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2nd of 3 files

Chapters 2 to 6

**Spirit, Desire and the World:
Roho Churches of Western Kenya in the Era of Globalization**

**by
Timothy John Padwick**

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**Department of Theology
School of Historical Studies
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Chapter Two

Roho churches in Vihiga

‘God has given you wealth in the Spirit, and taken away from you the wealth of money. You don’t know how rich you are – by what means can you get riches like this?’¹

Part One. Vihiga District and its people

Names and inhabitants

Vihiga District is one of the most densely populated rural districts in the world. It has produced a remarkable number of African Independent Churches, and is one of the two original homes of Roho Christianity.² In this chapter I give a historical overview of the Roho movement in Vihiga, beginning with its physical setting.

Contemporary Vihiga District was created as an administrative entity in February 1992.³ It forms the southernmost district of Western Province, and borders on the districts of Kisumu to the south and Siaya to the west (both in Nyanza Province), Nandi in Rift Valley Province to the east, and Kakamega in Western Province to the north (see Map 1). Administrative boundaries and names have changed considerably and frequently since 1902, when the whole of present-day Kenya west of Naivasha in

¹ Bishop I. Mugodo of *Holy Spirit*, addressing the Maragoli at a memorial service in Vihiga, *Makumbusho* of L. Busaka, 28.9.00 (Doc. 6) Kisiru.

² The other is Musanda/Ruwe. Musanda is in Wanga (formerly Kakamega District, now Mumias /Butere), in Western Province; Ruwe is a few kms across the border in Ugenya, Siaya District, in Nyanza Province.

³ I draw considerably in this part of the chapter from the background information given in Mutoro’s recent monograph on the agriculture of the district, *Women Working Wonders*, especially pp. 39-77.

the Rift Valley was transferred from the territory of Uganda to Kenya. To avoid confusion I refer to the geographical area of contemporary Vihiga district simply as 'Vihiga'.⁴ However, for historical purposes it is helpful to know that during the colonial period the whole of southern Kenya west of the Rift Valley was known as Nyanza Province. This was broken down into a number of districts, of which this thesis is chiefly concerned with those known during most of the colonial period as North Kavirondo (essentially contemporary Western Province) and Central and Southern Kavirondo (contemporary Nyanza Province).⁵

Vihiga District is inhabited predominantly by three sub-groups of the Luyia people, each with their own distinct dialect, the Maragoli, the Tiriki, and the Banyore (to use the usual English terms). In addition members of the Terik ethnic group (related to the Nandi) and a few Luo inhabit areas to the west and extreme south of the district. The languages of these two latter peoples are Nilotic but are distinct, mutually incomprehensible, and unrelated to the Bantu languages of the Luyia.

The earliest Bantu inhabitants probably arrived in Vihiga district in about 1250, and among these may have been the ancestors of the Maragoli and Banyore.⁶ During the immediate pre-colonial period, the Maragoli occupied the area now referred to as Maragoli, that is the contemporary administrative divisions of Vihiga and Sabatia

⁴ Vihiga is also a Division (i.e., a sub-section of Vihiga District), and a village. It was the village at Vihiga where the Friends missionaries established a mission station, and which subsequently became a divisional headquarters for the colonial administration, and for a short time the headquarters of the new district of Vihiga until the new centre was built at Mbale.

⁵ In 1946 the term 'Kavirondo' was abandoned in favour of 'Nyanza' for each of these districts, and in 1955 an additional district was carved out of North Nyanza north of the River Nzoia, to be called Elgon Nyanza. (Sangree, *Age, Prayer and Politics*, pp. 98-99.) At independence, North Nyanza became Kakamega District, and Elgon Nyanza was subdivided into Bungoma and Busia Districts. There have been further creations of new districts since then, of which Vihiga District is one.

⁶ Mutoro, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

(known during the colonial period as the locations of South and North Maragoli).⁷

The Banyore occupied the area to the west known as Bunyore (contemporary Emuhaya and Luanda divisions), and the Tiriki occupied the area to the north and east known as Tiriki and now subdivided into the divisions of East and West Tiriki. In the south-east, the Terik occupied Nyang'ori,⁸ and what is now Aldai division of Rift Valley Province. In addition, some Maragoli had already taken up land in the south of Tiriki and Nyang'ori before colonial rule, and some Luo-speaking clans originally from Gem and Ugenya had also settled and become assimilated into the Maragoli speaking community in these two areas. Sangree notes that by the 1950s and 1960s in all areas of Tiriki and Nyang'ori the Bantu population had outgrown the indigenous Terik.⁹

Land use, employment, and communications

Vihiga District has an area of approximately 521 square kilometres, of which at the present time 80% is arable, and 90% is used for crops and livestock production.¹⁰ The soil is naturally very fertile, and the district enjoys all-year-round rains, with two principal growing seasons. Although the equator crosses the district, the altitude of about 5500 feet ensures an equable climate. Even before the start of the colonial period, therefore, the area was quite densely populated.¹¹ By 1933 one observer reported that the population in Maragoli was 900 to the square mile, and 1200 in

⁷ This paragraph is taken principally from Kasiera, *Development of Pentecostal Christianity*, pp. 21-25.

⁸ Nyang'ori was a derogatory term formerly used by the British of the Terik people (Sangree, op.cit., p. 6). It was given to the location, and is used even today for the PAG church headquarters near Kiboswa. Nyang'ori Location was originally administratively part of Central Kavirondo, much to the distaste of the Terik, but was transferred to form part of Tiriki Location in North Kavirondo in 1939, later to regain its administrative status as a location in its own right in 1947, but still within North Kavirondo District. Sangree, op. cit., pp. 106-9.

⁹ Sangree, *Age, Prayer, and Politics*, p. 51, f.n. 1.

¹⁰ Mutoro, op. cit, p. 39.

Bunyore.¹² In the 1920s and 1930s the Maragoli and Banyore quickly seized opportunities offered to move into what were then the more sparsely populated areas of Tiriki and Nyang'ori.¹³ When this opening was closed, emigration began in the 1940s into South Nyanza. In the 1950s and 1960s Maragoli and Banyore migrants established their homesteads across the border from South Nyanza into Tanzania, and also settled in the far west of Uganda at Kigumba.¹⁴ Following political independence in Kenya in 1963, migrants from Vihiga occupied land in new settlement schemes, principally in Trans-Nzoia District, opened up by the Kenyan government in areas of the Rift Valley hitherto restricted to white farmers. Despite this continued exodus from Vihiga District, in 2002 there was an estimated total of 550,800 persons, at a rate of 978 persons per sq. km., which gave the District by far the highest rural density of population in the Republic.¹⁵ These figures do not include the very substantial proportion of males of working age who are away from the district at any particular time and who are employed or looking for work elsewhere.¹⁶

Currently small scale agriculture provides the basic support of 90% of the population, the remaining 10% gaining their livelihood from trade, commerce, quarrying,

¹¹ Mutoro, op. cit., p. 56, quotes the traveller Joseph Thomson (whom she mis-names Thomas) stating that in 1883 'almost every foot of ground was under cultivation', although this would have referred to the area to the north of the present Vihiga District.

¹² Figures quoted in Letter from JWC Dougall to JH Oldham, 13.1.33. (Lugard Papers L77/1 257-259.) Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, p. 21, gives rather lower densities based on the 1932 census of 600 in North Maragoli, and over 1100 in Bunyore. Kitching points out that all population statistics before 1948 (or 1942 in the case of labour statistics) are unreliable. (*Class and Economic Change*, p. 243).

¹³ Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 24-5; Sangree, op. cit., pp. 108-9, 137-8.

¹⁴ Kigumba, north of Masindi, was an attempt to resettle Bunyoro from densely populated areas of East Africa. Welbourn & Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home*, p. 76, f.n. 8.

¹⁵ As calculated in the District's 2002 Development plan from the figures of the National Census of 1999. Sabatia (North Maragoli) had the highest density, followed by Luanda (Bunyore), Emuhaya (Bunyore), Vihiga (South Maragoli), Tiriki West and Tiriki East in that order, but except for the relatively low densities in Tiriki East, the differences are marginal. Kenya Government, *Vihiga District Development Plan 2002-8*, pp. 6, 16.

¹⁶ According to the 1999 census figures there were 266,163 females compared to 232,720 males. *Vihiga District Development Plan, 2002-8*, p. 19.

woodwork and industry.¹⁷ However, the district is food-deficient. The maize produced is only enough for four months' food supply at the most. In 1994 the total labour force was calculated at 216,381: on small farms, 95.6%; rural self-employed, 0.6%; in public sector employment, 0.8%; in private sector employment, 0.5%; and urban self-employed, 2.3%.¹⁸ The employment profile in Vihiga District has hardly changed since the 1930s.

In terms of communication, the district is one of the better-served in Western Kenya. It is less than 10 kms from the city of Kisumu, the major Kenyan port on Lake Victoria, which serves as a rail-head from Mombasa and Nairobi. The trunk road from Kisumu north to Kakamega and Kitale passes through Mbale town, the centre of the district, and the trunk road to the Ugandan border post of Busia passes through the major market town of Luanda in the west of the district. These factors contributed to what earlier observers referred to as the district's relatively advanced stage of 'modernization'. Soja, writing in 1968, regarded Kisumu and its immediate hinterland, including Vihiga (except for Tiriki), as forming one of four 'national nuclei'. These areas were the most modernized and 'contain the major focal points of political integration and the prime generators, transformers, interpreters, and distributors of the forces of change.' In these four areas of the country a large proportion of the nationalist politicians were born or educated.¹⁹

¹⁷ For this paragraph, see Mutoro, op. cit., pp. 58-66.

¹⁸ Figures and details are taken from the 1994 Vihiga District Development Plan, cited by Mutoro, op. cit., p. 66. The rural self-employed were brick-makers, sawyers, charcoal burners, etc. Figures for public and private sector employment will have risen since 1994 due to the creation of a new District HQs and Hospital at Mbale and the opening of the Mudete Tea Factory. The urban self-employed were *jua kali* or informal sector workers such as mechanics, transport, carpenters, hawkers, and tin smiths.

¹⁹ The other three nuclei are Nakuru, Mombasa, and Nairobi with its large hinterland of Kiambu and the transport corridor through Thika and Murang'a to Nyeri. Soja, *Geography of Modernization*, p. 108-9.

The main difficulties facing the district at the present-day are the absence of non-agricultural employment and the shortage of land: the average household of 6 -10 people is now dependent on a farm of about 0.6 hectares.²⁰ HIV/AIDS is also taking its toll. As a result, over the past ten years poverty has been increasing.²¹ In fact, since the 1920s Vihiga has been a labour reservoir, most active men migrating in search of work elsewhere, leaving their wives to manage their farms. In a 1993 survey in North Maragoli location, approximately 50% of men aged 20-59 years had migrated out of the area in search of work, leaving a high proportion of farms headed or managed by women.²²

Originally the earned income of these migrant workers would have been spent chiefly on paying government taxes (see chapter four) and on the purchase of simple consumer items; currently the remittances received in Vihiga from migrants are used very substantially for educational expenses. The contemporary inhabitants of Vihiga believe education offers a better return on investment than their small farms. Many migrants see their land in Vihiga less as a business, and more as a symbolic means of enabling them to remain in touch with their rural and agricultural roots, and of according them the proper status in their rural community. It is somewhere for people to return to after retirement, where they can be buried in their lands of their ancestors.²³

²⁰ For this paragraph, see Mutoro, op. cit., pp. 75, 56-58.

²¹ 'In the early 1990s the community could on average afford various services. However, beginning late 1990s, ability to afford hospital bills and school fees, among others, continued to diminish, leading to over-reliance on the few people who have off farm jobs.' *Vihiga District Development Plan, 2002-8*, p. 18.

²² Of 39 households surveyed, 22 were headed by men, 11 were managed by women (with their husbands away from the location but remaining final arbiters over farm management), and 5 were headed by women (divorcees or widows). Mutoro, op. cit. p. 121.

²³ Mutoro, op. cit, p. 122.

Early history of the District

The peoples of western Kenya during the immediate pre-colonial period lived in relatively small communities based on patrilineal clans.²⁴ The demands of exogamy and the need to defend their territories without incurring the overheads of government brought these clans and groups into a shifting network of alliances with their neighbours, alliances which were based on marriage and patron-client relationships. All settlements were occupied by such associations of clans (Lulogooli, *oluhia*, pl. *edzimbia*).²⁵ The colonization of unoccupied land (still continuing in some areas at the time of the British conquest) proceeded by the ad hoc construction of such alliances, so that in some areas a clan or group of clans might be dominant, whereas in others the same clans might play junior roles to other clans. Among these related clans there were agreed procedures for the settlement of disputes such as homicide, and the area of operation of these laws constituted the extent of a people's sense of political identity. Often (and especially among the Luyia) these associations lacked any formal institution of chiefs, and were governed by meetings of clan elders. In present-day Western Province at the turn of the century there were some 15 such associations, each of which spoke distinct but mutually comprehensible Bantu languages later given the collective name 'Luyia'.²⁶ The Maragoli, the Banyore, and the Tiriki constituted three of these associations, known in the language of the colonial period as 'sub-tribes', and in Lulogooli as *edzihili*, 'nations' (sing., *ihili*).

²⁴ Except where otherwise indicated this paragraph is drawn from Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley*, Bk 1, pp. 49 – 51.

²⁵ Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, p. 55.

²⁶ For the history of the term Luyia, see Kanyoro, *Unity and Diversity*, pp. 5-11. The word is derived from *ku luhyia* (*ku rushia*) – the place out in the open where decisions were taken concerning the community by clan elders. (Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, p. 55). People speaking similar languages but living in Uganda have never been called 'Luyia', a fact that indicates the usage of the word is to be dated after the colonial drawing of national boundaries. The evidence suggests that the term was created by the Luyia themselves during the 1930s as they sought a political unity in their relations with the colonial government. The name Kavirondo, initially applied indiscriminately by

The coming of traders, colonialists and missionaries

Before the colonial period, western Kenya had been relatively unreached by long distance trade, principally because traders from the coast had to cross a large area controlled by hostile Maasai.²⁷ As Lonsdale puts it, in this region ‘the distant pulse of the overseas market had barely, if at all, diverted the allocation of household labour or opened out the regional circuits of exchange.’²⁸ By the mid-19th century, however, Arab traders had begun to reach Eastern Uganda through Kenya, passing through Kwa Shiindu (Mumias), some 40 kms to the north-west of Vihiga on their way.²⁹ At Mumias the Arab traders established a base by agreement with the *nabongo* or king of the Wanga which they used for limited ivory hunting and slave-raiding during the twenty or so years prior to the British occupation.³⁰ In return the *nabongo* benefited from the guns and military prowess of the Arabs and Swahili.

In 1889 Frederick Jackson, on behalf of the Imperial British East African Company (IBEAC)³¹ arrived at Mumias en route for Kampala, where in the following year he established (to British eyes) the IBEAC as the sovereign authority in Uganda. In 1893 the UK government took over responsibility for Uganda from the IBEAC, and the

traders and colonial administrators to all the peoples of present-day Nyanza and Western Provinces, was never accepted by the peoples themselves.

²⁷ Low, in Oliver & Mathew, *History of East Africa*, Vol. 1, pp. 316-9.

²⁸ Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley I*, p. 45. The main interest of the traders was ivory, the cost of portage from and to the coast ruling out any other significant source of commerce. Low, in Oliver & Mathew, *History of East Africa*, Vol. 1, p. 319; Flint, in Oliver and Mathew, op. cit., p. 400.

²⁹ Flint, in Oliver and Mathew, op. cit., p. 419.

³⁰ Berman and Lonsdale, op. cit., p. 51.

³¹ Such chartered companies were the British means of securing their ‘area of influence’ without the commitment of direct governmental involvement. See Flint, in Oliver & Mathew, *History of East Africa*, Vol. 1, pp. 407–411.

first British resident officer for Kavirondo (i.e., present Nyanza and Western Provinces) was posted the following year to Mumias.³²

The British won control of western Kenya in an *ad hoc* manner, relying on a mixture of military force, negotiation, patronage, and collaboration.³³ Resistance in one form or another prompted British military action in Nyanza on 30 separate occasions between 1894 and 1900. Following in the steps of the Swahili traders, the British also made an alliance with *nabongo* Mumia.³⁴ The willingness of the British officials during this period to offer their services as peace-makers between frequently disputative rival clans further increased their authority.³⁵

The opening of the railway to Kisumu in 1901 made the ‘pacification’ (British military operations against resistance) much easier. Military excursions were still in episodic process when the first missionaries arrived in Vihiga. Hotchkiss, Chilson, and Hole, of the Friends Africa Industrial Mission, travelled up the new railway line in 1902, to be welcomed in Kisumu by the District Commissioner Hobley.³⁶ Hotchkiss believed that teaching Africans practical skills would enable them to support themselves more effectively while also creating the foundation for a self-supporting indigenous church. Hence the word ‘Industrial’ in the early name of the

³² His instructions were to secure the rapid passage of goods and mail, to collect food for caravans, and to impose ivory duty and improve transport facilities. In fact, it was not until 1896 that Nyanza was formally included in the Ugandan Protectorate, although the Anglo-German Treaty of 1890 had already recognized the area as subject to British influence. Berman and Lonsdale, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-54.

³³ The summary in this paragraph is taken from Berman & Lonsdale, pp. 51-71.

³⁴ Berman and Lonsdale, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

³⁵ The British resident at Mumias reported in 1898 that he had had difficulties in appointing chiefs for much of the area, because clans were willing only to recognize leaders of their own. At first he used Arab or Swahili agents but by 1905 the British administration had imposed local chiefs on the people, and the clan chiefs were appointed as headmen. (See the summary in Kasiera, *Development of Pentecostal Christianity*, pp. 65-68.)

³⁶ Unless otherwise stated, information in this paragraph is from Kasiera, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-110.

mission.³⁷ The 1000 acre site the missionaries obtained with Hobley's help for their first mission station at Kaimosi, in what was then a largely unoccupied no-man's land between the Luyia and the Nandi, had waterfalls for power, and a forest for a sawmill.³⁸ The almost simultaneous completion of the railway line to Kisumu and the effective establishment of the colonial administration in western Kenya opened up the area to other missions. Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionaries built a mission at Vihiga in South Maragoli in 1904, only to hand over the property and work to the Friends in 1906, so that they could concentrate on their work with the Luo from their station in Maseno further to the west. Also in 1904, Robert Wilson of the South African Compounds and Interior Mission (SACIM) built a station between Maseno and Vihiga at Kima (a station that was sold to the Church of God in 1930).³⁹ Just to the south of Vihiga, in the neighbouring Luo location of Nyahera, the Nilotic Independent Mission (NIM) opened at Ogada's in 1906, under Dorothea Boldt. (This mission was later taken over by the Africa Inland Mission (AIM).) The close proximity of these four missions led to a meeting in 1907 in which the CMS and the NIM agreed to work among the Luo, and the FAIM and SACIM among the Luyia.⁴⁰ The same year also saw the arrival of the Millers, who were shortly to be supported by

³⁷ Hotchkiss believed that 'there never can be a *real* change of heart that is not followed by a radical social cleansing of the social conditions which immediately encompass it.' Such cleansing could be achieved through the teaching of habits of industry. *Sketches from the Dark Continent*, p. 111 ff, quoted in Rasmussen, op. cit., p. 20.

³⁸ Rasmussen, *History of the Quaker Movement in Africa*, pp. 20, 39-40.

³⁹ As its name suggests, this mission was from South Africa. Three missionaries arrived, two whites and a Zulu, John Pillar. Initially people around Kima thought the strangers might be slave traders. Due to lack of funds, in 1930 the mission was sold to Church of God, Indiana. Subsequently, in 1944 a dispute broke out over the siting of a school which led to the foundation of an early AIC in Bunyore. The mission wanted the school to be built at Ingotse, in Butso. Many in Bunyore, however, led by the Abamang'ali clan in their association called 'Muyonga', wanted the school to be at Kima. When a church meeting was held the majority decision was for Ingotse, and the Abamang'ali separated from the mission, founded an independent church, and took for themselves the name 'African Interior Church'. In 1951 Ebuangwe Ibubi was chosen as the HQ for the new church. African Interior Church was registered as a member of the then Christian Council of Kenya in 1956. (Esitambale, 'African Interior Church History'.) Since this church is not a Roho church, it will not be discussed in detail in this thesis.

⁴⁰ Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 108-109.

the Apostolic Faith Mission of Iowa. Since the Terik had not been ‘shared out’ among the other Protestant missions, the Millers settled among them at Nyang’ori.⁴¹ In fact, despite the Millers’ intentions of working among the Terik, their earliest converts were from the Luyia community.⁴²

Part Two. The planting of the church in Vihiga and the coming of the Holy Spirit

The missions establish themselves

There were four strands to the work of the Friends missionaries, medical, industrial, educational, and evangelistic. The first missionaries spent more time on physical construction than on evangelism, in particular on supervising the building of public roads.⁴³ This work included the construction of the road from Kisumu to Kaimosi. As soon as this was completed, machinery for a sawmill and posho mill (for maize flour) was brought up to Kaimosi from Kisumu. A Technical Training School in artisan skills was not opened at Kaimosi until 1921, but before then many Africans had received training in the mission’s own workshops. Medical, educational, and agricultural activities were also important. In 1904, when the Friends missionary Dr. Blackburn vaccinated thousands of people against a small-pox epidemic, he was the only medical doctor in western Kenya.⁴⁴ The first full hospital was completed at Kaimosi in 1919, two years before the government hospital at Kakamega. The Friends, like all the missions in Vihiga, introduced new agricultural and horticultural techniques, and the growing of new crops and fruits was rapidly adopted by the

⁴¹ Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 213ff. Kasiera notes that the Millers used various names for their mission, and possibly they were receiving support from a number of different sources.

⁴² Kasiera, op. cit., p. 229.

⁴³ Kasiera, op. cit., p. 177. This and the following paragraph are drawn from Kasiera, pp. 134–174, unless otherwise stated.

⁴⁴ He had arrived in 1903. Rasmussen, *The Quaker Movement in Africa*, p. 41.

people of the district.⁴⁵ The educational ministry of the mission was initially focussed on the 4 'Rs' – reading, writing, arithmetic and religion. Equipped with this basic knowledge, the students were sent out as teachers to village schools. By the early 1910s, popular demand for this education forced the Friends to abandon their initial policy of concentrating on the children of the chiefs, and the schools rapidly expanded. In 1921 a Normal Training School for the education and training of teachers was opened at Vihiga. Because of this very practical ministry of social 'improvement', the Friends missionaries were initially more highly regarded by the colonial authorities than their more 'spiritual' Pentecostal colleagues at Nyang'ori.

Miller took leave from Nyang'ori between 1922-3, and on his return started teaching that his converts should be re-baptized, and that they should pray loudly and weep over their sins. This new teaching caused a crisis in the mission.⁴⁶ Eventually Miller decided to sell the mission to the Kellers (loosely connected with the AIM station at Ogada), who had looked after it while he was on leave. The Kellers then returned home themselves to look for a sponsor, and became affiliated to Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC). During these two years (1923-4), the mission at Nyang'ori was in African hands.⁴⁷

Preparation for revival

As Kasiera has shown, the teaching of the Friends and the Pentecostal missionaries stimulated and gave theological form to the events in 1926 and 1927 that are remembered by the Roho churches as the 'coming' of the Holy Spirit. From the time

⁴⁵ These included citrus fruits, guava, avocado, mango, and mulberry, sugarcane, pineapples, potatoes, groundnuts and European vegetables.

⁴⁶ One of their two churches left to join the more 'sober' denomination of the Friends, This was the church at Tigoi (one of the two under the mission at the time, the other being Nyang'ori itself.) The rump of pentecostal believers from Tigoi formed a new congregation nearby at Kitagwa.

of the initial conflicts over the manifestations of the Spirit in the Friends church, the mission at Nyang'ori proved generally supportive of the new movement, and Keller eventually welcomed some of the Roho Christians under the Pentecostal umbrella. Later, it was PAOC itself that reluctantly gave birth to the second and third generation Roho churches of *African Israel* and *Divine*.⁴⁸

Revival teaching, which emphasized the use of protracted meetings, emotional preaching, calls for an individual to accept Jesus as a personal Saviour, and the use of a 'mourners' bench' for repentance of sin, had begun to influence the American Friends from the 1860s.⁴⁹ Revivalists stressed the experience of 'sanctification', as a second stage in a believer's life that could be experienced at a definite moment in time.⁵⁰ The Friends missionary Arthur Chilson, whose preaching was partly responsible for the descent of the Spirit, dated his own conversion to a revival meeting, later receiving 'the blessed Holy Ghost in all His fullness.'⁵¹ As early as 1909, Chilson and his wife had begun to teach the handful of early converts about the 'baptism with the Holy Ghost', and the need to prepare for Christ's Second Coming.⁵²

In fact by 1911 the number of Friends African converts was reported as still only sixteen. Real expansion in numbers began only after the end of the First World War. By this time the impact of colonialism had become more apparent. The sufferings recounted by returning Africans who had served in the army's Carrier Corps, together with the concurrent economic crisis and the influenza epidemic, led to reports of

⁴⁷ Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 254-264, for this paragraph.

⁴⁸ I use these shortened forms (in italics) of the full church names, African Israel Church Nineveh, and African Divine Church.

⁴⁹ Rasmussen, *History of the Quaker Movement*, pp. 13 – 16, 41; Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 123-132.

⁵⁰ Rasmussen, op. cit., p. 16.

⁵¹ Rasmussen, op. cit., p. 42.

unrest.⁵³ By the early 1920s the people of Maragoli were showing themselves anxious to take advantage of the educational opportunities and the religious teaching offered by the mission. The reported number of full and probationary members of the Friends church increased from 1013 in 1920, to 4100 in 1926, and to about 7500 in 1929.⁵⁴ Much of this increase can be attributed to the zeal of the African Christians themselves, such as Yohana Amugune, and Joseph Ngaira and his wife Maria Mwaiti, many of whom founded a number of individual ‘meetings’.⁵⁵ A traditional Quaker organizational structure was given to these new congregations, so that starting from 1917 village meetings were combined to form monthly meetings. From 1921 these in turn were grouped in quarterly meetings as necessary.⁵⁶ These structures were later used also by the first generation Roho churches.

