

Visits to
African Indigenous Churches
by KIST Students

2007/2008

Editor: Jim Harries

Contributors: Stephen Amakoye Asitarico
Evans Opula
Eric Otiyo
Jonathan Nandwa
Peter W. Wanjala
Patrick R. Okilla
Thomas Ken Anjichi

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Foreword

It is my pleasure to present the reports written below by KIST students following visits to AIC (African Indigenous Churches) in December 2007 and 2008.

Three classes were involved in making these visits. The Theology I class of January to March 2008 (BA2) was to visit church conferences including an overnight stay in December 2007 and early 2008. Unfortunately unrest in Kenya curtailed these visits. Stephen Asitarico was the only student to complete a visit, that was prior to the elections.

Other students who made day-visits to indigenous churches are either from the Emerging Issues course held in May to July 2008 (BA3), or the Theology I course held at the same time (BA1 and Diploma 1).

Jim Harries, PhD, KIST Lecturer.

HOW MARIA LEGIO OF AFRICA CHURCH, UNDERSTAND OR BELIEVE GOD.

By: Stephen Amakoye Asitarico

From my latest research (25th December 2007) Ugunja (Ephesus) I interviewed one of the members (original) among the first recruits or converts, said that they believe that Simeo nick-name (Ondeto) meaning the (stammerer) somebody who could not utter his words well, came from nowhere mostly suspecting from Tanzania and landed at a place named Ephesus after he has settled. He was with his mother named Maria recognized as (mama) her official “title”. Ephesus is a village situated along River Nzoia in Luoland, founded in 1960.

According to (Ogot 1980:210) the movement is believed to have started as a reform movement in Roman Catholic church in South Nyanza District of Kenya in 1960. By 1965, spread into all parts of Nyanza, and North Mara District of Tanzania as well as some of the Kenya towns such as Nairobi the movement had also acquired a leader and a prophet, Simeo Ondeto, or to give him his official title: ‘His peaceful Baba Mtakatifu Simeo Ondeto’.

Back to my search, Ondeto knew the word of God, he was prayerful and an (exorcist) meaning somebody who expels demons with power he possesses. Ephesus was believed to be a village or community with a lot of demons, that was in early (1960). Strong witchcrafts came from that place. Wizards, night runners, sorcerers and it was believed – at night wizards could even walk carrying hyenas on their backs. Pure Luo traditions and deep cultures practitioners came from that place, immoral lives, nor demons alcoholism magic practices and ancestral spirits worships – this was their place. The place was full of Satanic practices – we can compare it with Ephesus in (Acts 19:11-12) at the time of Paul. Ondeto preached, taught the word of God, healed the sick and sent demons from those that were possessed. Its same Ondeto who gave Maria powers or empowered her (Aoko, Gandencia) as called by Luo people. She baptized and expelled spirits. She moved around Luo land preaching, baptizing and expelling spirits and expanding the movement and many people who believed were converted (Acts 19:4-8). Paul prayed for people in Ephesus and received the power of the Holy Spirit. Same to Ondeto and Maria (mama) Ondeto used to give his followers power to pray for people and drive out demons.

Members interviewed in 1973, at the Maria Legio of Africa church mission at Kisumu answered this question of preach the Gospel, heal the sick and empowering of the Holy Spirit by saying that Blessed Virgin Mary came back to earth and revealed socially and morally to the chaos of the modern world intend to believe that this was the African Mary (Aoko) the mother of (Ondeto) African Jesus. (Ogot 1980:210)

In my research interviewed member, said that while Ondeto was preaching and teaching at Ephesus, listeners heard a voice from heaven (claim) say this is my beloved son listen to him. This was astronomy from any eye witness being one of the converts (first 1960) who calls himself a black Peter (apostle) of Simeo. (Mt. 3:17) “A voice from heaven said “This is my son, whom I love with him I am well pleased”. Also the same words were said by John 1:29-34).

Ondeto's followers took such words from the scriptures so strongly that Ondeto was an African Christ.

I have adapted (Ogot's 1980: 214) about Ondeto's vision of which I heard through my interview with a black (Apostle Peter). Ondeto's message as it is contained in initial vision which he received directly from God.

"One day as Ondeto was going to teach at a church, he found a dead animal in his path; put there obviously by his enemies. He threw it aside. He immediately began to shiver. He tried to teach, but his condition rapidly deteriorated. He decided to return home. On the way home, he found a trench had been dug, and an egg placed in it. He stepped on the egg and broke it. Blood started to ooze from his nose and mouth". When he arrived home at night, he could not see properly, nor could he eat. His relatives feared he would die. Eleven o'clock at night, he heard the first bell from heaven, mid night he heard the second and at two o'clock in the morning, he heard the third. Then he saw angels coming down from heaven to fetch him" (Ogot 1980:214).

