one level of importance with Christmas and Easter.

- None of the interviewed people mentioned the celebration of Pentecost day, like it is celebrated in the Anglican or in the Catholic Church. 2 said specifically that Pentecost is not being celebrated.
- 4 interviewees noted that in their church, there are big conventions being held once a year – usually in August. They last several days and the participants camp at the place. Local expressions are “Kiche” and “Tarsoso”.
- 1 person cited the custom in his church of the celebration of the “unveiling of the cross”, which is done on the grave of a deceased member some time after the burial. 1 person on the contrary said that his church has abandoned this custom, since the leaders found it to be a pagan remnant.

## **III.4 History of the church**

### **III.4.1 From which church?**

- 4 of the interview churches split from the Anglican Church.
- 8 of them split from other AICs.
- 2 of the interviewed people said that their church broke away from the Catholic Church. (Those are the two alleged “factions” of the Legio Maria Church).
- 1 from the African Inland Mission.
- 2 from the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada.
- 1 interviewee said that the founder had not been a member of any church before.
- 3 said that their founder had been a member of a different church before starting “his” independent church, but did not secede from the former church in the usual sense of the word. This means that according to this view he did not take part of the congregation of the mission church along, but rather gathered followers from all kinds of different churches or people who had not been Christians.

### **III.4.2 Cause of secession**

- 8 of the interviewed persons said that their church broke away due to doctrinal reasons. 5 stated that this also included the fact that their founder supported spirit possession, miraculous healing, speaking in tongues etc. and was himself possessed by the Holy Spirit, had visions and revelations. This was not acceptable to their former churches.
- 7 stated that the break-away happened because of disputes over leadership. This can also include questioning of the authority of the church or wrangles over church funds.
- 2 times it was mentioned that the stance of the mission church towards the issue of polygamy was one disputed question among others.
- 7 of the founders did according to the interviews neither start “their” AIC due to doctrinal disagreements nor due to leadership struggles. The Holy Spirit told them to start a church and so they did.

### **III.4.3 Year of registration**

- 5 of the interviewed churches have been officially founded before 1950.
- 12 of them between 1950 and 1970.
- 3 were registered after 1970.
- 1 did not indicate the time or year of registration.
  
- 6 said that their church had to undergo investigation by the colonial government authorities before being registered. The colonial police was sent to establish whether those churches had something to do with the rising nationalism or even the Mau Mau rebellion.

### **III.4.4 The present leaders**

- 4 interviewed persons said that the founder of their church is still the overall leader now.
- 3 said the present overall leader is a relative (son, grandson) of the founder.
- 2 mentioned specifically that the present leader is *not* a relative of the founder.

## III.5 Political activity

### III.5.1 General views

- The majority of the interviewees saw no connection at all between church and politics. They felt that “politics of the world” were contrary to salvation or to being a Christian or to the Holy Spirit. 12 interviewed persons gave answers to this effect.
- 5 felt that it is wrong for church leaders to speak out on political issues.
- 3 answered that their church supports the government of the day.

A common model crystallized from the interviews that looks like this: Leaders of the church can not hold any political office, ordinary members however are free to do so.

- 7 interviewees said that their church follows this model, while
- 3 stated that in their church no member can engage in active politics by standing for election.
- One leader answered that the archbishop of his church stood as a candidate during the last parliamentary elections, but did so as a private person and not as a church leader.
- 2 interviewees said that their church is active in the field of development (schools, orphanages etc.) and they see that as a kind of political activity.
- 5 said that their church is politically active.
- 5 stated that it is the duty of the church to criticize politicians who do the wrong thing, in order to bring them back on the right track. This applies especially in case of the poor people being treated wrongly or in case of corrupt practices by the political leaders.
- 2 of the interviewed persons stated that church and politics are inseparable, since the church has to fulfil a prophetic role in the world, just like Jesus did.

### **III.5.2 Ufungamano**

The interviewees were specifically asked about the stand of their church towards the “Ufungamano”-Initiative for constitutional change.

“Ufungamano” was an initiative of churches and different other religious groups (Muslims, Hindus) to make sure that the process of reviewing the Kenyan constitution is “people driven”.<sup>114</sup>

- 20 of the interviewed churches are not part of the Ufungamano initiative. 1 of the interviewed persons said, that their archbishop used to attend the meetings of Ufungamano in Nairobi, but the members and the other leaders urged him to stop.
- 1 said that their leader regularly attends the meetings and is part of the initiative, but not on behalf of the church he is leading. Instead he is attending on behalf of the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCK)
- 12 of the interviewed persons said that their church is against the Ufungamano initiative, since it can not be the work of the church to engage in constitutional review. This according to them has to be left to parliament.
- 9 said that their church has no stand towards Ufungamano.
- 3 said that their church is a member in the organization called “Church and State for Development”, which means that it works closely together with the government as opposed to Ufungamano which, according to their view, works against the government.

## **III.6 African culture**

### **III.6.1 General statements**

- During the majority of interviews it was stated that church and African culture have nothing to do with each other at all. According to these 13 interviewed persons, African Tradition is a thing of the past which is contrary to the Christian spirit and Christian life.
- 2 times it was stated that the church has an own Christian culture which replaces the traditional one.
- 6 interviewed persons said that in their church those traditions of African life that are not opposed to bible teaching are accepted, while those who go against the bible are rejected. Examples given for acceptable traditions were: respect of the younger towards the older generation, hospitality towards visitors, rights of the first born of the family.

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<sup>114</sup> The meeting place in Nairobi is called “Ufungamano House”. Further explanation see P. 81-82.

- 4 immediately saw some reference to African traditions in their church, in that the liveliness of the church service reflects in the way the church services are conducted, i.e. dancing, clapping, rhythmic music, drumming etc.
- 2 people answered that drums, bells, dances are only found in their church because the bible instructs the faithful do praise God with songs and musical instruments<sup>115</sup>.

### III.6.2 Statements on polygamy

- There is a common way of dealing with the issue of polygamy which was mentioned by 12 of the interviewed persons:
  1. The church preaches the rule “one man, one wife” and is generally against polygamy.
  2. People from polygamous families are however not rejected. They are welcomed in the church since what they did before is considered to have been done “out of ignorance”. After joining the church they now know the right way to salvation and a man can therefore not marry another wife to add to the ones he already has.
  3. Polygamous men can not become pastors or climb into the higher leadership ranks. This agrees with the biblical teaching in 1 Timothy 3:2<sup>116</sup>, 1 Timothy 3:12<sup>117</sup> and Titus 1:5-6<sup>118</sup>.
- 1 of the interviewed persons said that polygamous men can not be members of the church at all.
- 2 said that pastors/leaders of the church must be husbands of only one wife, while “ordinary members” have no restrictions, i.e. they can also “add” more wives while being members of the church.

### III.6.3 Wife inheritance

The common custom in Western Kenya, upheld especially among the Luo, that the wife of a deceased man has to be inherited by his brother is also a controversial issue. It is a matter frequently discussed, since it concerns the accordance of culture and religion.

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<sup>115</sup> e.g. 1 Chronicles 25:6: „All these were under the direction of their father to sing in the house of the LORD, with cymbals, harps and lyres, for the service of the house of God“.

<sup>116</sup> “An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach...”

<sup>117</sup> “Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households”.

The discussion is further nourished by the fact that in the Old Testament, wife inheritance is recommended (under certain circumstances)<sup>119</sup>.

- It was stated in 5 interviews that wife-inheritance is not allowed at all in the respective churches.
- 2 interviewees said that only the “ordinary members” can inherit the widow of the deceased brother, while it is not allowed for leaders/pastors.
- 3 said that it is “discouraged” by the moral teachers of the church.
- 1 mentioned that in his church wife inheritance is permitted under the condition that the brother-in-law to whom the widow gets married is still single. In this case the usual marriage rites are not performed - instead, only a blessing is given by the pastor.

### **III.7 Evangelization**

- During 8 of the interviews, “crusades” were mentioned as the primary means of evangelization. A preacher of the respective church preaches in a public place, mostly in town, but possibly also in a rural market place. The preaching is usually accompanied by a gospel choir.
- 2 of the interviewed people said that their church is a member of the “Kisumu Town Fellowship of Churches”, which organizes very big crusades in the centre of Kisumu, often featuring well-known preachers from the USA<sup>120</sup> as the main guests.
- 6 times it was mentioned that “door-to-door evangelism” or “house-to-house prayers” are being carried out.
- 10 of the interviewees stated that non-members of their church hear of it by word of mouth. They see the good deeds or the big meetings of the church and through this learn about it.
- 1 said that non-members of the church learn about it by seeing the characteristic way of dressing of the members and therefore become interested.
- 5 stated that people join their church because they have been healed or because they have witnessed somebody else being healed by one of its members.

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118 “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion”.

<sup>119</sup> Deuteronomy 25:5 : “If brothers are living together and one of them, at his death, has no son, the wife of the dead man is not to be married outside the family to another man: let her husband's brother go in to her and make her his wife, doing as it is right for a brother-in-law to do.” Also: Deuteronomy 25:7, 25:9.

<sup>120</sup> e.g. Billy Graham, T.L. Osborn.

### **III.8 Gender**

One particularity about the interview partners was, that they were all male. This can in part be explained by the fact, that there are very few women pastors and that 19 of the 21 interviewed people were pastors.

Following the question about the role of women in their church,

- 11 mentioned that there are women groups in the church, which are also headed by women.
- 4 said that women are equal to the men in that they can also be pastors doing all the duties of male pastors and can (at least theoretically) climb into the higher leadership ranks.
- 2 said that women can become pastors, but not perform all the work that men can. E.g. they can preside over the burial of women but not of men.
- 13 stated that women can not be pastors.
- 2 mentioned the outstanding role of the archbishop's wife as a leader of the church.
- 2 answered that elderly women play a special role and are called "doctors of the church".

### **III.9 Differences and similarities**

This question was difficult to answer for the interviewees. Many found it hard to think of any differences their church could distinguish from others.

- 10 said that in their church the bible is the base of all teaching which is not the case in other churches.
- 2 claimed that in their church, unlike in others, "the sacrament" is very central. (These answers were given by the interviewees from both Legio Maria "factions" and they meant the sacrament of the Eucharist – interviews 4, 8).
- 2 said that other churches allow women to be pastors, which theirs would never do.
- 2 claimed that their church is much stronger in the field of healing than others
- 10 saw some similarities between their church and others. 5 saw these similarities with "other Roho Churches" and five saw them when comparing their church with the mission church it split from.

Other interesting aspects:

- The interviewee from the Nomiya Church stated that his church differs fundamentally in its teaching about Christ (Interview 7).
- The interviewee from the Musanda Holy Ghost Church (Interview 16) mentioned that the members of his church do not greet each other by shaking hands. He explained that this as a reference to Luke 10:4 : "Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way".
- The interviewee from the "Power of Jesus around the World Church" (Interview 21) claimed that the Sunday service in his church is conducted in a much more "orderly" way than it is done in the Roho churches.
- The interviewed pastor of Nomiya Fueny Maler (Interview 12) said that an important difference between his church and the other Nomiya church it broke away from, is that his church believes in the Holy Trinity and therefore recognizes Christ and the Holy Spirit as God.
- He also mentioned that the Nomiya Churches as a whole adhere to rules of purification that other churches do not have. A further difference is that in the Nomiya Churches each church building has something called "kibla", which always points north-east.
- The interviewed pastor from the Miracles & Wonders Church (Interview 13) stated that his church rejects certain traditional rites of Luo culture that have entered into other independent churches. He mentioned customs attached to graves of deceased members and those that command the mother of a new born baby to only leave the house after 8 days in order to present the child.

### **III.10 Other patterns**

The patterns mentioned so far were the outcome of an evaluation of the questions raised during the interviews. I would now like to add a few remarks about patterns arising from my observations. The most palpable fact to be observed was that all interviewees were male. The following observations mainly concern social and educational status of the interviewed persons.

- 7 of the interviewees were very fluent in English. Fluency in English in Kenya usually means that a person has been well educated, i.e. has been to secondary school.
- Low proficiency in the English language and the general impression made me conclude that the educational level of about 11 of the interview persons was very low.
- In 5 cases it was to be observed, that the high level of education of the interviewed person coincided with his openness towards the questions about political activity and African culture. Where others saw no connection at all to their church, these people stated, that Politics and Traditional Culture have to take room in the church and are even an integral part of it.
- It could clearly be observed, that very few of the interviewed people belonged to the earners of high income. Quite a number were in fact very poor.
- Also the number of “professional” pastors, that are paid by the church and can make a living from these earnings were very few. Most of the interviewed persons were at the same time farmers and pastors.
- It could also be seen that the funds that are at the disposal of the respective churches as a whole were very little in the majority of cases. Only some bigger churches like CCA, ADC, AICN seemed to be better off in terms of buildings and “infrastructure”, at least in as far as the headquarters are concerned. “Power” and VOSH had by far the most advanced buildings and equipment.

## **IV Further discussion of the interview topics**

After evaluating the outcome of the 21 interviews, the next step is now to discuss the results, provide further information for the understanding of the findings and at the same time to comment on them. This will put the trends and figures in a wider perspective.

I will continue to follow the order of the questions asked during the interviews, but will at times lay more emphasis on one subject that I consider more relevant and vice versa.

It turned out during the evaluation that some questions “produced” very interesting results, while others turned out to be not so fruitful.

Many conclusions and observations will have their value in that they tell something about the specific situation in Western Kenya, while others give insights into characteristics of AICs in general.

The information I use during the following comments is from three sources:

- The 21 interviews.
- The literature listed in the bibliography.
- My own observations during the interviews and while living in Nyanza.

### **IV.1 Personal history**

#### **IV.1.1 Conversion**

9 of the interviewed people were “converts” from mission churches to AICs, which tends to strengthen the common perception, that AICs are drawing their members largely from the group of people who are members of the “mainline” denominations but who are for one reason or the other not satisfied with what they find in their non-AIC congregation.

At the same time it is remarkable, that an almost equal number of interviewees has already been “born into” one of the AICs. Since many of the AICs in Nyanza were founded in the 1950s and 60s, we have now reached the stage of finding many second or even third generation members. Only 3 of the interviewed have changed from one AIC to another. This shows that there is a certain stability in membership in that belonging to an AIC is passed on to children and grandchildren. Whether this tendency is restricted to the clergy and higher leadership personnel,

or whether the “ordinary members” are also that stable in their membership “behaviour”, has to be left open.

To somebody unfamiliar with the religious landscape of Western Kenya it might seem surprising, that none of the interviews revealed a Christian convert from traditional religion. It is not surprising however if one knows that a person in this part of Kenya who is not a Christian or has no affiliation to a church (or to the Muslim, Hindu or Sikh religion) is very hard to come by and in fact almost impossible to find<sup>121</sup>.

#### **IV.1.2 Individual salvation**

The conviction of having been “saved” features very prominently in the interviews. As mentioned before, here the AICs follow closely the Pentecostal and Evangelical churches. The moral implications going along with this appear below under the heading “beliefs, teachings, doctrines”.

The strong individualistic character of this all-important personal “state of salvation” could strike the observer as very puzzling in a cultural environment where communal values and belonging to the group are so substantial. The traditional society among the Luo, Luhya, Kisii etc. (and most probably in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa) has been characterized overwhelmingly by one factor: community. How is it possible, that from a cultural background of this type, people would by large number stress their individual and personal state of faith while at the same time disregarding traditional values, rules or taboos of their society<sup>122</sup>? A historical explanation could be the strong influence of the Revival movement, which did not come from Europe to Kenya but from Rwanda and which was not dominated by white missionaries.

Another possible explanation could be found in the fact that *although the newly “saved” person, the “born again” Christian leaves the safety of one community, he or she at the same time also joins another one by his or her conversion. He or she joins fellow Africans into a community of “saved” people, which although it seems to be a mere agglomeration of “freed” Christians, at the same time has its strong demands on conformity, in that it demands this statement of salvation as an “entry pass” and the acceptance of moral obligations connected to it. The community of the “saved” in this way becomes the new home society with its specific rules and new taboos.*

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<sup>121</sup> This is different in other parts of Kenya, where the history of Christian mission does not back that far, e.g. in the pastoralist areas of the North (Turkana, Pokot etc.) or among the Massai.

<sup>122</sup> See heading „African culture“ Page 85.

### IV.1.3 Healing and exorcism

Another point that featured very strongly is the one of “healing”. A very common way of describing an experience of spirit healing sounds like this: “I was very sick for a long time and had seen many different doctors and hospitals. None of them was able to help me. Only when the people/a person from this church prayed for me/laid his hands on me, I was healed and have been okay ever since”.

The ailments often mentioned have to do with eyesight, problems of the respiratory tract or inner organs, (facial) paralysis and disability to use the legs (“lameness”).

Critics of such miraculous healing have claimed that the diseases involved are often healed only temporarily in a state of great enthusiasm, and that the “patients” later return to their former condition gradually. Criticism also includes the allegation that the sicknesses healed by miracle healers are mostly of minor nature and are being healed through psychosomatic processes that are simply overlooked by academic medicine, i.e. by “ordinary” doctors and hospitals.

However that may be, for Christians of many AICs, *healing and exorcism is a strong reality of Christian life that corresponds with the biblical stories of healing in the gospels. That this particular quality of Jesus, the one of the healer and exorcist is emphasized so much, has to do with the “Christus Victor” Christology mentioned above<sup>123</sup>, that is so obvious to African Christians.*

Whether the stronger influence in this question of healing and casting out of daemons comes from the Traditional African Religion or from the Pentecostal and Evangelical tradition of “the North” is a question that would need some further research.

### IV.1.4 Position in the AIC

That the interviewed people were all taken from the “clergy” or higher leadership ranks was my intention. It can be assumed that this fact influences the findings at one time or the other and the “results” of the interviews differ from a series that would be held with “ordinary” church members.

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<sup>123</sup> See page 34.

## IV.2 Ways of worshipping

### IV.2.1 Liturgy

Through the interviews it became evident, that AICs celebrate their church service according to a certain fixed schedule or “liturgy”. Also in the Roho churches each element of the service has its specific place, which means for instance that even speaking in tongues and possession by the Spirit usually happens during singing of certain songs and during the playing of the drums and the bell and not during the bible reading or the church announcements.

Prayer books and hymn books are in use in some churches, whereby they are often the same ones as the mission church uses, that the AIC sprang from. Churches following the Anglican tradition use the „Book of Common Prayer“, which plays an enormously important role also in the Anglican church itself to this day. Since its introduction in the sixteenth century it has had a great influence on everything written in English. It has gone through a number of revisions, both in England and in the other countries of the Anglican Communion, but the original text is still comprehensible and relevant.

The order of the Sunday service of the CCA (interview 1) is an example of a liturgy having been virtually “copied” from the Anglican Church<sup>124</sup>. Archbishop Ajuoga is known for explicitly fighting against tendencies of shaking and tongue speaking among his congregation.

### IV.2.2 The “gifts of the Spirit”

Among AICs in general, speaking in tongues is a very common phenomenon. This applies especially to the Roho Churches (interviews 6,11,14,16,18,19,20) and the ones influenced by them or by Pentecostalism (interviews 2,5,10,13,15,21).

The gift of “speaking in tongues” is mentioned several times in the New Testament, especially in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians<sup>125</sup>. It was common in the early church and has been picked up again very strongly by the movement of world-wide Pentecostalism. Welbourn looks at it in a more scientific way. He sums up phenomena like ”uncontrollable shaking, falling into trance and speaking with tongues“ under “dissociation” and “psychosomatic”:

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<sup>124</sup> This has its historical reason also in the fact that the CCA did at first not intend to be an „independent church“ but the true Anglican Church in Africa.

<sup>125</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:10: „and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.“ Also 1 Corinthians 12:28, 14:5-6, 14:22-23, 14:39 .

“Dissociation: an organized mental experience is repressed and ceases to be under conscious control. Under certain circumstances it can, nevertheless produce overt effects. Conscious fear may, in battle, be repressed as shameful but express itself in a functional paralyses which makes participation in the battle impossible. [...]

Psychosomatic: bodily symptoms having a psychological origin. Common examples are stomach-pains caused by shame. ‘Speaking with tongues’ is a phenomenon of this kind in which the person concerned speaks words of foreign origin which, consciously, he does not know. Rarely do the words form an intelligible sentence; and often they are little more than a stream of nonsense-syllables”<sup>126</sup>.

Aylward Shorter writes: “In this state the possessed person feels “double” and is not in control of what he or she says. The “tongues” or sounds which issue from the possessed person may be intelligible as a known language, but often there is a greater or lesser distortion. [...] In Christian Pentecostalism and Charismatic movements, glossolalia is taken as a sign of the indwelling Holy Spirit or as a form of inchoate or non-rational prayer<sup>127</sup>.”

If we add to the tongue-speaking the characteristic shaking and dancing then we have to direct our attention to the phenomenon of spirit possession in general.

Shorter describes spirit possession as “basically a belief that a spirit is submerging someone’s personality, speaking and acting through that person. Evidence may or may not be adduced for this belief. Usually, the evidence cited is an altered state of consciousness known as dissociated mentality, glossolalia or tongues. Sometimes the person affected performs actions conforming to the identity of the spirit which is thought to be possessing him or her.”<sup>128</sup>

When asking people who still have some connection to and knowledge about the traditional culture and religion in Western Kenya, I was told that possession by an ancestral spirit is a very frequent happening, which the outsider can recognize by “funny” movements of the possessed person or by the seemingly unfocused glance of the eyes and facial expression. The ancestor spirit can be a “good one”, who is at peace or one that is haunting the world because he or she is still disturbed by things that went wrong during his or her life.

Such examples among others, show that *spirit possession has been known to African society and culture before the Christian message reached it. Could it be that from there it is not a long way to the shaking and the dancing of possessed Christians in the Roho churches or in AICN? Spirits in general (and in plural) have always been integral part of the African world of thinking. In the AICs the Spirit replaces the spirits, the one Holy Spirit replaces the many ancestral and natural ones.*

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<sup>126</sup> Welbourn, Ogot, 1966, P. 13.

<sup>127</sup> Shorter, 1998, P. 71.

<sup>128</sup> Shorter, 1998, P. 70.

### IV.2.3 The spirit world and the existence of Satan

While the Christians of AICs still believe in the existence of other spirits, they are degraded to be unclean and evil demons – the Holy Spirit is “chuny maler” in the Luo language, “maler” meaning first of all “clean”, “pure” and therefore “holy”.

Just as Christianity does *not* mean for the Christian of the independent churches that any supernatural being besides the Trinitarian God does not exist and just as evil spirits for him are still a strong reality, the latter also applies to the world of witchcraft and magic. “Witchdoctors” and diviners are seen as powerful people whose works must not be underestimated.

The belief in the Christian God does not make these powers non-existent but supplies a tool to fight and repel them. Christ is seen to be stronger than all demons and witchdoctors and according to the bible he has never ruled out their existence.

Here a parallel could be drawn to the belief in the devil or “Satan” still common among many Christians also outside Africa. Among conservative Catholics and among Pentecostal and Evangelical Christians a look at the world can be observed in which the existence of “Satan” is as much a reality as is the existence of God, while the belief in Christ is the powerful counterforce to this personalized evil. For them the modern theological denial of the devil’s existence<sup>129</sup> is foolish and goes completely against their personal experience of the evil in this world.

### IV.2.4 Testimony and prophecy

Coming back to the works of the Spirit, the role of prophecy and testimony must also be looked into a bit closer. To testify the faith in God and to openly narrate personal experience with him is again a widespread practice among Pentecostal and Evangelical Christians everywhere in the world. Looking at the historical roots of many of the AICs in Nyanza one can therefore not be surprised to find it here.

Prophetic speaking, seeing visions of the future and of the will of God is however something that seems even more widespread in AICs than in the Pentecostal churches outside Africa. The term “prophetic churches” has therefore often been used<sup>130</sup> for those AICs, that do not belong to the “Ethiopian” type.

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<sup>129</sup> Haag, Herbert, Abschied vom Teufel - Vom christlichen Umgang mit dem Bösen, Düsseldorf 2000.

<sup>130</sup> For example by Elisabeth Isichei.(Isichei, 1995, P. 3).

“Prophecy” in this context can mean that one person is an outstanding prophet, usually the founder<sup>131</sup>. Interview 20 provides a good example in the “nabi” Samson Owiti<sup>132</sup>.

It can also mean, that members of the congregation “prophesize”, i.e. they tell either of the visions and prophetic insights that they have had prior to the church service or of the visions seen during speaking in tongues/being possessed in the church. Such prophecy can also include the interpretation of what was said during tongue-speaking. It has also been mentioned during the interviews that such interpretation can include the disclosure of un-confessed sins.

Contents touching on political issues are largely absent during such prophetic speech, as will be discussed later under the heading “political activity”. Only two interviewed people made a connection between prophecy and political action.

#### **IV.2.5 Music**

The musical instruments frequently used in services of AICs are the drum and the “bell”. These are beaten with such vigour and in such fast rhythm that the above mentioned state of possession of most of the present members is almost inevitable.

This does however not apply to the churches which are not explicitly spirit-centred (interviews 1,3,9,13,15,21) and come from the Anglican tradition, from the African Inland Mission or that closely resemble American Evangelicals. In these churches singing is done much more “orderly”, avoiding ecstatic conditions and frenzy. They use drums only when a choir (often a “gospel choir”) is singing in church and uses the rhythm to accompany the hymns.

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<sup>131</sup> The “classic” example within the history of research on AICs is Isiah Shembe of the “ama Nazaretha” church. See Sundkler, 1961, PP. 110-111.

<sup>132</sup> „On January 1st, Samson Owiti, the founder became possessed by the Holy Spirit and did not know what was happening with him. He started seeing visions. The lord talked to him in broad daylight. He also was told to open the bible and read certain passages from the book of Revelation.

God told him to come and see him on that day. He told him to hang up a white piece of cloth. On that cloth he could then see all his problems like on a photo. Later he saw the angels destroying those pictures of the problems, that had appeared on the white cloth. And by doing so the real problems were also removed and were no more. He was also given instructions by God to tell his people never to take any water that is not boiled. Sicknesses should be healed by prayer or in the hospital, but a sick person should not go to a witchdoctor”.

#### **IV.2.6 Bible reading**

Bible reading is part of all church services in AICs. In the Roho churches there is normally no schedule of readings to be followed throughout the year. To possess a bible and to bring it to church is very common and practised even by people who can not read. Here many AICs in Western Kenya show that they are also part of the Protestant tradition (“sola scriptura”). It can however also be observed in many cases that the book of the holy scriptures is seen as having special (protecting) power against evil and is used as a device to repel evil power.

Bible reading is always connected to preaching, which again is a feature not to be missed in any church service of an AIC.

The priests/pastors usually sit at the front part of the church in what is mostly referred to as the “sinagogi”<sup>133</sup>. During seven interviews it was mentioned that the main preacher is not the only one addressing and teaching the congregation, which points to a role of the pastor (bishop etc.) that looks more like the one of a moderator rather than of a sole conductor of the service.

#### **IV.2.7 The Lord’s Supper and the Sabbath tradition**

During the interviews I frequently also asked about the role of “the Lord’s Supper”, the “Holy Communion” or the “Eucharist”. It turned out that for most of the AICs this plays only a minor role. The frequency of celebrating it once a month is probably an influence of the protestant tradition.