Relations between the missions were cordial, with joint conferences for missionaries, ‘native’ converts, and for teachers. In this sharing of Christian teaching and testimonies, there was by the early 1920s an openness to revival and to a second experience of the Holy Spirit. During this period the Kellers worked and prayed for an outpouring of the Spirit, as did Chilson and Ford, and Chilson’s assistant, Joseph Ngaira. Indeed, it was after Ngaira’s preaching in Bukusu that in 1924 for the first time people confessed their sins together.⁵⁷ Pentecostal teaching was probably also

⁵² Rasmussen, op. cit., p. 44.

⁵³ Rasmussen, op. cit., p. 49, referring to mission reports dating from 1922. In 1917-18 as many as 10,036 men from North Kavirondo were registered with the Carriers Corps – perhaps 12% of the adult male population of the District. (Rasmussen, *Modern African Spirituality*, p. 6). In 1924 the North Kavirondo Taxpayers’ Welfare Society was formed as an organ to express people’s concerns, but it drew principally on members of the Church Missionary Society.

⁵⁴ Rasmussen, *History of the Quaker Movement*, pp. 50-51. These figures are for the whole church, which included the mission stations of Malava in Kabras, and Lugulu in Bukusu.

⁵⁵ Rasmussen, op. cit., p. 53.

⁵⁶ The initial monthly meetings were based on the five mission stations of the time. These were Kaimosi, Vihiga (started as a mission station in 1906), Lirhandu in Isukha (started 1907), Lugulu in Bukusu (‘Kitosh’), which was begun in 1912, and Malava in Kabras. Rasmussen, op. cit., pp. 56-7.

⁵⁷ Kasiera thinks that the arrival of the Kellers encouraged Chilson to preach more openly about the pentecostal experience, having been inhibited beforehand by the poor reputation of Miller in

known at the AIM station at Ogada, only a few miles from Nyang'ori.⁵⁸ In any case, as Kasiera notes, the African experience of the spiritual world was very much more intense and pervasive than that of the missionaries. This led African converts not only to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, but to make an experiential distinction between a first stage in Christian faith as belief, and a second stage as commitment, reception of the Holy Spirit, and power.⁵⁹

The coming of the Holy Spirit

Roho Christians of the present day date the foundation of the first Roho churches to the coming of the Holy Spirit in 1926 and 1927, rather than the later, formal, decision to separate from the Friends.⁶⁰ In fact the Spirit's coming was not a single event but took place in a series of different meetings.⁶¹ The great majority of eyewitnesses to these happenings have now died, and it is difficult to go behind the events as they are recorded by Kasiera (in his thesis of 1984), and by Rasmussen (who conducted her interviews mainly in 1975 and 1976).⁶² Present day accounts of the early events are often conflicting. Kasiera recognizes that his account puts the final separation of the South Maragoli 'people of the Spirit' from the Friends church considerably later than their own tradition.⁶³ For the account that follows, I depend on

government and missionary circles. (Kasieria, op. cit., pp. 338-34.) Rasmussen on the contrary thinks that Chilson emphasized this from the early days. (*History of the Quaker Movement*, p. 186, f.n. 159.) The difference in interpretation seems largely one of degree.

⁵⁸ Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 343-4, 347.

⁵⁹ Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 346, 353-4.

⁶⁰ The date painted on the outside of the *Holy Spirit* church at Bukoyani has recently been changed from 1926 to 1927.

⁶¹ Archbishop Joel Sande says that the Spirit came in 1926, but came 'publicly' in 1927. OI, Lukayu, Sande, Mwangale, Nyando, 23.9.99 (Doc. 71), Mahanga. The 'Histori ya Holy Spirit Church' (Doc. 17) in Lulogooli starts with the coming of the Spirit in 1927 to the students at Kaimosi under the preaching of Chilson. I refer to this work as 'Histori'.

⁶² Rasmussen, *Modern African Spirituality*, passim. See Thunberg, 'Quaker Mission and the Holy Spirit Churches', for a review of her work.

⁶³ Kasiera (writing from a PAG base) puts the date as 1933; in the *Holy Spirit* 'Histori' (Doc. 17), the significant dates are 18 May 1928, when 'the people of the Spirit' started to pray every month in Jacob's house; and their expulsion from the Friends church in 1929. (There was yet another formal

Kasiera and Rasmussen, supplemented by other narratives written from within, or close to, the Roho tradition.⁶⁴

There was a steady growth of interest in teaching about the Holy Spirit. In September 1925, a 'Union School' of teachers and evangelists from different missions was held at Kaimosi, at which some participants were reported as seeking the baptism of the Spirit.⁶⁵ Later the following year, Friends Bible conferences in Maragoli attracted huge crowds and great fervour. On 22 November 1926, Chilson preached in the open-air to a large gathering at Kaimosi. Those who wanted to 'search their hearts' were invited into the building where Chilson laid his hands on them and they all received the Holy Spirit. This led to the first Roho group of Christians at Ishiru in Tiriki.⁶⁶

The following year saw the impact of the revival spread more widely into the village congregations. Chilson and his family moved from Malava in Kabras to Kaimosi when Ford went home on leave.⁶⁷ With the support of the Kellers, Chilson now

expulsion from the Friends in November 1932, but by this date most of the Roho Christians had already left.) The interests of the two traditions would naturally act in opposing directions as far as dating is concerned, and there is a difference between internal intentions or disposition and outward behaviour, but it is not possible to reconcile the two accounts completely. In particular, recent accounts (Obede; 'Histori') omit the period during which the people at Bukoyani were (nominally, at least) attached to the PAOC through Matia Elanogwa. And it is during this period between 1930–33 that the 'Histori' places the three year period of prayer. It would seem that constant repetition of these events during the annual commemorations of Daniel Sande and Jacob Buluku has resulted not in a simple solidifying of oral tradition but a foreshortening, so that only the events of value to the tradition of proud independence are now remembered, and events have been shifted backwards in an unconscious desire that they may partake of the purity of the original coming of the Spirit.

⁶⁴ A. Obede, 'A Short History of "The Holy Spirit Church of East Africa"', by a son of the present *Holy Spirit* Archbishop; J. Barasa, 'The Holy Spirit Church of East Africa', a sympathetic account of the church as it was in the early 1970s, by a student at St. Paul's Theological College, Limuru, who was a friend of Joseph Mahasi, the *Holy Spirit* student studying there at that time; and M. Lumwagi's 'The Separated Ones,' which concentrates on *Lyahuka*. These accounts conflict in their details. In addition, Anderson's brief article in *Risk*, 'The Children of Jacobo', and his 'History of the Holy Spirit Church of East Africa', and 'Leadership developed by Two Kenya Independent Churches', all about the *Holy Spirit* church, are derived from interviews with its leadership carried out in 1968 by Paul Chidwick and 1969 by Julius Barasa.

⁶⁵ Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 356–359.

⁶⁶ Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 361–363, 366; Rasmussen, *Modern African Spirituality*, p. 14.

⁶⁷ Rasmussen, *Modern African Spirituality*, p. 15; Kasiera, op. cit., p. 366.

experienced a greater freedom in preaching. Particularly remembered are his September 1927 conferences at Vihiga, Chavakali, and Kaimosi, and his preaching at a teachers' refresher course at Kaimosi in October. At the Vihiga meeting and the teachers' course at Kaimosi, very many confessed their sins publicly and received the Spirit. The day after the public meeting for confession of sins during the teachers' course, Chilson called the students to a quiet place in the Kaimosi forest, where he prayed for them, and they received the Spirit.⁶⁸ These student teachers, less restricted by social obligations and expectations than their elders, were particularly powerful in spreading the fire in their villages.⁶⁹ One of the student teachers, Daniel Mundia, is reported to have walked through Maragoli preaching and declaring to people their hidden sins.⁷⁰ In this way the new message was communicated to others who became leaders of the new movement: Matia Elanogwa, Jacob Buluku (who fell down on the floor when he heard Mundia's message), Daudi Chole, and Yosefu Chegero.⁷¹

The growth of opposition

Disagreement soon began to grow over the new practices of open confession of sin and weeping and wailing in church. The Spirit-filled were generally the younger

⁶⁸ Anderson, 'History', p. 2. Obede attributes this event to 1926. This event in the forest is also referred to in Barasa (op. cit., p. 4). Obede (op. cit., p. 6) records a tradition that while they were in the forest, a large snake coiled itself around Chilson's hand. When he prayed about it, the snake left. Obede states that Jacob Buluku, Isaya Maleya, and Daniel Mundia, were filled with the Spirit on this occasion, although this is inconsistent with other witnesses who state that Buluku received the Spirit through the preaching of Mundia.

⁶⁹ In South Maragoli, Daniel Mundia and Elijah Ukilu (from Mbale) were particularly effective in their preaching. In North Maragoli, Sones Kavosa Olindo, from Kigama, and Nazani Eboso from Evohole were among those at the Kaimosi meeting. (Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 367- 70.) Daniel Mundia, recognized as a prophet in 1927, died the following year, but not before he had communicated the new message to future leaders in South Maragoli, especially Jacob Buluku and Daniel Sande. (Anderson, 'History', p. 4.)

⁷⁰ Anderson, 'Leadership developed by Two Kenyan Independent Churches', p. 4.

⁷¹ For Buluku, see Anderson, op. cit., p. 4. Elanogwa eventually joined PAOC in 1930, shortly afterwards to be followed by Chole (Kasiera, op. cit, pp. 433, 464).

generation, many of them teachers, who challenged their church elders.⁷² The Roho Christians began to refer to those without the Spirit as ‘uncircumcised’ – a particularly insulting term to the Luyia, for whom circumcision marks initiation into manhood.⁷³ In early 1928 divisions between the African Christians were such that a united monthly meeting held at Vihiga cast out the spirit of despising each other as ‘the spirit of Satan’. On 6th January, Chilson preached possibly for the last time in Vihiga, and many repented of their sins and received the Holy Spirit.⁷⁴ A meeting at Kidundu on 18th February, however, is remembered by the Holy Spirit church at Bukoyani as an occasion on which the new faith was bitterly attacked, and those who persisted in the new practices were threatened with expulsion from church and schools.⁷⁵ In South Maragoli, groups at Bukoyani and Muhanda remained firm under the leadership of Jacob Buluku and Daniel Sande. Those who had received the Spirit – including a few leaders of the Friends church - began to gather on the 18th of every month at Mbale, for confession, prayer, and singing.⁷⁶ The following year, 1929, the Roho Christians were called before a Friends committee meeting. The church elders threatened to remove their names from the mission’s membership book. Jacob is reported to have replied, ‘Then take them out. Our names are written in the book of heaven.’ The Roho Christians then walked out singing:

When I will be sent before the court
My heart will be at peace
When I have his righteousness

⁷² Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 393-4; Eliakimu Keverenge, who was a young man at the time, described the conflict as follows: ‘When preachers preached to us, the Spirit fell on us despite our youthful state... and we began crying. Our people were angered and wanted to start fighting us. They held committee meetings at Kaimosi, demanding to know why the young people were speaking, preaching, and pointing fingers at them despite their old age.’ OI, E. Keverenge, 1987 (Doc. 91), Lukuvuli.

⁷³ ‘*Avagasa*’. The reference is from Acts 7: 51. Kasiera, op. cit., p. 375, 377.

⁷⁴ Anderson, ‘History’, p. 8; Barasa, p. 4. Anderson, ‘Leadership’ p. 4, describes the chairman of the meeting urging people to drive the devil away to Namwenge (a mythical river).

⁷⁵ Anderson, ‘History’, p. 9.

⁷⁶ Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 371-374, although the year is not given.

Now I want Jesus himself.⁷⁷

Some Spirit-filled Christians moved to worship at Nyang'ori, resulting in others at the mission there withdrawing because they did not like spiritual manifestations such as weeping in church.⁷⁸ During this critical period, the Chilsons left in January 1928 on furlough and never returned to Kenya. Their successors at Kaimosi, the Hoyts, replaced Chilson's openness to ecstatic behaviour with a quasi-military discipline.⁷⁹ However, the Hoyts and the African elders invited the Kellers to teach on the Spirit at their Native Prayer Conference in July 1928, hoping to bring unity and stop the threat of secession, especially in Maragoli. But already the group at Bukoyani had begun to meet by themselves on the 18th of every month in prayer in Jacob Buluku's house.⁸⁰ After attending a quarterly meeting in Vihiga on 30 March 1929, at which Buluku preached with great power, they were badly beaten by Friends. This seems to have been the occasion on which Buluku denounced Ford, saying that people should not listen to him since the missionaries were hypocrites and only interested in money.⁸¹ The six Roho Christians present went home scarred from their beatings.

The beginnings of separation

Kasiera notes that the people of the Spirit (*watu wa Roho*, Swahili; *avandu va Roho*, Lulogooli) came initially from three areas: Ishiru, in East Tiriki; Tsimbalo (Mbale),; and Nyang'ori, especially Museywa.⁸² In Maragoli, Ford brought Tsimbalo back into

⁷⁷ Hymn no. 57 from the Friends Lulogooli hymnbook. (Rasmussen. *Modern African Spirituality*, p. 18.)

⁷⁸ Keller was unhappy at the suggestion of receiving FAM members. (Kasiera, op. cit., 397-8.)

⁷⁹ Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 380-388, 417. Kasiera attributes the refusal of the Friends Mission board not to allow the Chilsons back to Kenya as the result of a split between fundamentalists and modernists in the mission. Op. cit., pp. 420-427.

⁸⁰ 'Histori', (Doc. 17).

⁸¹ 'Histori', (Doc. 17); Barasa, op. cit. (under 'Jacob Buluku').

⁸² Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 400-402.

the fold, but Muhanda in South Maragoli, and Kigama in North Maragoli now took over as local centres of Roho worship. Among the leaders in North Maragoli were Yosefu Chegero, and Sosnes Karosa; in South Maragoli, Matia Elanogwa, Jacob Buluku, and Daniel Sande; in Tiriki, Daudi Bulemi; and in Nyang'ori, Gideon Magudedi.⁸³ Elanogwa commented that as soon as Africans realized that the missionaries feared the colonial government's negative reactions to the spread of the movement, 'the Spirit spread among people like fire.'⁸⁴ At the village level, the struggle was for control of churches and schools. The Friends had the Roho leaders brought before the Local Native Council (LNC) and the Location Councils, which they dominated. As a result, the people of the Spirit sought protection by affiliating with other missions. Those who came from Madzuu approached Major Adlam of the Salvation Army (SA) in Kisumu, and were accepted. Others who came from Madira and Bukoyani approached Nyang'ori Mission, and were refused by Keller.⁸⁵ They returned to the Friends, asking for a sympathetic missionary, but were again rejected.⁸⁶ (Keller reported that a requirement imposed by the Friends on the Roho Christians before they could return was that they had to confess they had been under the influence of evil spirits.⁸⁷ For the Roho Christians, this would have been nothing less than the 'sin against the Holy Spirit'.⁸⁸) Eventually Keller did agree to accept

⁸³ Kasiera, op. cit., p. 414.

⁸⁴ Quoted from an interview by Kasiera, op. cit., p. 414.

⁸⁵ The original names of Bukoyani village were Matagaru, from the thorns that used to grow there, and Magui Makeke ('Little' Magui, from the name of a neighbouring village). Jacob Buluku's original church was Matagaru Friends. After receiving the Spirit, he moved the Roho congregation onto his own land, which he gave to the new church for the building of a school. Buluku used the name Bukoyani to distinguish the Roho church from that of the Friends, and because the members of the clan *avokoyani* supported his separation from the Friends. The name Bukoyani also became well-known in the area because of a famous team of dancers from the village. Since the Friends Church regained sponsorship of the primary school from the Holy Spirit Church of EA in 2000, it has been re-named Matagaru, but the Holy Spirit Church HQ retains the name by which it has always been known. (A. Obede, 'Who were the Founding Fathers?' 2001 (Doc. 98); Barasa, 'The Holy Spirit Church of East Africa', p. 1.)

⁸⁶ Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 418-9.

⁸⁷ Letter, Keller to McAlister of 12 July 1929, quoted by Kasiera, op. cit., p. 432.

⁸⁸ As Barasa, op. cit., points out.

Matia Elanogwa. Hoyt, however, resorted to using his influence with the DC, and had four Roho leaders from Ishiru imprisoned in October 1931.⁸⁹

Meanwhile the Spirit movement continued with joint meetings. Roho leaders would circulate and preach in different areas, reaching as far as Kapsabet in Nandi (where they converted some Bagisu labourers), and Kajulu in Central Kavirondo.⁹⁰ When the Kellers went on leave during 1931-2, and the remaining missionaries at Nyang'ori lacked the transport to visit the villages, the movement spread even faster.⁹¹ In November 1932 the annual meeting of the Friends church decided that all remaining Roho believers should be expelled.⁹²

The presence of so many former Friends unwilling to submit to the discipline imposed by the mission at Kaimosi led to a crisis in the comity agreement between the missions. By May 1933 the DC at Kakamega had been forced to accept the construction of PAOC churches in Maragoli, contrary to the agreement. In the same month, the Salvation Army, denied the right to build a church at Madzuu by the LNC, and who had appealed to the Attorney General, won a decision overturning the protection of missionary spheres of influence at the national level.⁹³

⁸⁹ Kasiera, op. cit., p. 438.

⁹⁰ Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 434-435; 443-4. There is a tradition in *Holy Spirit* that in 1929 Daniel Sande travelled as far as Congo evangelizing, returning in 1930 or 1931 with two converts from there. (Obede, 'History', p. 8.)

⁹¹ Kasiera, op. cit., p. 447.

⁹² Rasmussen, op cit, p. 22, based on an interview with Kefa Ayub Mavuru. See also Wanakacha, 'Pneumatology in the African Church of Holy Spirit', p. 105. Wanakacha relies on an interview with Lung'aho, supporting 1932 as the final date of expulsion.

⁹³ Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 453-4 During 1932 the SA and PAOC had both established themselves in Maragoli through the Roho groups at Madzuu and Madira respectively, despite the comity agreement. Local *baraza*, dominated by Friends, refused them permission to build churches. The SA went ahead anyway, and appealed to the Attorney-General in Nairobi. Daudi Chole and Elijah Ukilu, of Tsimbalo, left the Friends at this time to join PAOC, thus giving PAOC a further presence in Maragoli.

In January 1933 the Bukoyani group invited all the people of the Spirit to a meeting to pray against the spirit of persecution.⁹⁴ Matia Elanogwa asked the people of Bukoyani to help him build the PAOC church at Madira. They refused, being more interested in spiritual matters. The first months of 1933 they spent in repentance. ‘Then the power came from heaven and poured, and prophecy started where one man began removing [*kutuliza*, revealing] the hidden sins of the people....heavy confessions and repentance kept us in the house all through the whole year of 1933.’⁹⁵ It was during this year that particular teachings of the Roho churches began to be revealed and practised. At Nyang’ori, Keller reported some refusing to shake hands.⁹⁶ At Bukoyani, one such teaching was abstinence from sex the night before a church meeting.⁹⁷ In April at Bukoyani the gift of prophecy was given.⁹⁸ Jacob Buluku, Daniel Sande, and Japheth Zare considered that they did not need the further help of missionaries. This spirit of independence led to the *avakoyani* (people of Bukoyani) withdrawing from Elanogwa’s PAOC group in the third quarter of 1933.⁹⁹ According to Elanogwa, at the end of 1933 the *avakoyani* received a teaching that white people were animals; also that they had no need of education, because the Holy Spirit would teach their children.¹⁰⁰ A meeting of Roho leaders was then convened at Kedete, near Madzui in South Maragoli, to discuss these divisive issues. Kadulenge of the SA, Elanogwa of the PAOC, and Buluku of the *avakoyani* or *avahuki* (‘the separated ones’

⁹⁴ Kasiera, op. cit., p.455.

⁹⁵ From Kasiera’s interview with Japheth Zare, op. cit., p. 456.

⁹⁶ Keller to Ward, 6.9.33, quoted by Kasiera, op. cit. p. 458.

⁹⁷ From an interview with Elanogwa, who states incorrectly that the *avakoyani* had already begun to worship on Saturday. In fact Sabbath worship was not instituted at Bukoyani until 1940. Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 466, 467.

⁹⁸ Kasiera, op. cit., p. 455.

⁹⁹ Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 456-459.

¹⁰⁰ In an interview with Kasiera, op. cit., p. 465.

– the expression was first used by the Friends) agreed to go their distinct ways, but to return to the fellowship of the Spirit should they not succeed.¹⁰¹

By the end of 1933 the government Annual Report for the District reported that two or three South Maragoli congregations (i.e., those of Bukoyani) ‘have quite got out of hand, have been disowned by the Nyang’ori Mission, and are practising a form of religion of their own.’¹⁰² In North Maragoli the main Roho centre, led by Joseph Chegero, was at Enderi.¹⁰³ The events of these years caused the Friends’ membership to fall from 9408 in 1932 to 7048 in 1934.¹⁰⁴ Meanwhile, Roho meetings for seeking the Spirit continued through these years, and kept the revival powerful.¹⁰⁵

Part Three. First generation Roho churches in Vihiga: The Holy Spirit family

Families and generations

This section attempts two things. It continues the story of Roho Christianity, and provides an overview of the rise and development of Roho churches in Vihiga from 1933 to the present. Secondly, it proposes a classification of these churches. The most natural way to do this is by *families*, that is, by genealogical roots. In the period before the foundation of African Israel Church Nineveh in 1942 as the first Roho ‘denomination’, the relationship between the different groups in the Roho movement

¹⁰¹ On *avahuki*: OI, Eliakimu Keverenge, 1987 (Doc. 91), Lukuvuli. In the more northern Luyia languages, the word used is *avagambuli* or *avakambuli*, ‘Those who publicly confess their sins.’ (Wanakacha, op. cit., p. 103.) On the meeting at Kedete, see Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 476, which is based on an interview with Daudi Bulemi.

¹⁰² KNA DC/NN 1/14, North Kavirondo District AR for 1933.

¹⁰³ Enderi was also called Embaga, to distinguish it from the Friends Church at Enderi. ‘History of the Lyahuka Church’, p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ Kay, ‘The Southern Abaluyia, the Friends African Mission...’, p. 166, quoted by Rasmussen, *Modern African Spirituality*, p. 11. The main beneficiary of the separation from the Friends was the PAOC, which now began to grow rapidly. In September 1934 Keller had 53 churches, by February 1942, 144 churches. Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 487-490.

was indeed very much like that of a loosely-knit extended family. Later, when denominations had been formed with clear legal personalities, and dissident groups ('splinter groups') from these Roho denominations formed themselves in turn into new denominations, they carried with them many of the characteristics of their parent churches. I identify three such 'families' in Vihiga: Holy Spirit, Israel, and Divine. (There are also a few denominations that do not easily fit into these families, or that have not yet created families themselves.) Because these three families emerged in different decades, I also refer to them by generation, in order to underline the connection between the historical context in which they emerged, and the nature of their teaching and faith (their respective founders' visions).¹⁰⁶ In this chapter I concentrate on the narrative history of these families; in later chapters I examine more closely their faith and practice. Denominations are referred to either by their full name (African Israel Church Nineveh) or by a shortened, italicised, form, (*African Israel*); families are referred to by the shortened form without italics.

Persecution and waiting on God

To the first generation Roho churches the Holy Spirit was the Spirit of understanding, who would show Christians who accepted him all that was necessary in the Christian life.¹⁰⁷ Secondly, he gave Christians the power to discern and to reveal spiritual realities hidden to the ordinary person, especially peoples' sins and the plans God had for his church, enabling them to work to cleanse their community from evil. Thirdly,

¹⁰⁵ Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 470, 488; In OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00 (Doc. 12), p. 13, Savatia describes Keller as 'the only white' who followed Jacob Buluku.

¹⁰⁶ Looking outside Vihiga District to Luo Nyanza, at least four such 'families' of AICs immediately suggest themselves - Nomiya, Holy Ghost (Musanda / Ruwe, etc), Legio, and Johera. Further study would no doubt reveal others.

¹⁰⁷ OI, Lukayu, Sande, Mwangale, Nyando, 23.9.99 (Doc. 71), Mahanga

he enabled true repentance and cleansing as a protection from evil. Effectively, therefore, the coming of the Spirit had removed the need for missionaries.

Two things dominate the present-day stories told by the people of the Spirit at Bukoyani about the founding of their church: the beatings the founders received at the hands of the Friends, which give a historical justification for their ‘independency’, and led to the celebration of their founders as martyrs; and the period of two to three years they spent in seclusion and prayer, from which many of the special teachings of the Holy Spirit family flow. Dates given for the years spent in seclusion vary between 1930-1933, and 1933-1935.¹⁰⁸ As noted above, 1933 seems to have been the really significant year. It was during this period, as they reflected on their continuing persecutions and their experience of the Spirit, that they received many new teachings, some of which have already been mentioned. Such teachings will be considered in detail in chapters three and four.

Their isolation did not mean that all preaching stopped, or that attacks from the Friends ceased. Indeed, the Spirit directed the people of the Spirit to meetings of the Friends, where their preaching provoked some of the violence.¹⁰⁹ To this day at Bukoyani people remember the beatings given by individuals at Bukoyani itself and Mbihi in 1933, and at Musingu, Vagina, Muhanda in 1934.¹¹⁰ They did not fight back,

¹⁰⁸ Following Rasmussen’s account, which is based largely on interviews with Japheth Zare, an eye-witness, the period of prayer and isolation started in January 1933 and continued until December 1935 (Rasmussen, *Modern African Spirituality*, pp. 29ff.). In Barasa’s account, and in Anderson’s, this period appears to be placed rather earlier. (Anderson is dependent on Barasa’s material. In ‘Leadership’, p. 10, he says he took his material from Chidwick’s and Barasa’s 1968 & 1969 interviews with Zare and other *Holy Spirit* leaders.) The *History* of Holy Spirit dates the beginning of the three year period to 1930. Kasiera, as already noted, stresses 1933 as the really significant year.