He left his body behind, and his soul was taken across seven plains by the Angel Gabriel. The last one called the sheep plain, had sheep grazing everywhere as well as scattered trees. Paradise itself was a very flat plateau covered with green and well cut grass and surrounded by a high barbed-wire fence with one gate guarded by an angel. Within, were different types of beautiful mansions where saints, angels and our lady live. The blessed trinity lives separated in a place called (Armos). There are many different regions in heaven".

When Simeo entered paradise, he saw, among the elect, the Luo who had been civil servants during the colonial period. Among those who were in hell, he saw the pre-colonial Luos chiefs, all the police, and many Europeans who had oppressed Africans. Regarding the religious groups, the Catholics were in heaven with the faithful of Maria Legio (who regard themselves as Catholics) the Protestants were so close to hell that they could feel the heat; and the Moslems were between the two.

Then he was ready to return to earth, he heard God's voice commanding him to drive out demons, and to tell the people to pray earnestly using catena Legionis and to read the Bible and renounce sin, dancing, tobacco and alcohol. At the moment, the name of Maria Legio was revealed to him, was also forbidden to accept money for ministerial duties or in the form of annual tax. When he ended his visit to heaven, he was forcibly re clothed with his dead body. This was very painful. At that moment, he became conscious. He had remained dead for a day and had not yet been buried" (Ogot 1980:214).

Scriptures to support the above vision, Deuteronomy chapter xv iii verses fifteen and eighteen was told the above with the eyewitness through my interview with him. He claims to be the uncle of Simeo. He lives at Luanda – business (Luanda Div).

According to my own understanding of Legio Maria church, their central belief of understanding God comes or is rooted in this story of Ondeto as their founder of their faith.

In their worship they use Catena, and then believe Catena prayer sends out demons. These catena's are in different colours which signify its work. In their prayers, they consider Virgin Mary very much. At Ephesus they have a shrine built in honour of Mama Mary inside there, is a grave of Virgin Mary which is one of the attributes of God. Members once they get inside the shrine, they must pay honor to grave by lying flat on their stomach. (Respect) acknowledging her as the mother of Jesus (Ondeto) an African Jesus.

In their way of belief in God, uniform is considered very much. Even though most of them are poor, out one must work hard to see to it that she, or he has uniforms for worship. Uniforms are made in different colours depending on what colour the angel has chosen for one and according to the gift of the Holy Spirit has given. For example red colour represents Angel Michael who fights Satan with the sword. They recognize object of sword made from wood etc.

This theology is done in their own culture. In fact there was one member who went round among the people saying unless Maria legio removes his or her 3 front teeth will not enter heaven – this is a theology of mixing scripture with traditions. So he believes heaven is not entered with whole physical teeth. Where is this written in the Bible? Here we can compare this with the Old Testament, where Paul teaches about circumcision to the Israelites. Paul comes with an argument that one must be circumcised spiritually (heart) not physical. In other words, heaven is entered by those who have been removed spiritual teeth's or spiritual circumcision (Acts 15:1-20).

Legio Maria believes in Bible and Roman Catholicism beliefs and here, they have Africanized the system. On other side of coin, it is easy to conclude that the Maria Legio has completely rejected the African style of life e.g. Luo dancer, alcohol, Immoral life worship of ancestral spirits condemn Luo funeral ceremonies as pagan, traditional medicine, forbid the faithful from wearing amulets and any object of magical nature. The church prohibits members from eating many cherished material foods. In their view, traditional world symbolizes weakness and poverty, and the modern world for its encouragement of violence, debauchery, drunkenness, drugs oppression and exploitation for the sake of the Gospel.

Legio Maria has Christianized African belief by practicing communal living which was typical of the traditional society and this is different from African (Old) practice because Old African societies based on kinship ties in Luo land. And Christian new community based on religion. All the faithful the elect join the local community which replaces the traditional lineage in every real sense. (Ogot 1980:217). And in my search a good example is Ephesus – Ugunja community houses thatched of grass, house for mama – man's, House *Baba Mtakatifu* (Simeo) a church, etc. And faithful stay there. During Christmas time, people from far places erect tents for stay as they worship.

Historically, it was believed by some Kenyan leaders that Maria Legio of Africa was a political movement. This question was hotly debated in the parliament, daily press. Mr. Daniel Moses, then assistant Minister of home affairs issued a statement on behalf of the Government, denying allegations by another minister John Osugu, - the sect was not a political part Daily Nation 2 May, 1964, 25th June, 1964 1st July 1964) (Ogot 1980:223) so this was a spiritual movement.

There is this issue of Holy water – taken as medicines and also as (*baraka*) which means blessings. Candles are used to represent angels during time of worship. Objects like, wood carried guns, swords, panga, clubs, etc. Represents tools for fighting the devil spiritually and not meant physical fights.

Long hair left, represents the spirit of Samson's in the Bible.

CONCLUSIONS.