To study the “sabbatarian” tradition among AICs in Nyanza in depth would demand some more effort. In the interviews this topic featured only occasionally. It did not appear very clearly what is the reason for four of the interviewed churches to celebrate on Saturday. It seems clear though that the Old Testament emphasis on the Sabbath day plays an important role. This could also explain the use of the term “sabbatto” as a general synonym for “holy day of the week”.

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<sup>133</sup> I heard this expression for the first time during the interviews. Up to now I have not found out the origin and the connection of the front part of the church building to the „synagogue“ – the Jewish assembly hall.

## IV.2.8 Public confession

As mentioned in the chapter about the Revival movement, public confession of sins has quite a long tradition among the churches in Nyanza. This has influenced especially the Roho Churches, but also the AICN and the ADC to have it as regular part of the church service, usually at the beginning.

Confession of guilt in a more general sense and asking for mercy is part of the Catholic (“Kyrie eleison”) and the Anglican Sunday service as well. It is however a very different way of doing this, if the faithful stand up and publicly confess their wrongdoings of the past week in the presence of the whole congregation. It has often been criticized that this can lead to considerable embarrassment, in case for instance the father of a family would confess and act of adultery while his wife, children and neighbours are also present in the church. It is nevertheless emphasized as a very strong requirement in those churches that practise it. Sometimes the interviewees mentioned that during tongue-speaking and prophesizing the Spirit can reveal sins of individual church members that have not been confessed beforehand. This belief is likely to put a lot of pressure on the church members not to omit any sinful deed during confession time. It is common for the Spirit-centred AICs to open doors and windows of the church in this initial stage of the service. During the interviews this was also mentioned by one person<sup>134</sup>.

Three possible influences prompting the heavy stress on public confession (in some AICs) can be found:

- The influence of the Revival movement
- The influence of the Pentecostal mission churches
- The traditional African practice of spiritual cleansing before worshipping.

Welbourn, in his work about the AICN, mentions an interesting root of the practice which is specific to this church. According to him, the habit of public confession present in AICN, has “its roots in a pre-Christian custom of Maragoli<sup>135</sup>, by which wrongdoers were urged to confess in public, followed by a ceremony of reconciliation”<sup>136</sup>.

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<sup>134</sup> About the shutting of Windows during prayer in AICN: Welbourn, Ogot, 1966, P. 102:

„This custom is to be found also in the *Dini ya Roho*, which ‘receives the Spirit’ as actively as AICN; and it has been explained as a precaution both for keeping the Holy Spirit in and for excluding the evil spirit. But it seems, in fact, to have been copied from the Pentecostals. There is an attempt at a historical explanation from an occasion when unfriendly outsiders threw stones through the windows at people at prayer. But the most probable origin is the attempt to exclude external influences and make easier the sense of being near to God.”

<sup>135</sup> The Luhya sub-tribe prevalent in the area, where AICN was founded.

<sup>136</sup> Welbourn, Ogot (1966), P. 95.

## **IV.3 Beliefs, teachings, doctrines – feasts and events**

### **IV.3.1 “Spirit-centredness” and “Christ-centredness”**

*Concluding from the answers of the interviews, is it possible to extract a pattern of “Spirit-centredness” and “Christ-centredness” among the AICs, although only 11 interviews revealed specific information on this issue. Already in the different types or “revival” such a pattern could be observed<sup>137</sup>.*

This does of course not mean that the emphasis on Christ or the Holy Spirit excludes the belief in the Holy Trinity in the respective churches. It is merely a tendency showing a preference for one of those two divine persons – being the most important “teacher” or “counsellor” of the church. The two types of answers showing a preference either for Christ or for the Holy Ghost did however exclude each other in the interviews. Nobody mentioned the important role of Christ while at the same time stressing the Spirit or vice versa. The preference came out more obviously in the interviews with members of Spirit-centred churches.

Looking for influences bringing this about, it is again difficult to decide whether it is the inspiration of Pentecostalism or of the African religious tradition of spirit belief. The answer is probably a combination of both.

### **IV.3.2 Doctrine from and about the bible**

That any doctrine of the church has to come from the bible was strongly emphasized during a number of interviews.

*It can be observed that in most of the AICs the text of the bible is regarded to be literally binding. This bible-fundamentalism is found in almost all Evangelical and Pentecostal churches also and is a very strong religious driving force, that gives the members a sense of being on very secure ground. Together with the conviction that “to have the Spirit is enough” it has been a reason why in the past, members of independent churches have laid very little accent on theological education.*

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<sup>137</sup> See P. 22.

### IV.3.3 The special doctrines of the Nomiya Churches

The doctrinal and moral teaching of the Nomiya Church and the one of its branches and breakaways needs some more attention:

There is a set of rules that seems to be a continuation of Traditional Religion. This includes the purification rules of women after menstruation and after having given birth as well as other rules referring to ritual purity<sup>138</sup>. The rule of 33 days of staying out of the church after the birth of a boy and 66 after the birth of a girl must be seen in this line also.

The most obvious sign of difference between Nomiya and other churches is the ritual circumcision. Especially among the Luo this is remarkable, since this ethnic group never used circumcision as an act of initiation<sup>139</sup>.

The fact that Yohanna Owalo, the founder and addressee of the revelations<sup>140</sup> has lived for some time in a Muslim environment in Mombasa, leads to an explanation: He seemingly has been exposed to the Islamic faith and its theology and was strongly influenced by it as well as by the religious practice, which reflects in the adoption of the rite of circumcision.

The most important doctrine that probably stems from Owalo's Islamic influence is that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not considered to be divine persons. According to the teaching of the original Nomiya church, Jesus is not God, but only the son of God, which means that he does not partake in the divine nature. This stance is according to Nomiya backed by the bible<sup>141</sup>. It has however led to strong disagreements within this old AIC and consequently to the break-away of groups that believe in the trinity. Nomiya Fueny Maler (Interview 12) is one example. Other rules and doctrines that also go back to the Islamic influence are however still practised in these other "branches". In Interview 12, the interviewee mentioned the "kibla", which is part of every Nomiya church-building and that each church has to face the direction of North-East. He seemed not be aware of the fact, that the kibla is a recess in the wall of every mosque that shows to the Muslim faithful the direction of Mekkah, which is the direction of prayer. And from East Africa, the direction of Mekkah is indeed North-East.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> From Interview 12: "During the time of menstruation women are unclean and can not enter the church. She has to be purified after seven days. When somebody comes from a place where there is a dead body, he or she has to be purified before entering the church. A dead body is something unclean. A women who has given birth is also not clean and has to be purified. If she has given birth to a son, she can not enter the church for 33 days. After this period of time she has to be purified. If it is a girl, the period extends to 66 days. The purification is always done with water and has to be carried out by a pastor."

<sup>139</sup> Instead it used to be common to break two of the front teeth of the initiates.

<sup>140</sup> "Nomiya" means: "He has given it to me".

<sup>141</sup> With the known methods of biblical exegesis it is probably very difficult to prove to them the opposite.

<sup>142</sup> If it was not for the term "kibla", which is in use here, the tradition to make Christian churches point towards Jerusalem could of course also have been the reason for the Nomiya churches to be built in this manner. Jerusalem is also North-East of Kenya. The word „kibla“ is however a clear indication of the Muslim influence, since it is normally only used in connection with mosques.

#### IV.3.4 Selected Abstinence – the moral teaching

The strong connection between being “saved” and the abstinence from alcohol is a very important concern of Evangelical, Pentecostal and independent Christians in Kenya. It is regarded almost as important as the teaching about salvation itself. Most probably this is a continuation of the Puritan tradition brought along by Pentecostal and Evangelical missionaries. Smoking of tobacco can or can not be included in this package of moral laws<sup>143</sup>.

It is remarkable that for many “born again” Christians to go to a disco hall is considered to be equal to acts of adultery or other improper behaviour. During the interviews this has been mentioned three times. I did not go deeper into this issue to establish whether this is due to the fact that according to them people at discos move their bodies in an “immoral” way, or whether the reason for this stance is the likelihood of meeting immoral offers of sexual kind during such dancing events.

Dancing plays a very central role in African traditional culture. It is however well known that traditional dances often include movements of the bodies suggesting sexual connotations. It is possible that the strong rejection and even condemnation of traditional dancing by the early missionaries still resounds in the refutation of discos by many independent Christians.

That the teaching about polygamy generally differs between mission churches and independent churches has been mentioned above. The interviews also showed that teaching about love, forgiveness and the general way of dealing with the fellow humans plays an important role in the independent churches.

What struck me as astonishing is the fact that in a country that is so much damaged by corrupt practices especially in government offices<sup>144</sup>, corruption does not appear on the list of prohibited practices or “sins” within the moral teaching of the independent churches. Since the moral teaching of their churches is very strong, the inclusion of abstinence from corruption as a moral value for “born-again” Christians would most probably have a considerable impact on the situation in Kenya.

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<sup>143</sup> Under the heading “These Things are Forbidden“, Welbourn provides an interesting list of actions that were forbidden by the moral teaching of AICN in 1965. Welbourn, Ogot, (1966), P. 112.

<sup>144</sup> In the „2001 Corruption Perceptions Index“ of Transparency International, Kenya is rated the fifth most corrupt country out of 91 countries included in the survey. See <http://www.transparency.org> .

### IV.3.5 Sacraments

Although it can be alleged, that “sacraments” like baptism are practised in almost all the independent churches, they were not mentioned very frequently in during the interviews. One conclusion of this could be that due to the heavy emphasis on the gifts of the Spirit, such sacramental acts do not have a strong significance, at least not in the Spirit-centred churches. Following the example of the Salvation Army and some Pentecostal mission churches, some AICs do not baptize with water at all, but believe in the „baptism of the Spirit“. In some cases there is also the habit to baptize a child with water and later perform the „baptism of the Spirit“ to the young adult<sup>145</sup>.

Twice it was mentioned, that baptism is not only important but also has to be done by full immersion in the water.

The “Holy Communion” is an important element in the Legio Maria Church, following the Roman Catholic Tradition and it also plays a significant role in the Anglican Tradition.

Four interviewees mentioned the teaching of rules connected to child-birth. These rules are one of the visible remnants of African Traditional Religion and are found especially in the Nomiya Churches, but also in some Roho Churches.

Three times particular dietary rules were mentioned. I have not found out how they historically “came into” some of the independent churches.

### IV.3.6 Feasts and recurring events

What is important for a particular church often becomes transparent in the feasts and events that are celebrated during the year.

The fact that Christmas is generally considered to be more important (or was at least emphasized more during the interviews) shows that the valence of the different feast days differs between the independent churches and, for instance, the Roman Catholic Church that considers Easter the most important church holiday. Also the often found equalization in value of the New Years Day with Christmas and Easter differs strongly from the Catholic System.

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<sup>145</sup> About “Sacraments” in the AICN:

Welbourn, Ogot (1966), P. 103: “Water baptism is regarded as unnecessary, since it is superseded by the baptism of the Spirit. The Lord’s supper is not celebrated. On the other hand, there is something essentially eucharistic about the grace before meals [...]. This practice is to be found also among the Pentecostals. This disregard of the traditional sacraments is in no way intended as a criticism of those Christians who still practise them.”

Considering the history of the AICs included in the study and the fact that they have not been founded earlier than the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it appears logical that many of them would celebrate the day of foundation, which is usually the day when the new church broke away from the mission church or the day when it was officially registered.

The big conventions (“Tarsoso” or “Kiche”) mentioned several times are an interesting feature found among AICs. One of the possible sources of this tradition is the conventions of the Revival movement in the 1950s, 60s and 70s

“Tarsoso” or “Kiche” were mentioned four times during the interviews, though it is likely that they are practised in more than four of the interviewed churches.

It was surprising for me that Pentecost Day was not mentioned in any of the interviews.

I was amazed about this for two reasons:

Pentecost day is very important in the Catholic and in the Anglican Church and the traditions of the mission churches many times influenced the practises of AICs.

The importance of the Holy Spirit and of the gifts of the Spirit are valued so much in many AICs that it would seem strange not to commemorate this important biblical event with a special feast day.

During my talks with different local experts on AICs I once got the following proposal as an answer to my question: The AICs that emphasize the Spirit so much do this every day. They speak in tongues every Sunday, they are possessed by the Spirit every Sunday. For this, they experience Pentecost every time they come together and do not need a special day recurring only once a year.

## **IV.4 History of the church**

### **IV.4.1 Break-aways**

In the year 2001 the history of independent churches in Nyanza has obviously come a long way. It is for this reason and for the fact that numerous secessions also from the AICs have happened since their first emergence, that a high number (8) of the churches featuring in the interviews have split from other AICs.

Looking at those that split from mission churches, we find that the Anglican tradition plays the most significant role both in number (4) as well as in the importance and size of the former “break-away churches”, that we now consider AICs: The CCA as one of the largest and most

significant independent churches stems from it as well as the first Roho Churches: Musanda and Ruwe. While the Nomiya Church is also considered a breakaway of the Anglicans, the story around its founder Yohanna Owalo makes the matter a bit complicated.

For reasons mentioned above<sup>146</sup>, the splits from the Catholic Church have not been so numerous. That the Legio Maria Church is a very significant AIC, both in dimension and substance is known to everybody who is familiar with the Nyanza region.

The “Church of Peace in Africa” at Kajulu, that split from the African Inland Mission is not a very large AIC, but can still serve as an interesting example of what in other regions of Africa would be termed an “Ethiopian Church”.

The two splits from the Pentecostal Mission that appear in the interviews, the AICN and the ADC are again churches with a high number of members and with a considerable importance among the churches in Kenya.

The fact that four interviewed people claimed, that the founder of their church did not lead a break-away from any particular mission church, but rather gathered followers on the ground of his personality, shows the diverse picture one can encounter when investigating into the foundation of AICs.

#### **IV.4.2 Causes of secession**

*Looking at the causes of secession I believe that the results of the interviews show a picture that could well be representative for the whole “phenomenon” and the question why AICs have been and are still being founded:*

*Doctrinal reasons for disagreement, including the issues surrounding spirit possession, turned out to be most numerous (8) together with the well-known leadership disputes (7).*

Many times during the interviews such reasons for secession were “spiritualized” by the interview-partners<sup>147</sup>. This is a practice found everywhere during discussion of religious subjects and it naturally appears very often with members of Spirit-centred churches. For historical research this way of answering is certainly not very helpful, but it is at the same time understandable that bickering about leadership for instance or about church funds would not be a topic freely shared with outsiders.

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<sup>146</sup> See page 33.

<sup>147</sup> For example in Interview 06: “The present Archbishop and leader James Kisibo used to be a member of African Israel Nineveh, before he started his own church in 1963. The Holy Sprit told him to start a new church. It was not because of leadership wrangles or any other fighting. The leader of the Israel Nineveh church even gave Kisibo his blessings.”

### **IV.4.3 Leadership**

Leadership is a very important and difficult topic, both in secular African politics as well as in the administration of churches in Africa. There is often a very grave imbalance between the two tasks of leadership which are ruling and serving.

In the case of death of a leader of an AIC we find that almost everywhere in Africa the common response is to pass on the sceptre to a family member, usually to the son. In the interviews we find this model explicitly with the ADC (interview 5), the Nomiya Church (interview 7) and the AICN (interview 10). Not all the interviews revealed data about this question and it is probable, that this common model is found more often.

For the sake of creditability and the attempt of the AICs to join the community of other churches as equal fellows, it would be important to rethink the strategies in this field of leadership. The hereditary model presently practised far and wide could well turn out to be outdated when looked at closely.

### **IV.4.4 AICs and the struggle for political independence**

Looking at the years of registration of the respective AICs, we find that by far the biggest number of them started during the two decades during which political independence of the Republic of Kenya was first a political goal to be achieved, later a vision to be put into practice. This is not a mere coincidence. In the 1950s and 60s the struggle for self-government and the fight against oppression from the European rulers more and more became a common goal pursued by the majority of the people in Kenya. For reasons easy to comprehend<sup>148</sup>, white missionaries were often seen as the extended arm of the colonial government. It therefore happened during that time also, that many church members, especially young African pastors and other holders of minor and intermediate leadership ranks, decided to no longer bow to the sole European rule in the churches.

Welbourn writes about the role of the CCA within the environment of upcoming nationalism: “For empirical reasons alone the nation was emerging; and the myth of Africanism was gaining ground. Men had to mind the nation, for the nation was minding them-in a sense which British government, with its concern for tribal institutions, had never regarded them.

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<sup>148</sup> See page 16-19.

If they were to find a home, it must be a home set against the national background; and CCA could be presented as a national church in terms which had not before been possible<sup>149</sup>”.

There is a consensus among analysts and researchers that independent churches as a whole were strongly involved with the fight against colonial rule in Africa. In Kenya this meant that “the vast majority of other [non-Roho] independent churches, [...] were staunch exponents of nationalism right up to the time of Independence in 1963.<sup>150</sup>”

And even where the leaders of today claim that the foundation of their independent church had nothing to do with the political struggle for independence, we find that the colonial authorities had strong doubts about this. Six of the interviewees mentioned investigations on the ground of suspicions by the police and the administration.

Could it be that during the time preceding “Uhuru”, it was just too dangerous to identify with the struggle for independence? Could it be that it was simply considered unfit for religious people to reveal political motives?

*Many researches do see the appearance of AICs in the 1950s and 60s as a clear parallel on the religious sector what in politics and society was termed the emergence of African consciousness and the desire for self-determination<sup>151</sup>.*

## **IV.5 Political activity**

### **IV.5.1 The dogma of non-interference in politics**

The question about political activity of the respective churches provoked more perplexity among the interviewees than any other. For most of them it was rather an absurd thing to ask about political activities of churches, since for them churches are per se unpolitical and it goes without saying that members have to keep political issues out of the church.

Interpreting the biblical word “[...] then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's (Luke 20:25)” in their particular way, the vast majority of independent church leaders see the sphere of religious activity to be far removed from “worldly matters”.

And the culmination of worldly matters from this point of view is politics.

Although there were a few interviewees who said, that church members have to abstain from political activities in every case, most of them answered that it is forbidden only to the leaders

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<sup>149</sup> Welbourn, Ogot, 1966, P. 142.

<sup>150</sup> Kenya Churches Handbook, 1973, P. 37.

<sup>151</sup> See Kenya Churches Handbook, 1973, PP. 36-37.

(pastors) to stand for elections, while the ordinary members are free to do so as long as they keep politics out of the church.

The overall picture, though very clear the tendencies may be, shows some diversity, and possibly some developments in this question.

Already in 1966 Welbourn writes about the African Israel Church Nineveh: “In AICN politics was, at first, strictly forbidden. Its members were not allowed to stand for election even to the relatively non-political Legislative Council of the past. ‘Only at beer parties’, said one leader of the church, ‘are you likely to hear political talk. People at work don’t talk politics.’ It may be that this association with another, and still more objectionable, forbidden activity was additional reason for the ban on politics. But, in the year immediately preceding political independence, the younger generation in the church was growing restive. Unlike Revival, the church had always been deeply, and realistically, concerned for the social welfare of its members; and the admission of political action, in both the local and the national fields, would have been no more than an extension of this concern to its inevitable conclusion. Indeed, in its attempt to establish schools under its own management, it had already become involved, even if it was unaware of the fact, with the politics of educational control.<sup>152</sup>”

During the interviews, it was mentioned two times, that involvement of the church in the fields of development and education is in fact a political activity. Those that clearly denied any political involvement of their church, were mostly not ready to concede that their development projects or social programs had anything to do with politics.

Part of the reason for such strong inhibition could also be the way the word “politics” is commonly used in Kenya. “Siasa” in Kiswahili (and in Dholuo) is a word mostly articulated with a certain facial expression close to disgust. It mostly stands for the “dirty” side of politics, for the art of political games rather than for a general concern for the public and their well being. The trouble is that there is hardly any other brand of politics to be found in present day Kenya, which makes it understandable in a way, that positive connotations of the term “siasa” are not backed by the experience of the people. The grave disregard of the rights and needs of the “wanainchi” (the common people) by almost all politicians on all levels is so obvious, that general frustration rules the scene.

At the same time it is remarkable, that despite this clear overall picture, five interviewees still said that their church is politically active and that five considered it the duty of the church to criticize wrong policies that endanger the well being of the citizens.

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<sup>152</sup> Welbourn, Ogot, 1966, P. 20.

As specified under III.10 “Other patterns”, it could be noticed that those who stated that the church should be active in the field of politics, were the interviewees with the highest educational level. One could therefore conclude, that it takes some exposure with different ideas of thinking and some capacity to deal with new ideas, to overcome the doctrine that church and politics can not go together. For this is certainly one of the most deeply rooted convictions prevalent in the AICs, surpassed possibly by the prohibition of alcohol only.

Looking at the traditions this conviction is likely to owe its existence to, one again crosses the way of the international movements of Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism – within both a widespread anti-political mindset can be observed.

In a community of faith that so clearly stresses the salvation of the individual and the reward or punishment of the same after death, there is very little room and concern for the “matters of the world”. It is seen as simply obsolete, what happens in the world, as long as it is clear for the individual Christian that he/she has dedicated the whole life to Christ and lives accordingly.

The East African Revival that had such a strong influence on the Christian “scene” of Nyanza followed exactly this model and therefore once again provided a strong example for the present day AICs.

#### **IV.5.2 The Ufungamano controversy**

One other reason, why so many members of AICs repudiate political activity so strongly can be found in the animosity between the relatively small churches and the mission churches, that have much more money and many more members and who are not always ready to recognize the importance of their “indigenous” sister churches.

These bigger churches, among them especially the Roman Catholic and the Anglican Church have a tradition of speaking out strongly against policies that they find contradictory to the Christian spirit both on local and on national level. This of course puts them very often alongside the opposition parties who disagree with the government on the same matters.

One of the issues those “mainstream churches” disagreed with the government strongly is the one of constitutional change. As a result of this disagreement, the “Ufungamano Initiative” for a “people driven” process of constitutional review was founded. Its membership is drawn from Christian and from the other major religious communities in Kenya: The Catholic Church, the (mostly Protestant) National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), the Muslim Supreme Council of Kenya, and the Hindu Council of Kenya.

## **Background information:**

Following Kenya's first multi-party elections in 1992, there was national consensus that the constitution needed to be changed to address power imbalances that result in human rights abuses, corruption, mismanagement, and other ills, and to reflect changes that have taken place since Kenya's independence in 1964<sup>153</sup>.

The promised constitutional reform process, which could have brought greater democratization in Kenya, remained stalled as the government of President Daniel arap Moi continued to block progress. This left in place a deeply flawed political system with power concentrated in the presidency, insufficient checks on the executive branch, a lack of accountability for government officials, and the barring of independent parliamentary candidates in a political party environment fraught with infighting and divisions.

Just before the 1997 election, the government published a bill that would have set up a commission to hear peoples' views on constitutional reform, with the aim of changing the constitution. The opposition rejected the bill, saying that the proposed commission was not inclusive or independent enough. Following the election, a group of parliamentarians from all political parties agreed to initiate talks that would amend the original bill. Together with representatives from the religious community, non-government organizations, and women's groups they hammered out a draft bill, which was signed by Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi and became law in October 1999.

But when it came time to nominate representatives for the new commission, the political parties couldn't agree who to nominate, despite the best efforts of churches to reconcile the political parties<sup>154</sup>. Several months later, religious representatives tried to reconcile everyone at a meeting at Ufungamano House in Nairobi, where the initiative with the same name was born. Constitutional changes that groups were pushing for included: separating the powers and independence of parliament, the executive, and the judiciary; outlawing detention without trial; striking capital punishment off the books; and giving parliament the power to impeach or force the resignation of the president.

The modalities of the constitutional reform process remained unresolved. In the face of an opposition boycott, the ruling party controlled parliament pushed through President Moi's plan to control the outcome. A parliamentary committee of twenty-seven was created, composed of fourteen ruling party parliamentarians with the remaining thirteen from the combined opposition, to draft the constitutional reforms. In opposition to this, the civil society initiative,

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<sup>153</sup> Kenya's original constitution was drawn up in Lancaster, England, in 1963.

<sup>154</sup> The so-called „Safari-Park meetings“ were chaired by the Catholic bishop of Kakamega, Philip Sulumeti.

the Ufungamano group (sometimes called “church led” but more often “faiths led” – in order to include the non-Christian religions in the term), appointed a set of commissioners to carry out a more broad-based consultative process that centred on the ordinary citizen.

The Parliamentary process proposed by the ruling party KANU<sup>155</sup> and its ‘co-operating’ opposition party, the National Democratic Party (NDP) was led by Raila Odinga. The KANU-initiative sought to take the process to Parliament where the ruling party could feasibly whip a majority of MPs to vote its way.

The Parliamentary process received a surprise boost when President Moi against expectation chose a respected scholar to head its version of the review process, namely Professor Yash Pal Ghai, a legal scholar of wide experience in the field of constitutional review. Professor Ghai took the stand that a constitutional review is meant to be a uniting process, not a dividing one, and insisted on wanting to mediate between the two parallel constitutional processes and find middle ground.

### **Connecting the research with this background:**

As I was conducting the 22 interviews that are the basis of this study during the months of December 2000 and January 2001, the Ufungamano initiative still divided the opinion of church members deeply. One part feeling that it was recommendable for the churches involved to take the role of advocates of the voice of the common people within the review process, while the others saw in “Ufungamano” another undue meddling of the big churches into politics. On top of that this initiative was going against the action of the government and its allies. There is a widespread opinion among leaders and members of AICs, that supporting the government is not “siasa”, only to oppose the present rulers is to involve oneself in politics.

I chose to include the question about the stance of the interviewed churches towards the Ufungamano Initiative in order to get a more concrete picture about political activity.

Just one day before the last interview was conducted, the long expected “merger” of the parliamentary commission and the Ufungamano Initiative had taken place and Prof. Ghai had therefore reached his goal. Interview 21 with a pastor of the “Power of Jesus around the World Church” reflects this new state of affairs: “ The Ufungamano Initiative has been rejected by “Power”, but it is very fortunate and obviously the work of the holy spirit, that Ufungamano has now merged with the Parliamentary Review Committee. They are therefore now on the right track.”

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<sup>155</sup> Kenya African National Union.

In June 2000, already a short time after the foundation of the Ufungamano Initiative, an alliance of Pentecostal and indigenous churches<sup>156</sup> officially opposed the involvement of the churches. It stated publicly that it is not the task of the churches (and therefore not their right either) to involve themselves in politics in such an active way and that the people of Kenya should not be misled in thinking that all the churches were in favour of Ufungamano. They then stressed that they support the parliamentary initiative under Raila Odinga instead and held a large prayer meeting at Uhuru Park<sup>157</sup> to call upon God's blessing for it<sup>158</sup>. The question, that has to be asked here is: Is supporting the parliamentary initiative publicly not also an active involvement in politics?

Only two of the interviewed people answered, that their church was ever involved in the Ufungamano Initiative. The Archbishop of the Mercy and Holy Ghost Church (Interview 2) used to attend the meetings before he was urged by influential members to stop. The Archbishop of the African Israel Church Nineveh (Interview 10) was attending the meetings in Nairobi, but claimed to do so on behalf of the NCCK and not on behalf of "his" church.