¹⁰⁹ Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹¹⁰ ‘History ya Holy Spirit Church’. Anderson, ‘History’, gives different dates for these events. He places the first beating at Vagina in July 1932, when Daniel Sande was particularly seriously injured, followed by an evangelistic trip to Musingu, where they were beaten again. On their return to Vihiga in

but retreated to their homes to nurse their wounds.¹¹¹ By 1935 the fighting had begun to die down, and members of the church began to increase. But three people had suffered injuries from which they later died – Daniel Sande (died 2nd November 1936), Elijah Kerera, and Jacob Buluku (died 13th March 1938). A woman, Leba Akimbi, suffered permanent injury after being squeezed in a door.¹¹² In North Maragoli, the Roho Christians also experienced persecution and sought isolation.¹¹³ After attacks from the Friends ceased about 1936, in this area it was the colonial administration under Chief Odanya that began to harass the people of the Spirit, who were periodically arrested and imprisoned. Such arrests continued into the 1940s.¹¹⁴ (There was some justification for such arrests. In 1938, a group of Roho Christians in North Maragoli attacked a SA missionary, Adlam, during worship.)¹¹⁵ Some years later, members of African Church of the Holy Spirit in Kabras suffered persecution from the administration between 1948 and 1956, when they were suspected of being in alliance with the banned Dini ya Msambwa (see below, chapter five).¹¹⁶

These events have entered into the faith and liturgical year of the churches. At Bukoyani, the violent attacks by the Friends upon the unresisting faithful and their resulting deaths are remembered every year during the memorial celebrations (*makumbusho*, Swahili) of their founders.¹¹⁷ In Kabras, the persecution was made into

January 1933, they decided to remain in prayer in their homes. (This is the ‘three years of prayer’ mentioned in my account, which most writers place earlier.) Then in December 1934 came the beating at Vihiga, at the Monthly Meeting of the Friends. It was from this beating that Daniel Sande received the injuries from which he later died.

¹¹¹ OI, S. Ambihira, 7.3.00 (Doc. 14), Bukoyani.

¹¹² ‘Histori ya Holy Spirit Church’.

¹¹³ Rasmussen, *Modern African Spirituality*, p. 29.

¹¹⁴ ‘History of the Lyahuka Church’, p. 3; Rasmussen, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

¹¹⁵ KNA AR 1330 (DC/NN 1/20 N. Kav. AR 1938); KNA IR 67 (N.Kav. IR for Dec. 1938).

¹¹⁶ Wanakacha, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

¹¹⁷ One third of the ‘Histori’, which is read during the commemorations, is a detailed account of who was beaten, when, where and by whom. It also seems that a requirement for appointment to the leadership of *Holy Spirit* until the 1970s was that someone should have endured and stood firm during the persecution. Barasa, ‘History of Holy Spirit Church,’ p. 12

a song.¹¹⁸ These traditions give to the Roho churches of the first generation a radical strength which is elsewhere found only in the churches of their Luo neighbours – *Roho Musanda* and *Roho Ruwe* – and for the same reason.

The Luo connection

Three days after the burial of Daniel Sande at Muhanda in 1936, the mourners were surprised to see a group arriving dressed in white *kanzu* with a red cross. These were members of Alfayo Odongo Mango's church from Musanda, the faithful remnants of a massacre that had occurred in 1934 at Musanda in which nine people, men, women, and children, were killed, including their two leaders, Odongo himself and Lawi Obonyo, who had first taught Odongo about the Spirit.¹¹⁹ In 1933, Odongo, an Anglican deacon, had defied the Anglican authorities on issues of land, prophecy and the gifts of the Spirit, and had formed his own religious community at Musanda. Their Wanga neighbours resented what they saw as Luo claims on 'their' land. In January 1934 the followers of Odongo began to assert their authority, elected a 'king', and on 16th January raised a flag. These events precipitated an attack upon the Roho people on 20th January, during which the killings took place. At the grave of another martyr, Daniel Sande, the visitors from Musanda were warmly welcomed. Thereafter the *avakoyani* adopted the Musanda custom of sewing crosses on their robes.¹²⁰

The first return visit from Bukoyani to Musanda was led by Buluku and Japheth Zare in January 1937. From there they visited Ruwe, Ugenya, Alego, and Uyoma Naya. Crossing a river in Sakwa, their luggage was swept away, and they were nearly

¹¹⁸ *Omusalapa kwa Yesu*, 'The Cross of Jesus'. Wanakacha, op. cit., p. 111.

¹¹⁹ For an exhaustive analysis of these events, the various interpretations given them by interested parties, and the subsequent construction of the church tradition, see Hoehler-Fatton, *Women of Fire and Spirit*; also Ogot, 'Reverend Alfayo Odongo Mango.'

drowned. On their return to Ruwe, Barnaba Waluoho made Jacob a robe to replace the one he had lost. Buluku then declared that it was the people from Musanda who should bury him. In October 1937 Buluku appears to have obtained assistance from Musanda for a school at Bukoyani.¹²¹ The following year when Buluku died, Isaiah Goro of Musanda was called for the funeral but had just lost a child. He buried the child quickly and hastened to Bukoyani to participate in Buluku's funeral.¹²²

It was not simply the Bukoyani group who were affected by the events at Musanda. The story of the massacre had spread rapidly over western Kenya, frightening some and emboldening others.¹²³ An administration report of 1938 mentioned the group at Lukuvuli in North Maragoli, led by Joseph Chegero and Julius Mungasia, 'who style themselves as followers of the Rev. Alphayo of Masanda fame' [sic].¹²⁴

Buluku's successor, Japheth Zare, worked hard to build up relationships with the Luo.¹²⁵ Zare learnt the Luo language; he travelled with a small team to preach in Nyanza; and his daughter was married to the son of Bishop Andrea Odera of Uyoma Naya. The Musanda people came regularly to Bukoyani for the days of repentance and cleansing that ended each year (27th - 31st December), and in turn they welcomed the Holy Spirit members to Musanda on 20th January every year, the date of the massacre.¹²⁶ The conversion of the Bukoyani people of the Spirit to Sabbatarian worship in 1940 no doubt strengthened this relationship at the same time as it reduced

¹²⁰ OI, J. Sande, 3.5.00 (Doc. 84), Muhanda.

¹²¹ Buluku has set up 'an unauthorised Ja-Roho school, the furniture for which has been provided, I am told, by the Kager [the Luo clan of Odongo]'. KNA IR 66 (N. Kav. Monthly IR for October 1937)

¹²² Anderson, 'History', p. 12; OI, Bishop Daniel Were, 23.1.01 (Doc. 50), Ruwe.

¹²³ OI, Harun Babu, 17.8.86, Tigoi.

¹²⁴ KNA IR 67 (N. Kav. Monthly IR for October 1938).

¹²⁵ Unless otherwise stated, information in this paragraph is from OI, Joseph Zare, 22.9.99 (Doc.127), Bukoyani.

¹²⁶ Leaders' Conference at Bukoyani, 27-30.12.00 (Doc. 5), p. 5.

contact between the Luo and the Roho Christians of North Maragoli, Isukha and Idakho. Indeed, it can be said that from the late thirties until the Holy Spirit Church of East Africa was officially registered in 1957, the two churches of Musanda and Bukoyani worked together as one. During the 1950s, they worshipped together in Nairobi.¹²⁷

The parting of the ways, 1933-1946

The Roho Christians of North Maragoli had met first at Enderi, under the leadership of Joseph Chegero, Daudi Sagida Ludundu, and his wife, Enis, who had received the Spirit before either of the two men.¹²⁸ Outside Vihiga, there were Roho Christians in Isukha and Idakho, some of whom had been filled with the Spirit while members of the Friends mission at Lirhandu.¹²⁹ Some of these joined Nyang'ori; others remained independent.¹³⁰ The discovery of gold around Kakamega in 1931 affected this more northerly area more directly than it did Vihiga. A large number of European miners rushed to the area, laid out their claims, and started employing Africans to help in the diggings (see below, chapter four). The close association the Friends missionaries made with the miners, and the fear that Africans would lose their lands, have been suggested as a possible reason for the growth of Roho Christianity in this area from 1932.¹³¹

¹²⁷ OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00, (Doc. 12), Nairobi, pp. 14-23

¹²⁸ Rasmussen, *Modern African Spirituality*, p. 20.

¹²⁹ Wanakacha, op. cit., pp. 106-108.

¹³⁰ Significant leaders in this area were Samson Libeya in Isukha and Julius Mung'asia in Idakho. Rasmussen, op. cit., p. 35.

¹³¹ Rasmussen, op. cit., p. 25, quoting Lonsdale's statement to this effect, *A Political History of Nyanza*, p. 309. The argument is appealing but the direct connections have yet to be established. A more fruitful approach might be to trace the effects of the sudden arrival of mining enterprise on Luyia society, and the way in which the Roho faith expressed a symbolic rejection of the new values. This is the approach I use below for the more southerly Roho communities of Vihiga.

In North Maragoli, Eliakimu Keverenge had been imprisoned in 1936 for erecting a church building illegally. In 1939, he had erected another building and been forced to pull it down.¹³² In an attempt to establish who might be held responsible for exercising more ‘discipline’ over the whole movement, the District Commissioner called a meeting of its leaders. The Roho Christians went with some trepidation, expecting the administration to act against them. Asked who was the overall leader, nobody could agree, each area claiming the right for its own.¹³³

In fact, the movement in Vihiga was already about to split. In Bukoyani, back in 1933, they had received a message from the Spirit that they should worship on Saturday, not Sunday. Such a change was not to be undertaken lightly, and awaited further confirmation from the Spirit.¹³⁴ Then, in 1940 (as the ‘Histori’ records):

On 5th January, there was a prophecy about the Sabbath. People were scared, many were terribly scared but the Holy Spirit came with power and Yahuga said, ‘God is saying that his Sabbath should be kept.’ They started to keep the Sabbath. On Sundays, they started working in the land of Joel Midikira at Mbihi on 6th January, 1940. The following Sunday all went to work in the land of Japheth Zare. *[translated from Lulogooli]*

As an indication of how seriously this decision was taken, the next two entries in the ‘Histori’, for 1945 and 1946, record the deaths of two individuals who came to Bukoyani to dispute about the Sabbath, and who died shortly afterwards. It was this Sabbath revelation that brought about the division between the *watu wa Roho* in the north and those in the south. In North Maragoli, Isukha and Idakho, the new

¹³² Rasmussen, op. cit., p. 35.

¹³³ Rasmussen, op. cit., p. 36.

¹³⁴ According to Kasiera, op. cit., p. 468, the proposal to change to the Sabbath had been discussed at the meeting at Kedete in 1933. In an interview with Kasiera, Japheth Zare commented, ‘That day was prophesied while in the praying meeting in 1933, but we did not institute it... until Jan. 6, 1940. When we read in the Scriptures, we saw that Sabbaths were on Saturday, and Sunday was the first day of the week.’

revelation was rejected. As well as religious reasons for this, longstanding tensions between North and South Maragoli may have been significant.¹³⁵

Roho churches in the north

African Church of the Holy Spirit

When in 1946 the colonial administration asked the northern group again to find a leader who would be held responsible for their activities, they chose Solomon Ahindukha from Isukha, and Shem Ajega from North Maragoli as his assistant.¹³⁶ Ahindukha, who died in 1952, was never more than a spokesman. It was his successor, Kefa Ayub Mavuru, who was to become a strong leader.¹³⁷ Mavuru was the son of a chief, relatively well-educated, with a charismatic personality and possessing the gift of prophecy. These were difficult years for the Roho churches in Western Kenya, as from 1949 they were associated in the minds of some colonial officials with Dini ya Msambwa, and from 1952 with the possibility that they might become linked with Mau-Mau. (See below, chapter five.) In 1955 when Mavuru planned to travel to Kisii to open a new church there, he was called by a Special Branch officer, and given a rubber stamp in the name of ‘African Church of Holy Spirit’ (sic), with his new title ‘High Priest’.¹³⁸ Although never consulted, the northern *watu wa Roho* accepted the name and title. The gesture of the Special Branch officer stemmed from the government’s decision to register all churches under the Societies Ordinance of 1952, but it clearly gave Mavuru some official status. In 1957,

¹³⁵ Wagner, *The Bantu of Western Kenya*, p. 59, notes that the dispute between the people of the two locations is dated in Maragoli tradition to a disagreement between two sons of Mulogooli (the eponymous founder of the Maragoli), which resulted in one brother killing the other. Later there was a war between northern and southern clans in which the North allied with their neighbours, the Idakho. Until the European arrival, people from North and South were not intermarrying. See also Rasmussen, op. cit., p. 50.

¹³⁶ Rasmussen, op. cit., pp. 38-9.

¹³⁷ Unless otherwise stated, this paragraph is taken from Rasmussen, op. cit., pp. 45-49.

¹³⁸ The title may have been borrowed from Kivuli’s in African Israel Church Nineveh.

African Church of the Holy Spirit (*African Holy Spirit*) was registered by the government with its own constitution, and its HQ based at Lugala in Isukha, the home of Mavuru.¹³⁹

In due course the congregations in North Maragoli were formed into a quarterly meeting under Eliakimu Keverenge, and other quarterly meetings were established in South Maragoli, and further to the north in Kabras, where the denomination began to grow strongly, especially around Tumbeni.¹⁴⁰ (It was at Tumbeni that there were special outpourings of the Holy Spirit in 1971 and 1972. It is also from here that the present High Priest, Timoteo Shitsimi, comes.)¹⁴¹ Under the leadership of Mavuru, the church moved steadily to establish ecumenical relations. *African Holy Spirit* had become a member of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) by 1969,¹⁴² and was accepted into the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1976. In 1988 the church's Annual Returns to the Registrar of Societies in Nairobi gave a total membership of 22,000.¹⁴³ (In general, membership figures given below should be considered indicative of relative denominational size rather than accurate statistics.)

Gospel Holy Spirit Church of East Africa

In North Maragoli, Shem Ajega did not long survive his appointment as assistant to Ahindukha.¹⁴⁴ At the time of the selection of Mavuru, the church members in North Maragoli were unable to agree on a possible candidate for the post. Not only were

¹³⁹ Date of registration, 22.1.57.

¹⁴⁰ See Wanakacha, op. cit., pp. 108-117, for the early history of *African Holy Spirit* in Kabras.

¹⁴¹ Wanakacha, op. cit., pp. 113-4.

¹⁴² Rasmussen gives the date 1960, but this is too early (op. cit., p. 48). At that date the issue of the admission of AICs to ecumenical councils was too sensitive for anything other than exploratory discussions, and General Secretary Fueter was still urging the admission of AICs to the council upon its reluctant members. (CCK Reports for 1960, 1961.) See below, chapter five, p. 258 & f.n. 140.

¹⁴³ Wanakacha, op. cit., p. 108. Such returns are certainly not generally reliable for membership statistics, but in this case the return is not far from Rasmussen's calculation (op. cit. p. 48).

there tensions between Eliakimu Keverenge (leader of the North Maragoli quarterly meeting from 1958) and the church in Isukha and Idakho, but also between those members associated with the historic Roho centre for North Maragoli at Enderi, and the rest of the denomination. The quarterly meeting had been moved from Enderi to Ikuvu (near Keverenge's home) in 1946 with the result that membership at Enderi fell into decline, especially after the death of Daudi Sagida in 1958. But his widow, Enis, who had been the first in that area to receive the Spirit back in 1927, was determined to regain Enderi's original leadership position in North Maragoli. Her son, Elphas Sagida, therefore registered a new denomination, Gospel Holy Spirit Church of East Africa, on 18th April 1964.¹⁴⁵

This denomination (*Gospel*) has remained small. Rasmussen estimated its membership as low as 50 adult members, but this clearly excludes the congregations that are found in the settlement scheme at Lugari, to where Elphas Sagida migrated. My own estimate would be about 150-200 members.¹⁴⁶ After Elphas Sagida's death in 1997, the Assistant Archbishop, Elijah Joji, from Wamuluma in South Maragoli, was made Archbishop.

¹⁴⁴ Information in this paragraph is from Rasmussen, op. cit., pp. 51-57, unless otherwise stated.

¹⁴⁵ In Lulogooli, the name is *Evangelii ya Roho Mtakatifu*, or 'The Good News of the Holy Spirit'. (Rasmussen, op. cit., p. 56).

¹⁴⁶ Joji and I visited two Luo Roho leaders, one near the border with Tanzania in South Nyanza, and one from near Aluor, in Gem, who wanted to be affiliated with *Gospel*. In the first case, the leader had seven wives – which is not acceptable to Vihiga Roho churches. In the second case, the leader's wife had died. During the process of negotiation, the Holy Spirit 'chose' for him a wife during a service he was attending in a *Zion* church in Isukha. This procedure might have been acceptable in the 1930s in Vihiga (within the context of the worshipping community itself), but in the 1990s the *Zion* congregation drove him away. Neither attempts at affiliation succeeded.

Lyahuka Church of East Africa

In 1970 Mavuru created 'areas' to group together a number of quarterly meetings.¹⁴⁷ The Vihiga 'area' included the quarterly meetings in both North and South Maragoli, and other congregations in Tiriki and Bunyore. The leadership was given not to Keverenge but to Harun Kereda, a younger man.¹⁴⁸ This was intolerable to Keverenge, and he moved towards establishing his own denomination.¹⁴⁹ A member of *African Holy Spirit* from North Maragoli, Daniel Mung'ore, had registered a denomination in Nairobi in 1962 called 'Church of Quakers in Africa'. Despite a change of name to the more appealing 'African Church of Red Cross' in 1963, the denomination remained very small. In 1970 Keverenge approached Mung'ore, who agreed to let him use the registration of his church. The name was changed to 'Lyahuka Church of East Africa' (*Lyahuka*), and the HQ to Ikuvu.¹⁵⁰ Keverenge became bishop and Mung'ore assistant bishop. The church began to expand, often through the accession of other congregations dissatisfied with their own church.¹⁵¹ In 1973 some members joined *Lyahuka* from the South Nyanza branch of Wokofu Church of Africa, a Roho breakaway from the Salvation Army, after Wokofu's registration was cancelled.¹⁵² Subsequently, *Lyahuka* has expanded into Tiriki, Nandi, Kabras, Wanga, Lugari, Kitale, Moi's Bridge, Nairobi and Western Uganda

¹⁴⁷ Unless otherwise stated, information in this paragraph is drawn from Rasmussen, op. cit., pp. 57-61.

¹⁴⁸ Kereda is currently (2003) the leader in one of the two factions in a long-running leadership dispute in *African Holy Spirit*.

¹⁴⁹ This interpretation is Rasmussen's. Manoah Lumwagi Keverenge, son of Eliakimu, and Archbishop of the church from 1989 to 2002, attributes the division to the modernizing stance of Eliakimu's group vis-à-vis Mavuru's. While Lumwagi's own vision is certainly 'modernizing' (see below, chapter six), it seems unlikely that this was true of most of Eliakimu's group in the 1970s. (Lumwagi, 'The Separated Ones', p. 7.)

¹⁵⁰ Church of Quakers in Africa was registered 1.11.62; change of name to African Church of Red Cross, 3.12.63; change of name to Lyahuka Church of East Africa, 17.12.71. (Registrar of Societies)

¹⁵¹ This is a very common form of denominational growth and decline. It is extremely difficult to control, because most church buildings are semi-permanent structures built in their owner's own land. Present-day church authorities struggle to get these church plots registered in the name of the church, in order to reduce the loss of congregations to another denomination.

(Kigumba, Nyama, Hoima) – where a personal intervention by Eliakimu in 1973 against Idi Amin’s banning of the church won permission for the group to continue to worship.¹⁵³ A present estimate of church membership is 6000.¹⁵⁴ Archbishop Eliakimu Kevengere – nicknamed by his Roho contemporaries ‘Lugaka’ (a bird of prey known for catching chickens) - died on 17th May 1988,¹⁵⁵ and after one year’s mourning the church elected his son Manoah Lumwagi Keverenge as the new Archbishop. The modernizing role of Manoah, and the reaction against him, are considered in chapter six.

Roho churches with origins in South Maragoli

Holy Spirit Church of East Africa

On his death-bed in 1938, Buluku appointed two people to succeed him.¹⁵⁶ His choice of the young man Japheth Zare at the age of 29 for the leadership seems to have been inspired. Isaiah Maleya, the obvious choice for the senior post, who was Buluku’s own clansman, and much older and quieter, was made priest, *musalisi*.¹⁵⁷ Buluku had been badly beaten by his own clansmen, the *avamari*, the dominant clan in the area. In choosing Zare, then, who was from the junior clan of *avakoyani avasali* originating in North Maragoli, he may have sought to remove a major cause of persecution.¹⁵⁸ He certainly asserted the principle that the church was not owned by one clan. More

¹⁵² Wokofu [sic] African Church was registered on 11.11.66, with its HQs at Turbo; and cancelled on 26.3.73. (*Wokovu* means ‘Salvation’ in Swahili.) See KCH; TMK Mosii, ‘The Salvation Army in Kenya’; Std. 18.8.69; Lumwagi, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁵³ Lumwagi, op. cit., p. 8; ‘Hestoria (sic) yake Marehemu Archbishop Eliakimu Keverenge’ (the funeral ‘history’).

¹⁵⁴ PC, Manoah Keverenge, 4.2.03. Unless this estimate is taken as including everyone within the church ‘family’ – occasional worshippers and family members – I believe it is too high.

¹⁵⁵ ‘Hestoria ya Marehemu Eliakimu Keverenge’.

¹⁵⁶ See below, Appendix 5.6.2, for a description of this ceremony.

¹⁵⁷ Obede, ‘History’, p. 14.

¹⁵⁸ This is W.B. Anderson’s interpretation (op. cit., p. 7).

importantly, he chose for it a dynamic leader, one whose role was to be closer to that of the traditional clan elder than a prophet.

Zare, who was the first headmaster of the school in Bukoyani, worked to regularize relations with the government, visiting Kakamega or Vihiga many times to answer questions concerning the church's activities, especially concerning health issues, since the Holy Spirit had forbidden the use of drugs.¹⁵⁹ He fostered good relations with Chief Agoi, of South Maragoli. He introduced titles such as Bishop, Reverend, and Pastor to the church (previously the leaders were simply known as *mitume*, 'apostles'). He also worked to rebuild relationships with the Friends, so that leaders of the two denominations would be invited to speak briefly when attending each other's meetings (especially funerals).¹⁶⁰ The same openness and respect was extended to PAOC at Nyangori, and Major Adlam of the Salvation Army in Kisumu. (These two missions continued to supervise the two Roho congregations at Madira and Madzuu in South Maragoli.) During Zare's time, the church became a member of OAIC and played a leading role in KUIC.

Japheth Zare died on 10th October 1987 after a lifetime of dedicated service, and has been accorded the honour by *Holy Spirit* of an official annual commemoration on the day of his death. The changes he helped bring about in enabling *Holy Spirit* adjust to the modern world are considered in chapter six. Japheth Zare was replaced as Archbishop by the then church's General Secretary, Christopher Ondolo. Ondolo in turn retired in 2000 (retirement is unusual in Roho churches, but he had become blind

¹⁵⁹ Information in this paragraph, unless otherwise stated, is taken from OI, Joseph Zare, 22.9.99 (Doc. 127).

¹⁶⁰ This is a very highly regarded mark of respect in Vihiga. I have heard many contemporary Roho leaders complain bitterly about the way PAG pastors deny them this basic courtesy.

and physically weak), leaving the leadership of the church to Joel Sande, son of Daniel Sande. (In chapter six I discuss how these leadership changes were brought about.) At the present time, I estimate the membership of *Holy Spirit* at a little under 10,000, with congregations in Vihiga, Kakamega, Nandi, Eldoret, Kisumu, Siaya, South Nyanza, Nakuru, Nairobi, Kiambu, and Murang'a.¹⁶¹

Cross Church of East Africa

One of the early converts to the people of the Spirit at Bukoyani was Shadrack Mwiroti, who was healed from a form of mental disturbance when Jacob Buluku laid hands upon him.¹⁶² He later built a small church at his home at Makhokho, Isukha, on the Kisumu – Kakamega road. He died in 1957, and was succeeded by his son, Ezekiel Lichembe Mwiroti, a successful businessman, who led a faction which separated from Bukoyani. Ezekiel Mwiroti succeeded in obtaining the certificate of a Luo church based in Kabondo, Cross Church, Ong'ongo, changing the registered name to Cross Church of East Africa, Makhokho HQ in 1981.¹⁶³ The new church has itself suffered from a separation in Munoywa, North Maragoli (Sabatia) under the name African Cross Church, currently very small.

Connections with Central Kenya

In the course of their employment Roho Christians from Vihiga came into contact with other labour migrants from Central Kenya. Kikuyu Christians were already visiting Bukoyani from 1945, when a certain Karioki came to challenge the church

¹⁶¹ PC, A. Obede, 2.2.03. Obede calculates there are 121 congregations. A minimum membership figure would be $121 \times 50 = 6050$ members; an estimate at the higher end would give double that.

¹⁶² For Shadrack Mwiroti, see Barasa, 'History'.

¹⁶³ Original registration of Cross Church, Ong'ong'o on 21.5.70; change of name to Cross Church of East Africa, Makhokho HQ, on 20.3.81. (Registrar of Societies.) The church was originally led by Archbishop Philip Oketch. (KCH).

over the Sabbath and died before returning home.¹⁶⁴ Contacts with Kiambu (Banana Hill) began in 1947, and the first preaching mission from Bukoyani under Japheth Zare visited the following year.¹⁶⁵ A church was planted under Philip Kahiga, who then opened churches in Kabete, Githiga, Jakana and Limuru.¹⁶⁶ *Holy Spirit* also has a branch in Murang'a. Other connections with Central Kenya came about because during the years of Emergency from 1952 – 1960 the western Kenya Spiritual churches were regarded by the colonial authorities as less 'subversive' than those in Central Kenya, and were allowed to continue to worship. In this way, a prophetic group from Meru, whose origin lay in their rejection in 1929 of a Church of Scotland policy banning female circumcision, were led by the Spirit to Kakamega in 1961 and requested registration under *African Holy Spirit*.¹⁶⁷ As a result, the latter denomination now has a strong following in Meru.

Part Four. Roho churches of the second generation: African Israel Church Nineveh and its daughter churches

Zakayo Kivuli

I consider next the origins and brief history of perhaps the most famous of the Roho churches of Vihiga, African Israel Church Nineveh (*African Israel*). Its fame is due in part to the role it plays in Welbourn and Ogot's 1966 work on Kenyan independency, *A Place to Feel at Home*; but in part also to the extraordinary charisma of Kivuli, the church's founder, and to his ability to combine a deep Roho spirituality with a practical concern for grassroots development and considerable political wisdom.

¹⁶⁴ Holy Spirit Church 'Histori', for 1945.

¹⁶⁵ Holy Spirit Church 'Histori', for 1948; OI, J. Zare, 22.9.99 (Doc. 127), Bukoyani.

¹⁶⁶ W.B. Anderson, 'History', p. 13.

¹⁶⁷ Ndege, 'Historical Background of the African Church of Holy Spirit in Meru.'