Legio Maria of Africa is a very strong and determined movement for God's work. They can walk for along distance for God's service. They don't care very much about of this world instead thus care for heavenly things. And this is portrayed in kind of life they are experiencing.

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REPORT FROM ROHO WA UPENDO ISRAEL CHURCH

By: Evans Opula

INTRODUCTION

This is a small church located in Dudi but with full congregation. There is across and a flag outside the church. A few seats inside the church so as to hold charge congregation as many people will sit down on the mat.

Origin and organization of the church

It broke from church called “*moher upendo* Israel church”. The term ‘moher’ means loved. Cardinal is at the top then arch bishop, senior bishop, reverence, senior padre, padre, lay leader, pastor and finally the teacher. All of these should marry for one to have those post and for the Bishop he should atleast have six churches.

Some of the church’s restriction

First, women must kneel down when greeting their elders, giving offering. This is a symbol of respect.

Secondly, everyone must remove his shoes while in the church as this is a holy ground. The other funny reason for removing shoes is that a person wearing shoes can cause a lot of harm like stepping on people especially if filled with the Holy Spirit. He should therefore be bare footed to prevent harm.

Thirdly, women should not speak while standing on the pulpit. When she has given birth to a boy she should stay at home for 33 days and for a girl should be 66 days. During this period, the bishop can’t go and visit her.

Fourth, chairs are only meant for men and some church leaders who are women. The rest should sit down on the mat.

Way of Worship

First, sing while sitting down. No dancing as we are unclean. Finally the singer will be given signal to stand and everybody to look through the opened door. Chase the demons while praying, clapping hands, hitting the floor with your legs. Immediately the door will be closed. Do you know the reason? This is a way of confining the spirit into the room, and before the spirit enters into people, the chairs should be taken outside while the mat is rolled and put in a corner to give more room for movement or spinning within a few minutes, people start receiving the Holy Ghost which makes them to rotate or spin all around. They should be given support as they can fall on the floor. Bishop Shedrack through the interview said the person, or the spirit will start to smell or search for people who are supposed to repent. If touched you go out immediately and repent at the cross. The spirit will also select those children to be prayed for when selection is over the door is opened and people kneel down facing the pulpit to give reverence to almighty God hence we are pure.

Work of the cross

Used by those people who need to repent or those people whom the spirit has selected and feel that they should repent.

Secondly, this is where your prayers are tied up i.e. if you want to pray to God to assist you so as you may give birth safely, you give a piece of rag which will be tied on the cross. Why? Bishop say through the interview on 22nd June 2007 that “This shows your prayers are still in process, they have not been answered. Immediately they will be answered after you have given birth safely, your rag. will be untied on the cross.” Those people in Dudi whose prayers are still in the process their rags are tied on the cross even at this particular time.

Thirdly, may be your relative died and you touched his body, you are unclean. How can you get into the church again? The scripture in Numbers 19:14-20 will be read on the cross and you will be prayed for. A prayer like this cannot be performed in the church but only through the cross. Finally, water will be sprinkled to you and you become clean again.

Functions of the candle

The purple candle is used for chasing the demons, yellow is for checking good and bad spirit, while white candle is for cleansing. The bishop explained that a child with demons requires purple candle and the white one. The candles will be lit to produce light as light is power. The candles will be rotated a round you to assure you of the presence of the angels. He concluded by saying the number of candles varies according to the guidance of Holy Spirit.

Why of Baptism

Its embarrassing for one to die when not baptized as the teachers will just come without wearing their official dresses and secondly certain verses of the bible will not be read meaning the normal procedure will not be followed.

After 33 days for a boy and 66 days for a girl immediately after birth, the child has to be taken to church for baptism where child's name will be said while sprinkling water on his head and writing a sign of cross on the Forehead. The congregation will be allowed to come and visit the child with “*manemane*” as they call it in form of ten shillings. This is a kind of game they play to get money and at this stage one can talk anything if not careful you may think they are not saved.

Those children who are mature are deeply immersed in water.

What happens after burial?

After three days of the burial, the church has to come back to pray for the dead which they believe it is a form of resurrecting the dead. The believe is based on Mathew 28:1, John 11:38 where Jesus went and resurrected Lazarus who was dead.

What happens to new converts. A new convert can't go to the cross to repent his sins. In fact there is nothing he will do. But due to time, he will know the procedure of the church and later start repenting his sins on the cross.

Conclusion

Even without understanding the Luo language one must have something to learn from them mostly they emphasize on the Old Testament way of worship and women don't have much Freedom as we do in our churches. Despite of the difference we have with them but we all worship the one Lord.

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'HE GAVE ME.' A PRESENTATION ON NOMIYA SAGAM (CHURCH).

By: Eric Otiyo

Nomiya Sagam is one of the African Instituted churches in Western Kenya and Nyanza among others. Nomiya church that we visited is in Nyanza Province on Siaya to Luanda Road.