To evaluate the answers regarding the stance of the interviewed churches towards "Ufungamano" is further complicated by the fact that the National Development Party (NDP) which started to cooperate with the ruling KANU already before the stand-off in the constitutional review, has its base almost entirely in Nyanza (among the Luo), exactly the same area within which the study here presented was carried out. We are therefore confronted here also with the tribal factor in Kenyan politics: To be in favour of Ufungamano automatically also means to be against NDP and its leader Raila Odinga, the champion of Luo politicians. He was made the chairman of the parliamentary review commission. If an interviewee says: "It is parliament only and not the church to exercise the review of the constitution", one could interpret this as his being against the involvement of churches in politics, but one could also suspect that it is "the Luo in him" that speaks these words and does not want his ethnic community to be sidelined again, but rather to remain close to the ranks of power.

After all, the Luo have been in opposition to the government, almost the entire time since independence<sup>159</sup> and as a result of this missed to get a greater share of the "national cake"<sup>160</sup>.

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<sup>156</sup> Under the leadership of a Pentecostal bishop based in Nairobi.

<sup>157</sup> In the centre of Nairobi.

<sup>158</sup> The meeting drew much public attention, partly because of the fact, that the venue for the prayer had already been booked before by a different Pentecostal group for a major crusade and a virtual war of words erupted in the course of things. Obviously the municipal authorities had been instructed from above to licence the meeting of the anti-Ufungamano alliance although that meant an impossible "double-booking" of Uhuru Park.

<sup>159</sup> Odinga Odinga was the first Vice-President of Kenya and deputy of President Kenyatta. This however lasted for only two years, after which Odinga opted out and formed an opposition party: Kenya Peoples Union (KPU). The involvement of the Luo community in the „big politics“ of those initial years was further strengthened by the post of the Secretary General of KANU being held by Tom Mboya, who was murdered in 1969 through what is widely seen as political assassination. The gap between the ruling elite and the Luo leaders widened to a gulf.

<sup>160</sup> Which is national funds, development projects and positions in high offices of the country.

### IV.5.3 Political involvement against the dogma? – The “Church and State Co-operation”

It was only during the Interview with a pastor from the Church of Christ in Africa (Interview 1) that I became aware of an organization that calls itself “Church and State Co-operation on Development”. It is an organization that comprises several churches in Nyanza and according to interview 21 has been “instrumental in bringing the Luo of Nyanza back into co-operating with the present government of Kenya”.

Among the members are: The CCA, Power of Jesus around the world, the Anglican Diocese of Maseno South<sup>161</sup>, the Church of Mercy<sup>162</sup> and VOSH. In interview 20, the interviewed person states, that “nabi” Samson Owiti was also among the church leaders who, by writing a memorandum<sup>163</sup>, inaugurated the “Church and State Co-operation”.

During my visit to the headquarters of Power of Jesus around the world, Bishop Washington Ogonyo Ngedede gave me a booklet titled “Faith that Changes the World – The man who changed political landscape through prayer”<sup>164</sup>. In it is described, how under the leadership of the author, some church leaders from Nyanza visited the President at his residence and how through the guidance of these church leaders the NDP and its leader Raila Odinga changed course and brought the Luos back into the arms of the government.<sup>165</sup>

From the Foreword by Archbishop Ajuoga of CCA: “This book talks about how God had done a miracle amongst the Luo community, a factor which has made them change their attitude and place in the Kenya political scene. It came as a vision, the vision to reconcile the Luos, one to another through prayers. It was by no means an easy task, Bishop Dr. Ogonyo Ngedede has worked tirelessly towards the accomplishment of this vision, consulting with fellow church leaders, the administration and politicians”.

In September 2001 the NDP under Raila Odinga has decided to “merge” itself with the ruling party KANU and Odinga himself has been given the post of a minister in the Moi government. Whether it is justified or not to regard the “Church and State Co-operation” as the one, that brought about the radical change in Nyanza from fierce Opposition to enthusiastic Co-operation,

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<sup>161</sup> Here the local bishop Francis Abiero follows a different policy from the Archbishop of Nairobi, David Gitari, who is a regular critic of the government and was one of the key leaders at Ufungamano house.

<sup>162</sup> An AIC with its headquarters at Miwani. It does not feature in the interviews.

<sup>163</sup> Presented to President Moi in 1995 who was by then on a rare visit to Kisumu. His visits have now become much more frequent.

<sup>164</sup> Ogonyo Ngedede, Washington, Faith That Changes The World – The Man who changed political Landscape through Prayer, (Power of Jesus around the World Church, P.O. Box 991, Kisumu), Kisumu 1999.

<sup>165</sup> Raila is the son of the former champion of Luo politicians, the famous Jaramogi Oginga Odinga. He used to be, like his father, a fierce opponent of the ruling elite and was detained for that severally for long periods of time.

is a question that can not be decided here. But it has certainly played a substantial role in this process.

Looking at this events, *it seems clear that the imperative of the prohibition of politics for church leaders can be altered drastically in a case were a big change in favour of the own ethnic community is envisaged.* And the model mentioned before plays a big role in this example: *For a number of AIC leaders, to oppose the government is unnecessary and forbidden politics for the church. To support the government of the day and to co-operate with the rulers of the country is not.*

## **IV.6 African Culture**

### **IV.6.1 The rejection of the old ways**

To find out the stance of the interviewees about the role of the African Culture and Traditional Heritage in the AICs was made difficult by the fact that an appropriate translation of the word “culture” does not exist in the Luo Language. At the same time the concept behind the term “culture” is one foreign to the traditional African way of thinking and therefore hard to put across to somebody who has not gone through higher education. Traditionally, the African way of life did not distinguish between “religious” and “secular” life or between “cultural” and “profane” activities, which still reflects in a much more “holistic” way of thinking.

During the interviews conducted in Dholuo, it was therefore a difficult task for my companion, who did most of the translation, to put across what was meant. He tried the words “timbe joranteng”, which literally means the “*deeds* of the Africans” and then gave examples to illustrate what we wanted to put across.

In the end it was difficult to distinguish the astonishment of the interviewed persons for the reason that they found it difficult to understand what was meant by “culture”, from the astonishment for the reason that they found it very strange to be asked about the connections between their church and this question.

For most of the interviewees, African tradition has absolutely nothing to do with Christianity. According to this majority, these two things contradict each other.

Words like “superstition”, “paganism” etc. were used to explain, why the traditional beliefs are contrary to the Christian spirit.

As mentioned in the chapter about “missionary attitudes and impact”<sup>166</sup>, traditional dances, oracles, ancestor veneration and many other things were roundly condemned by many missionaries as “heathen”, “savage” or even “Satan’s work”. The collective memory of African Christians has not dropped this attitude and once again it was the big movement of the East African Revival who played a role. It added to the conviction, that the missionaries must have been right in condemning the old traditions and beliefs<sup>167</sup>.

#### IV.6.2 Inculturation

It seems surprising, that within the environment of *African Indigenous Churches*, one finds such a strong and widespread rejection of the African tradition. One could expect instead, that to be able to integrate this tradition into the life and faith of their church would have been the pride of the AICs.

And since it is fairly obvious, that the way church services are conducted, especially in the Spirit-centred churches, is genuinely African and would not look the same in any other culture, I then challenged again the answers of some of the interviewees: “But is it not a specifically African way of doing things, when drums are played and the ‘olang’ is beaten in church and when people sing and dance in their particular way?”. The answer was always: “It is written in the bible, that everybody should praise God in this way”.

Investigating a bit further, I could however not find anything in the bible about beating drums for the glory of God. “Cymbals”, that could come somehow close to the “olang”, are mentioned 16 times, tambourines, that are probably the closest thing to a drum that can be found in the bible, are mentioned 10 times.

Whether the exact musical instruments do matter or not: It is not in the minds of many AIC leaders, that their way of celebrating and singing in church is anything particularly African.

Catholic theologians concerned about the progress of the church on the African Continent have been investing a lot of energy into the idea of “inculturation”, and yet, it has proven to be a very difficult task to establish the relevant ideas at the “grassroot level” i.e. at the level of local parishes.

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<sup>166</sup> Pages 16-19.

<sup>167</sup> Members of Evangelical churches are also very vocal in their warning that popular celebrations like Carneval in Europe or Halloween in the USA could be an entry point for paganism returning. According to this way of looking at things, traditions like these are contrary to Christianity and therefore pose a danger to the minds of people who take part in them.

Independent churches on the other hand, especially the Roho Churches of Western Kenya, utilize so much of the traditional ways of thinking and of worship in their daily church life and yet, they seem to be largely unaware of it and even scandalized by the idea that they are alleged to do so.

How do these two facts go together?

An attempt to answer this question was done by one of the experts on AIC-research that I talked to in Nairobi. Reflecting on his answer, one could put it like this: The inculturation efforts by Catholic theologians are a conscious effort and an effort that comes from “above”, from the intelligentsia of the church, while *AICs practise inculturation from the grassroots. And most important: They do it without being consciously aware of it. The unconscious or sub-conscious dimensions of human life usually penetrate much deeper into the personality and have much stronger and long-lasting effects than the ones understood only intellectually.*

This way of looking at the problems could very well be the explanation for a puzzling situation: By not being fully aware of the inculturation in their church, the leaders and members can go ahead in their way of doing things without coming into conflicts with their conviction, that African culture is a thing of the past and to be rejected by Christians.

Like it was the case with the question about politics, a connection between church and traditional culture was seen only by those interviewees that had a higher level of education, which were at the same time those that were able to speak English. The proficiency in the English language is in this context of course also a prerequisite for discussing the term “culture” and differentiate various aspects of it. Six times during the interview it happened that there was a distinction made between cultural practices that are contrary to the bible and those that are not and therefore allowed to the Christian.

#### **IV.6.3 The independent solutions to the problems of polygamy and wife-inheritance**

The issue of polygamy has been a controversial one ever since the first missionaries arrived in Nyanza and it continues to be so. It is remarkable that almost all the interviewed churches have the same formula of dealing with this topic<sup>168</sup>: Before membership yes, afterwards no. Ordinary members yes, leaders no.

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<sup>168</sup> See page 57.

This solution to a problem that brought so much controversy and affected so many in the churches of Nyanza, is a formula that managed to give great strength to the AICs. *It provided a clear cut alternative to the practice in the mission churches and very often was the decisive factor for defection of individuals.*

The issue of wife inheritance (that also featured so often in the interviews because I was anxious to provide more concrete questions around the topic of African culture) is not addressed with such a wide consensus among the AICs of Nyanza. It seems that here the different churches are often fighting a difficult struggle, to find out how exactly to deal with it. They have to ask themselves: Is it a cultural practice worth fighting against? Will the church members listen? Is it to be called “polygamy” when a man takes the deceased brother’s wife while he is already married? What importance does the biblical rule of Dtn 25 have?

These questions are accompanied by one that in the recent years has gained more and more importance: Is not the cultural practice of wife inheritance a prime way of spreading the deadly HIV-virus? It has been claimed by many health workers and scientists concerned with the fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS that one of the main causes of death for young and middle aged men leaving wife and family behind is in fact AIDS. And since the wife of an infected man is very likely to be infected as well, the widow would in case of being inherited by her brother-in-law, spread the disease further in the family of the latter.

Also in the circles of AICs and their leaders this point of view has been presented and noticed and therefore has an impact on teaching about “tero mon” (Dholuo for wife inheritance).

## **IV.7 Evangelization**

The answers to the question “how does your church evangelize, how does it get new members” do not provide a very clear picture. During a number of interviews I got the impression, that there is not a very clear concept in some of the churches regarding evangelization. This is not true for the churches that resemble American Evangelicals. Power, VOSH, and the Miracles and Wonders Church have a definite strategy that consists mainly of so-called “crusades”.

“Crusades” in this context are open-air gatherings featuring an enthusiastic preacher (usually accompanied by an equally enthusiastic interpreter) and a musical band playing gospel music and other religious songs. They usually aim at converting the listening people to “allow Jesus to take control of their lives”, to become “born again Christians”, but not so much to convince them to join a particular church. Also the tradition of holding such crusades in large tents has

influenced the practice in Kisumu. It has been mentioned occasionally during the interviews that only those who ask for it would be told more about the church which organizes the crusade. For the organization of big crusades with famous preachers from overseas (usually held at Kenyatta Sports Ground in the centre of Kisumu town), several Evangelical churches have joined forces in the “Kisumu Town Fellowship of Churches”.

“Door-to-door” or “house-to-house” evangelism is a method of spreading the gospel that is practised in a number of AICs and that also has its origins in the practice of Evangelical churches.

The phenomenon of “conversion by seeing” deserves some attention too: Many interviewees stated that the word of mouth about the good deeds of a particular church is an important means of finding new members as well. This is the case in the incident of people seeing those good deeds and getting convinced, that the church in which they happen is the right one for them. The term “good deeds” mainly applies to miraculous healing, which seem to often impress “outsiders” and make them investigate further into the healing power behind, which is found in this or the other church.

During talks with people who live in Nairobi, I have heard several times that the African Divine Church (ADC) is very active in organizing open air gatherings accompanied by singing and dancing. According to these statements this presence in many public places (mainly open-air markets) is the reason why this church is spreading very fast and is well known to many people.

## **IV.8 Gender**

It seems a bit peculiar to ask the question about the role of woman to 22 interview-partners who are all male. But since the ones ready to be interviewed were all men, we have to put up with this fact and regard the results in that light.

Frequently the answer was that women do play a special role in that they have their own associations where they gather, deal with their specific problems and elect their own leaders.

Due to this fact, the question whether women can be leaders was often answered like this: “of course – but only among themselves”.

For most interview-partners it was however clear that women can and should not be appointed pastors. 13 mentioned that specifically. The opinion was expressed several times, that allowing women to be pastors would completely go against the will of God.

One could compare the pattern found in the independent churches toward the issue of gender with the traditional division of the roles and tasks of men and women in the African society:

Men take the overall leadership and are extremely defensive about this. Women however have certain areas of responsibility<sup>169</sup> within which the “rule” in every aspect and men would not even think of “intruding”.

In the churches resembling American Evangelicals (Interviews 15 and 21) two aspects can be observed:

- Women can be pastors and perform the same pastoral duties as men.
- Theoretically they can climb into the higher leadership ranks, practically it has not happened so far.

Neither of the two aspects seems very surprising considering the nature of those churches and the influence on them from outside.

That two other churches, which do not have so many “international connections”, namely the CPA and the AICN (Interviews 3 and 10), according to the interview have complete equality of male and female pastors is much more surprising<sup>170</sup>. AICN can even be positioned very close to the Roho Churches, among which equality of the sexes is not common at all.

In AICN the wife of the Archbishop takes over the leadership of the church in his absence. Also in other churches the wife of the highest leader plays an important role. In VOSH for instance she is the “secretary general”.

Two of the interviews revealed a pattern of restricted rights for women pastors: They can not perform all the duties of male pastors and can therefore not lead a congregation on their own. *The fact that six interviewees mentioned that their church has women as pastors shows that some independent churches have moved much further in this question than for example the Roman Catholic Church, although the overall picture shows that gender equality in AICs as a whole is far from being a reality or a manifested objective for the near future*<sup>171</sup>.

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<sup>169</sup> In society this is the area of the house and the household.

<sup>170</sup> Or would the membership of the AICN in the World Council of Churches provide the same „international influence“ as the strong link of „Power“ and VOSH with Evangelical churches in North America and Europe?

<sup>171</sup> A very interesting monograph “ Women of Fire and Spirit: History, Faith, and Gender in Roho Religion in Western Kenya” has been written by Cynthia Hoehler-Fatton (New York 1996).

## **IV.9 Differences and similarities between churches**

It was very difficult for most of the interviewees to point out a particular profile of their church that distinguishes it from others. The answers given sometimes featured issues that are not distinguishing at all: That all teaching has to be based on the bible for instance was mentioned by a whole number of interviewees (as an answer to the question about doctrines and teaching) while as an answer to this last question, ten thought it to be the feature that sets their church apart from others.

It was clear that Power and VOSH consider themselves to be very different from other AICs, the Roho churches for example, and there is sufficient substance for this point of view.

Also that the Nomiya churches, at least in their original form, are very different in their doctrine, since they disagree with the faith in the Holy Trinity, is very obvious.

The fact remains however that the awareness among the interviewed people about the differences between the various AICs turned out to be very low.

## V Summary and further perspectives

### V.1 AICs as churches of the poor

In the course of the research here presented, it became very clear, that *the vast majority of AIC-members in Nyanza belong to that sector of society that reflects the well-known picture of the “marginalized” majority of African people: They are mostly poor and poorly educated, often unable to read and write; employment is out of reach and feeding the own family very difficult. This applies even to some leaders of AICs that are “high up” in the internal hierarchy.*

Only in very rare cases have people from the (tiny) “middle class” or the wealthy segment of society chosen to join an indigenous church<sup>172</sup>.

The churches themselves are trying in many cases to engage in “development activities” which aim at improving the living conditions of the members and the surrounding community. The financial resources for these activities are however very limited and very often don’t go beyond the well known “harambees” – fundraising efforts that target the generosity of people who do not have much possibilities of donating, since they themselves have to struggle for their daily bread.

*The strength of the AICs, which at the same time makes them so attractive for the less fortunate of the society, is the firm believe: “The Spirit is with us, we may neither have fancy buildings and big bank accounts, nor well educated pastors, but we have the blessings of the Holy Spirit which is more important than all the riches and all the knowledge of the world.”* On top of this comes a feeling of moral superiority: “If the members of the big churches do not observe principal rules like abstinence from alcohol, disco halls and politicking, how can they claim to be true Christians?”

This elitist consciousness reflects especially in the ever present “statement of the own salvation”, which takes literally the biblical theme of “the few that will be saved, and the many that will perish”

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Although the integration of elements of traditional culture in faith and practice of AICs is mostly done un-consciously or sub-consciously, it nevertheless or even because of that provides a feeling for many local believers, that the independent churches are a place where they can be at peace with themselves – a place that is not dominated by outsiders and by the sophisticated and complicated world outside their daily reality.

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<sup>172</sup> An exception from this rule of thumb are VOSH and „Power“.

<sup>173</sup> And possibly even connects this with the one hundred and forty-four thousand chosen ones from Revelation 14:1-5 .

## V.2 The Challenge of the “New Religious Movements” and the “Gospel of Prosperity”

### V.2.1 “Neo-Pentecostals” and “New Religious Movements”

The high number of different independent churches that one can encounter in Nyanza, and their strong visible presence in the streets of Kisumu shows clearly, that they are a religious force to be reckoned with for many years to come.

There are however some scholarly voices that predict a fast decline of AICs and their followers in the near future, due to the upsurge of a phenomenon relatively new to Kenya and especially to its Western part: Groups and churches that have been termed “Neo-Pentecostals” or “New Religious Movements” (NRMs).

Aylward Shorter is of the conviction that AICs are part of an “older” type of Christianity in Africa that is going to lose more and more importance as opposed to the NRMs, that have constantly become stronger and more numerous and will continue to do so<sup>174</sup>.

One of the movements grouped under the NRMs by Shorter<sup>175</sup> that had strong connections to Catholic popular devoutness and has been termed a “cult” by many commentaries, was the “Movement for the Restoration to the Ten Commandments of God”. It gained extensive coverage in the local and international press because of the “Kanungu Massacre” in Uganda that took place in one of its churches and was orchestrated by its leaders Credonia Mwerinde and Joseph Kibwetere<sup>176</sup>.

The groups we encounter in Nairobi at many places have not much connection to Catholicism – the model after which they are formed is the one of the “Universal Church of the Kingdom of God”<sup>177</sup>. Also from Nigeria came many of those churches, or “chapels” as they are called there. The elements that unites those Neo-Pentecostals is the “gospel of prosperity” they preach.

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<sup>174</sup> See Shorter, Njiru, 2001, P. 9.

<sup>175</sup> See Shorter, Njiru, 2001, P. 11.

<sup>176</sup> Mwerinde, a former bar-owner and prostitute, claimed to have had visions of the Blessed Virgin Mary who had told her that the end of the world was near and the followers of her movement would exclusively be chosen for salvation. Kibwetere was a local headmaster who had tried his luck before in the field of politics. He had already been in contact with other “visionaries” like the well known “Little Pebble” in Australia. By his appointing himself bishop he became the official leader of the movement. A third important figure was one Dominic Kataribabo, a former Catholic priest. After the unearthing of the horrible activities of these leaders and their followers, an estimated 1000 bodies have been found. Further mass graves are thought to be discovered still.

<sup>177</sup> „Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus“ was founded in 1977 by Edir Macedo, a former lottery worker in Rio de Janeiro, who appointed himself bishop and now lives in the United States. In Brazil this church owns “quantities of real estate, many businesses, including its own bank, several newspapers, fourteen radio stations and a television station in Sao Paulo, all paid for out of donations from its 600,000 members.” (quoted from: Shorter, Njiru, 2001, P. 33). The “IURD” has spread far and wide, especially in the so called “Third World” and has a centre also in Nairobi.

Shorter uses the term “New Religious Movements” exclusively for Christian groups. In other contexts and by other scholars of religious science this term is used in a much wider sense: For those movements of relatively recent appearance that refer to certain elements of different historical religions without being part of those religions themselves. This includes esoteric groups, syncretistic movements and many others.

I will in the following passages use the term only in the way Shorter introduced it specifically for the African context we are concerned with here.

## V.2.2 The Influence of Pentecostalism

We have already seen the strong influence of Pentecostalism in Kenya, which so firmly stresses the necessity for making a decision for Christ and the verbal inspiration of the Bible together with the emphasis on the “gifts of the Spirit”.

Pentecostalism goes back to the American Methodist Charles Fox Parham, who was renowned for practising divine healing and by the year 1900 founded the Bible school at which the “new Pentecost” happened, showing itself by the sign of mass glossolalia.

In 1905, pastor William J. Seymour, an African-American, attended Parham's bible classes in Houston and consequently founded the famous revival centre at Azusa Street. The “Azusa Street Revival” of 1906-13 was the launching of a “Pentecostal explosion”, which had its base among the black people of the United States and quickly outnumbered Parham's “white-dominated” movement.

In the course of its world-wide spread, Pentecostalism has not only won large numbers of followers, but also influenced other churches in their way of worship. The “Charismatic Renewal” within the Roman Catholic Church for example owes much of its spirituality and ideas to Pentecostalism. It sees itself as a sort of “revival” for Catholicism and although it is so near to Pentecostalism tries hard not to leave the common Catholic ground<sup>178</sup>.

*In the middle of an environment of such strong emphasis on the Pentecostal “gifts of the Spirit”, Catholic parishes in Nyanza also have to face the challenge of integrating a growing number of members that join the “Charismatic Renewal” and have a tendency of segregating themselves*

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<sup>178</sup> A favourable reception of the „Charismatic Renewal“ is also not always secure and depends on the authorities at different places, mainly the bishop of the particular diocese. Among the “conservative” wing of the Catholic Church, it does enjoy considerable benevolence, since the theological convictions of “Protestant Fundamentalism” (in this case through the Pentecostal influence) and “Catholic Conservatism” have large fields of interception.

*from the “normal” church while at the same time being inclined to share the elitist self-conception of the “saved ones” or the “born agains”<sup>179</sup>.*

Within the independent churches, an additional aspect of the much described Pentecostal influence can be observed: *The Spirit-centred churches influence the ones belonging to the “Ethiopian” type.* Sundkler noted this development in South Africa already in the 1950s<sup>180</sup>. In Kenya it can be noticed by the desire of Christians from churches that conduct their services in a more “serene” fashion (like the CCA or the CPA) to also include elements that would show the “gifts of the Spirit”, especially speaking with tongues. An institutionalized example is the Mercy and Holy Ghost Church, which split from the Holy Trinity Church in Africa for exactly this reason<sup>181</sup>.

One could say, that the world wide success of the Pentecostal movement is explanation enough for its impact in Africa. *It is however important to mention that apart from that it also remarkably fits in with the traditional expectations of Africans towards religion. Like traditional African Religion it involves the body – which is the main vehicle for praise and worship – and not only the mind, it believes in the existence of demons and other evil spirits and offers miraculous healing for those that believe. All these features are very familiar to Africans and have been part of their traditional religion(s) since time immemorial.*

What could be termed “religious dissociation” (that is speaking in tongues, spirit possession, condition of frenzy and ecstatic shaking) is found in the ways of worship of the Pentecostal Christians, believers of Traditional African Religion and with the faithful of the African Instituted Churches.

“Finally, it must be said that the fundamentalism of pentecostalism is highly attractive to many. People want simple explanations and simple solutions. They are impatient of any sophisticated theological culture. The spiritual world they inhabit is an apocalyptic one, in which the forces of evil are ranged against the forces of good, and both can easily be recognized by the believer. As pentecostals, people are engaged in this vital, ongoing conflict that divides the world.”<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> The spirituality of the „Charismatic Renewal“ in fact predisposes its members so favourably towards Pentecostalism, that leaving the Catholic church and joining a Pentecostal or “Neo-Pentecostal” movement becomes an obvious alternative.

<sup>180</sup> See Sundkler, 1961, P. 205.

<sup>181</sup> See Interview 2.

<sup>182</sup> Shorter, Njiru, 2001, P. 31.

### V.2.3 The “Gospel of Prosperity”

Very early, Pentecostal missionaries came from North America to Kenya, as we have seen from the example of the mission at Nyang’ori<sup>183</sup>. Although the name used for the Pentecostal gatherings was not “church”, but “assemblies”, those “traditional” Pentecostal entities can be seen in line with the other churches, especially when looking at their forms of organization. The “Neo-Pentecostals” however have much less in common with what traditionally would be termed a “church”. The concept of membership for instance is foreign to them. There is no “local congregation”, but a very loose organization of the gatherings that take place regularly. Whoever is there at the moment, belongs to the movement. It is therefore easily possible for individuals to “try out” different offers in the “religious market” of a big city like Nairobi.

Already in the early 1990s, a German preacher with the name Reinhard Bonnke has been elating the masses in Nairobi, running a local office with some permanent personnel and coming to Kenya frequently for his big crusades. His message was very similar to television preachers in the USA and other parts of the world: “Dedicate your life to Christ, healing and miracles are possible whenever people believe in him.” Bonnkes “Christ for all Nations”, with its headquarters in Frankfurt, was founded to work specifically in Africa. It does however not run any church buildings in the countries where its leader is preaching, nor is there any follow-up of the crusades. As this example shows, Neo-Pentecostalism does not keep any membership register<sup>184</sup>.

Over the past few years, the number of smaller crusades has risen steadily and at the same time there was an upsurge of “miracle centres” in Nairobi and other big Kenyan towns that offer a much more regular service than Bonnke’s big events.

The most striking element these new “centres” and “chapels” have in common is the “Gospel of Prosperity”.

E. Isichei remarks that already in the 1980s, the huge proliferation of new churches represents “to some extent, an attempt to derive a livelihood in an age of unemployment. The founding of churches is a career open to talent, for which no formal qualifications are needed.”<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> See Page 14.

<sup>184</sup> Extensive Coverage is also given to Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal preachers in Kenyan TV. This applies to the national TV-station KBC (Kenya Broadcasting Corporation) as well as to private stations and of late even to a station specifically broadcasting TV-Evangelization. One of the “stars” in such TV shows in Kenya is the Canadian evangelist Benny Hinn, who has also been to Nairobi “in person” for a big “crusade”.