Daudi Zakayo Kivuli was born near Tiengere, between Tigoi and Jebrok, in 1896. In 1918, at the age of 24 he attended school at Nyang'ori Mission, but left for a short time to work as a farm labourer and then overseer in order to help his widowed mother.¹⁶⁸ In 1921 he married Rebecca Jumba. He returned to school in 1925. His school work pleased Keller, and in 1927 he was sent to Jeanes School, Kabete, for training as a school supervisor. (See chapter four, pp. 176-179 for a description of the practical and development-oriented training he would have received.) On his return from Kabete he was appointed school supervisor at Nyang'ori, returning to Kabete briefly in 1931. In 1932 he received the Holy Spirit in the house of Abraham Aseri, near Jebrok.¹⁶⁹ Tradition says that he was blind for two weeks, until answering God's call, his eyes were opened, and he declared he wanted to be known forthwith as 'Paul'.¹⁷⁰ He relinquished his school supervisory duties and was made a preacher.

It was now (in the words of the *African Israel* song) that 'the house of Zakayo became a pool of water', a place of blessings for many.¹⁷¹ In turning his house into a place for prayer and healing Kivuli was following the custom of the time. From 1937-43 he served on the Local Native Council as representative for Nyang'ori.¹⁷² He now began to become an object of envy among some of his fellow pastors. At the Mission, Keller proposed to elect a pastor who would have responsibility over all other African pastors. This led to an election on 13th August 1940, in which Kivuli won a substantial

¹⁶⁸ Unless otherwise stated information in this paragraph is from 'Historia ya Marehemu MPD Kivuli I', a short history written by Kivuli's grandson, John M. Kivuli II, and published in 1987 by African Israel Church Nineveh for the annual commemoration of Kivuli's death.

¹⁶⁹ Kasiera, op. cit., p. 533.

¹⁷⁰ See Welbourn & Ogot, op. cit., p. 77, for the full account from Kivuli himself.

¹⁷¹ Kasiera, op. cit., p. 535. The song is '*Inyumba ya Zakayo eveye lidavalia.*'

¹⁷² 'Historia ya Marehemu'; Welbourn & Ogot, op. cit., p. 78.

majority of votes.¹⁷³ Pastor Zakaria Oyiengo, Kivuli's elder brother (but of a junior mother), now opposed Kivuli bitterly, the mission became polarized, and Keller allowed the election to lapse. The events that followed are now disputed. Whatever the precise sequence of events, it is clear Kivuli disliked the bitter church politics and wanted to concentrate on the preaching of repentance.¹⁷⁴ He therefore withdrew to his own home at Nineveh, and began worshipping there with permission from Keller.¹⁷⁵ *African Israel* authorities date the separation from PAOC on 1st January 1942, and Keller's granting of 'permission' to Kivuli to 3rd February 1942.¹⁷⁶ In fact Kivuli's withdrawal solved the problem for the mission of reconciling those who followed Roho practices and faith with those who did not.¹⁷⁷ Kivuli immediately appointed himself as high priest, with two assistants, Matia Muzibwanyi and Zedekia Musungu.¹⁷⁸ The separation was accepted by the colonial administration with little difficulty. The first name of the church was Huru Salvation Africa (*Huru* means free in Swahili), shortly to be changed to African Israel Church Nineveh (abbreviated here as *African Israel*).¹⁷⁹

From its beginning the church was multi-ethnic. Kivuli was himself from a clan originally from Ugenya, and he spoke Luo. Moreover, he had been circumcised according to the traditional rites of the Terik (Nyang'ori), and he was widely accepted

¹⁷³ 'Historia ya Marehemu,' which states that Kivuli gained 16 votes, Isaya Mugunda 8 Votes, Philip Kitoto 4 votes, and Saulo Chabuga (later of African Divine Church) one vote. The date given in this account for the election is incorrect.

¹⁷⁴ OI, P. Orwa, 28.8.86, Ramba.

¹⁷⁵ For an analysis of the events around Kivuli's separation, see Welbourn & Ogot, op. cit., p. 79-81; Kudoyi, 'African Israel Nineveh Church', pp. 52-57.

¹⁷⁶ 'Historia ya Marehemu'. On 26.1.42, the Chief of Tiriki announced publicly Kivuli's separation from the mission with Keller's consent. (Welbourn & Ogot, op. cit., p. 81). A few months after this, Keller died.

¹⁷⁷ Kudoyi, op. cit., p. 59.

¹⁷⁸ 'Historia ya Marehemu' For the meaning of 'priest' in the traditional context see below, chapter four, p. 209, & f.n. 158.

¹⁷⁹ Welbourn & Ogot, op. cit., p. 82.

in the mixed community of Tiriki and Nyang'ori. An early convert, significant in the church's future history, was the Luo Philemona Orwa, from Nyahera, originally a member of CMS. In 1940 Orwa had been healed from 'insanity' (which he himself interpreted as the call of God) through the prayers of Kivuli and others. Returning home from Nineveh, he was driven away by the Anglicans at Nyahera because he refused to keep quiet in church. He then founded his own church, which Kivuli began to visit and encourage.¹⁸⁰

African Israel grew steadily under Kivuli's strong paternal leadership. By 1967 it had a total membership (including children) of 26,777, with branches in Vihiga, Kisumu, South Nyanza, Nairobi, Kakamega, Nakuru, Kitale, Eldoret, Mombasa, Nandi, Kipsigis, Molo, and Londiani in Kenya; Kigumba, Jinja, and Kampala in Uganda; and in Tanzania (probably North Mara).¹⁸¹ Following the teaching he had received at Jeanes School, Kivuli became committed to small-scale practical improvements based on local needs and traditions. He dug the first fish-ponds in the area, kept grade (European) cattle, built the church at Nineveh called *Safina* (the Ark), and later established primary schools at Nineveh, Saride, Kapsaoi (both near Nineveh) and Pergamo-Obede.¹⁸² There was for him no contradiction between the life of the Spirit and practical progress. He kept meticulous church records. Significantly for this thesis however, his bureaucratic efficiency did not extend to the separation of the church accounts from his own.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ OI, P. Orwa, 27.8.86, Ramba. Orwa said that he had only heard of Alfayo Odongo, and the Holy Spirit movement coming from the Friends, and had had no contact with them. See also Welbourn & Ogot, op. cit., p. 79.

¹⁸¹ AICN, 'Reference Hesabu ya WaIsraeli 1967,' 25.12.67.

¹⁸² 'Historia ya Marehemu'.

¹⁸³ Welbourn & Ogot, op. cit., p. 89.

The question of succession

Kivuli died on 10th November 1974. He had hoped that his son, Moses Aluse, who had been trained at St Paul's Theological College, Limuru, would take over.

Unfortunately Aluse had become mentally disturbed. Kivuli had therefore appointed a council of seven elders to decide who should lead the church after his death, with preference being given to someone from his family.¹⁸⁴ The precise authority given to this council became the subject of fierce debate. Orwa, who at that time was Chairman and assistant to Kivuli, claimed that he had been appointed by Kivuli and the church council to take over as High Priest to teach and train whomever the council should choose from the family. The Luyia leaders sat after the death and agreed that an uncircumcised Luo could not become High Priest, and that Harun Mudegu from Banja, who was not from Kivuli's clan, should take over. This decision was announced before the assembled members on Christmas Day. Orwa refused to accept Mudegu as High Priest. A committee was set up, attended by the Assistant Chief, but without reaching a conclusion. The Luyia committee later made Mudegu Chairman without consulting the church council, with Henry Ajega as General Secretary, and Daniel Oguso (a Luo) as Treasurer. This was a young, educated team. Against the wish of the Luyia, Kivuli's widow, Mama Rebecca, was appointed High Priest by the church council, which was still chaired by Orwa.¹⁸⁵ However, to placate the Luyia, Mama Rebecca was installed in her post by the Luyia priest, Ainea Babu, with the blessing conducted by Zedekiah Musungu.

¹⁸⁴ OI, P. Orwa, 27.8.86, Ramba; OI, H.Ajega, 29.8.86, Zululu. The account that follows is from Orwa, unless otherwise indicated.

¹⁸⁵ The question was one of Luyia tradition: how could a woman bless men?

Kivuli's grandson, John Mweresa Kivuli (son of Aluse), who had been born in 1960, went in 1982 to Mindolo, Zambia, for training in youth work.¹⁸⁶ On his return, while attending the 2nd OAIC General Assembly in Nairobi in November 1982, he wrote letters in the name of the High Priest to summon a meeting to discuss leadership in the church (since Mama Rebecca was now old). Orwa supported the young Kivuli in this step, hoping to receive from him the recognition he believed he had been denied.¹⁸⁷ At this meeting (the constitutionality of which is disputed by Kivuli's rivals), it was agreed that Mama Rebecca should retire, and Kivuli II should be made High Priest. The consecration took place on 20th March 1983.

Kivuli II slowly worked to establish his authority in the church, building up a strong bureaucracy, and making various changes to the church constitution. In 1987 the church was restructured around 'Centres', and then in 1989 around 'Regions', which were the equivalent of government Districts, so as to facilitate relationships with the government in its District Focus for Rural Development.¹⁸⁸ In 1989, Kivuli became Bishop rather than High Priest (for theological reasons).¹⁸⁹ The two roles of High Priest and Chairman (which had separated spiritual from executive authority) were now combined in the new post. In 1991 Kivuli was consecrated as Archbishop.¹⁹⁰ (See chapter six for more on Kivuli II's leadership.) I estimate the current membership of the church (in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania) as 178,800.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁶ J. Kivuli, 'The Modernization of an AIC', p. 59.

¹⁸⁷ OI, H. Ajega, 29.8.86, Zululu.

¹⁸⁸ Kudoyi, 'African Israel Nineveh Church', p.

¹⁸⁹ He told me that during his studies at Pan African Christian College in Nairobi the other students had challenged him about the status of High Priest, according to Heb. 7: 16.

¹⁹⁰ See J. Kivuli, 'The Modernization of an AIC', p. 60, which describes his struggles to change the church up to 1994.

¹⁹¹ This is based on a church structure of 125 regions, and 447 centres. In each centre there are about 8 local churches, assemblies or pastorates. Thus, using a rough calculation of 50 members per local church (which is generous), $447 \times 50 \times 8 = 178,800$

Israel Church of Africa

The underlying tensions between Orwa's group of Luo and the *African Israel* HQ at Nineveh continued. In 1979 Orwa had succeeded in obtaining a separate registration for a 'Nyanza Diocese,' for which there was no provision in the original constitution, and which limited the role of the High Priest within the Diocese.¹⁹² The struggle to gain real independence from Nineveh continued during the next decade, principally through constitutional means, with the Diocese aided by the advocate S.M. Otieno. In 1987, the leadership at Nineveh succeeded in getting the registration of Nyanza Diocese cancelled, only for Orwa's group to win their own registration as Israel Church of Africa on 15th September 1989, with the help of the then foreign minister Robert Ouko.¹⁹³ Israel Church of Africa has its headquarters at Pergamo – Obede, Orwa's home in Nyahera, and the main church is at Ramba - Philadelphia, near Kisumu. However, the progress of the new church has not been smooth, with a continued struggle over leadership and rivalry between Pergamo and Philadelphia. Orwa died on 18th April 1995.¹⁹⁴

Other Israel Churches

Other *African Israel* communities have sought to localize their leadership (and prevent the transfer of funds away from their own control). One such early attempt

¹⁹² PC, D. Oguso, 14.8.86, Kisumu. The registration was in the name of 'African Israel Church Nyanza Province Diocese', No. 9986, of 21.9.79. The registration used the constitution of the HQ church, with amendments concerning the appointment of leaders (which now became effectively the responsibility of the Diocese), and the raising of funds (45% of which was to go to the Diocese and only 10% to the HQ). On a strictly legal basis, it should not have been possible for such a constitution to have been registered without the consent of the HQs. But a frequent complaint heard at meetings of AIC leaders is the corruption and venality of the office of the Registrar of Societies, which (as a government department) is also subject to political influence. The possibility that 'branches' of denominations with their own registration can use their relative autonomy to build their effective independence has led both Kivuli II and Patron Bishop Chabuga of African Divine Church to cancel the numerous separate branch registrations of their denominations.

¹⁹³ Okong'o, '10 Years: Israel Church of Africa'; PC, J. Kivuli II. S.M. Otieno, who died in 1986, is famous in Kenya for the protracted law dispute that took place after his death concerning where his body should be buried.

was by Samuel Mbugua and Joel Muturi in Naivasha in 1959. This small Kikuyu group eventually obtained its registration in 1969 under the name Israel Assemblies of Kenya.¹⁹⁵ At the present time the church has four dioceses based in Njoro, North Kinangop, Burnt Forest, and Ndeiya.¹⁹⁶

Bunyore has seen two significant separations from the *African Israel* HQ. The first, in 1970, began when a group under J.H. Alubale refused to attend the Christmas Day celebrations at Nineveh (a significant indication of disloyalty). The group remained without a legal umbrella until 1974 when Archbishop Musa Thuo took them under his wing as the Western Kenya branch of his own Akurinu denomination, Kenya Israel Evangelistic Church of East Africa (*Kenya Israel*), based in Mathare Valley, Nairobi.¹⁹⁷ The second, more recent, case occurred in the early 1990s when Moses Amuli Okwemba separated from Nineveh with a large number of Bunyore members under the name Christian Israel Church. The separation had had its origins in the previous decade when Petro Amuli had declared the Bunyore branch of the church independent of Nineveh.¹⁹⁸ *Christian Israel* was later joined by a number of congregations from North Maragoli (Sabatia) and Tiriki, under the former *African Israel* bishops Mugasia and Mudegu. The HQ is at Emmakwenje, near Luanda town.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ Okong'o, '10 Years: Israel Church of Africa'. I have no current statistics for this church.

¹⁹⁵ OAIC Documentation Project on AICs, 1988; Israel Assembly of Kenya, 'Report for 1999'. In 1999 the church claimed 78 congregations with buildings and 14 without, giving a very rough membership estimate as follows: $92 \times 50 = 4600$ members.

¹⁹⁶ OAIC Documentation Project on AICS, 1988.

¹⁹⁷ See KCH for the origin of this church from African Mission of Holy Ghost Church. It was first registered as Kenya Israel Church of East Africa 3.8.72. The Western Kenya Branch obtained its own registration on 14.1.86. Other information from 'Hadithi ya J.H. Alubale'; PC, M. Thuo; Notes from the church's application for membership of KUIC.

¹⁹⁸ Kudoyi, op. cit., p. 81.

¹⁹⁹ Harun Mudegu's affiliation to *Christian Israel* did not last very long. At his death in 2002, he was involved in a rival *African Israel* faction calling itself African Israel Church 'B'. Other less significant 'daughter churches' include God of Israel Zion Church at Kanyamkago in Nyanza, registered in 1973, and Sinai Church of East Africa, from Gemovo, Tiriki, registered in 1965.

Part Five. Roho churches of the third generation: African Divine Church and its daughter churches

African Divine Church

With an estimated membership of 135,000 in 2002,²⁰⁰ African Divine Church (abbreviated here as *Divine*, and very widely known as ADC) is probably the second largest of the Roho churches based in Vihiga. It has a predominantly Luyia membership, and a considerable Luo following (the church HQ borders on Nyanza Province) together with members of other ethnic communities in the towns across Kenya. It has branches in Tanzania and Uganda (Kigumba). In Nairobi, *Divine* followers in their red, white, and green hats and head-scarves are conspicuous in their open-air meetings on Sundays, especially in the shanty-towns of Kibera, Kawangware, and Kangemi. The church is popular with young people. It has a strong commitment in pastoral care and fund-raising for members who die in Nairobi and whose bodies need transporting home for burial. Like *African Israel*, it has a considerable number of ‘daughter churches’, which have separated from the original denomination or from another denomination with a *Divine* ancestry. And yet despite its very significant impact on Roho Christianity, *Divine* has been largely unresearched. This is possibly because its ecumenical contacts have been relatively weak (except for OAIC and KUIC), and because it has sent few students for external theological courses, preferring to train its pastors by itself.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ The church HQ does not keep a list of individual members. This figure is calculated (by myself and the church’s General Secretary, Rev. John Mahero, 4.9.02) as follows: 180 regions x 5 assemblies in each region (on average) x 3 village churches (*vijiji*) on average in each assembly x 50 members (on average) per village church.

²⁰¹ A full account of this very interesting and dynamic church is still to be written. There are a number of college dissertations and other short papers on the church, two of which I draw on here: Embego’s ‘A Study of the Origins and Life of African Divine Church Movement’, which focuses considerably on the leadership disputes in the church c. 1970; and McDowell’s ‘Attached and Bearing Fruit’, which is a term paper for the St Lawrence University Campus in Nairobi.

Like *African Israel*, *Divine* had its immediate origins in a dispute over leadership at the PAOC mission at Nyang'ori.²⁰² In 1949, the missionary Morrison at Nyang'ori wanted to appoint a senior pastor to oversee the other pastors. The majority were in favour of Hezekiah Muhindi, but the post was given to Jacob Ananda. A group of four pastors were unhappy at the decision, and also wanted greater freedom to worship in a style closer to the Roho tradition.²⁰³ One of the four, Saul Chabuga of Gamalenga (about 2 kms from Nyang'ori) started holding services at his house, at first under the verandah, and then under a nearby tree. The name African Divine Church was chosen.²⁰⁴ A site for the church headquarters was later found about two kms away at Boyani.²⁰⁵ Leadership was shared among three of the four pastors: Chabuga was 'Patron', Joash Ombiri was 'President', and Zablon Muhindi was Treasurer and Minister.²⁰⁶ There seems to have been some secret agreement that these posts would rotate among the three after a few years. This was clearly a recipe for trouble, and in 1958 Muhindi demanded that he be given overall leadership, otherwise he would not share his own considerable responsibilities with others. Chabuga resisted, and in 1961 Muhindi formally separated and started Divine Christian Church, with its HQs at Iriva near Boyani.²⁰⁷ A significant number of *Divine* followers left to follow Muhindi. Divine Christian Church itself suffered a leadership dispute after a few years, and Muhindi and his rival from Mbale, Jeremiah Masitsa, went to court, each using the

²⁰² Details in this paragraph are from Embego unless otherwise stated.

²⁰³ The issue of open repentance was important in this. Hake, *African Metropolis*, p. 235.

²⁰⁴ The origin of this name is disputed. Embego (op. cit., p. 7) reports that it was from the tree under which they originally met (without giving further explanation); McDowell (op. cit., p. 2) that the church took its name from the verse in Jn. 15: 1, 'I am the true vine and my father is the gardener'. The new church was part of the true vine. Hence the meaning of 'divine'. The latter account seems more likely.

²⁰⁵ There are two villages named Boyani in Tiriki: Boyani Salvation Army, on the main Kisumu – Kakamega road, near Jepakoyai; and Boyani ADC near Nyang'ori.

²⁰⁶ The fourth pastor, Zablon Mugunda, moved to Tanzania shortly afterwards and planted the church there.

same certificate of registration in support of his case. Eventually the dispute began to affect the peace of the neighbourhood, and Divine Christian Church was banned by the Registrar of Societies in 1972.²⁰⁸ Some of its ex-members eventually succeeded in founding the Church of Bethlehem East Africa (see below). Others, including Muhindi, returned to *Divine*.²⁰⁹

In 1968, the issue of the secret power-sharing agreement was raised again at Boyani, this time by Joash Ombiri, one of the original four.²¹⁰ Ombiri demanded the title ‘President’. The question came to a vote on 2 March 1969, which Chabuga won, taking the title of Bishop. Ombiri then left *Divine*, to join the Kenya Church of Christ, only to return to Divine after a lapse of several years.²¹¹ The following year, 1970, Saul Chabuga died, having written a letter while in hospital in Kisumu instructing the church’s General Secretary that his son, James Lul’lega Chabuga, should inherit his leadership. On 14 March 1971 James Chabuga was duly installed as Bishop at the age of 45 years.²¹² He continues at the time of writing as Patron Bishop or Archbishop of the denomination.

As a result of James Chabuga’s strong (if sometimes authoritarian) leadership, the church has grown significantly and has made considerable material progress. At Boyani HQ can be found a village polytechnic (offering artisan training for school-leavers), a clinic, a nursery school, and the beginnings of a theological college, which graduated its first students in 2002, in addition to the HQ church with its external

²⁰⁷ Registered 27.1.64. Iriva is now the ‘home church’ of Patron Bishop James Chabuga.

²⁰⁸ EAS 5.2.72. Masitsa is also spelt Masiza.

²⁰⁹ McDowell, op. cit., p. 4.

²¹⁰ Information in this paragraph from Embego, op. cit., pp. 11 ff., unless otherwise stated.

²¹¹ McDowell, op. cit., p. 5.

²¹² He had earned a diploma from a Bible Correspondence Course.

baptismal tank.²¹³ This progress, unparalleled in other Vihiga AICs, has been made possible by a sophisticated system of collecting church offerings from its members, a close alliance with the government administration and incumbent Members of Parliament, and a judicious and transparent use of funds from a number of overseas agencies.

Unlike most other Roho churches of Vihiga, *Divine* celebrates water baptism and communion. *Divine* baptisms, by immersion in rivers known as ‘Jordan’ - or in Nairobi, swimming pools or baptismal tanks - are very colourful occasions, in which the vulnerability of the candidate is protected by precautions against contagion from sources of evil (see below, chapter three, p.130). The church also celebrates Holy Communion once a year, beginning from the centre at Boyani and moving out into the branches. The service is conducted by the Bishop and without the use of wine.²¹⁴ *Divine* continues the Roho tradition of worship. Shortly after its foundation, it benefited considerably from the ban in 1954 by its parent church PAG on drumming, dancing, and ecstatic behaviour, which encouraged many PAG adherents to cross to the new denomination in pursuit of these vital elements of Roho worship and spirituality.²¹⁵ At its foundation *Divine* adopted a *kanzu*, a flag, and hats and headscarves with distinct colours (green, white, and red – the colours in reverse order to those of *African Israel*).²¹⁶ As may be judged from its material achievements in

²¹³ The church runs many nursery schools, and a Primary School at Wambandu. (McDowell, op. cit., p. 25.)

²¹⁴ McDowell, op. cit., p. 17. For the 40th Anniversary of the church in 1990, the KUIC bakery prepared and iced a cake in the colours of the *Divine* hat. This cake, together with its icing, became the element for Communion.

²¹⁵ KNA HOR /37 (HOR of the DO Vihiga, RA Hosking to AC Loggin) 1956, lists other reasons for ‘the decline and probable fall’ of PAG. McDowell, op. cit., pp. 10-12, quotes from the testimonies of members who left PAG in the 1950s because of the PAG dislike of loud praying, drumming, and using one’s home as a centre of healing. McDowell notes that people joined from other denominations because they sought help in stopping their drunkenness.

²¹⁶ For the meaning of these colours, see Appendix 1.

recent years, *Divine* takes a considerably more positive stance towards the modern world, engagement in business, and the value of formal education and church bureaucracy, than the Roho churches of the first generation. Nevertheless, the denomination lacks senior leaders of a high level of formal education. Possibly for this reason, in Nairobi it is predominantly a one-class church, of ‘watchmen, messengers, and cooks.’²¹⁷

The Church of Bethlehem East Africa

The Church of Bethlehem East Africa (*Bethlehem*) was registered on 28.2.73 by former *Divine* members based in Nairobi at Kenyatta National Hospital and Kabete, and others who had been members of the cancelled Divine Christian Church.²¹⁸ The headquarters was placed at Kiriba in Maragoli, where the Bishop, Abraham Amoi, lived. In many ways *Bethlehem* follows the *Divine* church pattern, although naturally with a different church flag (See Plates 8, 10), but without the celebration of communion. Archbishop Amoi died in 2001, and was replaced by Benson Savatia. In 1999 the church had eight ‘Regions’, each headed by a bishop, with up to 8 churches in each region. This would suggest the total membership is about 2000.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ To borrow the words of the former KANU Secretary-General Joseph Kamotho’s recent derogatory and much-derided characterization of the Luyia. Hake, *African Metropolis*, p. 238, describes the membership in Nairobi in the mid-1970s as ‘domestic servants, artisans, clerks, the unemployed, housewives, children at school’. It should be noted that one reason why church members fulfil these roles is that they are trusted. It is however very rare to see a *Divine* member driving his or her own car (except for the Patron Bishop). While this is true also of many other Roho denominations, it is not so of *African Israel*, *Divine*’s sister church, which has a number of well-educated members and leaders.

²¹⁸ KCH; Nandi, ‘The Jerusalem Church of Christ’, p. 44, from which other material in this paragraph is taken unless otherwise indicated.

²¹⁹ The regions were Nairobi, Lugari, Maragoli, Nandi, Nandi Hills, Mombasa, and S. Nyanza. There was also a sub-region at Nakuru. (Information from Archbishop Benson Savatia, 4.4.99.) I have calculated the membership using a similar calculation as that employed above for *Divine*: (8 regions x 5 churches, x 50 members = 2000).

Jerusalem Church of Christ

Bethlehem has given birth to a considerably larger denomination which has gained much attention from the media, Mary Akatsa's Jerusalem Church of Christ (*Jerusalem*).²²⁰ Mary Akatsa was born in 1964 at Kima Mission Hospital in Bunyore. Her own account of her life is marked by events of poisoning, abandonment, neglect and murder. When still a young girl she was saved from suicide by a Trinitarian call to ministry. In 1983 she 'died' and went to heaven, but was sent back to earth to fulfil her mission. (See Appendix 6.1 for this account in detail.)²²¹ Having married at the age of thirteen, she went with her husband, Franco Akatsa, to look for work in Nairobi. She stayed in Kawangware where she became a member of *Bethlehem*, but her own charismatic, prophetic, and healing gifts threatened the church leaders, who excluded her from any formal role. She built up her own group of followers – many from *Bethlehem* congregations – and registered the Jerusalem Church of Christ on 18th October 1990.²²² According to Nandi, in 1993 the denomination had a registered membership of 11,222, of which 8000 were in Nairobi, and 2800 at Ebusiralo in Bunyore (from where Akatsa comes).²²³ In that its entire focus is on its leader's ministry of healing and problem-solving, and with a HQ in Nairobi, *Jerusalem* is atypical among the Vihiga Roho churches. Their leaders, indeed, have sought to dissociate themselves from her.²²⁴

²²⁰ Unless otherwise stated, I depend here on Nandi, op. cit., pp. 40-51. Among media references to Akatsa are: WR, 8.7.88, KT 8.7.88 (both of which mention a death that occurred during a public disturbance at a court case in Kibera in which Mary Akatsa was appearing. The WR article is substantial.)

²²¹ Nandi, op. cit., pp. 27-37, repeats much of the story as recorded in WR of 8.7.88. This story is summarised in Appendix 6.1.

²²² Nandi, op. cit., p. 37.