THE HISTORY

Nomiya church was begun in the year 1907 by Prophet John Owalo from Rarreda. This man was once a catholic who then changed to Islam. While he was a Muslim he received a call from the Lord. He went up in spirit (I can't explain how it happened) and conversed with God. When he arrived he first met Christ, he wanted to bow down to Him but Jesus stopped him and told him that there was a father (God) to be bowed to. As He conversed with God, this prophet was given a knife. As I know, a knife is a symbol of war; it is used as a weapon. Even though the believers of Nomiya claim that this knife was meant for circumcision, I can't disagree with their understanding but I think also they are people who can compromise war because their prophet was given a knife which in African tradition it is a warfare object.

The prophet advised his followers to be circumcising their children after eight days. This was like the covenant of Moses and God. The prophet was also told by God that he should serve God only. Idolatry was not to be practical whatsoever. This is why when he came back from heaven he left Muslim church because they worship other gods. John was taught how to compose and sing music by John Wanyundo.

Nomiya church has adapted some of Muslim behavior of worship. They remove their shoes before entering the sanctuary. This is because they believe that shoes might have stepped on dirty objects which can defile the sanctuary.

PRAYERS

This people have adapted catholic and Anglican prayer system. They also have Muslim characterism in prayer that is they recite sentiments and prayers in a form of prayer before the intended prayer can be made.

Nomiya congregation believe in the father alone. That is, they don't believe in the Trinity. They look at Jesus as a messenger of the Lord and that they can't believe a messenger because he is a second hand message giver he can give wrong information. They read the whole bible i.e. all books both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament are read. Besides the Bible, prophet Owalo was given another book that is used in presiding over ceremonies in and out of the church. (It is a book of prayer.)

Concerning leadership, ladies are not to step on the pulpit during the service because they are seen to be impure in that they can defile the pulpit. They can only decorate it but not sit there. Those who have been given position in the church they also are restricted to move on the pulpit. To be a leader (males) one must be circumcised. One can not lead others when uncircumcised because he is seen as a juvenile. A person joining their

denomination from another tribe and wants to be a leader, must be incised on the “penis”. If he is circumcised, he must drop some blood for him to be confirmed as a leader in their fraternity.

Concerning foods, Nomiya church has restrictions on the type of food that is to be consumed. They base on what the bible wants them to eat. Pork, ducks, un-scaled fish are abominations, and it is a taboo to eat them. They look at them as dirty animals. In ceremonies like in circumcision ceremonies, the food that is prepared is fed on by those who are circumcised alone. In memorial services, the food prepared is welcomed to everybody around. A sheep is slaughtered and some of its meat is roasted as its smoke goes up may be as a sacrifice to appease God. The person who slaughters the animal must be a circumcised person.

When it comes to Marriage, a leader in Nomiya church should marry more than one wife but should not exceed four women. He weds with the first lady and the rest are counted as helpers of the other one. A member of the congregation is allowed to marry as many wives as he can manage.

ROBES

Robes in Nomiya are worn according to the portfolio one holds. As we have said, they remove shoes while in church. Any colour of shoes but the colour of clothing differs according to what one is in that fraternity.

The church does not believe in dreams as a source of revelation because anybody can cheat he has had a dream. They are not valid sources of information from God. They also do not believe in tongues. Sculptures in church like the cross of Jesus, pictures of Jesus are not allowed because they look at them in church as idols. They believe in exorcism.

For you to be a member of Nomiya congregation you have to be baptized. Presently they baptize by dropping water on the head, but they used to dip in a river in the past years. Baptism is done in the name of the Father unlike other denomination where it is done in the name of the father, son and Holy Spirit. Holy Communion is not practiced in their church because they do not adore any other God, so they look at Jesus as a messenger who cannot be adored or remembered.

Burial services are done according to how the family members want it to be done. The type of service done at burial differs basing on the position one holds in the church. The Bishops burial is sophisticated unlike the teachers’ burial. They believe in resurrection and the second coming of Jesus. Wife inheritance is encouraged according to the Law of Moses. The structure of their leadership: Teacher – lay leader – Padri – Rural dean – Archdeacon – Bishop – Assistant archbishop – archbishop. The teacher is considered as the lowest portfolio; the archbishop is the supreme.

What I disagree with them is about the marriage of many wives in regard to this present world where H.I.V. and Aids is on the RISE. Women also need special attention which can only be achieved when you are married to one. Also the prolonged prayers can make some believers like me to march away. I strongly believe in the trinity and I can’t compromise with it. This is what I have learned in Nomiya church in Sagam whose headquarters are in Rarreda.

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THE VISIT TO “LUONG MOGIK” CHURCH.

By: Jonathan Nandwa

INTRODUCTION

I thank God for the opportunity he gave me to visit this AIC church. Although this was a requirement for the class of Theology I “The God of Grace”. There have been many things I have learned from the visits of my fellow students and my visit at “Luong Mogik” church. Thanks to Dr. Harries for his commitment and the exposure he gave us. There are many challenges we can learn from these A.I.C.S.