<sup>185</sup> Isichei, 1995, P. 335.

The remarkable economic success of the above mentioned “Universal Church of the Kingdom of God” or of a number of American TV-preachers serve as an example for local people to try to carry out the same model in Africa.

The principle means of receiving income for such churches or “centres” is what they term “tithing”, the giving of 10% of the wealth of the faithful to God. What people are made to believe is, that God will reward them one hundredfold more if they give part of their wealth to the particular movement and its leader<sup>186</sup>. References to the bible are made by citing Genesis 14:18-20, or Malachi 3:8-10. To enhance the spirit of giving, “testimonies” of people are usually presented, who visit the prayer meetings and tell their “story of success”<sup>187</sup>.

Whilst this practice of “tithing” is a sure way for many of the leaders of such movements to acquire immense wealth, it is also a part of a philosophy, that associates poverty and sickness with lack of faith or even the devil. Wealth and Health are consequently sure signs of faith and trust in God<sup>188</sup>.

*That such messages must fall on fertile ground in a society where extreme poverty and sickness are the daily reality for the majority of members is obvious. At the same time however the Prosperity Gospel also provides a welcome justification for the (relatively newly) acquired riches of an urban higher class. Those very few “lucky ones” who have been able to climb into the range of higher income earners see themselves engulfed by poverty, by countless members of the urban poor who pose a constant threat and challenge to them. They want to find a way how to combine their faith with their wealth and naturally react very irritated when hearing of church policies like the “new option for the poor”, or the “solidarity with the underprivileged”<sup>189</sup>.*

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<sup>186</sup> There is an interesting page in the Internet that advertises the idea of „tithing“: <http://www.tithing.org/> .

<sup>187</sup> Quotes from [www.tithing.org](http://www.tithing.org): “It seemed to work with little things. My car got fixed. [...]. I started to feel a little more positive, a little more trusting in God and this process. Little bits of money started to come in. [...]Now, I have my own company that does all the shipments, a warehouse, and several employees, and it is expanding to possibly take on other clients“.

<sup>188</sup> The “Winners Chapel” writes in its pamphlets: “It is time to get on line with Jesus. It is time you realized that you don’t have to be here on earth as a beggar. Jesus saves people so they can display God’s wealth on the earth. Poverty mentality is satanic slavery! Being wealthy is not just having money, it is a state of well-being which you enter into through encounter with Jesus, the giver of wealth”.

Concerning health, another pamphlet by the same organization reads: “Your health is very important to God. Jesus was never sick. He was as sound as stone. Behind every sickness is Satan. [...] But Jesus came, that He may destroy the works of the devil! That sickness in your body, it is the devil that put it there, but Jesus has come to root it out.”

<sup>189</sup> “The ‘Gospel of Prosperity’ is popular among white Christians in South Africa, as it seems to bless their privileged position, and guarantee its continuance”

Isichei, Elisabeth, 1995, P. 336.

As we have seen, Pentecostal church services are famous for their liveliness and the enthusiastic congregation celebrating them. Neo-Pentecostals or New Religious Movements go far beyond that: Their Sunday meetings are nothing short of big shows, well orchestrated, with a clear plan as to when the climax has to occur and a clear arrangement of seats for the audience and the stage for the leader, whose personal performance is the centre of the show.

Very often the places of worship are cinema halls, where large crowds can gather and where the show has its most effective ambience. The best known example in Nairobi is Pastor Pius Muiiru's "Maximum Miracle Centre" at the Odeon Cinema.

The "Winner's Chapel", a movement that originated in Nigeria, is very popular also and there is hardly anybody in Nairobi who has not heard of it.

Some of the names of the numerous other NRMs are clearly illustrating their orientation: "Achievers' Chapel", "Overcomers' Chapel", "Destiny Ministries", "Abundant Life Ministries" etc.

For apparent reasons, the success of "New Religious Movements" of the Neo-Pentecostal type is bound to the towns<sup>190</sup> and to an audience able to speak English, or at least Swahili<sup>191</sup>. At the same time it is important to note, that along with an ever increasing mobility (for reasons of trade, education, employment etc.) and rate of urbanization in Kenya, the number people exposed to town life is also constantly on the rise. This is one reason why it has to be expected that more and more people are going to hear of such "miracle services" and possibly take part in them, especially since such "centres" are no longer found in Nairobi and Mombasa only, but also in many smaller towns.

The coming of the Winners' Chapel to Kisumu is a vivid sign of this development<sup>192</sup>. With it (and with some other smaller centres with the same orientation) Nyanza has been included in the developments here described – and the so-called "mainstream churches" as well as the AICs have to look for an answer to this new challenge.

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<sup>190</sup> „New religious movements are essentially an urban phenomenon. Towns are places of wealth creation and conspicuous consumption. They are the context in which the preacher's materialist goals are most likely to be achieved."

Shorter, Njiru, 2001, P. 24.

<sup>191</sup> "AIC services are often held in indigenous languages that are spoken mainly in certain areas. To attract large crowds in a town can not be done without using a language that large numbers of people can understand. "A practical problem in the indigenization of liturgy lies in the fact that this must necessarily take place in terms of a specific language and culture, and it is not easy to apply to the polyglot cities".

Isichei, Elisabeth, 1995, P. 327.

<sup>192</sup> As one could expect, it occupies a former cinema hall (Nyanza Cinema), which is located in a central spot along Oginga Odinga Street, the main shopping street in Kisumu.

### V.3 Future prospects of AICs

Although it is questionable, whether the “New Religious Movements” will eventually prompt the fast decline of the AICs which belong to an “older image of Kenya if not an older generation of Kenyans<sup>193</sup>”, Shorter’s assessment of the situation certainly has its merits.

The rural areas, which are still the strongholds of AICs, will continue to lose significance in favour of the towns, where people are more and more confronted with a fast changing world. And although during my study I did encounter a number of young people as members of AICs also, one has to consider the fact that growing urbanization first and foremost means the influx of young people to the towns and away from the rural areas. This in turn means that the rural strongholds of the AICs will more and more depend on the older generation.

It has to be mentioned though, that Shorter’s analysis of the future prospects of the AICs as compared to the ones of the NRMs, is heavily based on his and J.N. Njiru’s research in Nairobi. Nairobi is a metropolis that has no match anywhere in Kenya or East Africa. Nairobi is not Kisumu and certainly not Kakamega or Kisii. The rural areas around the major towns in Western Kenya still have a strong influence on the urban life and the AICs with specific ethnic membership will continue to play an important role among those ethnic communities in Kisumu town for instance.

When attempting an outlook at the future of AICs, particularly in Western Kenya, the following aspects are likely to play an important role:

#### V.3.1 Financial situation

*Their independence makes most AICs also to be removed from the financial streams of international aid and mutual support of “sister churches”. Since they are specific African churches, there is not much motivation of Christians in the wealthy countries of the North to donate money to them<sup>194</sup>. Donations from wealthy people among the own members are also very rare, since this part of the society is almost completely absent among AIC-members – with some few exceptions proving the rule.*

One conclusion from this is that many pastors of AICs will also in the future depend on their own subsistence farming activities for their income.

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<sup>193</sup> Shorter, Njiru, 2001, P. 216.

<sup>194</sup> This does not apply to Churches like Power or VOSH, since they practice Christianity in a way that pleases their donors, who are mainly in North America.

### V.3.2 Theological education

Owing to the financial situation of many pastors of AICs, also the theological education of these leaders is difficult to organize. As the interviews showed, many leaders have not gone to secondary school, some not even to primary school, so that theological teaching would probably be very difficult for them to follow.

The economic situation of many pastors and of the churches brings about the question: If Pastor X leaves the home in order to study, who will cater for the income of the family?

The Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) has designed a programme called “Theological Education by Extension(TEE)”, which tries to take this situation into consideration. It offers a long-term course that requires the participants’ presence over several periods of about one week each, between which they can perform their normal duties and activities at home.

By doing this, OAIC shows that it has identified the need for a better theological basis for the AIC pastors and leaders. At the same time one has to consider the possibility of inherent difficulties in such an undertaking.

As it has been mentioned above, the “gifts of the Spirit”, which are so important for many AICs, are in many ways a concept in diametrical opposition to intellectual (theological) reflection. If the pastors of the “Spirit-centred” AICs for instance would all become theological scholars, it would probably be increasingly difficult for them to accept and understand the belief in the spirit world that is so important for the church members. They might then become a bit like the “missionaries who applauded spirit possession as ‘client-centred therapy’”, but “took it for granted that these spirits had no ontological reality”<sup>195</sup>.

If it is true, that the inculturation within AICs is based on sub-conscious processes, one could ask, if conscious reflection on this would not endanger its success.

It will therefore be a difficult task for those who are organizing theological courses for AIC-Christians, to find a balance between the participants’ being part of a belief system that basically goes against scientific teaching and a theological education that provides tools for sufficient reflection on Christianity and Church.

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<sup>195</sup> Isichei, 1995, P. 330.

### V.3.3 Organization, structure and co-operation

It is a phenomenon that has to puzzle the outside observer that despite the strong sense of unity intrinsic in the traditional African culture, independent churches that owe so much to traditional cultural values, would continue splitting among themselves in seemingly unending divisions and by doing so creating ever smaller and smaller sub-groups that register as separate churches.

If it is a fact, that AICs have to take up the challenge of the NRMs in the coming years, it would be very important to create a much stronger sense of unity and co-operation.

This could help the *reflection on the specific role of the independent churches vis-à-vis the traditional (and large) mission churches and the mushrooming Neo-Pentecostal centres.*

*Further and further splitting is counterproductive to this.* There is a need of the AICs also to stress what is their strength and where they are vulnerable. Although Kenya is still far from being a “multi-optional” society like the ones of Europe and North America, there is still a growing sense of people being able to make choices according to their liking. This includes more and more also the choice of churches or “worship centres”.

A very valuable attempt to unify the voices of AICs is the Organization of African Instituted Churches, which has its international co-ordinating offices in Nairobi. It tries to work out common strategies (like the TEE programme and different development activities) and voice the interest of its member churches towards other churches, the governments in Africa and society in general.

### V.3.4 Profile

Large AICs in a number of countries have been developing strongly towards becoming “mainstream churches”. The Kimbanguists in the DR Kongo are one example of this. In Western Kenya, the CCA could in the future be a church that loses the sense of being a “break-away” and instead become similar to the established mission churches in organization and manner. To take the profile of the “mainstream churches” is therefore one possibility for the future of certain AICs.

*What could further give the AICs a clearer contour to distinguish them from the NRMs would be a definite decision for the concern of the underprivileged of society. Since “the poor” are so strongly represented as members, it could be a future challenge for the AICs to offer religious alternatives to the Prosperity Gospel and yet attempt to answer the biting questions concerning poverty and desolation that many of their members ask themselves daily.*

This suggestion is likely to be dismissed by those that are so emphatic on the dogma of “no politics within churches”. I have however attempted to evidence that this dogma is in many cases not adhered to anyway, also not by a whole number of independent churches in Nyanza. It has been African Americans that discovered the “Social Gospel” as a source of dealing with their situation and trying to overcome it. Would the rediscovery of this religious and social concept not be a very viable option for African Indigenous Churches?

Another possibility to sharpen the own profile against the backdrop of the NRMs and the mainstream churches would be to overcome the condemnation of everything associated to traditional culture. The NRMs are even more vocal in this matter and *it could become a merit of the AICs to defend traditional values and cultural identity.*

The African Independent Churches have come a long way in planting the Christian faith deeper in the soil of the African continent. They have enabled many Christians in Western Kenya, who were estranged from their cultural background, to reconcile their faith and their daily lives.

To further discover the concern for the social (and therefore political) situation of their members and to become advocates of the indigenous culture and ways of thinking would enable them to remain –and indeed become more and more- “a place to feel at home”.

In order to live a better life, it would greatly aid the people of Nyanza and beyond, if the AICs could help them to be at peace with their God, their living conditions, and not least with their cultural heritage.

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## ***Interview 1*** ***Church of Christ in Africa (Johera)***

### Personal history of the interviewed pastor:

Parents were members of the Anglican Church, but changed to the Church of Christ in Africa (CCA) in 1959.

The father was baptized in the Anglican Church while he was serving in the colonial army (King African Rifles) during the second world war.

The interviewed person was baptized in the CCA.

The father joined the CCA because he was "chased away" by the Anglican church authorities. He had decided to marry several wives. Being a polygamist by that time led to the rejection by the Anglican church. Neither could the second, third etc. wives be accepted in the church or their children be baptized.

After primary school the interviewed person became a "church teacher"(1979), was ordained "lay reader" in 1984, ordained deacon in 1988, priest in 1992, appointed "Arch-deacon" in 2000 (in charge of overseeing many parishes).

Was "saved" when hearing an Anglican preacher who had come to the home.

Between the different stages of ordination there were different courses in the bible college at the headquarters of the church. For about one month, there are ongoing seminars for the pastors. The livelihood of the ordained people is taken care of by the church. They are on a "full time" salary if they want to work full time as a priest.

### Ways of worshipping:

There is a liturgy being followed every time there is a service. There is a prayer book and a hymn book. Preaching is there, 1st reading and 2nd reading, clapping the hands. The liturgy being practised is the same as in the Anglican church. The books being used are the same as the ones used in the Anglican church by the time the CCA split from it. The changes in the liturgy towards a more "lively" way of praying and singing was done slowly.

### Beliefs, teachings, doctrines

#### Feasts and events

Believe in Jesus, in God the father, the son and the holy ghost. Teach about love and forgiveness. Love for orphans and widows.

Different from the Anglican Churches: Congregation of faithful is called for "conventions" to hear the word of God. "Crusades" are organized. There is the custom of "unveiling of the cross" after somebody has died and has been buried.

The burial ceremony itself is not different from the Anglican Church.

The feast days of the Anglican Church are celebrated, Christmas, Easter, etc.

Special for CCA is the celebration of the day the church started, which is done every year in June.

Moral teachings of the church include not to commit adultery and not to take any alcoholic drink.

If a convert was baptized in the Anglican church, the CCA does not baptize again. Those that have been baptized by immersion in water however are being baptized again.

### History of the church

The CCA broke away from the Anglican Church in June 1957. There were misunderstandings and struggles within the church. Hatred and pride had disturbed the harmony. One disputed issue was the one of polygamy. The leader of the breakaway disagreed with the Anglican leaders over several fundamental issues.

The dispute revolved around the question: What are the consequences of salvation? One group believed, that once you are "saved", all your belongings are included in this, which means for example that your table or your utensils could not be lend out to serve in a funeral of your neighbours. Anybody who is not saved was not supposed to interact with the saved people, nor with their family, nor with their belongings. The ones who claimed to be saved segregated themselves completely from the rest of the world. The group that broke away rejected that attitude.

The breakaway happened during the time of the revival movement and was finally carried out in 1957, though its history goes back up to 1952.

The revivalist clergy saw that some of the teachings and practices were contrary to the bible. The example of chasing the polygamists: The bible doesn't speak of rejection. It says: " Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" Therefore all people are called to the lord. Our duty is to preach. The judgement is up to God, not up to us.

The present Archbishop of CCA was a key player by that time. He was a priest in the Anglican church and got some of its insights while studying in Limuru.

### Political activity

The church is active in politics as well as individual members are.

Some of the members are municipal councillors, others work in offices of high profile politicians.

The church is criticizing politicians who are going astray. It issued a political statement against the Ufungamano Initiative. The archbishop said, that the constitution can only be changed by the parliament.

The bishop doesn't recommend on the voting pattern of the church members, although in words and deeds he supports the government and the ruling party.

He is one of the key leaders of the organization called "church and state co-operation". They have prayed and called the opposition leaders in Nyanza to stop their destructive policy of opposing the government. They called the opposition leaders and the head of state to the stadium in Kisumu in order to facilitate talks. The archbishop of CCA, Dr. Ajuoga preached at that meeting. This was in 1997, after the last elections.

Other churches in "church and state" are: The Anglican Church in the Diocese of Maseno South (the Kisumu Bishop), Power of Jesus around the world, Voice of Salvation, Water living church, Grace Revival, Mercy Church. Any times the head of state comes to Kisumu, he is first met by the chairman of the movement, who is Washington Ogunyio, the bishop of "Power of Jesus around the world church".

### African culture

Cultural practices contrary to the bible are rejected. For example the sacrificing animals, as it was done in the traditional African religion. What is not against the bible is not rejected by the church. There is no problem about using herbs to cure ailments for example. The traditional respect taught to children towards their parents is supported and also the strong cultural rules attributed to the interaction with the family in-law of a person.

To have several wives is accepted, but once somebody has joined the church he must not add another one. Neither can a polygamist climb into the ranks of the ordained people. They can only serve in functions like treasurer, secretary and other secular offices. Monogamy is preached as the preferable way of marriage.

Wife inheritance is discouraged as an outdated practice, though it is difficult to make the people accept that teaching and follow it, since the fear of traditional sanctions or supernatural punishment is strong. Many people believe that a widow, who is not inherited by the brother of the deceased husband is killing her children through her rejection of the traditions. It can even happen that the sons of the lady who rejected inheritance can bring a man after the death of the mother so that through sexual intercourse with the corpse the tradition of inheritance is fulfilled and the spirits appeased.

Elements of traditional African religion are not found in the CCA.

Driving out of the devil or of demons who have taken possession of people is done in a Christian way: There is reading of the bible, singing of songs, clapping and shouting at the devil.

### Evangelization

There are crusades being organized in order to preach the word of God to the people. Through this there are also new members joining. Also house to house evangelization is sometimes done.

### Gender

Women can be pastors on a lower scale. They can preside over burial of women for instance, but can not do all the work, the male pastors can. The wife of the archbishop is an important leader of the church.

### Differences and similarities with other churches

The CCA still resembles the Anglican church in many ways. Other churches who have broken away have moved much further away from that origin.

## ***Interview 2***

### ***Mercy and Holy Ghost Church***

#### Personal history of the interviewed church teacher:

He was told by his heart to enter this church. He stays near the house of the bishop and therefore knew about it. He was a member of the Anglican church before. His parents are not members of the Mercy and Holy Ghost Church.

#### Ways of worshipping:

There is a prayer book, which is being followed. The way the service is conducted resembles the Anglican way. The baptism is done by sprinkling, not by immersion.

The "common prayer book" is used, which is taken from the Anglican church. For the Sunday services there is a hymn book.

The songs are accompanied by drums and bells. There an extensive preaching session which is part of the service.

#### Beliefs, teachings, doctrines

##### Feasts and events

The bible is the word of God. The "Apostles' Creed" is an expression of the faith.

The holy spirit is having a strong part in the life and faith of the church. Speaking in tongues and prophesizing.

The moral teachings are not different from the Anglican church, except for the stand on polygamy.

Easter and Christmas are celebrated. July 10th is the day of the foundation of the church, which is celebrated every year.

#### History of the church

The church split from the Holy Trinity Church of Africa (HTCA) in the year 1969. Wilson Guya, the founder, was possessed by the Holy Spirit. This spirit possession and what goes along with it, like speaking in tongues, was rejected by the leaders of the HTCA. Also the ways of worshipping that the possessed person chose, namely drumming and beating of the bell, were rejected by them.

One of the founders was a lady called "Mama Mikal". She is the mother of the present bishop of "Marera East Diocese", Martin Adero Metho (in whose house the interview was conducted). She also was a member in the HTCA.

In December 1963 she suddenly fell ill while being in church. The illness lasted until 1969. No doctor nor diviner could heal her. Her husband knew a boy who was healing people. He looked for him and found him. The boy prayed for her. This was on Thursday, February 19, 1969. She was possessed by a spirit and unable to walk. Six months after the miraculous prayer, she was able to stand up again.

Her miraculous healing and her possession by the whole spirit were not accepted by the Holy Trinity Church. Wilson Guya, who was a pastor in that church and mama Mikal were chased away from it at the same time. They were speaking in tongues and healing sick people. After rejection they could not attend the church services any more. They therefore sat down and looked for ways, how they could continue praying in the church. They decided to start a new church.

The boy who healed the mama was a well known healer by that time. His name was Juma Pesa. He later became the founder of the "Holy Ghost Coptic Church", but has nothing to do with the founding of the MHGC apart from the fact that his healing powers changed the life of mama Mikal.

#### Political activity

The church is not much involved in politics. It does not support anything that goes against the wishes of the government.

The archbishop, who is stationed in Bondo, was attending the meetings of the Ufungamano initiative in the beginnings, but was told by Mama Mikal to stop going there, since politics and the word of God should not mix. The parliament should be the only body to review the constitution.

The archbishop then stopped attending the meetings of Ufungamano.

The interviewed church teacher also feels that the Christians of the church do not support political involvement of the Archbishop.

The bishop of "Marera East Diocese" however claims, that church and politics can not be separated, although he supports the stand of his church now in as far as the constitutional review is concerned.

### African culture

The African Culture has not much to do with the word of God.

The interviewed pastor however feels, that the way of drumming and giving room to the Holy Spirit is specifically African.

In the beginning, polygamous families were accepted without any problems, which made one of the important differences when compared with the Anglicans. The founder himself had nine wives. During the early times, polygamists could therefore also climb the leadership ranks and become pastors. By now however, the church preaches the message of "one man, one wife". People with more than one wife can still enter the church, but should from then onwards not add more wives.

The moral teachings towards this question has changed with new and young leaders coming up.

### Evangelization

People just see what the church is doing and get interested. People see the gatherings and hear the preaching when they pass the churches.

Now big crusades are being held, although "fellowships" and "door to door preaching" are being practised.

### Gender

Although Mama Mikal is an influential person, being one of the founders, women can not be made pastors and can therefore not climb in the high leadership ranks.

They can however hold lower offices like being a "church teacher" or a "lay reader".

### Differences and similarities with other churches

The life and worship of the church centres around the spirit (roho). This is what makes it different from the Anglican church.

The robes of the pastors are only put on during pastoral work, not all the time like in other independent churches.

### ***Interview 3***

#### ***Church of Peace in Africa***

##### Personal history of the interviewed pastor:

He was baptized the Africa Inland Church in 1968 where his parents were also members. The Church of Peace in Africa split from the African Inland Church in his home area Kajulu. His parents were among the first members who had moved out of AIC in 1972.

When growing up he found the doctrines and beliefs of the CPA fitting to his understanding.

He was "saved" in April 1991, when listening to a preacher. After this he had to confess, that he had been a sinner.

Through this he was also healed from a long ailment, that different hospitals had not been able to treat.

He was holding different positions before becoming a pastor. First he was a youth secretary, then the youth development co-ordinator. After his wedding in 1994 he became a local church teacher. 1995 church deacon. 1999 ordained pastor. For the last five years he has been the development co-ordinator of the whole church. The parents were members of the church since it started. He has undergone theological training through the TEE programme of the Oaic, as well as different leadership seminars organized by the church.

##### Ways of worshipping:

There are different types of service. The normal Sunday service during which the word of God is preached is followed by bible study groups attended by the members in the evening. If it is a Sunday service with holy communion, then the communion service is following the preaching and teaching. Collection of money (offering) is also part of each service.

There is the tradition of "laying of the cross", when the grave of a deceased person is fitted with a cross. It is followed by a service including preaching. The wedding ceremony has its own way of celebration and worship.

Anybody can be involved in the preaching, as soon as appointed by the pastor.

For singing there are hymn books. There is a church choir, that also uses drums and other instruments. When there is no choir, the drum is rarely used.

The singing and dancing in the church goes moderate. Lively, but not too loud.

There is also a gospel band in the church, that uses all the modern instruments used by bands.

##### Beliefs, teachings, doctrines

###### Feasts and events

The holy bible is the foundation of the teaching. The belief in one God and in the holy trinity is central.

The baptism is done by immersion in a river ("water baptism"), which is an important difference with many other churches and an act that the CPA treasures very much.

The major difference between the Church of Peace in Africa and the African Inland Church is the dealing with the question of polygamy. In AIC a polygamous person can not be baptized nor take the holy communion. The CPA allows them in the church, grants baptism and holy communion, but does not allow a man to marry another wife again after joining the church.

Before being baptized, a person must be 12 years of age. He or She must be able to announce his or her salvation and state his or her belief.

The holy communion and baptism are very important, because these are the only two ceremonies Jesus left to be undertaken by his followers.

The members of CPA believe in the healing power of Jesus. Healing comes by faith and the church elders pray for the sick. Healing is however not a regular part of the Sunday service.

February 11 is the day when the church was founded. It is celebrated every year. On this day, the historical background of the church is read out by the bishop before the preaching session starts.

Easter and Christmas are important feast days. They are in line with the feast day of the new year.

History of the church

The pastor who started the church was called Samuel Opondo. He had been trained in "Scott Theological College" in Machakos. He was also trained at Kijabe, after which he was ordained a pastor in the African Inland Church. It was him that led the word in a disagreement with the American missionaries of the Africa Inland Mission over the question, whether the new local pastors should be allowed to wear the typical clerical collar that the missionaries were wearing. The missionaries felt that they had the exclusive right to do so while the African pastors should not.

Also the question on how to deal with polygamist families was disputed as well as the question as from which age onward somebody can be baptized.

Because of the different vision pastor Opondo had on those questions he was excommunicated by the leader of the AIC.

The District Council of Churches in Kajulu supported the pastor and encouraged him to register a new church. He became the bishop of the newly formed Church of Peace in Africa in 1974. It was called church of peace after John 14, 27.

Another reason for the split was that pastor Opondo was not paid well and that the church building was in a very poor state, although the Christians of Kajulu were contributing a good amount of money continuously to the mission headquarter of the AIC in Ogada.

Political activity

The CPA is politically active and has the right to question politicians on their work.

The spiritual leaders are allowed to speak on political issues, especially when the elected political leaders are not doing the right work. The spiritual leaders are however not allowed to contest for political offices themselves. The church is a reconciliatory agent that has to pinpoint what is going wrong in secular politics. The bishop can invite politicians to tell them the view of the church. An example is to put on the right track those politicians who are supporting the cultural practice of wife inheritance, since in the times of HIV/AIDS it has disastrous consequences. When the road is bad, it is bad for everybody. And since the church has to speak for the poor, it has to get involved in politics. It has to speak for the freedom and for the rights of the people as Jesus did.

The CPA does not support the Ufungamano initiative. Ufungamano is made of a few mainline churches that now want to speak on behalf of the churches as a whole.

The CPA feels that the constitution can not be reviewed in a state of disunity. Ufungamano has not brought about unity.

Moreover, the church should not oppose the government in a direct way, but agitate reconciliation.

African culture

The African culture is an important aspect in the church, since it has always taught discipline and respect of the young towards the older member of the society. Whichever cultural practices are in line with the bible are supported, the ones who are not, are rejected.

A polygamous family can join the church, but not marry again after and not become a leader.

The lively way of the service reflects the African way of celebrating.

Wife inheritance is not accepted. A widow or widower has to look for a new spouse to marry. The church helps in counselling.

Elements of the African Traditional Religions are not found in the CPA

Evangelization

Evangelization is an important aspect. There are crusades and evangelical outreach programmes with the help of preachers, gospel choirs etc.

Gender

Women can become leaders, evangelizers and church deaconesses. There is one pastor who is a lady, who is doing the same work as the male pastors. In future they may be more. All the training given is given to women and men.