²²³ My personal impression is that the membership has probably at least doubled since 1993.

²²⁴ Akatsa has a penchant for denouncing other church leaders in public, in a way that makes it impossible to defend oneself. Another senior Roho Archbishop from Vihiga, who attended worship at Akatsa's centre in Kawangware was reportedly denounced in public for having killed one of his neighbours through witchcraft, and was then forcibly shaved in public by her group of young men. He was obliged to hide in Nakuru for several weeks until his hair had grown again. Such unsubstantiated allegations (or 'prophecies') have not increased the prophetess' popularity among church leaders in her

A number of other denominations have either come out of African Divine Church directly or indirectly – among these are Kenya Divine Christian Church, Free Line Church Mission, and a number of ‘Nabii’ and ‘Canaan’ churches (some of which are ephemeral and never succeed in getting registered).²²⁵ Of these churches, at the present time Nabii Christian Church of Kenya is perhaps the most significant. It should be noted that, unlike the case of the ‘Israel family’,²²⁶ there has been no attempt to bring the various denominations of the ‘Divine family’ together – indeed, the present Patron Bishop of *Divine* regards none of these subsequent breakaways from his denomination as valid expressions of African independency.²²⁷

Part Six. Other Roho churches of Vihiga

Two other Vihiga Roho churches that emerged in the period immediately before or just after *uhuru* are difficult to classify, the first because its origin was in the Salvation Army, the second because its founder consciously attempted to combine characteristics of the Holy Spirit family with those of Israel. Finally, a third church will be described which illustrates the difficulties involved in bridging Roho spirituality and pentecostalism.

home district of Vihiga. (Personal information.) According to Nandi, the reason why the Akatsa couple travelled to Nairobi in the first place was that they had been expelled from their village by the local elders, church leaders, and administration. Nandi, op. cit., p. 35.

²²⁵ *Nabii* is the Swahili for ‘prophet’.

²²⁶ See below, p. 107.

²²⁷ PC, J. Chabuga, 1999.

African Holy Zionist Church

This small denomination (*Zion*) is significant for its role in the history of Roho conciliarism and for its liturgical innovations.²²⁸ Shem Ogula, born in 1917 in Tigoi, Tiriki, was brought up in the Friends Church, but later became a member of the Salvation Army, and it was while he was a sergeant in this denomination in August 1959 that he received a call from the Holy Spirit in a series of three dreams to found a new denomination, *Zioni Mtakatifu*, or 'Holy Zion'.²²⁹ His Salvation Army Major gave permission, saying that if Ogula should fail, he could return to the Army.²³⁰ After establishing his credibility with the government administration, the denomination was registered in 1963.

A significant breakthrough in the church's initial slow growth came the following year, when a man called Philip Bulimu Aluda arrived at Tigoi from Isukha. Bulimu, who had been worshipping in *African Israel*, had received a dream in which he was told to go to the Holy Zionist Church in Tigoi (having no previous knowledge that such a church existed). He was welcomed by Bulimu. Returning home, he invited Ogula to come and start a church in Isukha. From here the church spread into Nandi, where it has established congregations in the tea estates. Before President Amin's banning of the smaller churches in 1974 it also had established a large branch in Uganda. Ogula died in 1980, having given the church's registration certificate and files to his brother's son, Ayub Kenyan Kedogo, a member of Friends and a teacher,

²²⁸ In this short summary I depend, unless otherwise stated, on the short history by Clarke, 'For Zion's Sake'. I have also had access to a transcription of Clarke's interview with Harun Babu, brother to Shem Ogula, at Tigoi in 1983 (courtesy of Mrs. Gladys Kedogo & S. Muguga).

²²⁹ According to Ajega, this call came in July 1957. Ajega, 'Zioni Mtakatifu (Holy Zion) Kegomoli Church', p. 1. For more details on his early life, see Appendix 6.2.

²³⁰ In obtaining permission in this way, Ogula was following the example of Zakayo Kivuli.

for safekeeping. The night before the memorial service for Ogula, the deceased appeared to Kedogo in a vision, telling him to ensure that the church survived. After six months, Kedogo, now a member of *Zion*, was elected as General Secretary, Philip Bulimu as Archbishop (a post at that time in the church considered to be the assistant to the Bishop) and Ogula's wife, Trufosa Imali, as Bishop. In 1993 Mama Bishop Trufosa retired, and Bulimu took full power as Archbishop. By the year 2002, the church had planted new branches in Eldoret, Teso, Nairobi, Kiambu, and Maasai, as well as in Vihiga, Kakamega, and Nandi districts. Currently (2003) the church has about 560 members in Kenya and 85 in Uganda.²³¹

Baptism in *Zion* takes place without water and under the church flag, a concept borrowed from the Salvation Army, and consonant with the practice of many other Roho churches.²³² The candidate is, however, anointed with oil. Unusually for Vihiga Roho churches the sacrament of communion is given in the elements of bread and fruit juice. A similar sacramental principle can be seen during the service of blessing, after the participants have been anointed with oil, when boiled sweets are distributed to symbolize the sweet things of heaven.²³³ The church has also developed its own early-morning service, known as 'Saba Saba', of going to pray in a cave on a mountain, and the collection of water from a spring which is subsequently used for communion.²³⁴

²³¹ PC, S. Muguga, 2.2.03. The figures are for registered church members.

²³² The connection with the Salvation Army is referred to directly in Ajega, op. cit., p. 2: 'The Baptism is just like the Salvation Army of the grace, to be baptised under the flag of peace (grace) Blood and Fire' (sic).

²³³ See Appendix 5.1.5 for a *Zion* Order of Service for Blessing and Baptism.

²³⁴ 'Saba Saba' in Swahili means 'the seventh day of the seventh month', on which this ceremony takes place. Saba Saba is also a public holiday in Tanzania, celebrating the foundation of the Tanganyika African National Union in 1954 – with which the *Zion* celebration has no connection. (Saba Saba Pilgrimage, 7.7.02 (Doc. 83), Emau.)

Roho Israel Church of God

The founder and present Archbishop of *Roho Israel*, James Kisibo, was born in 1930 at Gimarakwa, Nyang'ori. His personal story can be found at greater length in Appendix 6.3.²³⁵ It is marked by his divine call in 1959 when he was sick in hospital – experienced as a visit to heaven – and his subsequent reception of the Holy Spirit. It also recounts an early blessing from Jacob Buluku, the presence of Japheth Zare at the opening of his church in 1960, and a series of formal and informal blessings and advice received from his near neighbour Zakayo Kivuli. This story is a complex construction which gives Kisibo's divine calling as sufficient reason for starting the new denomination. It locates Kisibo's life-mission very precisely in relation to two of the main Roho families of Vihiga, Holy Spirit and Israel, and asserts his ecumenical vision. Roho Israel Church of God was registered with the government in 1963.²³⁶ Kisibo began preaching at Kaimosi, and near Eregi in Idakho, but people there were not responsive (there were already strong Roho churches in these areas). He therefore turned his attention to Kabondo in Nyanza, where he first preached and sang in Luyia, using an interpreter (he learnt Luo over the course of the next few years.) He travelled widely in South Nyanza, in many areas being the first Roho preacher people had ever heard.²³⁷ Much of this initial evangelism and church-planting was done during his weekends and leaves during his employment as a Post Office driver in Nakuru. He soon encountered a serious cultural problem in his ministry. This was the strength of

²³⁵ Information in this paragraph, unless otherwise stated, is from OI, J. Kisibo, 9.3.00 (Doc. 41), Ibwali; OI, 20.10.99 (Doc. 117), Ibwali; OI, 31.8.02 (Doc. 136), Ibwali. The precise sequence of events in this very elaborate call to ministry, and the story of the rock-shelter, is taken from Peter Cox's short paper 'Bishop James Kisibo: the Beginning of the Roho Israel Church of God,' 7 pp., which Cox wrote during a visit of three months in 1991 as part of a gap-year project between school and university, assisted by Kisibo's nephew.

²³⁶ Registration date 30.6.63. The original name was World Spiritual Israel Church, but the translation of 'world' into mother tongues proved problematic, as it was associated with worldliness, and a month later the name was changed to Roho Church of God of Israel, more commonly known as Roho Israel Church of God.

the Luo practice of polygyny, a practice that without exception the Roho churches of Vihiga had forbidden for church leaders. Kisibo's firm stand on this issue has led, over time, to a number of leaders breaking away with their congregations.²³⁸ In Nyanza (following the strong traditions of *Ruwe Holy Ghost* and the Seventh Day Adventists), *Roho Israel* is Sabbatarian; in Western Province it worships on Sundays.

Partly because of his job in Nakuru, Kisibo made many contacts with Akurinu churches. It was one of the few remaining founders of these churches, Elijah Kinyanjui, who agreed to come to Ibwali to anoint and clothe Kisibo when he was made Archbishop.²³⁹ Some years later, Kisibo was instructed in a dream to go to Nakuru and pray for Elijah a few days before Elijah's death, and he subsequently participated in his funeral. (As Kisibo remarks, 'He blessed me and I escorted him as he went to God.')²⁴⁰ Kisibo considers that through his relationships with Kinyanjui's Chosen Church of the Holy Spirit and with Kenya Foundation of the Prophets Church, he was able to help them moderate their hitherto extremely rigorous interpretation of Levitical laws. Akurinu churches bearing the name 'Israel' have also requested him to help in arranging joint meetings with other 'Israel' denominations.²⁴¹

In 1991, Kisibo calculated the total membership of his church at about 6000. Of these, only 310 were in Western Province; the rest were in Nyanza. (Unusually at that time

²³⁷ He visited Oyugis (Kotieno), Gem Arege, Gem Mapore, Nyambare, Homa Bay, Soklo Kipenji, and Ayengo. OI, J. Kisibo, 31.8.02 (Doc. 136), Ibwali.

²³⁸ Breakaway churches included Emwolo ['gentle'] Roho Israel, Roho Israel Church, Mowar ['salvation'] Roho Israel. Others that died out quickly were Israel Roho, and Roho Israel East Africa. Kisibo did not make a policy of pursuing these breakaways through the law courts. OI, J. Kisibo 31.8.02 (Doc. 136), Ibwali. Possibly for historical reasons, the administration policy on new churches in S. Nyanza has been very much more tolerant than in some other parts of the country, and churches have been allowed to continue to worship with local permission only.

²³⁹ For Elijah Kinyanjui, see an article by him in KCH, pp. 124-127.

²⁴⁰ OI, J. Kisibo, 9.3.00 (Doc. 41). Ibwali.

²⁴¹ OI, J. Kisibo, 9.3.00 (Doc. 41). Ibwali

the church had no congregations in Nairobi.)²⁴² A more recent calculation of membership in 2002, based on Kisibo's estimate of 200 village-level congregations, gives a total of about 10,000.²⁴³

Church of Africa Sinai Mission

Robert Moses Aseri, founder of Church of Africa Sinai Mission (*Sinai*), was born into a family of Roho Christians in whose house near Jebrok, in Tiriki, Zakayo Kivuli is reported first to have received the Spirit.²⁴⁴ On leaving school, the young Aseri joined the new denomination of *African Israel*, and became a leader of the youth. He then learned carpentry and masonry training in Nairobi. After a further period at home, he was employed in the Ministry of Works in western Kenya for some years, later starting his own business as a building contractor in Nairobi. Here he began meeting in prayer with preachers from different churches (Presbyterian, African Brotherhood Church, Peace and Mercy, Nomiya) from different parts of the country (Taita, Ukambani, Kipkelion, and Luo Nyanza). These leaders had been influenced by the Kenyan crusades of TL Osborne, and were inspired to pursue a similar pentecostal form of evangelism through crusades of healing and other spiritual ministries. In 1970 the group registered themselves with the government as the Council of East African Evangelists Societies of God (for its later history, see chapter five).²⁴⁵ During a crusade of the Council held at Mombasa, a baptism service was held in the sea, and one of the candidates was inspired to shout out a prophecy instructing them to build a church with the name Church of Africa. Other prophecies from Rift Valley and

²⁴² PC, J. Kisibo, 1991.

²⁴³ This is to calculate an average congregation of 50 per village church, and would include children. Kisibo estimated 200 churches, divided into 10 regions, 70 branches, and 100 assemblies. OI, J. Kisibo 31.8.02 (Doc. 136), Ibwali.

²⁴⁴ OI, M. Aseri, 30.8.86, Jebrok. Information in this paragraph is taken from this source unless otherwise indicated.

Murang'a confirmed this command, and in 1974 a church was registered under that name, with the addition of Sinai Mission, indicating Aseri's HQ.²⁴⁶ (Sinai is the name of a rock near the Archbishop's house that was traditionally used for prayers for rain.) In 1986, Archbishop Aseri claimed 65 churches (i.e., village level congregations) in Vihiga, Busia, Moi's Bridge, South Nyanza, Meru, Embu, Mombasa, and Nairobi. My impression is that at the present day the denomination in Western Kenya is probably in decline, but is strong in Nairobi and Meru. Using a computation based on 50 members per local church, I estimate the denomination in 1986 to have numbered some 3250 members.

Theologically, *Sinai* has roots in *African Israel* and the Vihiga Roho tradition. In Western Kenya the church appears like any other Roho denomination. Its members dress in *kanzu*, with flags, processions, the beating of drums, and the driving out of evil spirits.²⁴⁷ On the other hand, the pentecostal and evangelical influences on Aseri have been great. The church's constitution specifies 'believer's baptism by immersion' for 'all persons who having professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ give evidence of being born again and of conduct worthy of their profession' (this is not the language of Roho Christians). Aseri has visited the United States and obtained a 'Doctorate' from an African-American church, which hangs proudly in his sitting room. Indeed, it may be said that the church is caught between Aseri's Roho roots and

²⁴⁵ Date of registration, 22.7.70.

²⁴⁶ Date of registration, 7.11.73. It is claimed, e.g. by H. Ajega (OI, 29.8.86, Zululu), that Aseri joined Masambu's church, Sinai Church of East Africa, and later took over the certificate of registration.

²⁴⁷ For the flag, see Plate 8. The 1st rule 'for the conduct of the society' in the Constitution is '(a) We worship by drumming, clapping hands, and playing trumpets.'

his global, pentecostal, aspirations.²⁴⁸ The two are not easily reconciled, a fact that may be one reason for the church's apparent decline.²⁴⁹

Conclusion and a definition

Anticipating somewhat the argument of the next chapter, I propose this definition:

Roho churches are AICs

1. that trace their origins directly to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Kaimosi in 1927, or to similar manifestations of the Spirit in Musanda / Ruwe during the years 1933-34; or
2. that share in a tradition of spirituality derived from the above events, which is centred especially on the need for repentance from sin and ritual impurity, and the power of the Holy Spirit to cleanse and offer protection from evil.

Beyond but close to the margins of Roho Christianity are churches focussed on the healing and prophetic powers of one individual (such as Mary Akatsa); or expressions of pentecostalism that have no concern with ritual purity (such as *Sinai* might conceivably become in the future).

This necessarily brief survey of Roho Christianity in Vihiga cannot avoid considering its divisiveness. But it is important to avoid judgements based on European understandings of organizational 'unity'. Roho Christians were simply following the missionary example. Within twenty kilometres – walking distance - of the centre of

²⁴⁸ A similar Roho church in which this contradiction is present is Church of Mercy, from Kiriti, near Miwani in Nyanza, led by Bishop James Owino Osambo. Owino was originally in Pentecostal Evangelistic Fellowship of Africa in Uganda, until the denomination was banned by Idi Amin. Returning home to Kenya, he registered a church in 1978, which in Nyanza is a Roho church, but in Limuru and Nairobi is predominantly pentecostal. I attended the Easter Day celebration in 1998 at the Kiriti headquarters, where the pentecostal brethren in their sharp suits, ties, and shaven heads or closely-cropped hair were vying with their fellow Roho members in *kanzu* and caps. The pentecostals looked down on the 'people of the Spirit' for being backward and caught up in 'un-biblical' traditions; the Roho Christians looked at the pentecostals as worldly and proud. It is hardly surprising the church has had leadership difficulties.

²⁴⁹ Aseri has also been associated for many years with the National Council of Churches of Kenya, and – as will be seen in chapter five – has played a significant role in AIC conciliarism in Vihiga.

Vihiga could be found missions of Baptist (Nyahera), Pentecostal, Holiness (Kima), Anglican, Quaker, Salvation Army, and Roman Catholic traditions. More fundamentally, however, Roho churches are constructed according to Luyia traditions of social organization. When there were conflicts within a family, witchcraft was suspected, or a serious taboo was violated, one of the affected parties would migrate somewhere else;²⁵⁰ when clans grew beyond a manageable size, or a serious crime was committed, a division of the clan might take place.²⁵¹ The rationale was the maintenance of peace and harmony within a local community. The same principles apply to Roho churches. Leadership styles are also significant. As I discuss in chapter six, the shift to a chiefly style of authoritarian leadership (characteristic of the ‘tributary’ mode of production) is strongly resisted by some groups, often in the interests of *local control* of the faith community, its resources and its religious sanctions.

The Roho churches of Vihiga have had an impact far beyond the borders of Vihiga District. This is partly because the people of Vihiga have migrated widely in East Africa in search of work or land and have taken their faith with them. But the appeal of these churches across ethnic boundaries is significant, despite the subsequent attempts of church communities to disconnect themselves from their HQs in Vihiga. This appeal is rooted in a series of appropriations of the gospel by succeeding generations in a context of very rapid social change. It is to these appropriations, which constitute the founders’ visions, and the mix of traditional and modern contexts in which they took place, that I turn in the next two chapters.

²⁵⁰ Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 544-5. In my own experience, a young man who had had sex with a younger wife of his father was forced to move away from his father’s land.

²⁵¹ This process of segmentation is discussed by Sangree, *Age, Prayer, and Politics*, pp. 7-9; Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, pp. 67-71.

Chapter Three

Roho Safi: The clean heart

Between the conscious and the unconscious lies the most critical domain of all for historical anthropology and especially for the analysis of colonialism and resistance.¹

Part One. Repentance and expulsion of sin as the fundamental work of the church

The centrality of repentance

It was through repeated repentance that in 1926/7 the Friends missionary Chilson and his African assistants taught Christians how to receive the Holy Spirit and to live with a clean heart, without hidden anger or dissimulation, without envy or lust for material things. The act of public repentance and the ecstatic phenomena that resulted - especially the prophetic uncovering of sins - caused the Holy Spirit people to be persecuted by the elders of the Friends, and to be driven from the church. In spite, or because, of the persecution, Chilson's teaching has endured, been elaborated, and has become what may be called the foundation teaching of the Roho churches. A contemporary church leader, Bishop Senelwa of *Holy Spirit*, describes how he first learnt to repent:

Elder John Andove took me and brought me to the house of the late Japheth Zare, where I found youth repenting in the house. At first I didn't repent because I thought they were

¹ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Vol 1, p. 29. Quoted in Sadowsky, *Imperial Bedlam*, p. 73.

simply playing, but on the second day I tried to repent of my sins - of not respecting my parents, of stealing, of waiting for people along the roads and then beating them up, and the sin of seducing girls, and then I found my body began to get very hot, and the elders who were called prophets continued to tell me of the sins that God wanted me to repent of, and I repented of them. After that I saw that to repent had become like a song I was singing, and then I saw a light in front of my eyes, and I felt giddy and my body became as light as paper, and I began to speak in languages I did not know, and then I found suddenly it was dawn and I was in a place which was not the place where I had been repenting. I continued to repent even when I returned home. My heart refused even to eat the food my mother prepared because I saw it as unclean. My spirit made me want to repent all the time and I changed my behaviour completely.²

Senelwa describes here his initial act of repentance, but Roho Christians repent repeatedly, and especially, and at length, in revival meetings and *kesha* (Swahili: ‘night watch services’). Senelwa mentions themes that recur frequently in testimonies of repentance: his initial reluctance, a sense of bodily oppression (‘heat’, ‘giddiness’, in some cases sweating), followed by a feeling of ‘lightness’, an experience of time passing without knowledge (often in trance or a state of unconsciousness), and of translocation.³ In the early days, the *watu wa roho* (Swahili: ‘people of the Spirit’) repented continuously for days or weeks in order to receive, and to continue to be filled with, the Holy Spirit. As has been seen, the founders of *Holy Spirit* spent three years in fasting, praying, and repenting, to the neglect of their farms and businesses.⁴ To current *Holy Spirit* members, this period is described as ‘cultivating the ground for the Holy Spirit’

² OI, I. Senelwa, 24.9.99, (Doc. 70), Womulalu, p. 1.

³ The Prophet and Assist. Bishop Jacob Shitochi of *Holy Spirit* described feelings of heat, of an internal voice talking to him. He fell down, his clothes were made dirty and torn, and then he became gentle and felt at peace with everyone. (OI, J. Shitochi, 25.1.02 (Doc. 104) Emwiru, Kisa, pp. 1-3.) The latter change in moral or psychological disposition is particularly significant and is reflected in Kisibo’s comments on ‘life in the Spirit’, Appendix 5.2.4.

⁴ ‘Histori ya Holy Spirit Church of East Africa’, pp. 1-2.

(*kupalilia roho*, Swahili), and is regarded with some awe as the foundation of the church, although in circumstances that are impossible to repeat these days:

Without relationships with women, without being disturbed by people, they lived only in prayer. When they had been brought food – they were eating only food like porridge (*uji*) – they would return immediately to prayer. And they increased, they conquered, they succeeded, so that the word of the Spirit succeeded in Africa.⁵

A decade later, when Zakayo Kivuli separated from PAOC and started African Israel Church Nineveh, he recognized the fundamental nature of this teaching by setting aside Friday as a day of repentance and prayers in church in memory of the crucifixion.⁶ The very name of the church underlines the message. In a paper Kivuli presented to the Mindolo Consultation in 1962,⁷ he explained the meaning of the name Nineveh:

As the people of Nineveh repented, putting on sackcloth and ashes, even so, the Israel adherents or converts teach the world to repent and flee from the wickedness and evils of this world. Today the sins of the world have multiplied, the whole world has become wicked and full of numerous and unnumbered sins: is it not likened to the wickedness of the past Nineveh! (sic) Therefore the Israel teaches the world that

- (1) This world is Nineveh
- (2) The Christian church is the prophet Jonah
- (3) If we repent sincerely crying deep tears for the forgiveness of our sins, we are made free from sins and become the Soldiers of Christ fighting against the devil until we are called in the higher service in glory with God in Paradise.⁸

⁵ OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00, (Doc. 12), Nairobi, p. 64.

⁶ 'Sheria za African Israel Nineveh Church', Nineveh Headquarters, 1993, p.1, summarizes the denomination's teaching concerning this day: 'Friday is the day for prayer in church or in a place set aside for purifying oneself (*kujitakasa*) and for asking for forgiveness of sins, in memory of how Jesus Christ was tormented and was crucified. [Church members] remember the blood which was spilt on the cross and for this reason [on this day] they do not eat any animal. Fish, vegetables, and food that is not mixed with blood is their food.' Translated from the Swahili.

⁷ See chapter five, p. 257.

⁸ 'The African Israel Church History', mimeo, 2 pp. HW Turner collection. The text was probably written by Isaac Ajega. It is reproduced in Appendix 4.

Nineveh is also the name given to the church headquarters. Israel Church of Africa calls the home of its founder ‘Pergamo - Obede’.⁹ The name is taken from Rev. 2:16, where John is told to tell the angel of Pergamum that the city should repent.¹⁰

What constitutes repentance?

Central to the Roho teaching on repentance is that candidates must confess their sins publicly.¹¹ As has already been seen, this practice was one of the major causes of the dispute with the Friends, who held that it was against Luyia custom, showed disrespect for the elders, and encouraged disorder. Nevertheless, with some more recent concessions to decorum (particularly sensitive sins such as adultery, or those of a church leader, may be confessed to the elders alone), the custom continues. In the description that follows, it will be seen that the acts of repentance and exorcism (the expulsion of Satan and evil spirits) are almost indistinguishable. A short text from Archbishop Sande explains the intimate relationship between the two acts:

Sin is brought by hope, and its beginning is the eyes, because if you see something belonging to someone else which pleases you, you start saying to yourself ‘that thing is already mine’, you desire it, and unless you get it [at once], you will take steps to do so. For example, if you have drunk some milk, your thoughts will tend towards stealing the cow that produced such good milk. So you must drive away the spirit [*pepo*, Swahili] that brings the desire to your thoughts.¹²

⁹ For the family tree of the Israel churches, see Fig. 3. Pergamo-Obede is at Nyahera, near Kiboswa.. In this case, the biblical reference is to Rev. 3: 7-13. PC, Rev. D. Oguso, 7.9.02, Nairobi.

¹⁰ In the custom of the Roho churches, the name also appears on the church flag.

¹¹ *Holy Spirit* distinguishes two categories of sins, the ‘light’ sins of youth –such as seducing girls, refusing to obey your parents or your neighbours, greediness, theft – and the ‘heavy’ sins of murder, adultery, idolatry, witchcraft. OI, S. Lukayu, J. Sande, K. Mwangale, T. Nyando 23.9.99 (Doc. 71), Mahanga.

¹² OI, S. Lukayu, J. Sande, K. Mwangale, T. Nyando, 23.9.99, (Doc.71), Mahanga, p. 3.

Because the desire is potentially dangerous, and the harbouring of the desire is sinful, then feelings and emotions that are destructive of a calm and confident relationship with God and with other human beings also need to be repented of. For example, when I was involved in a car accident in which an elderly woman was knocked down, it was considered appropriate (and indeed I felt it so) for me to repent of a host of strong and turbulent emotions arising from the event: fear of a possible police case, and of the possible reactions of the woman's family, anger at police corruption, anxiety over the cost of treatment of the accident victim – all tending to a lack of faith in God, destructive of human relations, and possibly leading to malicious thoughts. Similarly, part of the cleansing process for a widow after the death of her husband requires her to repent of her feelings of confusion and anger during the whole process of death, initial mourning, and burial.¹³ In addition to repentance of desire and emotions – which in Protestant tradition may or may not be sinful – the word repentance is used for recognizing and confessing involuntary acts that have led to uncleanness. Thus the prophet Shitochi agrees that after a wet-dream, a man should bathe himself (in accordance with Leviticus) but also repent, in order to drive out the evil spirit that caused the dream.¹⁴

The practice of repentance

In this dual act of repentance / exorcism (*kujitakasa*, Swahili, 'cleansing'), the activity of evil spiritual forces is recognized and dealt with through naming and expulsion. 'We people of the Spirit, when we are on a journey and we meet with evil people, when we reach our destination, we must drive away the evil spirits of those bad people by saying *gi*

¹³ PC, Mrs Gladys Kedogo, 7.9.02, Nairobi.