“LUONG MOGIK CHURCH”
 (“LORD’S LAST CALL CHURCH”)
 (“MWITO WA MWISHO WA BWANA”)

We set our journey on Saturday 22nd – June 2008 to Siaya District of Nyanza Province in Kenya. I was in the company of Enock Mbayi a fellow student of K.I.S.T. We arrived in Sagam area and we found Dr. Harries our Lecturer waiting for us. We went direct to the church which is not far from the Luanda Siaya Road. We arrived at the church compound and after exchanging greetings, Dr. Harries told them, today we had come to fellowship with them. They welcomed us and told us it was okay although some of the leaders, members and even the pastor had traveled to South Nyanza. They had accompanied a patient who had been healed through prayers back to his home in South Nyanza so that they could testify of what God had done.

We then requested that if they had some time before they start the service, they could give us some time for an interview. Our permission was granted and we were introduced to the church secretary by name Joseph Oketch. He took us to a permanent house with spacious sitting room. We learned this was the house of one of the founders, the late pastor Joseph Pudo. The widow is the present pastor.

BACKGROUND OF THE CHURCH

The church started in 1972 in South Nyanza. This was through the prayers and fasting the elders were making in the forest. They saw a vision and received the power of the Holy Spirit. They were to worship in truth and spirit as found in the gospel of John 4:23. Immediately they started the ministry of prayer and soon God started manifesting through miracles and especially healings.

It was not until 1980 when the church moved out of South Nyanza. They started building churches and prayer houses where serious cases could get more attention through prayers.

HOW THE CHURCH FOUND ITSELF IN AHONO AREA (SAGAM)

It was in 1982 that the church found its root in the Ahono Sagam area. Mzee Joseph Pudo was going through various problems and trials. He had an alcoholic wife who was really giving him problems and on the other hand a daughter who was epileptic and a son who had an incurable wound on the leg. Pudo had just heard of the rumours of this church in Imbo. Then a man was sent from Imbo by God. He just came in the home without any direction from anybody and the children saw him they ran towards him, he prayed for them and that was the end of all this problems.

Mzee Pudo who had a big position in the Catholic Church after experiencing the peace after this deliverance he decided to make a follow-up. He left Catholic Church and they started a church in Ahonya near Goduaka. From Ahonya then to the present place. The church engaged in praying for the people who had problems. They have continued in the same ministry and most of the members they are those who get delivered after prayers in this church.

THE CHURCH LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

The church has on the top, General Pastor, Deputy General, Pastors, Elders' deacons, deaconess and members. The church prays at an interval of three hours. That is 6.a.m., 9. a.m., 12 p.m., 3 pm, 9, pm 12 a.m. and 3 a.m.

The service starts immediately you enter the church compound by removing shoes. The ground is Holy. If you are unclean you don't enter the church sanctuary. The unclean are those in menstruation period, moved near dead person, given birth, bleeding wound, had slept with your wife or having done any sin. You will only be allowed after cleansing with holy water and after seven days.

The Sabbath is seriously observed. No work is done on this day. Baptism is done by immersion and they believe in trinity. They put on white robes and have white flags which signify purity and oneness. In the service we have songs, prayers "Reports" Testimonies, offerings preaching, prophecy and prayers. They have fellowship on Wednesdays which they call the Pentecost service. In the main service many times they stop and do what the spirit is directing them to do through a prophet:

They take those foods which the spirit has directed to them as clean. Their weddings in joining they do not bind by a ring but by a white rope. In the service they are led by the Holy Ghost but they also discern every prophesy. They participate in development project and even politics.

Their motto is to do all the Bible commands to be done.

A VISIT TO MUSANDA CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF KENYA.

By: Peter W. Wanjala

It is great pleasure for me when I remember the visit to MCKK Yala Parish because it was an adventure into the interior part of Siaya District. It was a study tour to the AIC which was very inspiring and encouraging because I experienced people of a different culture worship God in their indigenous way. On the way before and after meeting the lecturer, led us straight to his residence where we took breakfast together as we were preparing to proceed to the required destination which was not far from the lecturer's residence.

From the lecturer's home, we went straight to the church where we met with a young girl with small children preparing the church for the service. The church service is conducted on Saturday because according to their church calendar, their Sabbath falls on Saturday. Our arrival was in time because most of the members had not arrived. In the church compound, there was a flag on the post. The flag comprised of the red, white and green colours. Near the flag there was a cross but it was fallen down. This place seemed to be very important to the members of the church because every member that arrived regardless of the leadership position, they either knelt or stood there in order to purify themselves before they entered the sanctuary. The place is situated at the rear door which is mostly used by women. The door faces the lake so that when they are chasing the demons and Satan they face that rear door. The theology behind the scene is that the demons and Satan when chased out of the people, they move into the lake as Jesus did when chased out of the people, they move into swines as Jesus did when the swines were possessed they all drowned into the sea.