Differences and similarities with other churches

The CPA is drawing all its teachings from the bible, which not all churches do.

The dealing with polygamous families differs greatly from the way the AIC handles the matter.

Water baptism is very important - i.e. immersion of the whole body as opposed to those churches that baptize by sprinkling water.

There is no infant baptism as in many other churches.

**Interview 4**  
**Legio Maria of African Church Mission**  
**(Mamboleo)**

Personal history of the interviewed Cardinal:

He was a baptized a Catholic. During his time of working as a policeman in Uganda, he came across the Legio Maria Church. The Government of Uganda tried to suppress the Legio Maria, he however, knowing that this was not a dangerous movement, tried to defend them within the reach of his abilities. By that time the Legio Maria Church was also accused in Uganda of being responsible for the failure of rainfall in certain areas.

While he was working as a policeman, his parents had already joined Legio.

He returned to Kenya in 1979. After this he decided to join the Legio Maria Church also, since he liked their way of worshipping. What impressed him most, was the fact, that he saw the holy spirit being with them and guiding them and doing miracles. The holy spirit was speaking to them and telling them the truth.

He knew the way the Catholics conduct the holy mass well, this helped him to conduct the holy mass within the Legio Church later.

After being a member for three months the Holy Spirit told him to be a Padri. He found out, that that was really God's will, since he met different people independent from each other, to all of whom the Holy Spirit had told the same message: That he should become a father. He therefore accepted and was ordained a priest by the bishop.

It is always the Holy Spirit who conducts the priest while reading the mass. He is the big teacher of the faithful. That is the reason, why there was no education of training involved in the process of becoming a priest.

Since he was doing his job nicely, he was later made a bishop. In 1981 the spiritual Leader Malkio Ondeto made him an Archbishop.

In 1991 Ondeto passed away. After some time the leaders of the church now chose him to be a cardinal. Today he is the "Cardinal Dean" of the Legio Maria of African Church Mission, the one who follows the pope (Wilson Petro Owino Obimbo).

Ways of worshipping:

The way the Catholic Pray is the way the Legio Maria Church does. An important difference is that the Catholic Church has changed the way of conducting the mass. The Legio Maria did not do that. The missal book that was used in the Catholic Church is still being used in Legio. As it was done in the beginning is still the same way of doing it today.

The Rosary is being used and prayed in Dholuo. The mass is conducted in Latin, while the preaching again is done in Dholuo, Swahili or English.

The priest is facing the altar when saying the mass, the change within the Catholic Church where the priest is now facing the congregation, was not supported by the Legio Maria.

Believes, teachings, doctrines

Feasts and events

Moral teaching is strong on prohibition of alcohol and adultery. Also speaking bad about others, backbiting and telling lies is taught to be wrong.

The holy trinity is what the church believes in and the sign of the cross is the same as in the Catholic Church.

The way Christmas, Easter and other feast days are celebrated is the same way the Catholics used to do it.

There are many rules concerning the consumption of different types of food. Goat meat for example is not eaten, while mutton is liked very much. On the side of fish, the Tilapia (local name: Nyamami or Ngege) is the one that is eaten, while Lungfish and Nileperch (Mbuta) are rejected. Also not allowed is the consumption of termites and ants.

History of the church

The Legio Maria was started in 1962 by the spiritual leader and founder Simeo Messiah Melkio Ondeto.

It started at a hill called Calvary somewhere near Migori. Ahead of this place on the way to Migori is Jerusalem, the big place for the Legio Maria.

Baba Simeo Melkio was together with his mother. They started the church together.

Baba Simeo came from nowhere. He said he was born in Awasi Angoro, when his followers tried to confirm that, they found out, that what he had told them was not the same as what the villagers said. They therefore concluded that he must have come from nowhere.

When he and his mothers came, they taught the people about heaven. They went to Oruba Catholic Mission near Migori. The priest there did not allow him to enter the church and called him a devil. Ondeto then told the priest, that he was send by the father in heaven and therefore claimed to have back the things of his father, after which he went to the altar and took away the holy sacrament. The Catholics called the police. The police however did not find an offence and told Ondeto to start his own church.

He acquired a piece of land there and build a church equipped with Catholic things. He took away the sins from performed many miracles. He could tell a person unknown to him exactly where he comes from, where the grandmother and grandfather is, where he went to school, wherever he has been. He could just read people like a book. That is how people knew that that is the son of god and could believe in him.

At the present time there is a split in the Legio Maria. But the Cardinal is very optimistic, that the matter will be settled and that the two groups will be together again soon.

### Political activity

The church is not politically active at all. If a leader of a church wants to enter the political field, he has to resign from his church work first. Politicians can only be members and pray in the church. Politics should also not be talked about in church.

Ufungamano is not liked. It wants only violence for nothing. It is like a wind that doesn't know where it blows. The Legio Maria sticks to the government and follows what the government says.

The Pope of Legio does not involve himself in politics, except in the way of teaching.

### African culture

Legio Maria is trying to eradicate cultural practices of the olden days. The word of God and the cultural traditions of the olden days can not go together.

### Evangelization

The people who are not in Legio Maria can recognize the church members by their special clothes and by the rosary hang around the neck. Through this they can become interested and ask more about the church.

### Gender

Women are very much part of the church and are well taken care of. Especially widows are cared for.

At the same time it is impossible for them to be ordained pastors and become church leaders.

### Differences and similarities with other churches

The big difference with other churches is that the Legio Maria claims that Jesus has come back to them. They believe in "Baba Messiah". Other churches don't like to hear that. For them Jesus was only the man from Israel. Legio Maria follows the prophecy, that a black Jesus has come in the person that founded it and who performed a lot of miracles. In development matters, the Legio Church is very much together with other churches. The Cardinal is very well known to the leaders of CCA, Matthew Ajuoga and Voice of Salvation and Healing, Silas Owiti. The way of praying and the faith are however very different. The Legio believes very much in the sacrament, which they don't.

## ***Interview 5*** ***African Divine Church***

### Personal history of the interviewed pastor:

During the time of the split of the African Divine Church from the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) the interviewed person was a child.

His parents were among the followers of Saul Chabuga.

Born in 1937 he used to attend the church services of the PAOC mission at Nyang'ori. In 1944 he was staying with the Canadian Missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. Keller. They were taught songs and prayers. Later when Keller died, he was continuing to stay at the mission which was now under Mr. Maurisson, the next missionary in charge.

As the child of the first supporters of Chabuga, he then grew up in the ADC.

As a young man he was asked by the leader to work with the church as a preacher and pastor. From 1966 he was one of the secretaries of the church. Later he was chosen to be a treasurer and remained close to the leader until the death of the latter.

He is also a pastor in charge of a local church.

### Ways of worshipping:

First people have to confess their sins by declaring openly what they had done wrong this includes the pastor. After that there is a prayer followed by songs. Then comes the preaching and after that the offering.

The singing is accompanied by small and big drums and by dancing.

During the church service people also speak in tongues.

The lord's supper is celebrated only on the day of baptism. The baptism is done by immersion (mainly in rivers), the way the Pentecostal churches and the African Inland Church are doing.

The way of praying, celebrating weddings etc. is done in the same way as in the Pentecostal church the ADC has split from.

Healing and casting out of demons is very common.

### Beliefs, teachings, doctrines

#### Feasts and events

People have to become saved and from that day onward stop bad behaviours like drinking alcohol. For the rest, the doctrines are much the same as in the Pentecostal church.

The founding of the church is being celebrated every ten years (1989, 1999).

### History of the church

In 1949 there was fighting within the Nyang'ori Mission of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. There was a group opposing the Canadian missionary Maurisson on issues

The leader of this group was Saul Chabuga a local chairman of the churches branch of Gamalenga. He and his followers were expelled from the church by Mr. Maurisson and after leaving it took along a big number of followers, including entire communities belonging to small outstation churches of the mission. Very soon even the Luo people at Nyahera followed.

One of the main reasons for the conflict was that Maurisson wanted to install a new African Pastor and had chosen Jacob Ananda from Bunyore, the neighbouring Luyia area. Ananda was rejected by Chabugas people, because he had married a lady from Nyang'ori and was therefore considered an in-law. Their customs did not allow for them to be led by an "in-law". Maurisson told them that they have to leave the Pentecostal church if they are not ready to accept Ananda.

They started what the first called "Pentecostal Assemblies B". Bwana Hunter, the District Commissioner from Kakamga came with policemen and arrested Chabuga and a number of his followers for interrogation. After that they were ordered to drop the name "Pentecost B" and to chose a different name for their new church. The DC was satisfied when in 1950 a constitution was drafted that showed no dangerous activities.

On July 17, 1952 the certificate was issued by the registrar general.

Chabuga became the bishop of the newly registered African Divine Church.

After his death, his son James was chosen in 1971 to be the next Bishop.

### Political activity

The church abstains from political activity. When people are saved, it becomes very difficult to get involved in this, since when being a Christian, you are supposed to talk as a Christian.

The bishop is not issuing political statements.

Politicians can be members of the church, but can not say anything political in the church.

The church is not part of the Ufungamano initiative although it participates in the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCK).

### African culture

There is dancing and clapping in the church, but in a godly way, not the way it was done traditionally. Polygamous men can join the church, but can not hold any office and can not become pastors.

### Evangelization

The church is very active in preaching and singing at market places. This they do systematically in many towns in different parts of Western Kenya and other parts of Kenya. By so doing they spread the gospel and at the same time win new members.

Since this method is very successful, the church has grown very big. There are now 1.1 million members.

### Gender

The women can become leaders only among themselves. They can not lead the church service / be pastors.

### Differences and similarities with other churches

The ADC resembles the Pentecostal Churches very much and has a lot in common with other independent churches from that tradition.

It differs however in the way of evangelizing, since in this field it is much more active than most of the others.

## ***Interview 6***

### ***Roho Israel Church of God***

#### Personal history of the interviewed bishop:

He entered the church Roho Israel church of God (Roho Israel) in 1981. Before he was in the Sayun Church of God, which he had joined in 1978 and in which he was a leader on a lower, local level. There was a leadership struggle in the Sayun Church, which he did not like. He wanted to pray in an atmosphere of peace.

The holy spirit showed him Roho Israel, where he was soon made to be an elder. He was stationed in the headquarters in Nyakach, before the headquarters had been moved by James Kisibo, the present leader and Archbishop, to Maragoli.

In 1985 he was moved to Maragoli after he had been the assistant of the bishop in Nyakach. When he came to this new area, he was put back in a very low rank, since the leaders in this areas were many. He agreed to that, since his intention was not to be a leader, but to serve God and spread his word. The leader of the church, Archbishop James Kisibo liked the way he was doing his work and made him to climb up again until he was made bishop of Kisumu district. In the whole church there are ten bishops.

#### Ways of worshipping:

When somebody is sick and wants to be healed, the spiritual leader lays hands on the sick person. In the Sayun Church, where he was before, they spread a cloth on the sick and hold up a cross in front of the person. The interviewed person likes the way of letting God work straight, without any other means in between.

Drums are beaten in praise of God. The dancing is done in a holy way, where women dance on this and men on that side. The dancing is done when facing up to God, in the right way the holy spirit wants it and not the way it was done traditionally, where people on face each other.

The spirit is speaking to the people when they praise God. No work of witchdoctors or diviners is involved. Only God is the one that works.

The main day for the church service is Saturday (Sabbato), not Sunday. People pray together when the service starts, then comes the confession of sin. The door of the church is then opened and people look towards the door.

Then people pray individually and praise God for the forgiveness of sins. Somebody who sits in front, at the sinagogi, closes this prayer session. Then there are songs. After this people testify what they have experienced in their life with god.

Then one of the people up there tells the people which verse of the bible to open, after which one of them reads it out aloud as the others read along.

The people who are preaching later will stick to this foundation of the word, laid through the bible reading. There can be two or three people who are preaching and teaching.

There is singing again and beating drum and bell accompanied by dancing and praising God. Then there is a collection of money. The leader in the sinagogi after this ends the prayer with his closing words.

Then all the people greet each other again. As opposed to the Roho Musalaba Church, where people don't shake hands, the congregation in Roho Israel great each other with strong shaking of hands and singing together, before the service is closed.

There is occasional celebration of the lord's supper.

#### Beliefs, teachings, doctrines

##### Feasts and events

Drinking of alcohol and smoking of tobacco is forbidden. Also going to see the witchdoctor is not allowed. During the celebration of the lord's supper, some other liquid is used to replace the wine.

There are rules attached to the Sabbath day. People have to stay in the house.

On Thursday the faithful pray in their houses, not in the church. On the day before that, the men don't "come close" to their wives. And the same abstinence is observed on Friday, since the Sabbath follows that day. People have to be clean on Sabbath and must therefore also not quarrel or fight with anybody nor annoy anybody on Friday.

There is a special ceremony for wedding and also one for the new birth of a child. After eight days it is brought out of the house and gets gifts from the Christians.

Christmas is celebrated and the day is used also as a day of meeting of all the members in the headquarters, where the Archbishop is staying. There is the celebration of the lord's supper attached to it. On Easter there is also a church service, but the celebrations are much less than on Christmas.

The foundation of the church is celebrated only at the headquarters of the church and only the bishops go for that celebration.

### History of the church

The present Archbishop and leader James Kisibo used to be a member of African Israel Nineveh, before he started his own church in 1963. The Holy Spirit told him to start a new church. It was not because of leadership wrangles or any other fighting. The leader of the Israel Nineveh church even gave Kisibo his blessings.

First there were only a few members. It grew fast and spread to Nairobi, South Nyanza and other places. There are now 278 churches from Maragoli up to Musoma in Tanganyika. The biggest density is in South Nyanza. Nairobi also has a bishop.

There are a number of other churches bearing the name of Roho, that have in the course of time split from Roho Israel.

### Political activity

Politics of the world have nothing to do with the church. The chief of the area might call the bishop of Roho Israel to pray before the start of the area meeting. After praying however he will remain quiet and will not contribute at all to the political discussion. A Christian should not enter into politics, since he can only work for one master, who is God.

### African culture

The interviewed person could not see how the African culture should come in the church.

Drums, bell and dancing have some reference to the local ways of doing things. The driving out of daemons are now done in the name of Jesus Christ, not in the traditional way any more.

The leaders of the church must not be a polygamist. The men among the normal members however can have as many wives as they wish and can also marry more once they have become a member of Roho Israel. This applies to the traditional way of marriage. Once somebody has married in church, he can not do that with another additional wife.

The tradition of wife inheritance can only be observed by the ordinary members of the church. The leaders are not allowed to practice it.

### Evangelization

Many people join because of being healed by people of Roho Israel. Otherwise it is the word of mouth that spreads the news of Roho Israel. People join because of seeing and hearing.

### Gender

Women are wearing special dresses. There are leadership ranks for the women. They can preach in the church, but not sit in the sinagogi. They can only lead fellow women spiritually, but can not become leaders of the whole church or climb into the ranks of bishops.

### Differences and similarities with other churches

There is very little difference between Roho Israel and Israel Nineveh, where it came from. It is only the heart of a person that may tell him or her to be in this church or in the other.

## ***Interview 7*** ***Nomiya Church***

### Personal history of the interviewed bishop:

He was born into the Nomiya Church. His parents were members and therefore he followed the order of all the initiation rites the church has.

He is a pastor who is in church of the area which belonged to his father before. All the people of the area are worshipping in it on Sunday.

He worked for the Government for 37 years but has now retired. After retirement he became the bishop of Koru Diocese.

While he was working as a civil servant he was already a teacher in his church. He is now a high leader in the church. His father was the third Archbishop of the church.

He is involved in the work of development and in advising the church members in many ways concerning their lives as a whole. In the local church he is serving as a pastor, while at the same time serving as a bishop, responsible to the Archbishop.

### Ways of worshipping:

Before somebody enters into the church, the shoes have to be removed and left outside.

There is a liturgy that is followed closely. They start worshipping at 8.00 AM and finish at 10.00 AM

There are specific hymns for the Nomiya Church. The prayers also are unique. There is also special Nomiya scripture from which the teachings are drawn. There are seven stages of the "mass", containing singing, praying, preaching and collection of money.

A very important feature of the Nomiya Church is the circumcision of men, which has its special way of celebration and prayer.

During prayers they intercede for the Government and for the poor, the pregnant women and other people in need. If somebody dies, they also read a mass on the funeral service.

### Beliefs, teachings, doctrines

#### Feasts and events

Somebody who is a leader must have a wife. He must not drink alcohol or smoke tobacco. He is not allowed to inherit the wife of a deceased brother. He must not attend local meetings and involve himself in secular problems.

The founder of the church taught his follower that Jesus is the son of God. Others believe that Jesus is God. The Nomiya Church does not believe that. As the son of God he was a prophet above all the others, but not God himself. This teaching is following what is written in the bible. If somebody challenges that, they open the bible for proof.

The spirit also is not God. Everybody has a spirit. The holy spirit does not play a role. Only God the Father is God.

The faith of the Nomiya Church has been given directly by God. That is how the name comes about, which means: "It has been given to me" or "He has given to me".

Some churches preach, that the sick should only be prayed for, but not brought to the hospital. The Nomiya church teaches a different message. Somebody who is sick must be brought to a doctor.

On Thursdays there is a special session for the teachings of the church, called "catechism", where people learn for instance how to pray before taking a meal.

In the evenings a bell is rang to remind people in their houses that they should pray. The same happens at later at night and early in the morning.

After a woman has given birth, she has to stay in the house for 14 days and must not share a bed with the husband during that time. After this the child has to be baptized. The lady must not go to church for 66 days. During these 66 days she must not wash her husband's clothes. She must just be left alone.

The most important sign in the Nomiya Church is Circumcision of the male members. This is drawn from the bible: Luke 2,21. Jesus Christ was circumcised after eight days. This is why a boy child has to be circumcised also eight days after birth and any man who enters the church as an adult. Also Abraham received the law of circumcision: Genesis 17,9.

The day for church service is Sunday. There is the tradition of collecting ten percent of the wealth of the members once a year.

Christmas is being celebrated, other feasts like Easter are not celebrated.

January 11 is the day for remembering the death of the founder. March 1 is celebrated, because on that day God spoke to Yohanna Owalo. New Year is also celebrated.

### History of the church

The founder, Yohanna Owalo was first a Catholic. He was upset by the Catholic statement of Jesus being God and Mary being given the title "mother of God". He received messages from God that included the law of circumcision of all men. Many ethnic groups in Kenya practice circumcision, but not because of the law of God: The Kisii, the Luhya, the Kikuyu. Owalo was now told to teach the Luo about circumcision, although they traditionally don't do it. Jesus Christ was also circumcised, that is why a Luo Christian has to be circumcised also.

The Nomiya Church was founded in 1907. By then it was called Nomiya Luo Church. Later when the church wanted to spread into other areas also, the word "Luo" was dropped in the official name.

Yohanna Owalo was a catechist in the Catholic Church. He later became a member of the Seventh Day Adventists and later again of the Anglican Church. He received the messages from God when being in the Anglican Church. He also lived for some years in Mombasa. God spoke to him over a lengthy period of time and told him to start an own church. The colonial government was afraid of political upheaval that could spread from such a movement. After all it was the first breakaway from any major church in the history of the Mission work in Nyanza. It was therefore difficult to get registered.

After his death, Owalo was buried in Omboch (Asembo), where the church headquarters are.

Benjamin Oundo, the father of the interviewed bishop, was the third Archbishop of the church. He was followed by the present one, who is Gideon C. Owalo, the son of the founder.

### Political activity

The church is not politically active. The leaders have the order not to involve themselves in worldly conflicts. The Nomiya Church is not part of the Ufungamano Initiative.

### African culture

The Nomiya Church has its own cultural values and teachings that have been revealed to Yohanna Owalo by God. There is therefore not much room for traditional practices and customs.

### Evangelization

There are regular big meetings being held in different areas. During that time outsiders can see the church and its activities and can become interested in joining.

### Gender

There are women groups. Women can not be pastors or church leaders.

### Differences and similarities with other churches

The teachings about the trinity, that other churches consider to be the foundation of their faith is rejected by the Nomiya Church. There have however been groups within Nomiya who wanted to change these teachings. They have subsequently broken away and started their own church.

**Interview 8**  
**Legio Maria of African Church Mission**  
**(St. Peter, Manyatta)**

Personal history of the interviewed pastor:

He entered the Legio Maria of African Church Mission (Legio Maria) in 1963, when he was a child. He was called by the holy spirit when he was in class 5 of primary school. His parents were also members of the church.

Ways of worshipping:

The rosary is being used and another chain with beads attached to it, called "Katena Antifon". The latter one is used to drive out Satan. It is only found in Legio Maria. The Catholic Missionaries did give it to the people, because they knew that it is holding powers. They gave only the well known rosary. The Katena Antifon is used for prayers in the evening and in the morning.

When the Messiah came he gave it to the Legio Maria people. To pray along with it takes a long time. When Satan sees it, he just cries. He is asked who he is and a conversation can be held with him to find out who is with him. He is then removed with the help of that special rosary. The person possessed by him is then healed and can leave the bed and eat.

When people want to join, they first take an oath and are then baptized. After that they can also drive out evil spirits and curse Satan.

There is also a prayer of the "Jo-Mikael" (the people of the Arch-Angel St. Michael). They can pray for a possessed person in the evening, wearing a red dress and holding up the cross.

Another prayer is prayed by the "Jo-Katherina" (the people of St. Catherine). They wear green clothes.

There is also the holy mass. There is a Sunday mass, different one for different feast days. There is a mass for the dead. The masses can be read in reference to problems that people have.

Beliefs, teachings, doctrines

Feasts and events

The Holy Spirit is the greatest leader of the church. He can do anything.

The people who are priests in Legio Maria are not priests because of education, but because of the power of the Holy Spirit that they have received. The Spirit leads them much more than a high education. Would the Holy Spirit ever leave the church, it would surely collapse.

History of the church

The Legio Maria was started in 1963.

The founder, Baba Simeo was living in Migori District. He said that he had died and risen again on the third day.

He taught people that they should not drink alcohol and not smoke tobacco, so that they can be saved. Those are the things that he saw in heaven. He saw that the people drinking and smoking should be burned.

He was teaching especially the Catholic People and was called a prophet.

He told people that his mother was with him and that they needed each other very much. He recommended his mother to the faithful. By the time she appeared to them, the followers of her son were already many. The mother died in 1966 in the homestead of one of the members. That place is still honoured very much and the Christmas ceremony is being held there every year. The Holy Spirit revealed that this mother was the virgin Mary in Africa.

Her son was healing many people by laying his hand on them and with the same hand he was driving out many evil spirits, that had possessed people. Even by his mere preaching, evil spirits could be told to leave those possessed by them and people could be healed from illness. Seeing this, many people joined Legio Maria.

Once the spirits that he was trying to drive out called him: "Jesus the son of God, why have you come to disturb us".

He then shouted at them and chased them away.

A short time after that, he and his followers were in the home of a man called Johannes Baro. In the evening of that day at around 6 PM, the Holy Spirit came down. Before he came down they heard songs coming from the east. They could however not see anybody singing, they only heard the hymns coming from many, many voices. They sang four songs: "O God our help in ages past", "Ave Maria", "Alleluya", "My Jesus has come". After this they heard a big and loud thunder and felt a strong wind coming. Many people fell down and spoke in different tongues. The Holy Spirit called out: "This is Jesus Christ". From that day onwards, Simeo was called "Baba Messiah".

The followers of him went along with him, knowing that he was Jesus Christ, who is an African.

After the Holy Spirit had come down, Baba Messiah ordered people to climb a mountain called Mount Calvary, for he wants to build a big homestead there for the Legio Maria people.

When he did that, the Kenyatta government started to disturb him very much. There was also a chief in that area called Serubbabel Baraza, he said that Simeo was a bad man who spoils the women. Also the Priests of the Catholic Church tried to fight against him. His followers cried out to him: "How can we get the holy communion?" He saw the sheep coming in big number and they did not know, that Priests would be selected from amongst them. It was the Holy Spirit that started to select the leaders. He also chose the assistant of Baba Messiah, Pope Timotheo Atila. He also chose somebody to be the Cardinal Dean and Archbishops and Bishops. Baba Messiah sent those people to many places.

He chose also somebody, who was given the strong power of the Holy Spirit. This was a lady called Gaudencia Aoko. She was also sent out to another place. She had incredible powers and could do a lot of miracles. Many people thought, that Aoko was the leader of Legio Maria, but it was Baba Messiah who gave her the power. When she was to be arrested by the government, the car to bring her away did not move.

By that time many people got salvation in different ways.

When Baba Messiah died, he left the Legio Maria with the Holy Spirit to be their teacher, but also told the people that he will continue to be with them.

The first Pope has died and his successor, Laurence Pius Ochiel, is now the leader of the Legio Maria Church.

There are other ranks among the faithful that have been created. There are religious brothers and sisters, there are watchmen called "Jo-Mikael". They are guarding the gates and nobody can enter, without being checked.

The church spread and build many church building through buying of plots and through donations of plots by members. St. Peter Manyatta is build on a plot donated by somebody. The land title deeds however must be written out in the name of the Church.

The Legio Maria is one. But because of certain desires there can be problems. In a family there can be an elder and a younger brother. The younger one can not make himself the older one.

When Baba Messiah died there was a problem with people who wanted to have his wealth. He however had given all the property to the Legion Maria of African Church Mission and registered everything under that name. He did not register anything in a person's name. There were however people who wanted personal riches. This desire is still there. But the Legio Maria is only one. There is no other group.

### Political activity

The Legio Maria have only got the Holy Spirit as a teacher. Many churches in Kenya have entered into politics. Only the Legio Maria has not. The founder told the followers that they should not enter into politics, because nobody can work for two masters, the government and God. That is why most of the Legio people who used to work for the government have left that work to be only followers of the church.

Even the Archbishop residing at St. Peter Manyatta left to work for the railway company when he was a young man.

Ordinary members are not banned from taking on political offices. Leaders however can not hold such posts.

The Legio Maria Church is very far away from the Ufungamano Initiative.

### African culture

The traditional African culture has been rejected and even fought against by the Legio Maria. It is only the culture of the Holy Spirit and whatever Baba Messiah and Mama Maria have left behind, that matters.

### Evangelization

Almost all the 42 ethnic groups in Kenya are represented in Legio Maria. Even in Tanzania and Uganda the Legio is present. It should not be mistaken to be a Luo movement only.

### Gender

The women have a chairlady in every church, diocese and archdiocese. There is also a chairlady for all the women in the church. The women have groups in the church, that initiate development activities and collect money for the building of churches.

Women can not be priests.

### Differences and similarities with other churches

The Legio Maria differs from the other independent churches in that it is like a copy of the Catholic Church and the service of the two churches is just the same. Unlike other independent churches the Legio is upholding the sacraments. Some independent churches immerse people when baptizing. Not so the Legio Maria.

The difference with the Catholic Church is that they don't have the Holy Spirit as much as Legio Maria and that the Holy Spirit has told the Legio people not to do certain things that the Catholics do, like drinking and smoking. The Catholics also do not remove their shoes before entering a holy place. The Legio people do so.