¹⁴ OI, J. Shitochi, 25.1.02 (Doc. 104) Emwiru, Kisa, pp. 36-37.

twulidzwe! [Lulogooli, ‘may it be taken away’] so that the evil spirits of those people should not follow us. Before prayer you must chase away the evil spirits of those whom you have met.’¹⁵ The element of personal responsibility for harbouring, nurturing, and possibly enacting an evil desire, is admitted and handled through confession, repentance and asking for forgiveness.

In the contemporary daily practice of the Roho churches, repentance and expulsion of evil spirits take place in church services, and on entry into homes and church buildings. This is normally done by the ritual of *gi twulidzwe*¹⁶ - a casting out of evil often accompanied by the repeating of *Yesu usamihi* (Lulogooli, ‘Jesus, forgive me’). In its use as a command, *gi twulidzwe!* has become shortened and ritualized as *riswa!*, and *Yesu usamihi!* as *osmi!*¹⁷ In congregational worship, participants are invited to cleanse themselves by invocations such as this one from *Holy Spirit*: ‘Open your heart (*roho*), feel that you are now in church, feel that you are ready to receive those things of the Spirit which are here, and to receive the strength of the Spirit. Let us stand and repent.’¹⁸ Then the congregation speak out loud their sins in a time of communal spontaneous utterance (in this less demanding form of public confession, no-one can hear anyone else’s sins because of the general noise). Windows (usually wooden shutters) and doors

¹⁵ OI, S. Lukayu, J. Sande, K. Mwangale, T. Nyando 23.9.99 (Doc. 71), Mahanga.

¹⁶ The origin of this custom appears to have been a prophecy given in April 1934 by *Holy Spirit* member Leba Akimbi, who was told in a vision to read Eph. 4: 31: ‘Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away (‘*vi twulidzwe*’) from you, with all malice.’ Barasa, ‘History of Holy Spirit Church’, p. 10. See also Acts 3: 19-20. OI, S. Lukayu, J. Sande, K. Mwangale, T. Nyando 23.9.99 (Doc. 71), Mahanga. The term has a number of variant spellings.

¹⁷ *Riswa*, indeed, has become so well known to the Kenyan public as an all purpose formula for driving away evil that its inappropriate use was mocked in a recent edition of the popular satirical television programme. ‘Reddykyuluss’, on *Nation TV*, probably in the year 2000.

¹⁸ Opening of Shauri Moyo Church, 4.8.99 (Doc. 80) Nairobi, p. 1.

are closed, leaving the church in darkness.¹⁹ Repentance / expulsion is physically demanding, since the evil spirit is present in the body. In denominations like *African Holy Spirit* this is sometimes effected by rolling on the ground (*kugaagaa*, Swahili), especially during revival meetings or *kesha*.²⁰ In others, such as *Nabii*, the participants' repetition of *riswa!* and *osmi!* is accompanied by rhythmic body movements to expel the sin.

Considerable strength and energy is sometimes devoted to this exercise, which can build up to an almost orgasmic intensity profoundly disturbing to many western observers. In most denominations participants enact a driving out of the spirit through gestures of their hands and arms. An ordinary Roho service can be preceded by repetition of such acts lasting from five minutes to as long as an hour.²¹ In *kesha* the process can take several hours, or indeed the whole night.

The universal practice in the Roho churches is that the period for individual spontaneous repentance is concluded with the communal expulsion of Satan and evil spirits in the name of Jesus from the body of the church – or wherever the act takes place - where they can now be conceived as roaming freely. In a church, the rear door, in houses, the main door will be opened; in open-air public gatherings such as funerals, a corridor will be cleared in the crowd, to allow the free passage of evil. The evil is driven out by the communal repetition of *riswa* or similar commands (*vuzie*, Lulogooli: 'let it go'; *toka*,

¹⁹ Following the scriptural injunction of Matt. 6: 6.

²⁰ As in African Church of the Holy Spirit, where a dirty kanzu is often seen as evidence of repentance and the filling of the Holy Spirit. (PO, 29 - 31 April 2000, Kimingini, Kakamega.)

²¹ For an example of repeated and ritualized repentance and communal expulsion of evil spirits, see Appendix 5.1.1), which records part of a service in which the members of Nabii Christian Church in Kibera, Nairobi, spent over an hour repenting and driving away their sins before the service was formally opened. Although this particular service was a special occasion for the blessing of flags and consecration of church leaders, other services of the same denomination that I have attended have spent similar periods repenting.

Swahili: 'get out'; *hama*, Swahili: 'migrate'; etc) to the noise of the small drum *ikidindi*²² beaten by the leader, and to clapping or the stamping of feet.²³ Children are solemnly warned not to stand in the path of Satan or the spirits.²⁴ (It is to be noted that this communal rite of exorcism is based on a traditional ritual of cursing evildoers, which would take place in the early morning at a public meeting (*ku rushia*, Luloogoli; *ku luyha*, Luyia), when the elders met around a fire in order to solve community affairs.²⁵) After the expulsion, the church windows are now opened and light floods in. Other activities can now take place: in churches and open-air meetings the service of worship, in people's homes, fellowship, prayer or daily activities. Until, that is, the Holy Spirit, through a prophet, a preacher, or through the interpretation of a dream, or less formally in the course of people's ordinary conversation, uncovers other sins. The acts of repentance and expulsion will then be repeated as often as necessary until the evil is expelled.²⁶

This ritual is not simply symbolic. The people of the Holy Spirit believe in the real presence of Satan and evil spirits, manifested physically in peoples' bodies. The physicality of the phenomena associated with repentance, and seen in the effect upon the body when repentance is achieved, suggests that these acts should properly be considered

²² This drum was used traditionally to chase away evil spirits and to announce the arrival of the circumciser and to precede a circumcision procession. OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00, (Doc. 12), Nairobi, pp. 3, 4, 43.

²³ Noise is believed to frighten the spirits away.

²⁴ It is believed that the spirits can enter into someone found in their passage. For example, at a recent exorcism of a man conducted by members of *Holy Spirit* in Kibera, Nairobi, Jonah Azere warned the others present that they could be attacked, but he himself when leaning on the wall was attacked and started crying. He had to be prayed for himself and the evil spirits rebuked before continuing to the exorcism for which they had come. PC, A. Obede, 1.8.02, Nairobi.

²⁵ Following the identification of a particular problem in the community, the words of command, exorcism, or cursing from the leaders were then repeated by the people. OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00 (Doc. 12), Nairobi, pp. 8, 57; Kasiera, *The Development of Pentecostal Christianity*, p. 27. The phrase *ku luyha* is the origin of the name 'Luyia'.

²⁶ Sometimes the prophet will recall people several times to acts of repentance / expulsion until he or she is sure the evil has gone.

the fundamental *work* of the church, which is necessary before any other ministry can be performed, or the ‘life of the Spirit’ resumed.

Part Two. Sin and ritual impurity as hindrances to God’s power

Sins against community

What deeds require repentance? In 1948 *African Israel* issued 'The Book of the Law as the Lord Taught His People', an early list of 47 significant sins that require repentance.²⁷

In addition to the usual sins of adultery, theft, and murder, this list is predominantly concerned with sins leading to the disruption of community. The list begins with ‘backbiting’. Other sins mentioned include ‘arguing, being stubborn, taking yourself as superior to others, being harsh, being greedy, rudeness, pride, not respecting others, gossiping, separating oneself from others’. Roho members’ personal testimonies mention adultery, drunkenness, smoking tobacco and bhang (marijuana), drinking *chang’aa* (illicitly brewed liquor), playing the guitar (associated with dances and promiscuity), and lack of respect for parents, in addition to those mentioned above in Bishop Senelwa’s testimony.²⁸

States of ritual impurity

Sins of commission restrict people’s access to the power of the Holy Spirit (*hufunga njia za mtu*, Swahili: ‘they block the paths of someone’).²⁹ Equally, infringements of the Roho laws of purity, whether conscious or not, bring about a ritual state of impurity, which has

²⁷ ‘The Book of the Law as the Lord Taught His People’, by Isaac Ajega (on behalf of Rev. M.P.D. Zakayo Kivuli). Another list contains 66 sins, of a similar nature.

²⁸ OI, J. Avisa, (Doc. 130), p. 2; OI, C. Ondolo, 27.9.99, Bukoyani, (Doc. 100), p. 1; Youth Conference at Vihulu, 25–27.11.99 (Doc. 10), Vihulu, p. 2.

²⁹ OI, S. Lukayu, J. Sande, K. Mwangale, T. Nyando, 23.9.99, Mahanga, (Doc.71), p. 2.

the same effect. Across different cultures, purity laws generally concern themselves with the same areas of human life. Countryman notes:

What is consistent from one culture to another is that purity laws relate to the boundaries of the human body, especially to its orifices. This means that whatever passes these boundaries has particular importance for purity law: foods, waste products, shed blood, menstrual blood, sexual emissions, sexual acts, birth, death.³⁰

Roho purity laws are generally consistent with this statement. They draw from two sources, traditional Luyia laws, and the book of Leviticus, supplemented by other scriptural passages. Before attempting to identify parallels between particular Roho laws and traditional practices, it is relevant to consider first Wagner's summary of the common features of a number of distinct states of traditional Luyia ritual impurity:

(a) They involve dangers of a mystical nature, either to the person afflicted or to others who come into contact with him, or to both; (b) They overcome their victim as an automatic consequence of an act which he has committed on purpose or in which he is passively involved without his volition; (c) The state of impurity is only temporary and wears off, either after an appropriate purification ceremony has been performed, or after a certain period of time has elapsed; (d) finally, although a person who goes through such a state of ritual impurity is feared and avoided, he is not blamed for his condition (although he may be blamed for having committed an act which is regarded as instrumental in causing his condition)....³¹

These rules all apply to the way the Roho churches understand the state of ritual impurity.

Contemporary Roho purity laws

The Roho churches' primary source of 'relevant' biblical laws in this context is the collection contained in Leviticus (chapters 11-16). They make very little reference to the second collection, known as the 'Holiness Code', in chapters 17-26. Countryman notes

³⁰ Countryman, *Dirt, Greed and Sex*, p. 11.

³¹ Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, p. 96.

that the two collections have different interests: the first understands transgressions of purity as an inevitable aspect of daily life, and prescribes the means of purification; the second treats them as defiling the land of Israel itself, and lays down extreme measures to execute or expel from the land the most serious violators.³² I suggest that two factors led the Roho churches to prefer the former collection: Luyia tradition was closer to the first, more tolerant understanding, and secondly, the Roho stress on the availability of repentance made the extreme punishments detailed in the second collection irrelevant and ‘un-Christian’.

I turn now to consider the laws by area of concern. Where the churches refer directly to Scripture as their authorities, I give the reference. I will later consider the relevant Luyia traditions, and comment on their continuation or adaptation by the churches.

Among the Roho churches of Vihiga, the following rules apply regarding *birth* (subject to modification in different denominations). The menstruating woman is considered unclean for seven days (Lev. 15: 31). (According to the principle of contagion, this requires her husband to sleep separately from her, and the priest or spiritual leader will not eat food prepared by her during this period.) The woman giving birth to a boy-child is unclean for eight days, and to a girl-child, twelve days.³³ A period of thirty-three days and sixty-six days³⁴ of relative seclusion then follows before she is welcomed back fully into the church and society (Lev.12). The child itself is secluded for 8 or 12 days respectively,³⁵ and is then prayed for by a pastor or priest in a house of the parents. This is an occasion

³² Countryman, op. cit., p. 20.

³³ Only eight days for the girl in *Zion*.

³⁴ Thirty-three in *Holy Spirit* for both. OI, J. Shitochi, 25.1.02 (Doc. 104) Emwiru, Kisa, pp. 26-3.

³⁵ Eight days for both boy and girl-child in *African Israel*. African Israel Church Nineveh, ‘Sheria’, pp. 9-10.

when the child is named, and is then brought out of the house and cleansed (*kutakaswa*, Swahili). Parents may receive gifts on its behalf.

Circumcision and its consequent shedding of blood also put the initiate into a state of uncleanness. In Maragoli although circumcision remains important, and the churches conduct prayers for those to be initiated, the rite has become largely a matter for the nuclear family. In Tiriki, however, the churches run their own circumcision camps (*majando*, Swahili) in opposition to the traditionalists.³⁶ In both communities the state of ritual impurity consequent upon circumcision is extended to about a month, until the initiate emerges from the *jando*, or from the seclusion imposed on him at the family home, both of which are subsequent to the healing of the wound. The church will then organize prayers for the candidates' coming out, and for their cleansing (*kwaruka*, Lulogooli).

Sex in general leads to a state of impurity. (It is widely believed that the sin of Adam and Eve was the act of sex.³⁷) In the Holy Spirit family, church members should abstain from sex for at least one day before Friday, the day of crucifixion, and the worship service on the Sabbath or on Sunday.³⁸ In fact, Mondays and Tuesdays were the most acceptable days for sex.³⁹ This restriction is considered by some to be the most difficult to follow of all the spiritual laws. It demands both considerable self-discipline and agreement between

³⁶ See Diru, 'The Effect of European Contact on Tiriki Traditional Circumcision Rites', for a discussion of the changes brought about by the missionaries and resulting division of Tiriki society into traditionalists and Christians.

³⁷ African Israel Church Nineveh, 'Sheria', p. 26, sets out to correct this belief.

³⁸ OI, Avisa, Savatia, I. Mugodo, 8.5.00, (Doc. 12), Nairobi, p. 64; African Israel Church Nineveh, 'Sheria', p. 34; OI, J. Shitochi, 25.1.02 (Doc. 104) Emwiru, Kisa, pp. 16-19.

³⁹ OI, Avisa, Savatia, I. Mugodo, 8.5.00, Nairobi (Doc. 12), p. 64.

husband and wife.⁴⁰ However, this rule is considered the reason why the Holy Spirit is able to work in power in the church and in the lives of individuals. If members fail, and then attend worship, and speak, pray, or preach, in an impure state, their lack of spiritual power will be apparent to all. 'If you have been with your wife, the Spirit does not want you to work for him in church.'⁴¹ Similarly, men who have had an emission of semen are considered impure during the following day (Lev. 15:16). They should not attend church services, although they may listen through the window.⁴² Sexual immorality also causes ritual impurity,⁴³ and certain traditional ritual acts that are considered to bring automatic judgement upon the sinner remain in force. For example, an adulterer eating with the husband will fall sick with swollen testicles. Similarly, an unfaithful woman cannot stand at the head of her husband's bier during the three days before burial,⁴⁴ or carry the basket of flowers which is the mark of a faithful wife at the funeral ceremony – such an act would bring about her own death.⁴⁵

Contact with death also leads to impurity. The widow or widower is considered impure for three days after the burial of their partner. Another widow or widower is to cook and care for the bereaved partner during this period, as a sponsor (*omusingili*, Lulogooli), who will lead the bereaved into the new state of widow(-er)hood. The bereaved will need

⁴⁰ OI, J. Shitochi, 25.1.02 (Doc. 104) Emwiru, Kisa, p. 33.

⁴¹ OI, J. Shitochi, 25.1.02 (Doc. 104) Emwiru, Kisa, p. 17.

⁴² This is perhaps less widely practised these days, although it is rigorously adhered to in the Luo-speaking Roho denomination, God's Last Appeal Church, and Prophet Shitochi of *Holy Spirit* insists on it. OI, J. Shitochi, 25.1.02 (Doc. 104) Emwiru, Kisa, p. 36.

⁴³ OI, J. Avisa 13.10.11 (Doc 13), Mutsulyu.

⁴⁴ See Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, p. 475.

⁴⁵ PC, Rev. A Obede, Mrs. Jane Kavaya, Mrs. Gladys Kedogo, Nairobi, 5.9.02.

to be cleansed in church after a certain number of days following the burial.⁴⁶ Those who carry the coffin to the grave are prayed for before they do their work and cleansed afterward.⁴⁷ They are considered to be vulnerable to attack from the spirit of the deceased, and should also be given money to buy soap for cleansing.⁴⁸

In matters of food, the people of the Spirit followed (and follow) the rules of Leviticus 11. Moreover, in recognition that all Roho people are priests and Nazirites, and in general conformity to the teaching of the protestant missionary churches, alcohol is forbidden.⁴⁹ By extension, food that has ‘slept’ (stayed over night) such as *ugali* (Swahili: a cake of maize-meal eaten with a relish or sauce), which might have fermented, must be refused or thrown away.⁵⁰ Traditional fermented *uji* (porridge) is not acceptable.⁵¹ Food could not be purchased from markets, and meat could only be eaten if it was freshly killed. (This restriction was later eased in Nairobi when it was argued that the government slaughterhouse at Athi River froze the meat before delivery.)⁵²

Moreover, following both the Levitical and the traditional Luyia understanding of the contagiousness of ritual impurity and evil in general, Roho people would not formerly eat

⁴⁶ The period depends on the denomination. In *Zion*, a widow remains unclean for thirty days; in *Holy Spirit*, for seven days. However, a church minister will visit after three days to pray for the widow / widower and to help him or her to repent. PC, Rev. A Obede, Mrs. Jane Kavaya, Mrs. Gladys Kedogo, 5.9.02, Nairobi.

⁴⁷ Cp. Num. 19:11.

⁴⁸ PC, Rev. A Obede, Mrs. Jane Kavaya, Mrs. Gladys Kedogo, 5.9.02, Nairobi.

⁴⁹ The Nazirite is forbidden alcohol in Num. 6:1-4. At the present time, the practice of some Roho members drinking at home in private is tolerated, although frowned on, but drunkenness and public drinking is disciplined.

⁵⁰ This led to people saying that the *watu wa roho* must be rich if they could afford to throw away edible food.

⁵¹ OI, Avisia, Savatia, I. Mugodo, 8.5.00, (Doc. 12), Nairobi, p. 28.

⁵² OI, Avisia, Savatia, I. Mugodo, 8.5.00, (Doc. 12), Nairobi, p. 64.

with others who had not repented.⁵³ They would cook food for themselves, and travel with their own cups and plates, which they painted with the sign of the cross or a denominational acronym. Archbishop Japheth Zare of *Holy Spirit* used to travel with a woman, Siliba Musulube, whose job it was to cook for him alone.⁵⁴ Eating in ‘hotels’ (local canteens) was forbidden.⁵⁵ That these restrictions on food were not merely customary or physical but had spiritual implications can be seen from the practice of throwing ‘unclean’ food out of the window accompanied by commands such as ‘food of Satan, *gi twulidzwe!*’ For it could contaminate the purity of someone of the Spirit.

Traditional and Levitical purity laws

These rules concerning purity have parallels in Luyia tradition. Indeed, the general function of such traditional laws (*emigilu*, Lulogooli) was so significant that they might better be termed ‘rules for life’, as they were intended to ensure a prosperous and stable community.⁵⁶ Their infringement brought about states of ritual impurity which threatened the individual, the family, and the community, and made them vulnerable to attack by evil forces.⁵⁷ Indeed, it is this very significance in tradition that explains why Roho Christians so readily adopted and adapted some of the Levitical laws in their place.

⁵³ OI, Avisa, Savatia, I. Mugodo, 8.5.00, (Doc. 12), Nairobi, p. 27.

⁵⁴ Barasa, ‘Holy Spirit Church’, p. 8.

⁵⁵ Until, in Maragoli, a *Holy Spirit* member, Mwangale, opened his own hotel at Mahanga. OI, K. Mwangale, 21.2.02, Kitumba (Doc. 110), p. 11. Archbishop Kisibo notes that eating in hotels was considered a form of greediness, a sign of inability to control the appetite. OI, J. Kisibo, 31.8.02 (Doc. 136) p. 15)

⁵⁶ Wagner, ‘The Abaluyia’, p. 43.

⁵⁷ There seems to be no general word for states of ritual impurity in the Luyia languages. Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, pp. 106, 109, lists four words (*luswa*, *kiragi*, *vukunzakali*, *vusixu*). In Swahili *najisi* can be used of anything that makes someone unclean. See Johnson, *Swahili-English Dictionary*. The term is used

First, however, two areas of traditional uncleanness that continue in practice not fully assimilated to the Levitical laws. The state of *vukunzakali* (Lulogooli), explained by Wagner as contamination by the breath of a dying person,⁵⁸ but understood simply by my contemporary Maragoli informants as ‘the state of widow(er)hood’, has been retained in the law of purity noted above, and has not been assimilated into the Levitical concept of contamination by the corpse itself. Secondly, the traditional concept of contamination by blood (according to Wagner) referred to ritual impurity brought about by contamination by a person’s own blood (in circumcision, and childbirth) or someone else’s blood (in the case of war or a fight), but excluded menstrual blood, which was not considered ritually unclean.⁵⁹ As noted above, in current belief circumcision is still considered to cause a (traditional) state of impurity.⁶⁰ Childbirth, on the other hand, now brings impurity according to the Levitical law; and menstrual blood has become regarded, again according to the Levitical understanding, as particularly polluting. (It can be argued that this significant shift in thinking has increased the period of defilement for women.)⁶¹ The concept of impurity caused by killing or wounding someone else is rarely found these days.⁶²

especially in Leviticus in the Union Version of the Swahili bible, but is also found apparently interchangeably (in the sense of ‘impure’) with *-chafu* (e.g., Acts 10: 14).

⁵⁸ Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, pp. 109-10.

⁵⁹ Wagner gives only a ‘Luvugusu’ (= Lubukusu) term for this concept, *vusixu* (= *vusikhu*), which was unknown to my Maragoli informants. Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, pp. 109-110.

⁶⁰ Initiation by baptism is regarded as creating a similar state of temporary ritual impurity.

⁶¹ Wagner, ‘The Abaluyia’, p. 42, considered that the access granted to women in the Luyia traditional rituals suggests that the traditional division of gender roles was due to the patrilineal social structure, and not to the concept of women’s uncleanness. If this is the case, the Roho tradition has increased the disqualification of women through its adherence to the Levitical laws.

⁶² Although it is still said (in a traditional, not Roho context) that a man who has killed another cannot go to Mung’oma. (OI, K. Mwangale, 21.2.02, (Doc. 111), Kitumba, p. 9.) In church matters, one branch of the (non-Roho) African Interior Church from Bunyore in the mid-1980’s refused the leader of the other (and

In the case of sex, the traditional rules prohibited a man from having intercourse with his wife during certain periods (e.g., after childbirth and during menstruation), or a woman from having sexual relations for a period after the death of her husband.⁶³ Indeed, these laws restricted sexual relations to a very considerable extent, and were one reason for polygyny. During such periods, a man would normally sleep separately from his wife in the roof space.⁶⁴ These laws have now been generalized by the Roho churches to separate all acts of sex from the 'holy'. Consequently, in the Roho tradition recent sexual activity hinders any Spiritual work or ministry, such as worship, prayer, preaching, or prophecy. The only direct comparison I can find to this separation in the Luyia tradition are the rules restricting sex during circumcision (see below, p. 131), and those Wagner describes that protected entry to the Maragoli traditional shrine of Mung'oma.⁶⁵

Concerning food laws, there were many traditional rules restricting the consumption of certain types of food by certain categories of people – on the basis of clan and gender, during pregnancy, on specific occasions and ceremonies, and according to personal preference. These required a transgressor to seek ritual purification.⁶⁶ Traditional laws also forbade certain people from eating together.⁶⁷ This concept may be behind the

larger) section on the grounds that he had killed a man. This would seem to relate to the qualifications for ritual elderhood. See below, pp. 209-10, & f.n. 158.

⁶³ Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, p. 497

⁶⁴ See the plan of the traditional Maragoli house, Fig. 3.

⁶⁵ The sacrificial priests and elders are all old men (by implication, beyond the age of sexual intercourse). The pot used for drinking the ceremonial beer must be made by a woman who no longer has sex with her husband. The firewood and cooking arrangements are undertaken by girls who are virgins. (Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, p. 292, 'The Abaluyia', p. 42.) The contemporary rules state that anyone wishing to visit Mung'oma should not have had sex the night before; but these rules show considerable cross-influence from Roho teaching. (Pilgrimage to Mung'oma, 20.12.00 (Doc. 73), p.18.)

⁶⁶ Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, pp. 200ff.

⁶⁷ Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, p. 85.

refusal to share a plate with those who were not *watu wa roho*. More generally, ritual impurity was contagious in Luyia tradition – a direct parallel with the Levitical concept, and one that was strictly observed in the early years of the Roho churches.⁶⁸

Many of the traditional purity rules Wagner lists, however, are little observed these days by anyone.⁶⁹ The exception is when problems or serious sickness occur, and a traditional diviner is consulted and discovers that the cause of the problem is that a particular rule has been broken. (Consulting diviners is strictly against the teaching of the Roho churches, but even staunch church members in extremity may have recourse to this means.)⁷⁰ In both Tiriki and Maragoli people will still take restorative action (ritual actions such as washing in a river or the use of traditional medicine) if they themselves believe they are ritually unclean, but this is usually regarded as personal or a clan affair, not the province of the churches. In any case, the extent to which people of the Spirit observe traditional regulations varies considerably from individual to individual, and those of a strong Christian faith frequently ignore such rules.⁷¹

Much of what I have said here concerning rules of impurity in the Roho churches of Vihiga is also true of the Akurinu of Central Kenya, for whom the concepts of *thahu*

⁶⁸ Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, p. 191; 'The Abaluyia', p. 49.

⁶⁹ Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, p. 190-198.

⁷⁰ As Bishop Mwangi demonstrates in an amusing sermon preached at a Baptismal service in Shauri Moyo Holy Spirit Church. See Appendix 5.5.1.

⁷¹ For example, Archbishop C. Ondolo was criticised for not having a sponsor (*omusingili*) to escort him at the burial service of his wife, seeking instead assistance (for he is blind) from his favourite grandson. He replied, 'What matters is how you stand with your God.' PC, Rev. A.Obede, 5.9.02, Nairobi.