The church service began with a pre-service which comprises of the choruses composed in Dholuo and Kiswahili. Following the arrival of the senior pastor / bishop, the service begins, all the mats and benches are removed for vigorous dancing and singing. All doors and windows are closed. This is the hour whereby people dance and sing until they reach the ecstasy. They become possessed and begin prophesying. After this session, then follows a period of the interpretation of the dreams. In the church, we have the senior pastor who interprets dream per dream satisfactorily that takes a very long period of time. This period helps members to be emotionally, socially and spiritually satisfied. The session that follows is one for the reports led by the teacher in the church. They give to each department chance to report to the church their plans for the week. Then following the preaching time which begins with the common people in the church until they finish with the bishop or the senior pastor.

For our case we had the senior pastor. The session that follows after preaching is the offertory time which takes a very short time then they close the service. On my surprise, they don't take very long on the issue of money like other mainstream churches.

The members have special attires that they put on that distinguish them from other denominations. They all put on white robes with a red cross on it. The style of the attire shows the rank that one is holding in the church. The attire for the bishop is different from that of the senior pastor, pastor, elders in the church and even women. In the church we have two doors i.e. the front door that is directly to the altar is majorly meant for men

while the rear door is meant for women and children. Therefore, the women pass through the rear door because they are not allowed to stand on the altar. This issue has the exceptional such as the women who have stopped menstruating are allowed on the altar but not to sit. They just come to do inquiry or make a request or they have a word that they want to pass to the leaders who sits on the altar. This also applies to small children who have not begun menstruating. Those who are still active women or ladies that have not married but active and prolific are not allowed to the altar, they defile the altar of God. I noticed that the church uses the Old Testament terms such as synagogue to mean the altar of the Lord.

In the women department is headed by the senior doctor who graduated long ago from menstruation. Those women that have graduated from menstruation are allowed to sit on the benches that are found near the rear door. But women who are still prolific they sit on the mats with the children. The work of the senior doctor of the women is to pray for the new born babies and their mothers, to visit and counsel the bereaved, to bring reconciliation in times of the crisis and to pray for the women who are possessed with the Holy Spirit when they reach the ecstasy. She works in conjunction with other women in the church in order to make the work of the church to move smoothly. It is also her duty to ensure that when women are overpowered with the Holy Spirit cannot move aimlessly and step on the altar. Thus she controls the movement of the women in the service, takes keen watch on what happens during the session praising and worshipping as they guard so that women should not mix with the men. Everybody is not required to enter the sanctuary without shoes.

This is the mode that the church is using to reduce cases of immoral behavior, because there is vigorous dancing hence when the interaction left uncontrolled in the church then people would turn to be immoral. Therefore this has made most women when they see a vigorous dancing man they will stand near the wall and give the dancing man space without interference. Another issue is that most women in the church concentrates on what is done in the church. They follow each and every item that they do in the church. Both men and women could not move out of the church aimlessly. From my observation, it seems as if all of them are taught the church disciplines. When you stand near the altar, you adore it by bowing down. This is for every member to give the due respect to the altar and the anointed people of God. Due to respect that they owed, they tended to revere God and they genuinely worshipped God. This was done in an indigenous way. They tend to uphold the teachings of the Old Testament. The worship service comprised of 21 women, 23 children, 6 men and 3 of us. According to my observation children are not considered and appear as not part of the service. They are left to move around, yelling in the service, play while others sleep. The trouble is that they are just left to their mothers which disrupt the concentration of the mother. The church should see the importance of the children and have somebody especially for them.

During the questioning time, I realized that the church does not value weddings. But for one to be in the church leadership must have one wife. This quickly brought to my notice that the indigenous churches does not value weddings because if it is a western practice, on the side of membership, once a person confesses publicly in the church, he/she is allowed to pass through sessions in the church and then is baptized. They don't have very strict requirements that one need to follow in order to become the member. The Testimony of the person who wants to join them is enough. They baptize people by the use of the water cross on the forehead. There is no catechism class for the newcomers as

it's done in the mainstream churches. The instruments used in the church are very African; therefore they are very original in their worship.

In conclusion, the MCKK is organized and managed in the African way. They don't have any foreign aid but they survive on the meager resources that they have. They also use the local language in their service being an indication that it was formed and organized in an indigenous way. I closed my visit with my colleague by passing through the lecturer's residence then we proceeded to the college.

MY VISIT TO THE MYSTIC GOSPEL CHURCH

By: Patrick R. Okilla

It was a fine sunny Sunday morning, the sixth day of July 2008, a colleague by the name Marcus Wameyo and I embarked on a field trip that would take us to Yala. We left Kima at exactly 8:00 a.m. and boarded public service vehicles for Yala. The ride was smooth all the way. We met Dr. J. Harries a few minutes before the agreed time and we had enough time to scheme on the day's events. Now in the Company of Dr. Harries and a teenage boy by the name Daniel, we took a maximum seven minutes walk from the main road to the church that was to be the subject of our study.