## ***Interview 9***

### ***Holy Trinity Church in Africa***

#### Personal history of the interviewed pastor:

His father had been in the Anglican church and left it in 1957. He later became a church teacher in the Holy Trinity Church of Africa (HTCA). The son was therefore baptized and grew up in the same church. In 1980 he got a very severe accident and had to stay in hospital for more than three years. When he left the hospital finally, he got another accident. Arriving home he was in a serious condition and people already started the traditional way of mourning, since they believed he was dead. He however heard a voice at the same time that told him: "Arise and go and preach the word." People were astonished to see the one they had believed to be dead had in fact risen from the bed and was shouting. The words he said they could not understand. They thought he was mad. He preached for three weeks in this language that he himself could not understand. After three weeks he spoke again in Dholuo. He preached and was taken by the local pastor to the church where he continued preaching for six months. He was then given the chance to study the word of God for three years at "Faith College, Nairobi". After completing he became a preacher. He worked as a preacher for two years and then went back to study for another three years. After that he was ordained a pastor in 1986. He was first stationed in Mombasa and was then transferred to Kisumu to work as a pastor and at the same time as a teacher in the local bible school, where some students are training for being a pastor.

#### Ways of worshipping:

For the church service there is a prayer book, that is also used in the Anglican Church. There are other services on weekdays, when the prayer book is not used. On such occasions the pastor is opening the service by a prayer. Then there are choruses and praise songs for about 20-30 minutes, after which the people sit down. Then the bible is read. Another worship song follows. Then there are announcements being read out. After this it is time for preaching. The preacher will preach according to the way he has prepared the sermon for the day. The spirit of God will direct him as to how much time to use for that. The Sunday service follows the prayer book. On Sundays there can also be the celebration of the lord's supper with the holy communion. This is done about twice a month. The church choir is using drums and tambourines for certain hymns. These instruments are however only used in case there is a choir singing. There are also hymns that need a humble way of singing, where no drums are wanted. The dancing must be biblical and glorifying god.

#### Beliefs, teachings, doctrines Feasts and events

Any teaching must be in harmony with the scripture, the word of God. Any doctrine out of the bible is prohibited. Holy Communion and Baptism are very important. Salvation is only found by accepting Jesus Christ alone. The idea of being saved is important. The personal sins are forgiven from then on and the person is in harmony with God. The time and day does not matter. The time must not be a cult and to be glorified. What matters is to be saved and born again. After being born again, people must now see your faith and salvation. You must not drink and smoke any more and not do any other sinful acts. Christmas is celebrated, the Passover also - that is the day Christ resurrected. There are only these two feasts. The day when the church started is not celebrated.

#### History of the church

It split from the Anglican Church in 1957. There was a misunderstanding between a white pastor in Maseno and the African pastors. It was about the church doctrines. By that time a born again believer would have to quit his home after the death of his wife. Also he was not supposed to enter a home where somebody has died in order to console the bereaved. That was the main course of the split. There were two pastors. Bishop Ajwuoga and Bishop Owira were pastors among others. They led the other pastors. In 1961 there was a misunderstanding between the two. The disagreement was on the question who should be the leader of the Church of Christ in Africa (Johera). Owira then remained with the HTCA, while Ajuoga stayed with the

Church of Christ in Africa. Bishop Owira was the leader of the HTCA until his death. The highest leader is now called Archbishop. There are Bishops in Kisumu, Siaya and Nairobi. In 1999 there were over 8700 members.

### Political activity

The HTCA is very active in the field of development. It runs different schools and an orphanage home. A pastor or the bishop can speak out on political issues, especially when people are deprived of their rights or of what they are supposed to get from the government. God doesn't allow church leaders to remain quiet when his people are suffering or when corruption rules the day. Any matter that interferes with the people of God must be rectified. The Ufungamano Initiative is not being supported by HTCA. It is the parliament alone that has to change the constitution. Therefore the bishop has never gone to the meetings of Ufungamano.

### African culture

Some traditional dances are done without control and in a way naked. This is not a Christian way of doing it. Nakedness is not of God. Women have to wear long dresses and dance decently. In Luoland, very often the word of God is mixed with tradition. The HTCA does not do that. It is for instance very common to appease the dead. A Christian however knows that a person who has died can not come back and attack somebody. God is the security. The tradition of "unveiling of the cross" formerly celebrated some time after the death of a church member has been rejected as something rather cultural and not in line with biblical teaching. This ceremony, celebrated at the grave with the help of a pastor, has now been abolished. There are distinguished members of the church, who study the word of God even in far away countries. Through this they find out, what sound doctrine is and can identify things that are not in line with the scripture. A number of such things were only brought up by culture and cropped in because pastors wanted to please the Africans. Unless they are in harmony with the scriptures, the African traditions are rejected. Those that so not collide with the bible are not taught to be wrong. Polygamist families are accepted but after conversion one must not add another wife, since that would be adultery. The bible does not accept for leaders to have more than one wife. St. Paul says that leaders should be husbands of only one wife. On wife inheritance: The bible says that before a women is 60, she should not live alone. A younger widow should therefore marry again, but she can only marry somebody, who is unmarried himself or who has also lost his wife.

### Evangelization

There is a group of "evangelists" and a group of "church planters". They go to town and do open air preaching in public places, accompanied by a choir. There is also door-to-door evangelism, where pastors are going round a certain estate to preach the word to every house. Hereby the pastor should only be an agent of God and not of the church. If anybody asks what church he is from, he can be told and invited.

### Gender

There is a group called "mothers union". It keeps a bursary for instance to sponsor orphans for going to school. They also do handwork, like making ropes to earn funds for the church. Women can be leaders of their own groups, but can in no way become pastors. That would be against the words of God. It is done in other churches in order to please the women. The HTCA however sticks to the bible against all odds. Churches who allow women to be pastors are becoming cults.

### Differences and similarities with other churches

The doctrines and the church service are almost the same as in the Church of Christ in Africa (CCA). The CCA is having a celebration day called "rapar", the anniversary remembrance of the day when it was founded. Another difference is that in the CCA is celebrating something they call the "unveiling of the cross". This used to be done also in the HTCA, but the more the leaders thought about it, the more they realized, that it is unbiblical.

## ***Interview 10***

### ***African Israel Nineveh Church***

#### Personal history of the interviewed pastor:

Both parents are members of African Israel Church Nineveh (AICN). He was born in 1960 and on the 8th day dedicated to God according to the traditions of the church.

The mother had been in the African Inland Church, while the father had not been in any church.

The interviewed person grew up in a Christian way. At the age of 18 he decided to receive Jesus Christ as his personal saviour, when he heard somebody preaching on Matthew 28.

In 1978 he became very active in the youth movement of the church. In 1984 he was appointed pastor of one of the local churches in Kericho. Later he became one of the senior ministers of the church. Now he is a "chief minister" in the Muhuroni Region. At the headquarters level he is the "international director for legal services and human resources". He is also teaching at a college of the church, since he is holding a diploma in "evangelism, discipleship and Christian fellowship".

He is married with six children.

#### Ways of worshipping:

The main day for worshipping is Friday. Sunday is also a day for prayer.

On Friday the AICN commemorates the death of Jesus Christ, when he shed his blood in order to bring people to God and to cleanse our sins.

The church service starts at 9.00 AM. At 12.00 midday, all of the church members kneel down to remember how Jesus died on the cross. They confess their sins, pray and worship by hitting drums and singing. By 3.00 PM the service is finished and people go home.

Those who have to work on Friday should remember the death of Jesus at 9.00 AM and in their thoughts to be with their brethren who are by that time in church.

The Friday service starts with singing hymns. While the singing is going on, sins have to be confessed one by one.

People stand up, confess and ask for forgiveness. Then they

sit down again and continue singing.

After the individual confession all the people stand up and confess jointly.

Then there is a bible reading, for instance Matthew 26, the crucifixion of Jesus.

Then the people fellowship together by singing three songs and beating the drums.

After this people pray individually, followed by a prayer of a leader on behalf of everybody.

Now comes the time for prophecy. Anybody who has received a revelation should stand up and tell the others about it.

Some people speak in tongues during the service. This however does not always happen, since it is a gift from the Spirit.

The celebration of the lord's supper plays no role in AICN. Whenever two or three are together and eating or having tea, they pray together to remember the lord.

It is the togetherness in the spirit that has always been stronger in AICN than the material signs.

Preaching takes a very significant role in the service. The pastor can do the preaching himself, but can also ask other members to preach to the people.

On Sunday there is also a service, which has its most obvious sign in the procession that takes place before. The congregation and their leader walk along the road holding banners up, while singing and beating drums. This habit has been copied by many other churches.

After this there is a normal service.

There is the tradition within AICN, that a child has to be dedicated to the lord by a pastor, eight days after birth.

#### Beliefs, teachings, doctrines

##### Feasts and events

The AICN believes in the trinity. It also believes, that salvation is not by works, but by faith through Jesus Christ. It is only Jesus that can save.

It is not allowed to drink alcohol and to "move with ladies". Going to discos is sinful.

Anything that the bible prohibits is not allowed.

An important rule is also not to eat any flesh (meat) on Friday.

That Friday is being taken as the holy day has no other reason than the fact, that it was revealed to the founder by the Holy Spirit to do so.

The meaning of the name "African Israel Nineveh" is: "African" stands for the land where the church was founded, "Israel" refers to the people that belong to God and have been chosen, "Nineveh" refers to the city to which Jonah was sent and that was a place of sin. The whole world is a place of sin, that has to be changed by the people of God.

The flag used by the church has the colours green, white and red.

Near Nineveh, the headquarters of the church, there is a mountain called "Mount Sinai". On top of it is a rock besides which the lord spoke to the founder and after that made a spring of water to come out of the rock. This place is still honoured very much.

Pasaka (Easter) is celebrated as well as Christmas. Christmas is celebrated by all members who can make it at Nineveh, the headquarters of the church. Before the Christmas celebrations there is the annual general meeting of the church on December 24.

#### History of the church

The church started in 1938. The founder of the church was a member of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. The lord spoke to him to leave that church and to start a new church. The leader of the PAOC by that time was Otto Keller. He went and asked permission from Keller to go and start his own church. During those days of the colonial government it was not easy for an African to do this, since the suspicion would always be there, that is could be a political movement.

The founder, Paul David Kivuli from Nyang'ori area, had however received the order from God, which made him to be persistent in his request to Mr. Otto Keller.

In the year 1942 Keller gave him a letter indicating his consent. Now the new church could be registered. It has spread now all over East Africa.

There was no disagreement between Kivuli and the Missionaries. The letter given by Keller is proof of that. The latter even told Kivuli to go and try and in case he would fail, to bring his people back to the Pentecostal church. Kivuli obviously had great gifts given by God, which might have threatened the work of Mr. Keller in his Mission. When Keller tried to silence him but did not succeed, he thought it better to let him leave and try his own venture.

The first name of the church was "Huru Salvation" (freedom salvation). This was sparking off suspicions and prompted the Governor, the highest official in the colony, to come himself to the headquarters and to do investigations as to whether this movement was connected with the Mau Mau. Only after this, when Kivuli and his followers were found to be "clean" and doing no other than worshipping the lord, the church could be officially registered.

It was through revelation again that the name was changed later. After prayer the Holy Spirit spoke and gave the name African Israel Nineveh. This was in 1942.

It is common that church members in one area hear the voice of God speaking on one issue and saying how a particular thing should be done. This is written down and kept. If after a short time a person comes with a message from a completely different place where God has spoken to one of them and these messages are the same in content and if this is again repeated three or four times, then the church knows that this message is truly a new rule given from God.

The present leader of the church is John Kivuli, the grandson of the founder. The policy concerning the leadership succession is: If from that family comes a capable person, he is given the post. If not, somebody from outside the family is chosen.

#### Political activity

The church is active politically. The members are free to associate with any political party. The constitution of the church differentiates between "unnecessary politics" -that should be kept away from- and necessary politics.

The pastors can give their personal opinion on political issues, but not claim that as the opinion of the church. The same applies to the Archbishop, who is the overall leader.

During the last general elections in 1997, a very peculiar thing happened: The Archbishop himself contested for being a member of parliament in his area on a ticket of the ruling party KANU. He did however not hand in his name as a leader of the African Israel Church, but only as a private person, namely as John Kivuli.

He said publicly that he does not want to force any church member to follow him in the party where he is a member and that he completely leaves it to god whether he is chosen to win the election or not.

The church is not a member of the Ufungamano initiative. The Archbishop attends the meeting in the name of the National Christian Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK), since all the member churches of NCCCK are called to participate. He does however not go in his official attire in order not to be too closely associated with his church.

#### African culture

Since the church is mainly in the Luyia and Luo areas, the question of circumcision could easily come in since the former practice circumcision as a rite of initiation, the latter don't. It does however not matter for the church whatever such traditional practices may be. They are done outside the concern of the church and do therefore not affect it.

All the ethnic groups included in the church are left to whatever tradition they have.

Drums and the African way of singing are featuring prominently in the church.

Polygamy is not supported by the new testament. Polygamists can enter the church as members, but can thereafter not marry more wives. Pastors must be the husband of only one wife.

Wife inheritance is not accepted, if the one to inherit is already married.

Evangelization

The public gatherings and especially the processions are meant to glorify God. Only if somebody asks, he or she will be given instructions how to get into contact with the church.

Gender

Women can also be pastors. When the archbishop is going away, his wife takes over as the acting archbishop. When the founder of the church died, his wife took over as the leader.

Women pastors do the same things as the male ones and are in charge of local churches just as their male counterparts. They have also climbed into the ranks of chief ministers and senior ministers.

Differences and similarities with other churches

African Israel Nineveh church members wear a cap that bears that name. There are also other clothes unique to AICN and the way the processions are carried out is also different from those churches that have later copied this way of showing the faith.

## ***Interview 11***

### ***Ruwe Holy Ghost Church of East Africa***

#### Personal history of the interviewed pastor:

He became to be a member of the Ruwe Holy Ghost Church of East Africa (Ruwe) in 1951, when he was born. In the same year his father, husband of six wives, passed away. His father was also born into the same church. He was chosen to be a church teacher later. He is now in a local church in Kondele-Kisumu with a congregation of about 260 Christians.

Since he has been doing his work well, he was later made a pastor and has now been put in charge of 16 churches. He is married and has got big children.

There are much more educated people in the church, even people who hold university degrees. It is however because of his character and good work that he was chosen to be a leader.

#### Ways of worshipping:

In the church, the people are separated: The elderly are given a special section, the women also away from the men etc.

Before the pastor enters in the sinagogi, he finds the women praying certain prayers that are meant for private worshipping. When the pastor enters they stop.

He is holding up the bible and is then reading from it. After this, he preaches to the congregation. Then he gives the people a chance to say whatever they have to say while he is listening. This chance is mainly taken by the older people in order to teach the younger ones. To finish this part up, the pastor offers a prayer.

During the service there is also singing, drumming and speaking in tongues.

The lord's supper is celebrated once a month.

The main day for worshipping is Saturday, not Sunday.

#### Beliefs, teachings, doctrines

##### Feasts and events

The Sabbath day has to be honoured. There must not be any work done, it is reserved only for praying.

Drinking of alcohol, smoking, fighting with people and dancing in discos etc. is not allowed.

The faith in the Holy Spirit is very important. That is why they are also called "the Roho people".

An important feast is the commemoration of the foundation of the church on January 15.

This celebration lasts for a whole week. It features the signs of fire and of the flag.

The flag is raised again the way it was raised when the church was started. The fire is a symbol to remember how their forefathers in faith were tortured and burned.

Other feast days are Christmas, Easter and New Year. On the eve of those feast days, the church members sleep in the church building.

#### History of the church

During the time the Holy Spirit entered into many people, there was a lot of fighting between those possessed by the Spirit and those that did not believe in that happening. Through this there were some people tortured and some people were burned to death. This was in 1934. In those olden days Spirit possession was not yet well known and had not yet happened to many people.

The one who started the church of Roho first, was a pastor in the Anglican Church and experienced this possession by the Holy Spirit. He talked to him, after which he left the Anglican Church and worshiped outside. His preaching brought the Holy Spirit upon many people and made them to fall down.

Those however who did not believe in this started to fight with him. It was the power of God that was with him. He was called Alfayo Odongo Mango and lived and worked in Ugenya in a place called Musanda. The beginning of the Ruwe Church is connected with one person who was together with Odongo Mango. His name was Lawi Obonyo and he was killed with a spear after his companions had been burned to death.

The Musanda Church sprang from the Ruwe Church. Ruwe is therefore the original one following Alfayo Odongo Mango.

It was the none-Luos that left Ruwe and started Musanda.

Ruwe is the name of the place in Ugenya where the church started and where its headquarters are. It is near the place called Musanda, which again has the headquarters of the other church mentioned.

### Political activity

The church is active in development. For example in collecting money for children's school fees or for the transport of dead bodies to their homes for burials.

If a politician comes to church during campaigning, he is free to speak to the people. On the election day however each member is free to vote for whoever he or she wants.

The church can talk on political issues that are not good and have to be rectified.

It is however not good for a church leader to become closely involved in politics.

Ruwe is not concerned about the Ufungamano Initiative. It neither supports it nor rejects it.

### African culture

The Holy Spirit talks to people and makes them a strong African church.

Ruwe has some rules that have reference to the African culture. There are for instance certain types of food that are not eaten: Nileperch (mbuta), Catfish and others with no scales are forbidden by the Holy Spirit. During church ceremonies only sheep can be eaten but not goats.

### Evangelization

There are many cases where the sick people are attended to very quickly by the church members and when somebody dies, they also help wholeheartedly as well as in financial needs of people who want to send their children to school, but can not afford the fees. These deeds make others to see and follow the church.

Crusades and preaching in streets and market are not done.

### Gender

The women play an important role. The elderly mothers are teaching the younger ones.

They can not be pastors or leaders of the church.

### Differences and similarities with other churches

The main day for worshipping is Saturday, not Sunday.

Other churches have given women leadership post. For Ruwe it is not in line with the right faith if women can enter the sinagogi.

The members of Ruwe are not greeting others by shaking hands. The bible says: "once you are out to work for God, don't greet the people along the road". They also do not eat with other people from the same dish or plate, since the one who ate with Jesus from the same dish was the one who betrayed him.

## ***Interview 12*** ***Nomiya Fueny Maler***

### Personal history of the interviewed church leader:

He started to be a member of Nomiya Fueny Maler (NFM) in 1988. He saw the way of prayer and other things like the practice of circumcision. He joined the congregation in their prayers and services and after one year he was circumcised and therefore became a "full member". Before this he was a member of the Anglican Church.

He found the way the Anglicans are praying not lively enough (no dancing and singing rhythmic songs) and also saw that they don't have the Holy Spirit as much as the church he joined later.

He also did not like it that women were leaders in the Anglican church, which is contrary to the bible.

After changing to NFM also his wife and children went along.

Although he was baptized before, he was now baptized again by immersion into a river. After this he was also circumcised.

Though still a young man, he has now climbed into the rank of being "rural dean", which is the third person after the archbishop and the assistant archbishop. They are at the level of the mission (headquarters). Under them are the dioceses with their respective bishops, archdeacons and pastors.

### Ways of worshipping:

There is a small book that is followed during Sunday services. Before entering the church everybody has to remove the shoes and leave them outside.

After entering the church people have to kneel down. The pastor in charge is now praying on behalf of the people gathered in the church. They then stand up and sing some songs, then kneel down and pray again following the book. The book used for that is the same in all the Nomiya Churches, not only in NFM.

After that the people present give reports concerning the church. Then comes the preaching. The last part is the offering of 10 %.

The bible is read before the reports are said.

Sometime during the prayers people speak in tongues.

Apart from the Sunday service there is another weekly service on Wednesday which is for the Holy Spirit alone. The bible readings are only about the Holy Spirit. The prayer book is not used during that service. There are songs and drums and a lot of prayer for the sick.

The day for worship should really be Saturday, as it is done in the church where NFM has split from. In Kisumu town however the service is held on Sunday, because many people have to work on Saturday, which is still the main day (Sabbato) in the rural areas.

### Beliefs, teachings, doctrines

#### Feasts and events

The ten commandments of Moses are followed closely.

The central sign is circumcision of all males. An uncircumcised person can not be a leader. The circumcision of a boy born into the church has to be carried out on the eighth day. The baptism has to be done before that (this also applies to adult).

A girl has to be baptized after 14 days.

A child is baptized in the house by pouring of water. As an adult the same person has to be baptized again by immersion.

The NFM Church believes in Jesus Christ as the saviour and God. Different from the original Nomiya Church, they believe in the holy trinity.

During the time of menstruation women are unclean and can not enter the church. She has to be purified after seven days.

When somebody comes from a place where there is a dead body, he or she has to be purified before entering the church. A dead body is something unclean.

A women who has given birth is also not clean and has to be purified.

If she has given birth to a son, she can not enter the church for 33 days. After this period of time she has to be purified. If it is a girl, the period extends to 66 days.

The purification is always done with water and has to be carried out by a pastor.

The celebration of Circumcision is very important. Christmas is celebrated, Easter not.

### History of the church

The founder of Nomiya Fueny Maler was formerly a member of Nomiya Luo Sabbato.

Nomiya Luo Sabbato came from the original Nomiya Luo Mission. The word "Luo" was erased later to make it Nomiya Mission.

The original founder of Nomiya, Yohanna Owalo, had instructed his church to pray on Saturday. The colonial government however forced them to pray on Sunday.

After the death of Owalo, a disagreement arose between one group that wanted to go back to the original Saturday celebrations, while the other one claimed that the church should continue doing, what Owalo himself had done: to pray on Sunday.

The former therefore split and formed Nomiya Luo Sabbato Church.

The split of NFM occurred because of doctrinal reasons: The Nomiya Luo Sabbato do not accept Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as being God. It was however the Holy Spirit, that told the founder in a dream, that Jesus is the saviour. This revelation in a dream brought about the name "fueny maler", which means "clear revelation" or "clean revelation".

The church was registered in 1975 by the founder Simeon Ndara Owang'. He is now an old man (around 90 years) and his son has got the post of the "dean". The Archbishop (the highest office) is not from the family of the founder. The church has only spread within the area of the Luo.

### Political activity

The NFM is abstaining completely from political activity. Members of the church can be politicians, leaders however can not hold political office.

NFM has never been part of Ufungamano and has no stand on it.

### African culture

The circumcision in the Nomiya churches does not resemble the traditional way of circumcision which is done by other tribes outside the Luo area. Before the circumcision is carried out, there are certain verses from the bible to be read.

If somebody joins who is already circumcised (for example a Luyia), he has to be cut symbolically with a small wound.

The circumcised person has to stay in the house for a certain period.

### Evangelization

NFM is only preaching through actions. It often happens that through the prayer of the members sick people are healed. After this the healed persons are likely to join the church. There are no crusades or other public prayers being held in markets etc.

There are now eight dioceses in the whole of Nyanza and more than 400 members.

### Gender

Women can organize themselves in special groups, but can not become leaders.

### Differences and similarities with other churches

The issue of Jesus Christ (and the Holy Spirit) being God has brought division between the Nomiya churches. That is why there can still be unrest between NFM and others like Nomiya Luo Sabbato.

The way of worshipping is the same in all Nomiya branches.

The difference with other independent churches is not very big. One difference is, that each church build by Nomiya has something called "kibla". Each church has to face into the direction of North East.

Other differences: The purification rules, the rule that a dead body can not enter the church, the rule that the shoes have to be left outside the church.

### ***Interview 13*** ***Miracles and Wonders Church***

#### Personal history of the interviewed pastor:

He became a member of the Miracles and Wonders Church (MWC) in 1980 after one of the elders had preached in his homestead at Migosi (01.05.80). Through this preaching he received the salvation by accepting Jesus Christ as his personal saviour.

He was encouraged to come to the church and attend the weekly fellowships? He would sometime also go out with a team of church members to hold crusades outside Kisumu municipality.

In 1983 he organized a crusade around his home area (which is Wich Lum near Usenge) for three days. During those three days many people received salvation. Afterwards a big church was build there, that later also produced other sister churches, one of them on a small island in Lake Victoria.

He became a teacher in the church and became a pastor in 1986. He has now risen to the post of an overseer in the Nyanza region with 21 churches under him, while still being the pastor of the local church in Manyatta/Kisumu.

#### Ways of worshipping:

On Sundays there is "praise and worship" in the morning. The adults start around 10.00 AM, the children a bit later. The children have their own service.

After "praise and worship" people give testimonies: About their lives before salvation and how it is now, after they have received Christ as their personal saviour.

This is followed by some teaching and then by singing. The preaching part of the service is started by contributions from different people, mainly church elders. Sometimes the passage of the scripture that is the centre of the preaching of that day is read out. After this comes the main sermon of the main preacher of that day (20-30 minutes), who is normally the pastor of the church. This is followed by prayers. Before the end of the service there is an offering.

The lord's supper is celebrated around once a month. The holy communion is shared with everybody. On the last day of big crusades there is also the sharing of the holy communion.

During singing there are no drums or bells beaten. Only if a choir is leading the congregation in singing, they might use instruments like drums and kayamba.

The songs are lively and accompanied by clapping. People often get filled with the Holy Spirit at the end of singing. This leads to speaking in tongues. People can also start speaking in tongues after a long prayer.

#### Beliefs, teachings, doctrines

##### Feasts and events

The work of the Holy Spirit is an important part of the teaching, as well as the forgiveness of sins.

The power of faith and prayer is stressed.

The moral teaching is based on Galatians 5,19ff. The faithful are taught not to drink alcohol, not to smoke, how wives should behave to their husbands and vice versa.

Salvation happens at a particular time on a particular day. Somebody may be a member of the church, but not have this experience of receiving Christ in his life, after which he/she confesses the sins and becomes born again. It is very important to have this experience.

Healing and performing other miracles is a common feature. This happens through prayer and preaching. Laying of hands is rare and happens mainly during door to door preaching.

#### History of the church

Miracle and Wonders Church was established in 1978. It was founded by somebody who was a street preacher in Nairobi. He used to go to the pubs and preach to people during lunch hours or early in the morning. He would later proceed to places like bus stations, would preach to the passengers in the busses and would stand at the crossroads to preach again when people return home after work.

Later on he met a group of other people who had received the salvation. They were from Luoland, some from Siaya, some from South Nyanza. They joined hands and started working together. Later on they started a branch in Kisumu. The man who had started the church was a Kamba by tribe. He was called Abdallah Davish. His mother had been a Muslim and his Father a Christian.

He had been preached to by another church during a crusade. He might have joined that church but later decided to start his own church.

### Political activity

MWC has not taken time with politics. It only preaches the gospel. Development activities are part of the church work. The pastors should abstain from speaking out on political issues. Most of the people who speak on political issues don't believe in salvation. They think that salvation only happens after death. The Anglican Church of Kenya for example does not believe in people who speak in tongues.

The MWC however knows that the Holy Spirit is there.

The churches that don't believe in the Holy Spirit have a big voice in politics.

The Ufungamano Initiative is not supported by MWC. The church should play the role of a mediator. If it plays a major role in politics and something goes wrong, there is no chance of reconciliation.

### African culture

African Culture is a thing of the past that has nothing to do with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Most of the old traditions are in fact contrary to the bible.

Polygamy is not encouraged during the teachings of MWC, the same applies to wife inheritance, since the latter is leading to polygamy.