(Kikuyu: state of ritual impurity) and its contagiousness are central, and who in this respect also follow many of the Levitical laws.⁷²

Both sin and ritual impurity bring judgement, as do impaired social relations. On falling sick after visiting an Archbishop for a seminar a few days after my consecration as an apostle, I was told that since the Archbishop had publicly condemned the ceremony (which he had attended), we had now entered a state of mutual hostility and unconfessed sin. Failure to confess our sins before eating together had brought about the sickness.⁷³

States of spiritual vulnerability

In the Roho understanding, as in the Luyia tradition, rites of passage also lead to a dangerous ritual state, in which the candidates become more open to the impurity of others, and to attack from evil forces. For example, the initiation of baptism places the candidate into a state of ritual vulnerability: he or she should therefore be in seclusion as far as possible and not greet by hand for a period of seven days, or until released by prayer in the church.⁷⁴ Baptism is here regarded as a parallel to traditional circumcision, in which (among the Tiriki and Maragoli) the initiate after the operation is regarded as highly vulnerable until the wound heals, and is very carefully guarded and protected –

⁷² See Mwaura, 'The Akurinu Churches', pp. 188 ff.; Githieya, *Freedom of the Spirit*, pp. 137-142.

⁷³ For a similar case of mystical sanctions operating automatically in the case of disagreement, see chapter four, p. 208, f.n. 153. Traditionally, groups, families, or clans, who had quarrelled seriously, or cursed each other, practised avoidance. '...any members of the two groups must refrain from social intercourse, since this would involve ritual dangers if a rite of reconciliation had not been performed.' (Wagner, 'The Abaluyia', p. 49, f.n. 2. See also, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, p. 191.)

⁷⁴ This is true even if the initiate comes from a Roho denomination that has never forbidden such hand greetings, such as *Divine*.

even to the extent that he must not be seen by others who may be ritually impure. Sexual intercourse is also strictly forbidden in the community during the time of healing.⁷⁵

Consecration to higher grades in the church is also regarded as a rite of passage which causes temporary vulnerability. When I was consecrated an apostle, I was escorted home by my sponsors, and instructed to remain secluded for several days, lest in my new 'unripe' (Swahili: *-bichi*) and untested state, I should be attacked by the forces of evil. Such persons passing from one ritual state to another need special care and advice, and the angels are sometimes requested to watch over them specially.⁷⁶ Possibly the seclusion of a new-born infant, already mentioned, as well as being due to its contact with the mother's blood, is caused by its radically new state of being.⁷⁷ Similarly, I was advised on one occasion after arriving back in Kenya from leave in Europe that I should remain at home for a few days. The travel, my necessarily 'promiscuous' contacts with many people on the way, and my fresh arrival in a different country, had made me spiritually vulnerable.

Conscious acts of sin, states of impurity entered consciously or unavoidably, and states of spiritual vulnerability, are either hindrances to fellowship with God and others, or increase the danger of spiritual attack, and can thus directly or indirectly prevent the

⁷⁵ PC, Rev. A Obede, Mrs. Jane Kavaya, Mrs. Gladys Kedogo, Nairobi, 5.9.02. The Tiriki, who follow circumcision rituals adapted from the Nilotic Terik, are very much more rigorous in the application of these laws than their Maragoli neighbours. Indeed, this is one reason why the Maragoli-led Roho churches do not have many followers in Tiriki.

⁷⁶ This is one reason for the sponsor (*omusingili*) traditionally given to widows or widowers (see above, p. 125) in order to provide support and guidance in their new state of life, in which the sponsor is considered wise and experienced.

⁷⁷ This is what Wagner suggested for the traditional context. *Bantu of Western Kenya*, p. 110.

indwelling of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁸ This indwelling, which leads to *maisha ya kiroho* (Swahili: ‘the life of the Spirit’), is the real goal and purpose of repentance, and of the other restorative or preventative measures I have mentioned.

Part Three. Mystical forces and personhood in traditional Luyia understanding

‘Body’, ‘heart’, and ‘shadow’

In order to understand better the ‘life of the Spirit’, it is necessary to examine further the context of traditional spirituality - albeit a context already challenged and affected by missionary teaching - in which the people of the Spirit received, elaborated, and preached their gospel.

Although Wagner’s standard ethnographical work on the Luyia was not published until 1949, he conducted his fieldwork in the late 1930s, during the decade in which Roho spirituality was in process of formation. He gives an analysis of the traditional Luyia understanding of a human being (the ‘essential qualities’).⁷⁹ In his interpretation, the three significant elements are the ‘body’ (*ombili* - I give the Lulogooli terms here), the ‘heart’ (*omwoyo*), and the ‘shadow’ (*ekilili, echiriri*). *Ombili* represents the physical body, with similar referents as the English word. At death *ombili* becomes simply *omukuzu*, a corpse. *Omwoyo* can mean the heart but also ‘a man’s consciousness of being alive’, ‘his soul’ ‘the life within you’. It is that part of someone that feels and moves the person to action (my words). *Ekilili (echiriri)*, the ‘shadow’, is a concept widely found among eastern Bantu people. It is both the visible shadow, and a spiritual quality and

⁷⁸ Cp. Lev. 5: 2-5.

⁷⁹ Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, pp. 159ff.

essence essential to human life. In the latter aspect, it has an existence independent of the body, since it can travel abroad at night.⁸⁰ At death it separates from the body. Whether, together with *omwoyo*, it was then transformed to *ekigingi*, the spirit of the deceased, is not clear.⁸¹ The *ekilili*, however, remains to be dealt with after death in a ceremony known as ‘bringing or escorting the shadow’ home (*kushoma echiriri*, Lulogooli), which remains popular today.⁸²

Spirits of the deceased

The *ekigingi* is the spirit of the deceased. After the physical death of someone, his or her spirit is believed to remain for sometime in close contact with the family, communicating normally through dreams, and occasionally visions (i.e., a visual manifestation perceived in a waking state). A departed relative is generally seen as beneficent, but because he or she is not yet fully established in the world of the ancestors, they may demand food, or gifts to the ancestors, or indeed anything to make their state more comfortable. If this is not provided, the deceased may harass a relative in dreams or by sending sickness or causing problems until his or her need is met. However, the relationship is mutual: the living can approach the deceased and the ancestors for assistance. As long as the departed

⁸⁰ Ruel, ‘Passages and the Person’, p. 104.

⁸¹ Sangree, *Age, Prayer and Politics*, p. 42, says that the Tiriki believe that after the death of the body the shadow (*shinini*) – which he also calls a ‘spirit’ – becomes the ghost (*shisyukhu*) which waits around the homestead until satisfied with the respect given it by its relatives.

⁸² In an interesting article on Bantu conceptions of personhood, Ruel (op. cit.), using information from another Eastern Bantu people, the Kuria, argues that the Bantu conceive of personhood in terms of relationship rather than identity. He believes that Wagner’s analysis of personhood is too western, essentialist, and metaphysical, and has been strongly influenced by Western Christian thinking. Ruel then draws from ethnographic texts on other Bantu peoples to show that the missionary use of the Swahili *roho* for spirit and *Roho Mtakatifu* for Holy Spirit has resulted in *omwoyo* and its cognates becoming assimilated to *roho*, acquiring in the process a new quality of immortality and a fuller sense of personhood. Essentially, then, Ruel warns about imposing an essentialist interpretation upon a people of quite another anthropology, and the danger of reading back into Luyia tradition Christian concepts of a later date. However, my primary concern here is with the Christian understanding of these concepts, and my Christian Maragoli colleagues are in general agreement with Wagner’s interpretations, although that is precisely the point Ruel is making.

are remembered by those who are still alive, the personal, human, connection is still present.⁸³ Sangree, in his discussion of the ancestors in Tiriki custom, makes a general distinction between those still remembered personally (*mu, ba, -guga*, Lutiriki: the 'grandfathers') and the ancestors of long ago (*misambwa*).⁸⁴ In supplication, the former were approached first by name at ancestral shrines before calling on more distant ancestors, who were presumably less interested.⁸⁵

Contemporary and Roho understandings of the human spirit after death

What is clear is that in the process of Christianization, the term *ekigingi*, which traditionally was used for the spirits of departed relatives, has become demonized. In the contemporary Maragoli Christian interpretation of what happens at death, it is charitably held that everyone's *ekilili*, or 'shadow' (sometimes *omwoyo*, 'spirit' or 'soul' in this context) goes to heaven. Before departing, the spirit of the person remains around the homestead for some time, unwilling to leave his or her relatives. Among the Roho and some other churches this period has been formalized as forty days, by which term the second, memorial, service (*makumbusho* in Swahili, 'remembrance') is sometimes known. These two services ensure that this journey to heaven takes place, by ensuring that the deceased has a worthy send-off, and by way of warning. Indeed, at both services such phrases may be heard as 'don't come back here!' or 'we are sending the spirit

⁸³ Mbiti in his classical works (see bibliography) calls the departed ancestors 'the living-dead', but this has unfortunate overtones of zombies, or corpses which are resurrected to work for sorcerers, which are found in Northern Luyia belief.

⁸⁴ Sangree, *Age, Prayer, and Politics*, p. 34.

⁸⁵ I have not seen any ancestral shrines in contemporary Tiriki or Maragoli.

(*omwoyo*) away' (this last expression especially at the *makumbusho*).⁸⁶ At the *makumbusho* I have seen *Holy Spirit* worshippers come to dance and trample on the grave – partly as sign of triumph and joy for the successful completion of a Christian life on earth, but also as a visual and concrete warning to the deceased that there is no way of returning to this world.⁸⁷ Bishop Senelwa of *Holy Spirit* uses this prayer at the forty days ceremony:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I give you thanks and praise during this marking of forty days. Since we buried the deceased, he went out for a walk, and for all those days there was no food for him except honey, fruits, and grubs of bees [all *uvusangura*, Lulogooli], which were his meal. Now he has won through, and is here, we are sending him over. We ask of you, Father who lives in heaven, let his hands divide his wealth among the children, to the church that is his armour.⁸⁸ Here he comes, let him sit at Abraham's bosom, and may this congregation remain in peace. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit...⁸⁹

In the third funeral rite, of 'escorting the shadow home', close relatives visit the places where the deceased worked and lived, and the homes of his or her children, usually carrying a photograph of the deceased. The rite concludes with short prayers in church. The purpose of this rite seems to be that of allowing the shadow a last opportunity of saying farewell to familiar scenes of his or her earthly life, and *thereby discouraging him or her from returning to disturb the relatives*. As part of this event, it is natural therefore for family and church members to repent of sadness, quarrels, abusive words and feelings, and anger, which might encourage the shadow or soul to think there is some

⁸⁶ PC, Rev. F. King'ang'a, Nairobi.

⁸⁷ E.g., at the *makumbusho* of Rodah Lulya Obede, 8.7.01 (Doc. 76), Bukoyani.

⁸⁸ One of the other functions of the forty days is the settlement of property and payment of the deceased's debts. On rare occasions this is done within the context of the forty days service itself.

⁸⁹ OI, I. Senelwa (2nd Int.) 16.8.02 (Doc. 141), Womulalu.

unfinished business left behind on earth. However, increasingly this ceremony is becoming a simple remembrance of the deceased's life in its historical context.

These three ceremonies represent a very considerable effort and expense for the family, with the dual purpose of bringing to an end the mourning process and to ensure the deceased is properly honoured and has no wish to return. The deceased's benevolence and continued guardianship of family members continue to be assumed.⁹⁰ If, however, the deceased continues to visit relatives in a threatening manner without a very good reason (for example, inadequacies in the funeral rites),⁹¹ and disasters occur in the family over a period of time, then the term *ekigingi* may now begin to be applied, meaning a 'disturbing spirit', 'a demon'.⁹² If the deceased was not particularly evil during his or her life on earth, then it will be assumed that the deceased's appearances in dreams or visions are caused by an evil spirit from Satan. If his or her character on earth was notorious, then it will be said that the deceased's spirit never went to heaven. In both cases, the Roho churches will exorcise the evil spirit, or *ekigingi*.⁹³

Human agents of spiritual power

⁹⁰ At the first annual commemoration service for a recently deceased church leader in *Zion*, the printed programme read: 'Your body has gone from our sight, but your spirit (*roho*) will continue to shine upon us, to care for us, and to teach us.' (Translated from Swahili.)

⁹¹ Kasiera, op. cit., p. 34.

⁹² An example from Butali, Kabras: 'In the village of Butali, a daughter lost her father two weeks ago, and she fell very sick after the father died. After keen observation it was concluded that the daughter was being disturbed by the evil spirit of the father who had not gone to heaven. So when they called some of his relatives with whom they fellowship in the same church, they began to call out the names of his ancestors and casting them out one by one. When they mentioned the name of her father who had died two weeks ago [and had been buried], the daughter kept quiet and stayed in a sort of coma from 11 p.m. up to 4.00 a.m., when she regained consciousness. So they believed the father of the disturbed daughter had not gone to heaven, but had become an evil spirit that was disturbing the daughter.' [And had now been cast out.] Recounted by Lauden Kedogo, Nairobi, 8.9.02.

⁹³ In the above two paragraphs, the information is from PC, Rev. A Obede, Mrs. Jane Kavaya, Mrs. Gladys Kedogo, Nairobi, 5.9.02.

As well as ancestors occasionally visiting their living relatives in dreams, people traditionally believed themselves to be at the mercy of a number of other spiritual forces or personalities. Wagner provides a useful summary.⁹⁴ Most of the agents able to wield mystical power over the lives of human beings are themselves human. These are: (1) Ordinary people able to bless and curse, who may also acquire magical substances to assist them in this work. (2) People in a temporary state of ritual impurity, and therefore dangerous to their fellow human beings, especially those in a ritually vulnerable state. (3) Specialists and experts in mystical power (for good or evil), such as sorcerers (*ombila*, *avavila* – I give the Lulogooli terms here), witches or wizards (*omulogi*, *avalogi*), rain-magicians (*omugimba*, *avagimba*), diviners (*ombimbuli*, *avavimbuli*), dream prophets (*omung'oli*, *avang'oli*), and priests (*musalisi*, *avasalisi*). These wield their power permanently, use esoteric techniques which must be learnt, and either receive special training or have an inherited disposition for their calling. Wagner further states that such mystical powers can be employed for purposes that are promotive, destructive, curative, and protective. Physical health, success, and prosperity are considered normal (Wagner would say are considered to be God's intended purpose for the Luyia⁹⁵) until negative forces intervene. Promotive measures are therefore less important in daily life than preventative ones.⁹⁶ Since any significant event was considered to have both a practical, material cause, and also a mystical cause,⁹⁷ people would consult elders and specialists in order to know the non-material cause of problems, disasters, and especially death, so that they could take any steps necessary to restore the situation to normal.

⁹⁴ Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, pp. 111-159. See also, Kasiera, op. cit., pp. 29-32.

⁹⁵ Wagner, 'The Abaluyia', p. 43.

⁹⁶ Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, p. 97.

⁹⁷ Wagner, op. cit., p. 94.

Summarizing, then, the purpose of traditional Luyia laws, rites, rituals and ritual specialists, Wagner comments that, next to satisfying material needs and kinship obligations, ‘the maintenance or restoration of the ritual status occupies the most important place in the life both of the individual and the community’.⁹⁸ This, in a nutshell, is a major function of Roho spirituality. Traditionally it has respected both the purity code, and the laws of personal and social morality. It sees the Holy Spirit as God’s given means to enable the ‘people of the Spirit’ to uncover and deal with transgressions against these laws, and to defeat all evil and mystical attempts to destroy the health of the individual and community.

The traditional Luyia understanding of God

I have not hitherto mentioned the traditional Luyia concept of the creator, or High God. In fact, among the southern Luyia peoples, there are very few recorded traditions concerning such a God. The name they normally use for him (*Nyasaye*) is shared by the Luo, and its origins are uncertain. *Asai* and *Isahi*, quoted by Wagner, may be variants of this name.⁹⁹ Sangree argues for the Tiriki that they had no such concept of the creator God at all. Wagner, on the other hand, asserts that the idea of a creator God ‘is a very firmly established belief and of basic significance for the whole world view of the Abaluyia’.¹⁰⁰ There is, moreover, a Bantu word used by the Maragoli for God in the traditional Mung'oma ceremonies – *emungu* (*imungu*) - which is clearly cognate with the

⁹⁸ Wagner, ‘The Abaluyia’, p. 49.

⁹⁹ Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, pp. 167, 168, 291. Kasiera maintains the concept of a High God was indigenous. ‘Development of Pentecostal Christianity’, pp. 38-9.

¹⁰⁰ Wagner, ‘The Abaluyia’, p. 28.

Swahili *mungu*.¹⁰¹ In conclusion, the Southern Luyia seem to have considered the creator God as distant but beneficent. In this connection, Kasiera quotes the traditional Luloogoli saying, ‘Peace comes from God.’¹⁰²

Part Four. The Roho understanding of the Holy Spirit

The meaning of ‘Roho’

It was into this traditional Luyia context that the Swahili term *roho* (‘spirit’) was introduced by the missionaries. The missionaries were careful not to translate ‘Holy Spirit’ by any indigenous terms. *Roho Mtakatifu* is the term used in all the various Luyia language versions of the Bible, as in all the Swahili translations. *Mtakatifu* (‘holy’, literally, ‘cleansed, made clean’), is normally used to distinguish the use of Roho in its divine sense from evil spirits and from the human spirit or heart.¹⁰³ At the present day, *Roho* can be used to express the energy, or spiritual force of a person, as in the expressions in popular use *roho mbaya*, ‘a person’s evil or bitter spirit as expressed in his personality’, and *roho ndogo*, ‘someone without courage’. *Roho* is also sometimes used, possibly incorrectly by the standards of coastal Swahili, of evil spirits (more usually termed *pepo*, *mapepo*, or as *pepo chafu*, an ‘unclean spirit’). *Roho* can also be used to mean ‘heart’.¹⁰⁴ What connections did the imported term make with the underlying Luyia concepts? If, as Ruel has argued, *omwoyo* became assimilated to *roho*, this is partly because *omwoyo* and its Swahili cognate *mwoyo* (‘heart’) already shared with *roho* a

¹⁰¹ Pilgrimage to Mung’oma, 20.12.00 (Doc. 73).

¹⁰² *Milembe gytula ku Nyasaye*, Kasiera, ‘Development of Pentecostal Christianity’, pp. 38-9.

¹⁰³ This is formed from the same stem as *kutakasa* (‘to purify, make clean’) which is used by the Roho churches for repentance and the expulsion of evil spirits.

¹⁰⁴ See ‘Common Swahili expressions’ in the Preface.

number of meanings.¹⁰⁵ *Roho safi*, ‘the clean heart’ or ‘pure spirit’ in the heading of this chapter, is translated *omwoyo omulavu* in Lulogooli in its human aspect, meaning the cleansed human spirit or heart, in which the Holy Spirit delights to dwell. Both *Roho safi* and *omwoyo omulavu* are also used specifically for ‘the Holy Spirit’.

There are clear and intimate links between *mwoyo / omwoyo* and *roho*, which may have promoted the belief in the intimacy of the Holy Spirit, who seeks to identify himself with ‘the life within you.’¹⁰⁶ Indeed, Catholic prints of the Sacred Heart, which portray Jesus or Mary displaying to the world a heart beating within that is burning with flames and encircled with the crown of thorns, are very popular in the homes of Roho members.¹⁰⁷

Similarly, a sign of a heart is often seen on gravestones in *Holy Spirit*. Both the gravestones and the Sacred Heart pictures signify the Holy Spirit burning in the heart, in the very centre or source of life of a person. The gravestones also suggest the openness

¹⁰⁵ See the wide range of shared referents in ‘Common Swahili expressions’ in the Preface..

¹⁰⁶ Tanner, ‘Word and Spirit’, pp. 133-5, objects to this potential intimacy between the human spirit and the divine spirit. He has a rather different argument for the growth of pentecostalism among the AICs. He attributes it to fact that the (Union) Translation of the Swahili Bible is inconsistent in its use of noun classes for *roho*, with the word sometimes being placed in a personal class (as Holy Spirit, *Roho M-takatifu*), and at other times, when used to express the human spirit or the Divine spirit present in the human, it is placed in the n-class for things, as *roho takatifu*. Together with inconsistency in the use of capitalization, he argues that this creates a degree of confusion for the reader, which leads to a ‘de-personalization of ‘spirit’ in the non-divine context’. This ‘detaches it from the human mind and body and allows it to be thought of something as independent of human consciousness and control.’

The argument over capitalization assumes, however, that the reader possesses a degree of formal literacy and understanding of conventional notation which is normally the product of a fairly high level of Western literacy, and is rare among AIC members and leaders. As for Tanner’s comments on inconsistent use of the noun class leading to a depersonalization of the human spirit, ‘his/her spirit’ (as the human spirit) is always translated *roho yake* (see Johnston, *Swahili – English Dictionary*) not *roho wake*, and it is not clear why the translators would have broken this grammatical rule only for God’s Spirit. In any case, the n-class is also used for people: *ndugu yake, rafiki yake*. I am not convinced by his very technical examination of the use of *roho*, partly because he assumes in the first place that the pentecostal message is theologically false, and that East African Christian interpretations of the New Testament in this sense are mistaken. For an able defence of the pentecostal theology of AICs in general, see A. Anderson, ‘Stretching the Definitions?’.

¹⁰⁷ Reflecting on these connections, Archbishop Kisibo sees the pain of crucifixion entering the heart/spirit (*roho*) of Jesus, only to be transformed into a heart/spirit of joy after God declared he had conquered. OI, J. Kisibo, 9.3.00 (Doc. 41) Ibwali.

and purity of the heart of the deceased, which was able to welcome and host the divine Spirit.¹⁰⁸

I have never found any conceptual confusion between the use of *roho* for evil and human spirits, and the Holy Spirit of God, although in practice discernment is always necessary and often difficult (see below). In fact, from a Christian perspective, the Roho understanding of the Holy Spirit is nearly always orthodox and Trinitarian. He is regularly called *Roho wa Bwana* (- of the Lord), *Roho wa Yesu*, *Roho wa Mungu* (- of God), *Roho wa Baba* (- of the Father).¹⁰⁹ The only non-orthodox tendency is to depersonalize him – a problem faced in many cultures.

¹⁰⁸ The crown of thorns on the heart also speaks of the suffering that a faithful servant of Christ must undergo – a fundamental distinction from neo-pentecostal prosperity teaching.

¹⁰⁹ I have come across one instance in which the Holy Spirit is described as ‘coming after the Trinity’. For a spontaneous, orthodox, explanation of the Holy Spirit, see Appendix 5.7.1.

The necessity for purity: ‘The Holy Spirit is like an egg’

In this context of human beings, their spirits and their spiritual powers, active for both good and evil, the significance of the holiness and ‘cleanness’ of the divine Spirit can be appreciated. The divine Spirit requires purity in the believer as the *sine qua non* of his work. Bishop Josiah Mwangi of *Holy Spirit* comments on the story of John the Baptist.¹¹⁰

After baptizing Jesus in the River Jordan,

John never went back to the desert. That day, John went home and ate with people – which he never did when he used to stay in the forests. He also went to sleep among people. [As a consequence, therefore,] John never did any more work. Jesus is the one that took control from that day by going to the mountains.

The clear implication is that *separation* is necessary to achieve and maintain spiritual power. Although Roho Christians dispute how far it is necessary to separate from the world, they are all agreed that such separation is necessary, and that it is a source of spiritual strength. The most obvious form of separation was the refusal of the early people of the Spirit to greet by shaking hands.¹¹¹ In *Roho Musanda* and *Holy Spirit*, people clapped their own hands when meeting and greeting one another. This practice is still adhered to strictly in the former church, but has been relaxed in *Holy Spirit*, except among the older people and prophets, and except in the more formal context of greetings during worship.¹¹² Many of the original Roho leaders never shook hands with anyone;

¹¹⁰ OI, J. Mwangi 14.9.00 (Doc.15), Bukoyani, p. 1.

¹¹¹ The social importance of physical and expressive greetings among the Luyia is not to be underestimated. Mrs Agnes M’mboga Mwangale (OI, K. Mwangale, 21.2.02 (Doc. 110), Kitumba, p. 15) describes the great joy she took in greetings (with numerous repeated handshakes) as a member of PAG, and her reluctance to join *Holy Spirit* where such greetings were forbidden. Traditionally, there were rules of avoidance in traditional custom that prohibited greeting by hand between in-law relations. Some of these are still followed but these seem to have as much to do with a sense of natural shame as states of impurity. Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, pp. 195ff; KUIC Culture seminar, 13.2.01 (Doc. 42), Manyatta, p. 8.

¹¹² Archbishop Kisibo of *Roho Israel* explains his practice on handshaking in Appendix 5.3.3.

others refused only when engaged in specific Spiritual ministries, such as prayer, healing, the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Spirit, and prophecy. The only liturgical exception to the rule is at baptism (in the *Holy Spirit* family), when the bishop welcomes the candidate into the church by shaking his / her hands. But here it is presumed that the candidate has repented during the preparation for the ceremony, has been carefully guarded during the *kesha* the night before, and is therefore ritually clean, and is now spiritually pure and open to receive the Spirit - the purpose of baptism.¹¹³

Susan Ambihira, one of the original members of *Holy Spirit*, explains the origin of the refusal to shake hands: ‘God said when you greet people who are drunkards but [then] you use your hands to pray for the sick, that evil power gets into you, making your prayers weak.’¹¹⁴ It is clearly based on the principle of contagion noted above in connection with ritual impurity – but also demonstrates the tangibility, the materiality, of the Roho concept of evil.¹¹⁵ Indeed, it might be more correct to state that evil is understood to have both a spiritual and a physical aspect, and that they are inextricably related. Thus the Holy Spirit demands ‘physical’ as well as ‘spiritual’ separation from anything that might contaminate, since he cannot tolerate sin or impurity. In the words of Bishop Senelwa, quoted as the heading of this section, the Spirit is like an egg, fragile but strong, a source of life.

¹¹³ See Appendix 1 on baptism in the Roho churches.

¹¹⁴ OI, S. Ambihira, 7.3.00 (Doc.14), Chamadele.

¹¹⁵ Wagner also tells an interesting (and tragic) story of a young man who believed he had been infected by the contagion of night-running from a shirt he had been lent by a friend. (Night-running is a maleficent activity in which the night-runner is obliged to run naked through the villages at night frightening and causing evil to his neighbours.) Unable to undergo the necessary purification rites, as he was working on a farm away from home, he committed suicide. Wagner, op. cit., p. 131.