We were cordially welcomed by a middle-aged lady. It was 9:30 a.m. when we stepped into this unfinished "L" shaped church building, which is the Headquarters of the Mystic Gospel church. It was founded about ten years ago. There were about three ladies and four gentlemen seated at the time of our arrival, among them was a man who, by appearance, was mentally challenged or retarded. The seating arrangement was a bit different from many of the indigenous churches in such a way that men sat on the left-hand side and their seats were fewer compared to the women's side. This was a clear indication that women out-numbered men in terms of attendance. Expensive plastic chairs and some High-class benches were reserved for men while women sat on plain benches.

There was no provision for sitting on the pulpit. The top cream of the church, lead by the Bishop sat along the left-hand side wall facing the pulpit, and to the far right-hand sat the little children. They (the children) just sat on the bare floor.

Members flocked in one after another and many went down on their knees and engaged probably in confession or repentance prayers. The service begun at around 10. a.m. by a few choruses and then followed preaching, which was by a member of the congregation. The preaching was so vigorous and powerful that whenever a member of the congregation felt moved or convicted by the spirit. She sprung up and cut short the sermon by singing and immediately there was an exodus towards the altar. The singing and clapping was so vigorous and superfast, but surprising, no dancing and jumping was witnessed. There was no use of musical instruments, drums or any sort of accompaniments. This culminated in devotion, speaking in tongues and submission until the last person cleared the floor is when the speaker carried on with his sermon. The scenario repeated again and again for about 50 minutes.

Then followed very captivating testimonies from members and it was evident enough that they believed in the doctrine of the trinity from the way they kept praising the work of the Holy Spirit, and from the constant mention of "*Yesu Opako ...*" (Praise be to Jesus). The Bishop came in next and embarked on a 30 minute condemnation of lateness by members. He also highlighted on his many trips in Nairobi and areas around Nyanza Province and from this, it was clear that the church grows and spreads its wings through evangelism. He mentioned that there would be an open air crusade later in the year, a clear evidence of evangelism. After all that is when he embarked on the message of the day. He preached in

Dholuo language which was translated into Swahili by an elderly lady. The Bishops message convicted many and there were cries and people who sounded like they were moaning all over the church. At the peak of this the people moved towards the altar, went down on their knees and the Holy Spirit took control of everything.

Again it was evident that they could be practicing sorcery from the way the Bishop and other officials prayed for the people, one by one cursing away demons. There were people (ladies) crawling and lying on the floor and the scenario lasted about 20 minutes. After the floor was clear, there were patches of wetness that a lady had to employ the services of a mopper to dry the floor. They believed in long and “productive” prayers.

Then followed offerings and the mentally retarded gentleman got me thinking when I saw him go up to reach a little boy with nothing to offer and gave the boy a 10 shillings coin to offer. The man himself gave his offering too. Announcements followed and from it I picked the idea that they encouraged marriages and weddings in the church. A brief fund raising followed and this was prove that the church grows and is financed by members themselves.

We then said the grace, which to me was yet another proof that they believed in trinity. After the benediction, at around 2:30 p.m. the members dispersed. We were then asked to wait for our resource person for an interview, as we waited in the nearby house. The wait was long and after a meal of Ugali and some nice-cooked eggs, we too dispersed after our resource person continued to be in a meeting with top church officials. This report therefore is based entirely on my personal observations.

AIC VISIT TO UPENDO WA ROHO ISRAEL CHURCH – DUDI IN GEM YALA

By: Thomas Ken Anjichi

In company of Dr. Jim Harries the lecturer Evans Opula 3BA and Mishack Mugambi 1AD we visited UPENDO WA ROHO ISRAEL CHURCH AT DUDI on 22-06-08.

The church is situated some 11 km. away from Luanda Town along Kisumu. Busia Highway. It is about 8 meters off the Kisumu Bus stop to the right just behind Dudi Township Primary School.

It is a small structure of semi-permanent type 8m. long by 3m. wide approximately. A small tin-roofed structure beside it serves as a latrine. Near the door to the entrance, two tall poles stand hoisting flags in blue and white colours. Something that resembles a kind of shrine. As we arrive there at about 10 o'clock, a lady in a white robe is seated outside with some two little children waiting for the arrival of other faithfuls. A few members of the clergy arrive in turns in casual dress. The rest of the members trickle in slowly. Before they enter, they perform a kind of cleansing at the flag posts, mutter some prayers and pay tributes.

Soon a congregation of about twenty people is formed. They leave their shoes and sandals, all footwear by the door and enter the church. We are ushered in and advised to remove our shoes. The pulpit where we are directed to is to the South. On the pulpit is a small table covered with a red cloth and a blue border. On top of the table are a few candle sticks and two to three mobile phones, A cross is placed on top of the same table with a rosary, hanging on it.