A polygamous man can still enter the church if he has received Christ as his personal saviour, if he does not add another wife. He can however not be a teacher in the church or a pastor.

### Evangelization

Around once in three months there are big crusades being held. Though the more effective way of spreading the gospel is the door to door preaching, since hear the church reaches out to those who have not received salvation. Crusades are attended by many people who are already saved or who listen to the word but stick to their denomination.

Through the Kisumu Town Churches Fellowship, MWC takes part in organizing big crusades with famous preachers. These crusades are announced with a lot of publicity and are usually attended by big crowds of people.

### Gender

Women are encouraged to take active part in the spreading of the gospel. They are part of the body of the church. There should not be a barrier between men and women. Women can not be pastor. There are times when women are not holy before God, this is during the time when they are in their period.

Women can not be ordained pastors and therefore not climb into the higher leadership ranks.

### Differences and similarities with other churches

MWC is part of the Kisumu Town Fellowship of Churches. Most of the churches that are part of that network are Pentecostal churches, like MWC. Most of them are indigenous churches: Power of Jesus Around the World, Voice of Salvation and Healing, Church of Christ in Africa, Redeemed Gospel Church. The ACK (Anglican Church of Kenya) is also part of it.

Other independent churches believe in circumcision of the body. MWC believes only in circumcision of the souls.

When somebody is buried as a member of MWC, there is not "stick" in the shape of a cross being put up. It has bears no spiritual meaning at all. The burial rite is based on 1 Corinthians 1, 18. The power of the cross is strength for those who have received salvation. Many of the traditions of the Luo that go along with burials are rejected.

Other churches have ceremonies after the burial and practice the custom of "baro liel", tomb breaking. MWC does not do that.

The idea of keeping babies in the house after birth including the mother also has no room in MWC.

## ***Interview 14***

### ***Musanda Christian Church of Kenya***

#### Personal history of the interviewed pastor:

He used to be a member of the African Inland Church. He left that church in 1973 and joined Musanda Christian Church of Kenya (MCCK).

He became a member when he had a big problem with a serious sickness. The doctors in the hospitals were unable to heal him. The Municipality of Kisumu, for which he worked had dismissed him from his job. He also went to a witchdoctor (diviner), who told him, that he is unable to heal him. He should instead look for help from those people who beat the drums and run along the roads.

He tried MCCK, since that church is found in his home area.

When he joined MCCK, the members prayed for him and he was healed. From that time in 1973 up to now he has been very healthy.

He believes, that without that sickness, he would still be a member of the AIC.

He started worshipping with them before he was married. He then found a wife and wedded her in church. He has nine children.

He was healed for free in the church and got to know God well.

When the church leaders saw, that he was a good person and could be able to do the work of God, he was given the post of vice-secretary in 1989. When the person who held the office of secretary died, another person was appointed. After that one also died, the interviewed person became the secretary. He now knows all the goings-on in the church.

#### Ways of worshipping:

When there is a church service, the people first confess their sins, then the leader of the service gives a sermon. After finishing the people stand up and one of them leads the congregation in prayer. Then the sins are confessed.

Everybody repents his or her own sins. The leader then closes this part by praying. After this there are three songs followed by the lord's prayer which is said three times while kneeling down. Then people stand up and sing again.

While the drum is beaten, people speak in tongues and receive prophecies. The rhythm and the singing makes people to be possessed by the Holy Spirit.

When people get quiet again, the ones who received messages while say what they saw and heard. Sometimes the people who have spoken in tongues rely on the translation of the leader. The prophecies can be about coming sicknesses of people, about problems that the country will face, when the rain will come or a famine, whether there will be wars in different parts of the world. All this will be revealed in the church, so that there will be no secrets and surprises any more. The spirit also reveals sins, that people have committed. These are also spelt out, so that they can be removed from the people who did those bad things.

After this it is time for teaching the word of God. There is no particular time when the service has to end. It depends on what God has to tell. Before the teaching commences, there has to be the reading of the bible passage of the days.

Up to five people can be given a chance to speak and teach the others. It can be anybody who likes. The leader is the one who speaks last.

To finish up, there is always a collection (offering).

#### Beliefs, teachings, doctrines

##### Feasts and events

The Holy Spirit is very important. He tells the individual members and the church as a whole what to do. Through him, the people are healed and can speak in tongues. Through him people can see what will happen in the future.

There is the celebration of Easter in April. There is another celebration in July for the Holy Spirit to come. It has no particular name. It is God to decide at which day of the month that big gathering has to take place.

Another big feast day is called "Kiche" or "Tarsoso", it is also a big gathering at which many members of the church are camping at an agreed place for four days in order to build one another on evangelism. This happens in October. Christmas is celebrated from 24th in the evening up to 25th December. The New Year is also celebrated.

History of the church

The MCKK split from the Musanda Holy Ghost Church of East Africa (Musanda).

Musanda is the place where Odongo Mango stayed and where the headquarter of the first "Roho" church is.

At one time was a "Tarsoso" meeting of Musanda at some place in Nyakach.

The Archbishop and his assistant clashed in the sinagogi. The name of the Archbishop was Alfred Odede, the assistant was called Julius Pete Okuom. The disagreement was about some of the members walking on dirty paths.

They were practising adultery and sexual misbehaviour. The Archbishop did not see this mistakes, while the assistant Archbishop was condemning them strongly and urged his leader to do something about it. They were both from South Nyanza and pulled their community into this fight. The Archbishop then wanted to get rid of Pete and to install an assistant from Central Nyanza, claiming that it is not good to have both highest office bearers from the same locality. This caused Pete to leave the church and to take along those who were his followers and who saw the deeds mentioned also as bad sins.

The disagreement was on moral issues and on leadership. On the side of the principle doctrines there were no differences. This is the reason, why up to now the way of worshipping and preaching of the two churches is very similar.

The church is still very poor. It is very strong in preaching the gospel, but can not afford big buildings. It uses old building materials, that have been used before.

Political activity

There is no politician in the church and there can be no preaching about political issues. The church preaches the word of God only. Pointing at things that are wrong has got nothing to do with politics.

Politicians are only concerned about the development of this world, not about what is to happen in heaven.

Up to now, none of the members have tried to stand for any elections and it is difficult to say, how the leaders would react, if on would like to.

The MCKK is not part of Ufungamano.

African culture

The church carries light inside itself, which makes it attractive for the local people.

There is no other way how the church and the African tradition are connected. The traditional way of life has nothing to do with the church. The fact that drums are beaten and people clap their hands is having its ground only in the bible.

Polygamists can not become leaders of the church or teachers. Those in the sinagogi have to follow what Paul wrote to Timtheo and later also to Tito. Those that are not shepherds of the flock can have many wives, but add no more once they have entered.

Inheritance of wives can not be done, since it leads to polygamy.

Evangelization

The MCKK is only preaching the word of God. There are no crusades in towns. In the villages however there are meetings being held for evangelism. Through getting in contact with those church happenings, people can get attracted to the church.

Gender

Women can not be leaders in the church. They also do not organise themselves under their own leaders. They just pray.

Differences and similarities with other churches

Some churches have accepted women to be pastors. Others accept polygamists in the sinagogi just because they are rich. Those are things impossible in MCKK.

The MCKK is a church that is very strong in healing people. The AIC is not like that.

A priest in the MCKK has to constantly cover the head by tying a turban or wearing a cap.

The difference between the original Musanda Church and the MCKK is very small.

Other independent churches are also doing the work of spreading the gospel and therefore deserve all the respect.

## ***Interview 15***

### ***Voice of Salvation and Healing Church***

#### Personal history of the interviewed pastor:

He became a member of the church by virtue of his birth, since his parents happened to be members of Voice of Salvation and healing (VOSH). He was blessed within the church and grew up in it. He inherited all from his parents. But December 11, 1982, when he was in 7th grade of Primary School, he was "ministered to" and there was a new touch in his life and his live changed.

From being merely a member of the church, he came to know Jesus Christ as his personal saviour and was born again.

His mother had 11 children. One of the brothers of the interview person was at one time very sick and was on his way of loosing his eyesight. The doctors had failed in preventing him from getting blind. The mother prayed and cried to God. By laying hands on the son and casting out of the demons she made the him to start seeing again.

The interview person later joined High School and during this time became involved in preaching and became the "Christian Union" chairman at his school. The "Christian Union" was a union of those who had accepted Jesus and are therefore saved. Since his family is poor and has many children, he could not continue for further education.

He instead picked up a job as a teacher (untrained) after school and was party involved in preaching, especially in schools and hospitals ("hospital ministry"). He was also very active in the work of the local church.

After seven years he felt the urge to be much more involved in church work. He therefore resigned from his teaching job to work full time in the church. He was absorbed as an administrator apart from other jobs he was doing as a deacon.

After some time the church found it fit to upgrade him as assistant pastor of the English service, besides being the administrator of the church.

#### Ways of worshipping:

During the church service there is an opening prayer first. Then the people sing songs of praise and clap their hand jovially. God feels happy about being praised.

The worship and singing pulls down God's glory and his presence is felt. The prayer after the songs is done while raising up the hands.

Now comes the part, when about two or three people testify what they have experienced with God, which deeds of salvation they have seen and how they encountered the healing power of the Lord.

After that the word of God is written out from the bible by one of the members of the congregation.

The pastor then expounds on the passage and teaches the congregation either with words that he has prepared for the day or with whatever inspired him when hearing the words from the bible. After finishing the preaching, he will lead the congregation into worshipping the lord. The people now pray individually in order to thank God for the living word that they have been given. During this time, those who are filled by the Holy Ghost and overtaken by him. They then speak in tongues. Speaking in tongues however is controllable and should only happen when it fits into the proceeding of the service.

An important part of the service is the "altar call": Those who have needs (sickness and other problem) can come in front to assemble together with the pastor. They express their needs and the ones present pray over those needs. So the community of Christian prays for those in need, lays hands on them and calls for God's help.

After this, the service is over. If it is a day for holy communion, people take it. The holy communion is held once a month, although the scripture says, that it should be held as often as possible.

Normally in church there is no beating of drums. Drums can only come in when there is a choir with many instruments (even guitars, piano etc.).

#### Beliefs, teachings, doctrines

##### Feasts and events

The people of the church should be silent in areas where the bible is silent. Where the bible is emphatic however, they should be equally emphatic. Teaching is bible-oriented. VOSH does not want to teach anything that is not backed by the scripture.

VOSH believes in the trinity of Father, Son and the Holy Ghost.

The moral teaching includes not to drink. This is to prevent people from being tempted. Even if the bible does not ban alcohol completely, it is better not to permit it, since very quickly people loose control.

It is important as a member of the church to have had the experience of receiving Christ as the personal saviour. Those that have been converted to be members of VOSH when coming from other denominations and religions usually convert at the time when they get saved through hearing a preacher of VOSH.

Those that have not had that experience feel that as a burden. It is also a burden in the hearts of those who are already born again. The others, especially the pastor, pray for them and leads them to the experience of being saved and change their lives. It has not yet happened that somebody remained without that salvation. Since God has so far always made those with stubborn hearts to surrender.

Until one accepts Christ in totality there is no real salvation.

Somebody who has not accepted Jesus as his personal saviour and is therefore born again can not become a leader in the church.

Speaking in tongues can be very inspiring to the congregation of faithful. It is however a gift not given to everybody.

### History of the church

The church started in the mid-forties. A Pentecostal evangelist came as a missionary. He was a white person from South Africa and was called Wellington Bengo. During that time there were only the big churches like the Anglican and the Catholic Church. During this time Africa was still called the "dark continent", when people were really busy taking a lot of alcoholic drink and traditionalism was on the peak. Most of the people had their own African way of relating to God. This had no major form, since nothing was written down. Religion was in their way of life. Even witchcraft and superstition were on the increase.

Following the preaching of Bengo, African people of the area also started preaching the word and called that time the "revival period". Many people were converted, but it was not liked by many and the government was against it since they feared upheaval in a time when the fight against colonialism had started. Anything that brought people together was suspect of political activities against the government.

But because of the power with which this came, people were very enthusiastic. So the revivalists went about preaching.

It was around that time, that the pioneers of VOSH also got saved. Those that had become saved congregated together and by 1956 VOSH was registered after having gone through a lot of trials through the hands of the colonial government. Because of the peculiar way of praying (crying etc.) and because of the fast spread of the movement, the authorities became suspicious. It also happened, that people who conspired with the colonialists blackmailed the new religious movement with false information. This was also done by the white missionaries, since they were jealous of the success of those preachers, who also converted members from the big churches.

It was however found out, that these people were genuine and were only worshipping the lord. So they were allowed to register the new church.

The present Archbishop Silas Owiti is the founder-chairman. He was first a member of the Anglican Church. He did not break away from his church, but preached without any affiliation to a particular church. The people he and his colleagues converted were either members of no church or came from different churches.

He pioneered together with a group of other people. Some of them died, some broke off and started their own organizations, but he is still where he started.

The church started around Ahero, since Owiti was born there. The founders wanted to be a voice of salvation and healing and therefore registered the church under this name.

The church spread and has now close to 1000 branch churches in almost all the provinces of Kenya and indeed in the whole of East Africa (Uganda and Tanzania). The churches in Rwanda and Burundi were closed and scattered during the civil war, but there is hope, that they will congregate again.

### Political activity

In the VOSH church politics is really shunned, since the bible only instructs us to influence the political scenario through prayer.

Leaders are planted by God. The duty of the Christians is to correct them and point to them the truth which is in the bible when they go wrong. Also to pray for them is important. Quite often, political leaders come to the Archbishop to ask for help. What he gives them is the word and his counselling. He prays for them and there he ends. He does not become actively involved in politics. His is to pray for them and to correct them. VOSH has always criticized bishops who get actively involved and take to the political platform. VOSH therefore is also against the Ufungamano Initiative. The Ufungamano leaders have taken the roles of politicians, which is wrong. It is wrong to take people to the streets so that they through stones. To call for mass action is very much against the spirit of the children of God and against the humble spirit of Christianity.

If politicians go wrong, the church can tell them personally, instead of speaking about it in church and through that inciting people. It is wrong to incite the subjects against their master.

### African culture

It is very difficult to do away with culture completely. VOSH however really tries to shun it. It is important to adopt the Christian culture, to be Christ-like.

Africa had a religion of its own, the traditional religion. It was in the way of life of people. They felt, that there were different spirits in charge of different areas.

People were very superstitious. They believed for example, that it is a bad omen to hit one's left foot when going on a journey. Whatever people dreamed at night, had something to do with what would happen in the day, so they believed. There was even the believe that the ancestors are also eating together with a family, so that a part of the food had to be thrown in a corner for them. All this was idol worshipping.

As born-again Christians, we have to shun these cultures, which are demonic. It has much to do with spiritism.

VOSH is more inside the Christian culture and shuns the African one.

Other parts of the culture are not done away with. For example the birth-rights. A younger brother automatically has to respect the older one. Another example is the tradition, that one has to be buried in the homestead. In those things there is nothing demonic, so they are accepted.

VOSH is an African indigenous church, since there is no link up with outside on the organizational level. It was started in Africa and goes on here.

There is friendship with many friends, especially from Evangelical churches in America. The Archbishop is visiting America and Europe every year to preach the word. There are also a lot of visitors all the time from the USA, Canada, Norway, Finland etc.

For example the famous evangelist T.L. Osborn has come many times. This brings about a lot of friendship, but does not touch the independent character of VOSH.

Drums are not beaten in the traditional African way.

Polygamy is discouraged, but the people are accepted the way they are. If someone comes in with several wives, the church does not tell him, that he has to chase away the second, third etc. one. If polygamy was practised before salvation, it is considered to have been done out of ignorance. After salvation it is however not accepted to have marry more wives. Somebody who is in the church and has not yet married, will only marry once.

### Evangelization

There are a lot of crusades organized in towns and especially also in rural areas. VOSH is in fact much stronger in rural areas than in towns. When a crusade is held in an open air meeting, the truth is told to the people. During that time the people are also told where they can find like-minded believers, where they can grow spiritually in the fellowship of brethren. If they feel like joining VOSH, they are very welcome, although they are not forced.

### Gender

The gender issue has been tackled well: The word is preached to everybody without regard of sex. The Holy Spirit does not select men only. Since both sexes have received the word, they also spread it together. In the scriptures we find women who followed Jesus closely. There are even prophetesses in the bible.

Therefore within the church of VOSH women even become pastors. Up to now, they are less in number, but they are there. The secretary general of the church is a woman. The women can also climb into the higher ranks of leadership even up to the post of the Archbishop.

### Differences and similarities with other churches

The way the service is conducted is similar to the way evangelical churches do it everywhere in the world.

Many of the Evangelical churches have added in some doctrines, that are not biblical. One example is polygamy.

Some churches accept polygamy generally without any restrictions. Not so VOSH.

Another difference is, that some churches nowadays are more like commercial enterprises. The membership depends on the financial contribution. VOSH is very different.

The Power of Jesus Around the World church is very similar to VOSH in their teaching and worshipping.

## ***Interview 16***

### ***Musanda Holy Ghost Church of East Africa***

#### Personal history of the interviewed bishop:

He was formerly a member of AIM (African Inland Mission).

During his long life he has worked for many employers. He has been an employee of the power + lighting co-operation in the colonial days, he worked for the Kisumu Municipality for some time and was also a nursery school teacher for three years. At one point he earned a living as a musician.

Before he left the AIM, he was very sick and could not be healed by any doctor. In his home area, Kajulu, the Musanda Holy Ghost Church of East Africa (Musanda) had already been established and it were the members of this church that prayed for him when he was in a very bad state of illness. Through these prayers he was healed and therefore decided to join the Musanda Church.

In the year 1980 he was ordained a pastor of the church and was later made the bishop of the area.

After deciding to work full time for the church, he stopped his paid job in town and is now earning a living through tilling the land around his homestead and keeping a few heads of cattle.

#### Ways of worshipping:

The church service starts with opening words by the leader.

People then stand up and one of them offers a prayer, after which follows the part of repentance. People confess their sins.

After this people worship God by song and by beating drum and bell. Then they kneel down and cry for God. They tell him whichever problems they have. If somebody is sick, she or he tell God personally about it.

After this the congregation stands up again and sings a hymn to the angels. It is this hymn that makes the Holy Spirit to speak to people.

What the Holy Spirit has revealed is then spoken out. It can be something that will happen in the life of an individual, it can also be pointing out a sin that somebody has committed and that has to be confessed there and then so that it is wiped out. Different people get different messages, that have to be translated to be understood. The message can concern the world in which we live, it can contain the order to pray for the president of the nation.

The preaching part can not start before the sins are removed. Only after revelation of the messages of the Spirit and after leaving demons behind, can the message of the sermon get across to the faithful. In a "Roho church" one can not just start the service by preaching, because it is God who speaks with the people in the church. Starting straight away with preaching would mean to combine sin with sin. The preaching commences when people are pure and holy. The preacher in his sermon refers to a certain passage of the bible.

Preaching continues up to around 3.00 PM, after which there is a collection and the service ends.

In the "Roho" church, the lord's supper is offered only by the bishop, not by an ordinary pastor. It is done only on important feasts like Christmas. The bishop has to take it to many churches. During the lord's supper they take bread. Wine however they do not drink. They do it the way the Holy Spirit has told them. What is taken besides the bread is a secret of the Holy Spirit, which can not be told.

#### Beliefs, teachings, doctrines

##### Feasts and events

The teachings on doctrines and morals do not differ from other churches: The Holy Spirit is the teacher, the bible is the foundation of the doctrine. People are not allowed to take alcohol or smoke tobacco, not do get involved in bad sexual behaviour.

Christmas is being celebrated and also a feast in April, that was copied from the Catholics. Pentecost is not celebrated.

On January 19 there is the important feast of the remembrance of the burning of Alfayo Odongo Mango. On that day the church members go to Musanda to celebrate and do what the Spirit has told them.

#### History of the church

The history of the church can only be told properly by the archbishop, not by a bishop.

Alfayo Odongo Mango was burned in 1934 because of the Holy Spirit. He was burned together with eight other people who were also possessed by the Holy Spirit. Odongo Mango however was seen to be the one who spoiled the others.

He was an Anglican pastor when he was burned. He started experiencing the possession by the Spirit from 1924 onwards.

It was the time of the colonial government and the Anglican Church was lead by Europeans. The Europeans did not like to hear about the Holy Spirit entering into an African. When the Holy Spirit entered into the life of Alfayo, they were afraid, that it could affect the political situation and the European government. The ones who caught the nine people in a house and burned them to death, were sent by the government to do so, although they were not government employed. It was Chief Mumia who organized the burning.

The Holy Spirit had left the land of the Europeans and came to Africa. Also the Israel Nineveh people had to leave the European church and their leader Kivuli had to start his own, since the Spirit had chosen to enter into the African people. It came to select people. The signs of the cross, which the Roho people put on their clothes, was also revealed by the Spirit.

The Ruwe Holy Ghost Church split from the Musanda Church later. They were together first but in order to spread the word of God it is good to have many branches. "Ruwe" and "Musanda" are two places near each other in the area of Ugenya. Lawi Obonyo was one of the people who were killed together with Odongo Mango.

### Political activity

The Musanda church only prays for the politicians, so that there may be peace in the country. Church work and political work can not mix. The Holy Spirit can not allow that.

If a member wants to stand for election, he has to leave the church. He might otherwise spoil the people of the church. The light can not come together with darkness.

### African culture

The "Roho" church is the church for Africa.

The beating of drums and bells has nothing to do with the African tradition. It only comes from the bible. The church and the traditional deeds of the local people have got nothing to do with each other.

### Evangelization

There are no special activities for evangelization. The church spreads by word of mouth and by the fact that those from outside can see the good things happening in the church, especially when it comes to healing sick people.

### Gender

Elderly mothers are called "doctors", which means that they are able to speak prophetic words. If a lady is sick, those "doctors" go to pray for this lady. If somebody is sick and has to be washed with hot water, the water can only be boiled by one of those mothers.

Women can not be leaders of the men. They can not be pastors.

### Differences and similarities with other churches

The Ruwe Church and Musanda church are very similar in the way of praying and in faith.

The "Roho" churches all have a cross on their clothes, caps or church buildings. Musanda was the first of those "cross churches".

The teaching and doctrines are very similar to other independent churches.

## ***Interview 17*** ***Sayun Church of God (East Africa)***

### Personal history of the interviewed pastor:

The person was first a member of the Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) and he became seriously ill during that time. He could not be healed by the doctors in the hospital, neither could he be healed by prayer from the members of his PAG church.

There was a person from the village, where the interviewed person lived, who was also very sick. That person was healed by members of the Sayun Church of God (Sayun) as he was watching. He therefore decided to also approach the Sayun people and he was also healed. This made him to see, that the power of the Holy Spirit was with the Sayun Church. He therefore decided to join them.

He later became a pastor and is now in charge of the local church.

When he was in the Pentecostal church, he was already taught well, it seemed to him however as if his salvation grew in depth when he entered the Sayun Church.

### Ways of worshipping:

The praying of the Sayun Church is taken from the bible.

The main day for prayer is Sunday. This day is called Sabbato.

During Sunday service there is a small prayer first. It is to tell God: "We have entered in your house". Then there is time for announcement of church matters.

After this comes the main part of prayer. This starts with singing, after which everybody prays individually while kneeling down. Then one person by his prayer concludes this part. That person must be a pastor.

Then people stand up and praise God with three hymns, after which they sit down again.

Again one person prays. Then there is the chance for somebody to give testimony about his life.

Then there is a hymn being sung from a hymn book. Afterwards two people are chosen to preach and teach the word of God.

After this the prayer is closed by the pastor or the highest person present, unless somebody still has a problem. In that case there is a prayer over those problems before the pastor closes the prayer.

To finish up, there is a collection.

The bible is also read out during the prayer. There is however no fixed schedule for bible readings. Whatever somebody wants to preach about, he also reads out.

The lord's supper is celebrated once a month. Although the bible says that it should be done every week, there is not enough money to do so.

Bread is being eaten and something special is being drunk.

During the Sunday service, people can speak in tongues. This can however also happen in any other place in any meeting or even when somebody is alone in the house.

### Beliefs, teachings, doctrines

#### Feasts and events

The Holy Spirit is the most important teacher. Somebody who has received the Holy Spirit must be baptized.

Somebody who is sick can be healed through prayer.

A leader of the church must be chosen by the people. The people have to lay hands on him. After that he must be trained and told by the people what to do.

Easter is being celebrated as a very big feast. There is also a celebration called "kiche", which is done in August. It is to remember the way the Israelites suffered in the desert. Christmas is also celebrated to remember the birth of Christ.

Apart from those there is also a day to commemorate the start of the church.

### History of the church

The Sayun church started through the power of the Holy Spirit. The founder is called Joseph Nyang'wara Obera. He is now the leader and archbishop of the church.

He was not a member of any church and only prayed in his own house.

One night he had a dream. God spoke to him in that dream and continued to do so over a period of three weeks. God told him what to do and showed him his kingdom. The founder did not imagine before that, that he could have his own church. When he sent his application to Nairobi in order to register the church and to get a license, the Holy Spirit continued talking. A woman came from Kabondo. God had also spoken to her. Somebody came from Maragoli, to

whom God had also said, that Obera should raise the flag. Even he himself was still disturbed by the Spirit until he rose the flag. It was the flag of "Sayun Church of God". The Spirit also showed him the type of flag he should use: white on top, red in the middle and yellow below.

He managed to get the license and started the work of God in 1974.

It was the Holy Spirit that made people to join the church. Those first converts did not come from one particular church, but from many different ones.

The leader was sent by the Spirit to different areas. He had to go on foot for lack of other means.

The name "Sayun" was taken from the scriptures. "Sayun" is a hill, where those warriors stay, that have won the war.

The "New Sayun Church" broke away from Sayun Church in 1998. They do however not have a license yet. They left because of their own wish.

### Political activity

The Sayun Church does not enter into politics, since it has the salvation of God.

Politics is a field that is left to the government. Sayun however is only with Jesus and with the Holy Spirit.

Sayun is not part of Ufungamano.

### African culture

The deeds of the olden times are not done by the members of Sayun Church. The African Culture only comes in when the type of singing is considered.

Polygamy is accepted if somebody married many wives before his salvation. A husband of many wives can however not become a leader of the church.

Wife inheritance is not accepted, since it can lead to the spread of diseases. The leaders will not be happy with somebody who follows this practice.

### Evangelization

New members are found through the journey of the archbishop. He is doing the main part of the evangelization, though he is being helped by his pastors.

The church has around 11600 members.

### Gender

There are women who are called the "church mothers". They keep the church building s clean. There are meetings on Thursday, headed by women.

There are women called "doctors" who pray for women who have given birth, since men can not go there. There are women who are called "pastors". They can however not baptize people and can only be leaders of women, not of men. They can also not enter the sinagogi or climb into the higher ranks of leadership.

### Differences and similarities with other churches

The big difference between the Sayun Church and other churches is that the power of the Holy Spirit is given room and that people who are sick are healed by that power. In the Pentecostal Church, the sick people are merely prayed for and the result is left to God. In the Sayun Church however the leaders come and lay hands on the sick person and the sickness leaves him or her.

The Sayun church relies on the bible more than any other church.

Many churches put women in the ranks of pastors who can even baptize people. Not so the Sayun church.