On the floor and to the right are spread wide mats made of papyrus reeds on which all the female faithful are seated. To the left are three to four pews and a few chairs for the male faithful to sit on, after bowing or kneeling.

In a moment the Bishop (priest) arrives with his clergy in full attire. He dons a red cloak with a white kind of robe on top reaching the knees to denote his rank. Another red scarf is worn. On his head is a red fez. Other teachers (*Jopwonj*) wear different attires ranging from purple, maroon, and red to green. Each denotes one's rank. They move right to the table where the candle sticks are now lit. They bow and kneel. They mutter audibly some kind of prayer and then rise to face the audience. Everyone is now seated except the song leader and the drum players.

A medium size sonorous drum (*bul*) is struck to a tune that sets the pace of the praise and worship. The song leader a middle aged man leads the melody in soprano! Everybody now responds to the Luo tunes which sound quite melodious.

As the singing gains momentum, a bigger (*bul*) is struck to the rhythm of the singing. Bells, sticks, metal-bars, rattles made out of tin-cans fastened to wooden handles all accompany the singing. The singing goes on for about half an hour then stops.

Very quickly all the chairs, pews and the mats are carried out for the next section of worship. Everyone turns now to face North, towards the main door. Then the doors and windows are

shut. Serious worship starts. People sing with enthusiasm and zeal. They talk in tongues, emotional utterances and mutterings, they yell and shout. This takes almost another half an hour or more, The song leader leads in soprano although male without tiring. Soon the “*bul*” take their turn. Singing commences with the percussions accompanying in. In a moment all join and there is serious praising and celebration in anticipation of the “arrival” of the Holy Spirit. A man moves in quick jumps into the centre of the congregation. He whirls and spins on his feet, arms stretched sideways, parallel to the ground. He is clad in white robes with flaps that make him appear like a flying angel. The spinning is so vigorous that one would expect him to fall to the ground, any moment he stops. This does not happen for there are some strong men around to take control should anything happen. He finally lands on the floor full fuming and breathing heavily and he is quickly carried out to the flags to receive healing from any evil. We then learn that this is due to the power of the holy spirit. The singing continues besides all these happenings.

Soon a young lady follows the same trend. She is dressed in a white full dress with a white headscarf flowing over her shoulders. She makes fast round turns, spins and soon she is on the ground. She too is ferried out to the flag posts. The Bishop is already there attending to all those with problems, evils and other needs.

Some members who have been guided by the holy spirit move among the congregation spotting those they suspect to be demon possessed as an unclean in any manner, according to “revelation”. They locate them and force them out of the church to the flag posts to be cleansed. All the cleansing and purification is performed under the flags. The singing continues.

Back inside the church, the Bishop has moved to attend to a young mother who is holding a child suspected to be possessed with demonic spirits. In each hand he has two lit candles. Two red ones and also two white ones. He swerves them around the small child’s head and utters some words in Dholuo and in an unknown language. He is dismissing the evil spirits. Everything cools down. The chairs, mats, pews are brought back and calm restored.

The next thing we witness is dedication and Baptism of two babies. The Bishop reads scriptures while candles are lit. Holds the babies in turns and asks their parents to pronounce their name, beginning with the current name followed by the one sought for baptism. This is repeated by reversing the order of the names. He offers prayers and blesses the babies. This is after sprinkling some water on them from a trough over their heads. He hands them back to their parents.

Then follows time for presentation of gifts for the baby mainly in money (cash) form. This is done in the form of a “fund-rise” accompanies by some kind of “gambling” people want to out-do each in a kind of contest. This is done to win more collection, we learn that. The game goes on for a time. Some money and a few other gifts are realized and handed over to the mother.

Each one of us on the dais is then requested to introduce himself and give a short sermon. We come to understand that this is how preaching is conducted. There is just no specific speaker” A (*Japwonj*) teacher on the podium sums up and in a few minutes offerings “*sadaka*” is collected and a prayer follows.

We are then guided to the Bishops home a few metres from the church. He treats us to a luncheon, “ugali” and meat. While there we ask him a few questions concerning the ministry

of the church. He explains that the original mother church is African Israel Nineveh, then followed Mowar Israel church and finally now UPENDO WA ROHO ISRAEL CHURCH whose founder current cardinal is Jackton Oyaro Wega who resides in Nairobi.

The church is based on an Episcopal establishment. It has the cardinal, Archbishop (Assistant Cardinal – Senior Bishop – (Assistant Archbishop), Bishop – Padre, Teachers (*Japwonj*) others are, Lay leaders and Deacons. It believes in doctrines like Baptism by sprinkling on children but full immersion for adults. It also believes in Resurrection, Holy Matrimony and Holy Communion.