Many churches accept people as leaders who are polygamists or who have inherited the wife of the deceased brother. Not so the Sayun church.

## **Interview 18**

### **Bethsaida Roho Matakafu Church**

#### Personal history of the interviewed Archbishop:

He was first a member of the Ruwe Holy Ghost Church.

When he was still young, he was attacked by a disease. His mother and his brother took him to the church. This was at his home in Nyakach. He was almost dying. He was however healed by the members of Ruwe. After this he was taken to Musanda. At Musanda he was taught a language of the Holy Spirit. That language had been brought when the Holy Spirit had come down in the year 1930. Among the people that had brought that church of the Holy Spirit was somebody called Alfayo Odongo, another one was called Lawi Obonyo.

At Musanda, the interviewed person was taught that holy language, which is the language of the angels, for a period of seven years. After that he returned to his home place in Nyakach. There he prayed and worshiped. While praying and worshipping, he could see things revealed to him by the Holy Spirit.

There was by then an old man called Paulo Omumbo Achola. God had entered in his heart and the Holy Spirit talked to him. He went to the leader at Musanda, whose name was Barnaba Waluoho. He was the archbishop of the Ruwe Church.

Omumbo asked Waluoho in a friendly way to give him the boy called Musa (the interviewed person). The latter accepted straight away, since he wanted the word of God to be spread. In exchange for this "gift" he also gave the Ruwe Church building materials, since he was a very wealthy man.

Omumbo then asked the interviewed person to follow him, which he accepted. He then moved to many places to preach the word of God. He evangelized in Tanzania also and had great success.

After the death of Omumba Ochola, Petro Kariuki Wachira took over the leadership of Bethsaida Roho Matakafu Church (Bethsaida). This new leader then said to the interviewed person, that he can not yet be his assistant, but he can be the secretary of the church, since he knows the church well. After some time he would be made the assistant of the overall leader (vice-archbishop).

When Kariuki fell sick, he called the interviewed person and told him to be the next leader. He handed over the files of the church including the registration certificate. He laid hands on the chosen person and asked God for blessings.

After one month Kariuki came to him in a dream. In that dream he took him from Nyalenda to his former house in Kondele by blessing him and anointing him with oil.

Blessed and anointed, he went on doing his work as the leader and archbishop of the Bethsaida church.

Up to now, he has not been able to build a big church. The founder of the church did not introduce the rule of giving 10%, so that there is now no proper way of fundraising in the church.

This is also the reason, why even as an archbishop, he has to work as a labourer, so that he can earn a living.

He has been given gifts by God, that include the powers of healing sick people.

#### Ways of worshipping:

The way of praying in the Bethsaida Church resembles the way other churches do it. The special thing about it is the fact, that first the sins have to be confessed, before the church service goes on. This is the way it is done in the Roho Churches and in Israel Nineveh. If somebody tries to keep his sins secret, it is detected by the others by the time the sinner enters the house or the church.

#### Beliefs, teachings, doctrines

##### Feasts and events

The Bethsaida Church beliefs in the Holy Trinity and gets all its teachings from the bible. The members are taught not to drink alcohol or to indulge into other sinful behaviour.

#### History of the church

The history of the Bethsaida Church is connected with the Holy Ghost (Roho) churches of Musanda and Ruwe.

Therefore it is good to look into the history of those two first.

Musanda Holy Ghost church was there first. Barnaba Waluoho stayed at a place called Ruwe. There was a registration certificate, reading "Ruwe Holy Ghost Church of East Africa" and one certificate reading "Musanda Holy Ghost Church of East Africa". Both churches however had a very good relationship with each other.

Waluoho had started the Church and had registered it. A short time later, the son of Odongo brought problems and claimed the leadership of the church that his father had died for. Therefore a group led by Waluoho left Musanda and went to Ruwe. The son of Odongo was then left to register the "Musanda Holy Ghost Church". When Paul Omumbo Achola founded his own church, he asked for the help of the interviewed person who was by that time with the Ruwe Church.

Petro Kariuki had been staying in the Luo area for many years. He knew Omumbo Achola, since they both were very wealthy men and both of them had cars. Omumbo invited Kariuki to join the new church. Omumbo had first been saved in the African Israel Nineveh Church. Before that he had been just a business man with many wives. He had not been a member of any church. Later he left Israel Nineveh and joined the "Roho Israel Church of God", belonging to James Kisibo.

Kisibo however did things that Omumbo did not like. He therefore left and formed the "New Roho Israel Church". This church does not exist any more. There emerged a fight about the word "Israel". This made them to change the name into "Bethsaida Roho Matakatiifu Church", so that there may be peace.

### Political activity

The church is not politically active. Politics and the work of God can not mix. The Ufungamano Initiative is something the church members have no knowledge about and the church has nothing to do with it.

### African culture

The African culture is a thing of the past. The Holy Spirit is teaching new things to the Christians that make them leave the old ways and receive the holy ways instead of superstition and witchcraft.

Polygamists are welcome to join the church and to get saved. But they can not become leaders and can not marry more wives after having joined.

Wife inheritance is discouraged and the pastors try to teach the people not to practice it.

### Evangelization

The church does not engage in strong evangelizing. The new members join because they see the good work of the church and the healing powers of the leaders.

### Gender

Women can not be leaders in the church since Jesus left the work of leading the flock as pastors to men only.

### Differences and similarities with other churches

The Bethsaida Church resembles the "Roho" Churches very much in the way of praying. It differs from the Catholic Church in the way of confessing the sins. The confession of sins and the guidance by the Holy Spirit are very important elements, that some of the big churches have neglected.

## ***Interview 19***

### ***Roho Fueny Maler Church***

#### Personal history of the interviewed cardinal:

He was first a member of the Musanda Holy Ghost Church of East Africa.

At one time he became very sick and could not be healed in any way for a long time. The members of Musanda Church did not manage to heal him. It was in the name of the Roho Fueny Maler Church (RFMC) that he was healed. This made him to leave the Musanda Church and to join RFMC. In the Musanda Church he had been a pastor, but had not climbed very high in leadership. In the RFMC he struggled hard to worship and pray and at the same time climbed very fast up to the post of the cardinal, who is the highest leader of the church.

The former cardinal died recently.

As the present leader, the interviewed cardinal is staying at Kajulu, but performs his official functions at the headquarters at Otongolo, near the Kisumu Airport.

#### Ways of worshipping:

In the church, the women are divided according to their leadership ranks. The "doctors" sit in front. The men are also divided, whereby the teachers of the church sit in front.

Before starting with the service, people repent their sins. Then the leader comes in. He then prays and the people sit down.

During the church services, the drum and the bell are beaten vigorously. Speaking in tongues is also done all the time. Preaching is also very important, which is preceded by bible reading.

The confession of sins before the service starts is done like in the other Roho churches.

#### Beliefs, teachings, doctrines

##### Feasts and events

The faith is founded in the bible. Anything taught is taken from the bible.

The celebration of the Sabbath day is taken from the bible as well as the celebration of the lord's supper.

A member of the church is not allowed to diverge from his way after having left the church. He or she is to go home straight and "carry the blessings home". This is to prevent the faithful from being tempted to fall back into bad habits, for example drinking alcohol.

Members of RFMC are not allowed to take alcohol. It can however happen, that an old friend tries to call one of the faithful to visit him when he is drinking in his house. Instead of following such an invitation, the church member should go home straight after the service.

Bad behaviour that is not allowed and had to be repented includes many things. Those things have to be left behind after salvation: Alcohol, tobacco, abusing people with words, fighting and quarrelling, seeing prostitutes, jealousy.

Having left those things, the saved person can now be called "japolo", a person belonging to heaven.

In the RFMC, healing of sick people is an important feature.

#### History of the church

RFMC split from the Roho Fueny Church, which belongs to somebody called Obuya. Roho Fueny Church is not the same as the Roho Revelation Church started by Samson Owiti.

Roho Fueny Church had split from the Musanda Holy Ghost Church. RFMC is therefore a split in the tradition of the churches that go back to Alfayo Odongo Mango.

There was a fight within the leaders of Roho Fueny which was about leadership and the way the church was run.

There were also quarrels about money. This made some leaders to leave and start Roho Fueny Maler. The headquarters were established in Olando, near the Kisumu Airport.

#### Political activity

The fields of the church and the government are completely different. The RFMC does not engage itself in politics at all. In case of bad deeds of the politicians of the area, where the church leaders are, the church still has to remain quiet since politics is not their field. Only wrong things within the church can be corrected by the leaders of the church. If one of the members wants to become a politician, that is left to him. A leader however would first have to give up his leadership work before entering the political arena.

### African culture

The people in the RFMC are taught, how to have respect. This resembles very much the way respect was taught in the olden days. Women for example should not leave their head uncovered when a church leader enters the house. When the elder enters the house, there must be a prayer first. Only then people greet each other and only after that the visitor says why he is here. This respectful way of dealing with each other is part of the ancient culture and is still important in the RFMC.

Having several wives is not allowed in the RFMC if one wants to be a leader. Leaders only have one wife. Normal members can have many wives and can still continue marrying once they are in the church.

The leaders also do not practice wife inheritance. Normal members can do it without problems.

### Evangelization

The leaders of the church visit people who stay around. If somebody has a problem, the members of RFMC can come and console the person. This makes him or her to see how good this church is.

Crusades are not being held, but there are seminars being held in the form of big meetings. Such meetings are also called "kiche".

### Gender

The women of the church are given leadership among themselves, although they can not be pastors. Women have to respect men and leave leadership to them.

### Differences and similarities with other churches

In the way of worshipping there is no difference between RFMC and the other Roho churches like Musanda Church or Roho Fueny Church. Also the cross as the symbol on clothes and buildings is common in all of them.

Some however have a song, which is very dear to them and which others don't have. It is called: "Yesu in misangona" ("Jesus, you are my keeper/shepherd").

The Roho churches are not after money like those other churches that are connected with Europe like for example the Anglican Church. They just build their churches out of their own resources.

## ***Interview 20*** ***Roho Revelation Church***

### Personal history of the interviewed leader:

He joined the Roho Revelation Church (RRC) in 1996, because of seeing a relative being healed by the leader of the church.

The lady was about to lose her eyesight completely. She was living in Nairobi and was given the message by a friend, that just outside Kisumu there was a man living by the name Nabi (Prophet) Samson Owiti and that he is known for being able to heal such ailments.

The interviewed person and his wife helped the sick relative to search for the man. They had all not known him before. After finding him they left her to his treatment and the next day she was healed. She had received back her eyesight. That was the first move that made him join the RRC.

The prophet was a very simple man, who told him, that he only believes in one God, who is the creator of heaven and earth and that he does not use any witchcraft to heal people.

The prophet subsequently visited the interviewed person at South Nyanza and they also built a church at his home. They remained close to each other until Owiti's death in 1998.

Before joining the RRC, the interviewed person was a Catholic. He and grew up in a staunch Catholic family. He was baptized and confirmed in a Catholic church. He went to a Catholic mission school. Before seeing the healing of the relative, he had never thought of leaving the Catholic Church.

The way of praying he found in RCC looked not very different from what he was used to in the Catholic Church, he only found the people of RRC more serious in their approach to religion. They are not taking anything for granted. They pray about everything and do not make a move before God gives answer. They can fast for a very long time, until what they want happens.

He and his wife had witnessed how Samson Owiti prayed for the relative. She was a cousin of the wife and was working with the City Council of Nairobi. Owiti prayed for her and told them to come back the next morning. Already at that following morning, she could see a lot of improvement and after three days she was healed completely and could go back to Nairobi to work. Before seeing the prophet, she had gone to several hospitals. This was her last hope.

After joining the RRC he became a very strong member and decided to become saved. He stopped drinking alcohol, since the RRC teaches strongly to abstain from it.

He also stopped doing other bad things like being violent, unnecessary quarrels etc.

He strongly showed his commitment and even build a church in his home.

The members of the church are many in number, though most of them are illiterate. They decided to give him a strong role in their leadership. After some time he was made the deputy secretary general (the post of the secretary general is held by a son of the late founder). He is currently also a councillor of the Municipality of Homa Bay.

### Ways of worshipping:

The main part of the service is singing. The RRC believed that people can get salvation through preaching or through singing. During the singing people can get influenced to see visions. There are also instruments like drums and bells being used. People clap and move their bodies very fast.

The Sunday service begins with the "our father", after that the singing starts. The part of the singing continues for a long time. Then the preacher asks the congregation about the visions, that individual members had seen. People now tell their visions to the others and somebody interprets them. Through this a lot of good has come to the church and a lot of warning about bad things happening has been there beforehand.

The preaching that now follows must have a solid foundation in the bible. The common everyday life also features in the sermon, but the main source is the bible. For this there is no schedule prepared before. The pastor or bishop chooses any part of the scripture, that he would like to preach about. This choice is often influenced by the Holy Spirit. After the sermon people give reports about matters that concern the church. Then there are songs again and the service ends with the "sadaka", the collection of money for the work of the lord.

The service officially starts at 9.00 AM and ends at 3.00 PM.

During the service people also speak in tongues.

The preaching starts from the congregation members. Anybody who would like to teach about something can be chosen to speak. It is the pastor, or the bishop that concludes all that with his sermon.

The holy communion is taken on Christmas and on New Year day. During this time, there is bread and wine being given to the faithful.

### Beliefs, teachings, doctrines

#### Feasts and events

The RRC teaches, that there is life after death and that there is salvation. Anybody who is saved must turn away from the normal earthly things, to the heavenly ways in order to prepare oneself for the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The RCC believes in one God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

An important belief is, that God can send visions during prayer, singing and during dreams.

Pastors of the church are not consecrated, but simply elected by the executive board.

During a recent meeting of the administrative committee (the executive board), the wife of the late founder was suddenly possessed by the Holy Spirit and saw vision. She asked the board to open the bible and look at a certain passage. She can not read and write herself, she could only speak out the book and the chapter. The passage she had mentioned however turned out to be completely relevant for the meeting. The meeting was in despair, since there were not enough members and the invitation letters had not been sent in time. Some had mentioned, that the quorum for the meeting was not there.

The mother told them however that the angels in heaven were not happy about that talk about the quorum. The work of the lord can not be dragged, it has to be done.

After opening the bible, the chosen passage was talking to them on something that was related to what had been discussed.

The belief in miracles is paramount. Healing of sicknesses, both physical and mental is a very important feature of the life of the church.

Easter is celebrated in the RRC. There is also a feast called "kiche", when several local churches come together and camp at one place to receive teaching for several days. There is also Christmas and there is the New Year. Pentecost day is not celebrated.

In the headquarters, January 1st is also celebrated as the "remembrance day", that is the day when the founder was saved. In future there will be another feast day on April 26, to commemorate the death of the founder.

### History of the church

The RRC was started in 1967. On January 1st, Samson Owiti, the founder became possessed by the Holy Spirit and did not know what was happening with him. He started seeing visions. The lord talked to him in broad daylight. He also was told to open the bible and read certain passages from the book of Revelation.

God told him to come and see him on that day. He told him to hang up a white piece of cloth. On that cloth he could then see all his problems like on a photo. Later he saw the angels destroying those pictures of the problems, that had appeared on the white cloth. And by doing so the real problems were also removed and were no more.

He was also given instructions by God to tell his people never to take any water that is not boiled. Sicknesses should be healed by prayer or in the hospital, but a sick person should not go to a witchdoctor.

Owiti often cured people with water. He could put the water on the table and through his prayer it would start boiling without fire. He would then put that water on the mouth of the sick person and she or he would get cured.

Before receiving his visions, Samson Owiti had been a member of the Church of Christ in Africa (Johera). He used to play the guitar and used to drink and even go to discos and other night gatherings.

The RRC is part of the "Roho" churches and uses the common cross as a symbol, although it has not emerged as a split from the tradition of the churches that go back to the events around Alfayo Odongo Mango. Odongo Mango however is kept in great honour also by the members of the RRC, since there are a lot of similarities between Odongo Mango and Samson Owiti.

The headquarters of the church are at Ogango, just outside Kisumu on the way to Kibos.

After the death of the founder there has been a strong fight for the post of the Archbishop. There are currently two groups who are fighting for their respective leaders to take the seat.

At the moment there is also a man who is still a member of RRC and who was once healed by the founder: He seems to be thirsty for money and therefore wants to break away and start his own church. He has already started to do this but has not yet received a registration certificate. He also uses the same symbols.

### Political activity

The church has very little to do with matters of politics. The RRC believes in fairness.

In politics however, there is no fairness.

Politics of the nation however is not ruled out completely. Sometimes the churches have to give their stand on national issues. One example for this is: During the time when the multi party system was about to be introduced in Kenya, that was in 1991, many church leaders were called for a meeting and their opinion was sought. Samson Owiti was in that meeting and also recommended the introduction of a multi-party system.

When the president came to Kisumu to visit the Dala Hera some years later, the founder and leader was also part of writing a memorandum that inaugurated the "church and state co-operation" and he was then among the first signatories.

This shows, that politics are not ruled out, particularly when the opinion of the church leaders is sought and especially when matters of peace are involved.

The interviewed person is a holder of a political office himself: He is a town councillor in Homa Bay. When was asked to stand for election, his church leader first advised him not to do so, since this would bring him into a lot of controversies with people. After the elections, his party (one of the opposition parties) wanted him to join the council as a nominated member, since he was very active in the party. He then asked the leader of the church again for advice. He was asked to wait, since the leader wanted to pray over this first. The following day he told the interviewed person to go and work as a councillor but to try and keep on working within his salvation and to do his political work as a Christian.

This was the first case of one of the members of RRC to become a politician. The church has no stand on the Ufungamano initiative, since it could not take part or reject it, the reason being that there has been no official leader of the church after the death of the founder due to wrangles for that post.

The interviewed person himself believes that the Ufungamano group is doing a very good work and that it is needed very much in order to correct the work of the Parliamentary Select Committee. Would the church have an official leader, it would probably not support Ufungamano, since it is part of the "church and state co-operation".

### African culture

The African Indigenous Churches are attracting many new members, because the big churches seem to have been left by the lord. They are only rich and can do wonders with money. But they have nothing spiritual to offer to the people.

The indigenous churches are very poor, but one can see the hand of the lord working in them.

The African Culture however does not come in very much. It is the "Roho factor" that matters.

The indigenous churches should also try to modernise themselves to be in the same international marked as other churches.

Polygamous people are accepted to become members, but can not add more wives after that. If by the time of salvation a man has several wives, he should not chase away any of them.

The post of a pastor or a bishop can not be taken by a polygamist.

The tradition of wife inheritance is silently practised by some members. It is however not recommended, since it leads to the spread of diseases.

### Evangelization

Many people have joined the RRC because of the miracles, that are performed. People want to see first and then they join the church.

In the past, there have been crusades organized. This does not happen now, because of lack of funds.

One important activity is the house to house prayers. When the RCC people are called to a house, they many time heal the sick in that home.

Through this word goes round and people see the good work that happens for example in a neighbours house.

### Gender

Women have a big role to play in the RRC. They are usually the majority of the congregation. They come together and raise funds. There is now the "Roho Revelation Church Women Caucus". Their leader is representing the views of the women in the executive board meeting.

Most of the women unfortunately are poor and illiterate.

The women can be teachers of the church, they can take posts like secretary general, treasurer etc., but they can not be pastors.

### Differences and similarities with other churches

The RRC is praying and celebrating the Sabbath Service in the same way as the other churches do, that are part of the "Roho" family. The songs are also almost the same. They also have the speaking in tongues in common.

The teachings and doctrines of the RRC are very similar to those of the Catholic Church. The difference is in the strong belief in healing powers and in miracles.

## ***Interview 21***

### ***Power or Jesus Around the World Church***

#### Personal history of the interviewed pastor:

He was saved when he was a young man and still in school. By that time he was a Catholic. He heard a preacher of the Power of Jesus around the World Church (Power) and was getting saved through that. Then he joined Power. He worked for the government for many years, before he heard the call of the lord to work for him full time. In 1991 he joined the bible college in Kisumu and later went to Canada for further studies in a bible college related to the one that had donated the funds for the build-up of the one in Kisumu. He became a pastor and was later appointed to be the Secretary General of his church.

#### Ways of worshipping:

People are clapping their hands and shake their bodies when singing and praying. The preaching is a very important part of the church service. But equally important is the testimony of the people present. Anybody can give an account of the great things God has done for him or her and how she/he was saved. There is also a collection for the church during the service.

The lord's supper is celebrated occasionally, approximately once a month. Then bread and wine is shared with everybody.

The way of worshipping is not very different from other evangelical or Pentecostal churches in other parts of the world. Healing is a very common thing during the prayer sessions. People are healed just by hearing the word and going along with the songs and prayers. Sometimes they are also healed by laying of hands from the pastor and especially the bishop.

#### Beliefs, teachings, doctrines

##### Feasts and events

The faith in Jesus Christ as the personal saviour is central.

Every doctrine has to come from the bible.

People are taught not to take alcohol and not to closely control their sexual behaviour. The youth should not go to discos and other places that lead them into sin.

The feast include Christmas and Easter. Pentecost day is not celebrated.

#### History of the church

The Power of Jesus around the World church started as a split from the Voice of Salvation and Healing Church. There was a leadership wrangle, whereby the present leader of the Voice of Salvation mislead his own bishop in order to gain the leadership. The bishop then left Voice of Salvation and went to register his own church. This was in 1955. The present Bishop Washington Ogonyo Ngede is the forth successor of the founder as the leader of the church.

Power does not differ very much in the approach and the way of teaching and preaching from the Voice of Salvation. They both have very strong links to other parts of the world, especially North America.

#### Political activity

The church is politically active since it is important for the Christians to change the face of the earth. As the prophets in the old testament spoke to the kings, so the Christians of today have to speak to the leaders of the nation.

The bishop of Power is the chairman of the "Church and State Co-operation for Development", which has been instrumental in bringing the Luo of Nyanza back into co-operating with the present government of Kenya.

The Ufungamano Initiative has been rejected by Power, but it is very fortunate and obviously the work of the holy spirit, that Ufungamano has now merged with the Parliamentary Review Committee. They are therefore now on the right track.

### African culture

The African culture comes in when the liveliness of the church service is considered. Although the way of worshipping resembles the way it is done in sister churches in Canada for instance, there is still a greater freedom in expression and giving way to the spirit when the people in Africa are praying.

The parts of the local customs and traditions that are compatible with the Christian ways are accepted, the others rejected.

Polygamous families can join the church if the man restrains from adding more wives thereafter. Inheritance of widows is supported as long as the man who inherits the sister-in-law is yet unmarried. In this case the two are blessed by the pastor, but do not celebrate the usual marriage rites.

### Evangelization

The Power Church is very active in doing crusades in Kisumu town, but also in many other towns. In market places they preach and sing and give testimony of their salvation.

This resembles largely the street crusades done by other evangelical churches. Power is part of the "Kisumu Fellowship of Churches" that jointly organises big crusades with famous preachers from other parts of the world (mainly North America).

There is also "door to door evangelization" whereby a preacher with his team goes to the estates and visits people in their houses.

### Gender

Women can be pastors just like man. Whoever the holy spirit has chosen to serve in the church can do so irrespective of sex.

Theoretically women can also climb into the high ranks of leadership, even up to the bishop's position. It has however not happened yet and is unlikely to happen soon.

### Differences and similarities with other churches

The difference with big churches like the Anglican or the Catholic Church is the freedom of worship and the lively way in which people can sing, pray and express themselves.

From other indigenous churches like the Roho Churches, the Power church differs in that the way of worshipping is much more orderly and not as uncontrolled as they do it, since their way is again too wild and ecstatic.

## ***Interview 22***

### ***Coptic Orthodox Church***

#### Personal history of the interviewed deacon:

The interviewed person was a deacon in the Coptic Orthodox Church. He joined it in 1979, when it was established in the Kisumu area. The building at Nyamasaria was erected during that time. The grandmother had been a member of the Greek Orthodox church, whose leadership had left the area in the years before that. When the Coptic Church was now established, she realized, that the way of worship she was used to resembled the way of worship in this new church. The grandmother took along the family, including the interview person. The boy liked the way of praying, the songs, the doxologies. Later on he was healed from sickness through his grandmothers' hiding of the unique orthodox cross under his bed. In the same night he dreamed of that cross shining with light. After this night of healing, they went to the priest, who by that time was an Egyptian. He blessed them and anointed them with oil. Before this, he had been criticizing the strong worshipping of the cross as it is practised by the fellow faithful. He used to consider this idol worshipping, which is contrary to the bible. The interviewed person was later ordained a singer in the church leaders. Some years later he was ordained by the bishop as a sub deacon. The ordination for becoming a deacon was done by Pope Shenouda of Egypt during his visit to Kisumu.

#### Ways of worshipping

There is a book of liturgy which is closely followed when the mass is celebrated. (Apart from the mass there is a service called "the raising of incense"). When the priest enters the church, he and the deacons recite a certain psalm. Many psalms have to be recited before the actual beginning of the mass. At the beginning the congregation asks for the forgiveness of sins ("lord have mercy"). The drums used during the service are beaten slowly, not in the quick rhythm which is used in other churches. Incense is used intensely. The liturgy followed is the same in any Coptic Orthodox Church anywhere in the world.

#### Beliefs, teachings, doctrines feasts and events

St. Mark is the founder of the church. (The present pope Shenouda is the 117th successor of him. "Pope of Alexandria, Patriarch of the see of St. Mark"). The bible is the centre of teaching. All the songs have words which are quotations of the bible (psalm, words of Jesus). The church believes in one lord Jesus Christ. The deacon didn't feel firm enough in the more detailed question of the doctrines and therefore referred that part to be his seniors. The teachings on alcohol are not as strict as in the churches where people are "saved". Christmas is celebrated on the 7th of January. It is preceded by a period of fasting and prayer starting from the 25th of November. On the eve of 7th, a midnight mass is celebrated. After the mass on 7th there is a big communal meal to which everybody contributes. Easter and other important feast are also observed.

#### History of the church

The church started very long ago. The founder was St. Mark, one of the Apostles of our lord Jesus Christ, who went to Egypt after the Pentecost, in order to spread the gospel. The Coptic Orthodox Church in Nyanza was planted by bishop Antonius, on one of his official visits.

#### Political activity

The church is not active in politics. Individual members may be politicians. The church as a body however is quiet in the political field. If politicians want to address the faithful, they are given chance to do so outside the church building. The Coptic Orthodox Church is not a participant in the Ufumgamano Initiative and has no official stand towards it.

### African culture

Since the liturgy followed in the mass is the same world-wide, the influence of the local culture is very small. It can in fact only be seen by the language, which is used.

The church is trying to adopt to the local culture, for example by not rejecting polygamous families. The people are however taught, that having one wife is the right way to life as a Christian. The same applies to the dealings with those who practise the tradition of wife inheritance.

### Differences and similarities with other churches

The differences are rather big and easily visible when it comes to the liturgy. Other churches have adopted a lot of the local way of singing and liturgical music, while the Coptic Church is using songs and music that is strongly influenced by if not copied from the Egyptian Centre of the Church.

### Evangelization

Occasionally some of the clergy go out to market places to preach and along with them goes a choir to sing the typical church songs. Some people get interested through this and make contact with the church.

### Gender

Women can organize themselves within the church, but can not be pastors or climb into the ranks of ordained leaders.