The rules governing the preparation and selection of food have already been mentioned. Whereas some foods were rejected as unclean, *all* medicine, whether traditional or Western, was initially forbidden by the Holy Spirit churches.¹¹⁶ It was often impossible to know who prepared it, from what ingredients, and how, and the intention behind its preparation or administration. When Archbishop Manoah Keverenge of *Lyahuka* visited the UK, his rivals in the church alleged that, since he had necessarily been injected (against yellow fever), he had lost the Spirit.¹¹⁷

But the Roho concern for purity extends beyond the fear of contamination by evil. The early people of the Spirit sought purity and simplicity as virtues in their own right. As has been seen, food should be eaten the day it was gathered or slaughtered, and should not contain alcohol. The use of scented soap was rejected in favour of simple black soap, or traditional preparations made from *kisavuni* (Lulogooli: a plant that produces foam).¹¹⁸ Instead of manufactured mattresses – what might they contain? – people preferred to sleep on locally made mattresses of grass or dried banana leaves put in a sack or heaped

¹¹⁶ It is generally, though not universally, believed that Archbishop Japheth Zare took no medicine. When I visited him on his deathbed in 1987, I was told that he had been suffering from acute malaria, but had taken no drugs. Archbishop Eliakimu Keverenge also took no drugs, until he fell very sick. His son Manoah and I persuaded him to go for a medical check-up in Kakamega. He first repented (asked forgiveness for breaking his long-standing vow not to seek medical attention). Unfortunately he was suffering from inoperable cancer of the oesophagus. The family members did not accept this as the cause of death because at the time the Archbishop was confronting considerable opposition in the church, and witchcraft was suggested. Manoah himself, as a more 'modern' archbishop, favours poisoning as the explanation, but partly because there were no dreams or visions to suggest that witchcraft was the cause. (OI, M. Keverenge, F. King'ang'a, 19.8.02 (Doc. 118), Lukuvuli, pp. 23-5.) In another high profile case, High Priest Timoteo Shitsimi, of *African Holy Spirit*, is a diabetic, but has received no medical treatment. Undoubtedly this has affected his administration and leadership of the church, but his followers would say that he has kept the faith.

¹¹⁷ OI, M. Keverenge, F. King'ang'a, 19.8.02 (Doc. 118), Lukuvuli, p. 23. For further thoughts on this, see below, p. 292.

¹¹⁸ OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo 8.5.00 (Doc. 12), Nairobi, p. 63; and OI, E. Joji (Doc. 101). K. Mwangale blames Europeans bitterly for his daughter's use of skin-lighteners, such that she no longer appears an African, and that this is a reason for his joining *Holy Spirit*. OI, K. Mwangale, 21.2.02 (Doc. 111), Kitumba, p. 26. The relevant passage in this interview is to be found in Appendix 5.11.4.

together.¹¹⁹ This continued use of traditional sleeping materials when other more comfortable products were readily available was believed necessary to receive Spiritual dreams.¹²⁰

The Holy Spirit and the battle against evil

To summarize the traditional understanding, all evil that happened to someone in daily life could be explained as the work of mystical forces in one form or another. Some were sent by the malicious intent of other people, or emanated from ‘witches’, ‘wizards’, or sorcerers, consciously or unconsciously. Ill effects were also brought about by mystical sanctions consequent upon someone falling into a state of ritual impurity, or upon having been in contact with someone else in such a state. Ancestors could cause illness or problems. To distinguish which of the many causes was relevant in a particular case took skill, time, and - since recourse to elders or to specialists was often necessary - resources. The new message of Chilson and all those who adopted his teaching was that repentance would lead to a clean heart and that into this heart the Holy Spirit of God would enter with power. To this teaching the Roho Christians, drawing on their traditional Luyia cultural heritage, added the concept of the Holy Spirit as the power of God to discern, confront, and deal with the diverse spirits and spiritual forces surrounding and troubling them. They came to understand that the purpose of the Levitical laws was not just to enable people to avoid ritual impurity, but to ensure that the human spirit or heart was clean enough to receive the Holy Spirit. The combination of these concepts offers a more

¹¹⁹ OI, E. Joji, 22.9.99 (Doc. 101), Wamuluma.

¹²⁰ See below, chapter four, pp. 215ff. for another reason for restrictions on use or consumption of particular items: the disciplining of desire.

powerful tool for dealing with the mystical forces of ordinary life than was available in the non-pentecostal missionary message, and forms the basis of Roho spirituality.

The Holy Spirit as guardian of the community

Although Roho Christians must be peaceful and not given to quarrelling or anger (indeed, this is considered one of the most reliable tests of the presence of the Spirit)¹²¹ the life of the Spirit demands that the spiritual forces of evil be confronted at all times. The Spiritual song *Kurwana Rihi liu Mwami* (Lulogooli: 'Fighting the Lord's warfare') was probably first sung not long after the people of the Spirit had been expelled from the Friends and had suffered persecution. It commemorates the courage of the leaders who fought spiritually (not physically, although they were beaten severely and some later died from the effects). It concludes: 'Let us fight the Lord's fight, / People want to go for His warfare.'¹²² Another song foresees the trumpet calling the elect to paradise, and rounds on the wicked against whom the war is to be fought:

Solo: Where will you pass you witch?

Response: Halleluya, where will you pass you witch, halleluya, halleluya!

Solo: Where will you pass you arrogant people?

Response: Halleluya, where will you pass you arrogant people, halleluya, halleluya!

Solo: Where will you pass you wicked?

Response: Halleluya, where will you pass you wicked, halleluya, halleluya!¹²³

These are the people who bring disruption and evil to the community and to individual lives, and who will be excluded from heaven.

¹²¹ OI, J. Kisibo 9.3.00 (Doc. 41), Ibwali, p. 16.

¹²² HSS (Doc. 21) No. 5.

¹²³ *Kisiriva Kirikubwa* ('The Trumpet will Sound') HSS (Doc. 21) No. 31.

But evil must be fought not only outside the church, it is present inside, as the amount of time the people of the Spirit spend on repentance and expulsion of evil from their midst makes very clear. *Mumuganda Yimu* (Lulogooli: ‘In This Congregation’), despite its unfortunate understanding of Jews as the betrayers of Jesus, is primarily concerned with the fact that members of the congregation themselves may harbour evil motives, and be traitors within the fellowship:

Solo: In this congregation

Response: There are

Solo: In this congregation

Response: There are Jews, there are

Chorus: Halleluya, there are
Halleluya, there are Jews, there are

Solo: Those that crucified Jesus

Response: There are

Solo: Those that crucified Jesus

Response: There are Jews, there are

Chorus: Halleluya, etc.¹²⁴

A strong and bitter hostility to ‘sinners’ will be noted in the two Spiritual songs quoted. This was a significant element in early Roho spirituality. At one time outsiders – the ‘sinners’ – were referred to as ‘puffadders’ (*kihirigoma*). (In contrast, modern Roho teaching is much weaker on condemnation and separation, focusing rather on love of your neighbour.) It may perhaps be posited here that since the Spirit requires complete purity, and evil cannot be tolerated *within* – either within the individual or the church – there is a tendency in Roho spirituality for it to be projected upon others.

¹²⁴ HSS (Doc. 21) No. 40

Because this warfare is spiritual and normally invisible, the discernment of evil is particularly important. Although this is the primary duty of the prophets, as will be seen, essentially discernment is a function of the Holy Spirit in someone's heart. A catechism prepared for an assembly (congregation) of *Divine* in Nairobi, asks the question, 'What is the function of the Holy Spirit?', and requires the answer '(1) The Spirit is a gift which someone is given to show them what has taken place and what will take place [i.e., to know the spiritual causes of things, and the spiritual dangers ahead, and how they can be avoided]. (2) The Spirit is a gift which enables someone to discern good and evil.'¹²⁵

Part Five. The prophetic gifts

Prophets as channels of God's messages

A Lulogooli *Holy Spirit* song of the 1960s captures the Roho understanding of the war against evil, and the guidance, protection, and power the Spirit affords to his people:

The way He¹²⁶ called prophets,
 The Spirit Himself guards the land. (x 2)
 The Spirit Himself, the Spirit Himself,
 The Spirit Himself guards the land. (x 2)

Tell the witches Jesus is coming,
 The Spirit Himself guards the land. (x 2)
 The Spirit Himself, the Spirit Himself, etc.

Tell the sinners Jesus is coming,

¹²⁵ African Divine Church, Kenya High Assembly: *Maswali kwa wanajordani* (Doc. 95), translated from the Swahili. The document is purely congregational, and has not been approved by the ADC HQs. For a fuller theology of the Holy Spirit, offered spontaneously by the self-taught Archbishop James Kisibo of *Roho Israel*, see Appendix 5.7.1.

¹²⁶ The Lulogooli is gender neutral here. I am not able to render the personhood of the Holy Spirit in this translation to indicate this without at the same time reducing the force of the original.

The Spirit Himself guards the land... etc.¹²⁷

The prophet has a special responsibility for guarding the community, and warning against danger. In *Zion*, prophecy 'is the only means that the Holy Spirit of God can talk to the mankind [sic].'¹²⁸ Like the other spiritual gifts, it is widely distributed among the church members – in accordance with the egalitarian and gender-free prophecy of Joel 2:28-32.¹²⁹ The prophet, then, is someone particularly (but not exclusively) gifted by holding himself or herself open to receiving and interpreting the messages of God, a calling that demands very considerable self-discipline. In *African Israel*, the new believer may be 'faced by prophecy from other old members telling him the exact sins or evils he did, even if the prophet or prophetess be a stranger to him, he/she gets spiritual mirror to read and interpret the sins to the new member [sic].'¹³⁰ As well as revealing to individual members their sins and challenging them to repent, prophets do the same for the church community.

Often prophecies are addressed to people by name.¹³¹ Such prophecies frequently threaten death, AIDS, or other disasters if people don't repent. The question of what subjects of prophecy it is appropriate to raise during a public service of worship is much debated. Some hold firmly to the belief that prophecies of death, and anything that could cause division in the church should be handled privately and by a small group of

¹²⁷ *Roho mwene yarinda rirova*, 'The Holy Spirit guards the land', Holy Spirit Songs (Doc.21), No. 2.

¹²⁸ 'African Holy Zionist Church History'.

¹²⁹ OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00 (Doc 12) Nairobi, p. 58. 'If you have the Spirit, you are a prophet. The dream you dream, the prophet also dreams. The way he sees you, even you see the prophet.' In Acts 2: 14-21, Peter regards Joel 2: 28-32 as having been fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

¹³⁰ 'The African Israel Church History'. In the *Holy Spirit*, a prophet's work is 'to pray and talk to God and tell people their sins.' (OI, K. Mwangale 21.2.02 (Doc. 110) p. 20.)

¹³¹ For examples of prophecies see Appendix 5.1.2, 5.1.6.

elders.¹³² Occasionally Roho members wonder why prophecies focus on evil and the punishment to come. The answer would seem to be that the root function of a prophet – as that of the Holy Spirit himself - is the uncovering of sin. Of course the prophet also often brings words of encouragement and affirmation.¹³³ Indeed Anderson sees this whole ministry of ‘diagnostic prophecy’ as a form of pastoral therapy.¹³⁴

The healing ministry

The prophet will usually have a healing ministry as well. The two ministries go together because sin is considered the ultimate cause of sickness,¹³⁵ and the uncovering of sin, followed by repentance and prayer, can often lead to recovered health.¹³⁶ Success in this ministry can lead to the prophet gaining a very strong following in the church, especially since he or she (for there are female prophets, often having a significant influence)¹³⁷ usually exhorts the healed person to become a church member. People from all walks of life will come for healing. I interviewed the Town Clerk of Mbale Municipality, who had

¹³² OI, J. Shitochi, 7.3.01 (Doc. 87), Emwiru, Kisa. Prophet Shitochi explains that warnings of death (preferably communicated privately) may be a call to people to examine themselves and amend their ways. But his concern for order and maturity among the prophets can be understood from the following example. In 2000 another prophet (also from *Holy Spirit*) warned a senior church leader (B) of his forthcoming death. B visited the prophet to ask whether God had changed his mind. ‘No’, said the prophet. Two months after the prophecy, the leader died. At the funeral, the prophet said God had called the deceased home. Then after the burial, he informed B’s wife that the five ‘killers’ of B were coming to burn the grave (i.e., to stop the spirit of the deceased from haunting them). Now some in the clan believe that B was poisoned by his brother. (PC, A. Obede, 15.1.00) Such cases can cause considerable distress.

¹³³ In my own case, the following prophecy was given in 1999 from a prophet in Nairobi: ‘because Padwick is a leader who stands on the truth, anyone who casts doubt on his faith, poverty will follow him, because it is the word of God in him not falsehood.’ This suggests to me that my rather ambivalent position in the church was under attack in some quarters, though unknown to me. (Shauri Moyo Church Opening, 4.8.99, (Doc.9), Nairobi, p.6.) Prophet Shitochi understands the whole ministry of a prophet as one of gentle encouragement and correction of others. OI, J. Shitochi, 25.1.02, (Doc. 104), Emwiru, Kisa, pp. 6-8.

¹³⁴ A. Anderson, *Zion and Pentecost*, p. 304.

¹³⁵ OI, S. Lukuyu, J. Sande, K. Mwangale, T. Nyando, 23.9.99, (Doc.71), Mahanga.

¹³⁶ The patient must make an initial repentance (*kujitakasa*) also before the Spirit is able to reveal the disease. OI, J. Shitochi, 25.1.02 (Doc. 104) Emwiru, Kisa, pp. 38-9.

¹³⁷ As for example, Prophetess Belita Muhatia, of *Holy Spirit* in the town of Eldoret. Formerly a Catholic, she was born in South Nyanza, and became a member of Roho Maler before joining *Holy Spirit*. She has considerable influence. PC, A. Obede, 15.5.02.

suffered from depression, general lethargy, and then experienced an attack from evil spirits. One night at home, he found himself unable to shut the door, tore it off its hinges in his struggle, and (in his words) ‘I kept fighting things that I did not know. I could see only light and darkness alternately.’ He went to the neighbouring *Holy Spirit* church, was prayed for the whole day by the church and by the prophet, and the following day was taken to hospital by his brother, where they found no clinical signs of disease. The next day he was all right. He joined *Holy Spirit* in consequence.¹³⁸

Unlike the Zionist churches of South Africa, the Spiritual churches of Kenya use no symbolic objects to assist in the healing ritual, except for the *kanzu* (the white prayer-gowns), and the wooden cross. The *kanzu* was originally a common everyday garment of no ritual significance.¹³⁹ Now, it is usually reserved for worship and prayer, and is beginning to acquire some ritual significance in itself. The cross, between two and six feet long, is carried as a staff, and is referred to as Aaron’s or Moses’ staff. It protects you from the police, makes wrongdoers fear, stops you from fighting with someone, and judges those who do wrong.¹⁴⁰ It assists in exorcism, in blessing and cursing (though the

¹³⁸ OI, Mulehi, 29.4.01, Mahanga (Doc. 34). I saw the signs Mulehi’s struggle with the door had left on the woodwork. The Prophet Adolwa attributed the attack on the Town Clerk to *djinn* sent from Mombasa, which, he says, is a characteristic form of spirit used against the educated. Archbishop Kisibo tells the story of another healing of someone mentally disturbed in Ponge, who hitherto was bound with ropes, but after healing became a leading member of the church, and a drummer. OI, J. Kisibo, 31.8.02 (Doc. 136) Ibwali, p. 16.

¹³⁹ See below, chapter four, p. 191.

¹⁴⁰ OI, J. Shitochi, 25.1.2 (Doc. 104) Emwiru. The cross is quite widely believed to offer protection from police harassment. (I certainly place my cross prominently on the dashboard of my vehicle when approaching a road-block.) The Nation for 2.1.03 reports that a certain James Onyango, of African Roho Msalaba Church, entered State House, Nairobi, on 22.12.02, during the election campaign for a new president, in full sight of the security guards, wearing clerical robes and carrying a cross and a wooden sword (the newspaper shows a photograph of him holding the cross). He wanted to tell President Moi to hand over the presidency immediately. No guard stopped him, and he spent a night in State House, reading files, and washing his robes and a shirt, before being arrested the following day. (He was later released.) The cross appears to have been significant in enabling his entry. “I waved the cross to the G[eneral]

latter function is disputed theologically), and it can even help in stopping rain. It is not supposed to be handled by all and sundry, lest its power should be diminished.¹⁴¹

Moreover, some quite senior church leaders of my acquaintance have refused to carry one, believing that they are not yet sufficiently holy for its power not to rebound upon themselves.¹⁴² Essentially the cross is carried only by those who follow the rules of the Holy Spirit, and who for that reason have the power of the Spirit.¹⁴³ Anderson quotes Daneel on how Zionist leaders in Zimbabwe understand their use of cords, cloth, church badges, staffs, holy water, and other symbolic objects, for healing purposes: ‘the object used... is primarily *the visual symbolic concretization of the Divine Power*, which [i.e., the symbolic object] in itself has no medicative effect.’¹⁴⁴ The use of *kanzu* and cross among the Roho churches is similar, with the proviso concerning magical or mystical power noted above. It should be noted that among the Roho churches of Vihiga there is considerable resistance to the overuse of crosses and indeed other symbolic objects in the ministry of the church.¹⁴⁵ This is possibly due to the association of material objects with witchcraft or traditional divination.

S[ervice] U[nit] officers and then walked in... Ten metres from the gate, I knelt down and prayed for my country and Moi to agree to hand over power. I met other security officers at the State House’s doorstep but they did not ask me where I was going when I waved the cross to them.”

¹⁴¹ Because of contamination by those whose hearts are not pure. Kefa Mwangale considers himself worthy to carry one because of his age and because he no longer has ‘any desire for wealth or for things of this world.’ OI, S. Lukayu, J. Sande, K. Mwangale, T. Nyando, 23.9.99, (Doc.71), Mahanga.

¹⁴² When I proposed to hang my own cross above the door in my house leading from the sitting room to the bedrooms, the other household members protested, believing that they would fall under judgement for their sins if they passed underneath. In this case, it is the contagion of holiness that is feared. Cp. various passages in the Jewish Scriptures, in which God protects his holiness by striking down those that inadvertently touch the Ark of the Covenant, or trespass in the Tent of Meeting (1 Chron. 13: 9, Num. 4: 15-20). This is a parallel concept to the judgement of death or sickness that threatened sinners or the ritually impure if they entered the cave at Mung’oma. (OI, K. Mwangale, 21.2.02 (Doc. 111), Kitumba, p. 9.)

¹⁴³ OI, J. Shitochi, 25.1.02 (Doc. 104) Emwiru, Kisa, pp. 52-53.

¹⁴⁴ Daneel, *Old and New* (2), p. 233 (emphasis in the original), quoted in Anderson, *Zion and Pentecost*, p. 301.

¹⁴⁵ In *African Israel* the use of the cross is not permitted (PC, Rev. Daniel Oguso, 7.9.02, Nairobi). In *Lyahuka*, Archbishop Eliakimu Keverenge felt that the practice of carrying crosses was being misused for

Interpretation of dreams

The prophet may be consulted for a wide range of matters, not just for healing or advice on church leadership. Prophet Joab Adolwa was visited recently by a woman whose pharmacy had been broken into in a nearby market. Apparently he was able to reveal the names of the suspects.¹⁴⁶ But probably the prophet's commonest task is one shared by other leaders in church, and by members in their homes: the interpretation of dreams. During public worship, time is normally set aside for such 'telephone calls from God'. Like prophecies – from which they are hardly to be distinguished in their function – they can give immediate instructions, such as telling the congregation to visit the home of someone in pastoral need immediately after the service.¹⁴⁷ Or as when a dream reported by a church member that morning advised the late Archbishop Eliakimu Keverenge of *Lyahuka* on my first visit to him that I was not a threat to the church.¹⁴⁸ Dreams can indicate to the dreamer that he or she will receive the Spirit; they can propose candidates for marriage (although such messages are now distrusted).¹⁴⁹ Dreams frequently guide the church officers on issues of leadership. The retired Archbishop Ondolo spent some time discussing with me and his sons the meaning of a dream he had had, in which we had all appeared together with the new Archbishop, and which contained a verse from

the purpose of cursing or condemnation. He therefore called them all in, unless someone could give a good reason why he or she should carry one. In the end, all the recalled and discarded crosses were eaten by termites. (OI, M. Keverenge, F. King'ang'a, 19.8.02 (Doc. 118), Lukuvuli, p. 22-3). See also the objection of Archbishop James Kisibo of *Roho Israel* in Appendix 5.5.3, to *Legio Maria's* excessive use of crosses and rosaries. (Although Archbishop James himself carries a staff which he has described to me as Aaron's rod). *Legio Maria* also use candles and robes of different colours, and wooden spears and guns in addition to crosses, in their spiritual warfare.

¹⁴⁶ OI, J. Adolwa 11.7.01 (Doc. 123), Mahanga.

¹⁴⁷ Dreams and Adolwa's interpretation, 7.3.00 (Doc. 97) Lugangu p. 2.

¹⁴⁸ Lukuvuli, c. 1982.

¹⁴⁹ Respectively, OI, J. Shitochi, 7.3.01 (Doc. 87), Emwiru, Kisa, p. 32; *Lyahuka Church Records*, (Doc. 141) for 7.1.41: 'Joash foretold that Mary was going to get married to Paul.'

Scripture concerning the rule of Hezekiah. After some discussion, we agreed this was advice concerning the new leader.¹⁵⁰

I have not been able to discover any clear principles of dream interpretation, except that it is generally by analogy of image.¹⁵¹ It can therefore be distinguished from traditional dream interpretations, which frequently use the reverse of analogy, e.g., a dream of a funeral means that person has eaten well; in Roho understanding, the person whose funeral is dreamt of is spiritually dead, or in real danger of actual death. Sometimes an intuitive understanding of depth psychology seems to operate also in Roho interpretations.

Prophets and traditional diviners

The prophet is usually called by God to his vocation during a long sickness, a period of mental disturbance, or a disaster.¹⁵² Prophet Adolwa's story is that he was working with a construction company in Nairobi on a high-rise building. He took a false step, fell from the 13th storey, and having been taken for dead was covered with a blanket. In this state he had a vision of a church leader who instructed him to return home. The leader explained to Adolwa that 'he had gone for repair' and was now a new creature. To everyone's surprise, Adolwa regained consciousness, and recovered to the extent of being able to walk away from the scene. He left his work, and returned home, having declared

¹⁵⁰ Dreams of C. Ondolo, 31.5.01 (Doc. 126), Bukoyani. It is accepted that dreams can be invented for the purpose of promoting the chances of certain leaders. In that case, they are attributed by the opponents to 'confusion'. This is in fact a strong argument for some form of open election in the churches.

¹⁵¹ For example, Adolwa gave an (extremely misogynist) interpretation of a snake called *kihiringoma* (Lulogooli: puff-adder), which he compared to a woman because both lie on their backs. Dreams at Lugangu, 18.4.00 (Doc 97) p. 2.

¹⁵² This is a characteristic of the calling of ritual specialists in tradition, especially a spell of temporary madness. Wagner, 'The Abaluyia', p. 39.

‘That is how God elects and chooses his people.’ From then on he worked as a prophet.¹⁵³

Roho prophets seem to serve a similar sociological function to that of two traditional Luyia specialists, diviners (*ombimbuli*, *avavimbuli*), and dream prophets (*omung’oli*, *avang’oli*). Sangree notes that among the Tiriki and elsewhere among the Luyia, occasional individuals would appear whose dreams received recognition from the elders as of special significance; among the Nandi and Terik such prophets could acquire a degree of political power.¹⁵⁴ But Luyia dream prophets were relatively rare and in Vihiga it is doubtful if they have existed for some time.

In contemporary Vihiga, however, there is understood to be competition between Roho prophets and traditional diviners, and the boundary is sometimes blurred. Both groups are called in dreams or visions (in the one case by God, in the other by the ancestors), often after sickness or some traumatic event.¹⁵⁵ Both meet the need of people to understand why sickness and problems come upon them, and to find ways of restoring the natural and beneficent state of affairs. Both will often discern the activity of witches or sorcerers, although the Christian prophet will normally avoid traditional diagnoses that attribute misfortune to the action of ancestors (see below, chapter four). These parallels were clear to the Friends, who opposed the new Roho movement in the early years and believed the

¹⁵³ OI, Adolwa 11.7.01, (Doc. 123), Mahanga. This is Adolwa’s own account, and I have not been able to confirm the events from independent witnesses. The story has clearly been moulded in the course of many tellings to conform to a genre that might be termed ‘Divine Calling’. In Archbishop Kisibo’s story, he fell sick, was admitted to a hospital ward, was invited to leave his body behind, and was taken on a visit to Purgatory and Heaven before being sent back to his ministry. (See Appendix 5.2.1)

¹⁵⁴ Sangree, *Age, Prayer, and Politics*, pp. 183-184, 221-222.

¹⁵⁵ See Wagner, ‘The Abaluyia’, p. 39.

revealing of sins – particularly the open naming and challenging of other people about their sins - to be the work of evil spirits. They were answered, ‘An evil spirit cannot reveal the wrongs that someone has done’.¹⁵⁶

The parallels are also clear to contemporary Roho church leaders. They urge their members to consult prophets rather than diviners.¹⁵⁷ Or they themselves, as pastors, priests, or bishops, advise people who believe they are bewitched.¹⁵⁸ (As already observed, the prophecy of Joel promises the gifts of the Spirit to all, in marked contrast to the very restricted and esoteric calling of traditional diviners.) Church leaders also try to ensure that the prophets are guided by the Holy Spirit and not by evil spirits, and that (unlike diviners and sorcerers) the prophets do not use medicine, and do not ask for money.¹⁵⁹ The mechanism of prophecy or divination itself is not susceptible to observation and analysis. In a predominantly non-technological or non-industrial society, the question ‘how?’ is less important than ‘who?’, and the creation of *meaning* in the lives of people and the community is essentially a personal rather than a technical matter.¹⁶⁰ The criteria for assessing a prophet, then, are the modes and methods of inspiration, the conformity of the prophet’s life to the church’s own moral criteria, and his or her success in acts of healing and interpretation of events.

¹⁵⁶ ‘History of the Holy Spirit Church of East Africa’.

¹⁵⁷ See Appendix 5.5.1.

¹⁵⁸ As for example in OI, S. Lukayu, J. Sande, K. Mwangale, T. Nyando, 23.9.99, (Doc.71), Mahanga, p. 2, in which Archbishop Sande says that someone who fears that he/she has been bewitched should repent of the fears, be prayed for, and later they will receive a vision to guide them.

¹⁵⁹ OI, Lukayu, Sande, Mwangale, Nyando, 23.9.99 (Doc. 71), Mahanga p. 2; OI, J. Shitochi, 25.1.02 (Doc. 104) Emwiru, Kisa, pp. 42-44.

¹⁶⁰ Rajae, *Globalization on Trial*, p. 67 notes this shift towards understanding ‘how’, and making things work, that was a necessary precondition for technological invention in industrial society.

Dangerous prophets

The role of prophets in church leadership can be crucial. They can easily lead people astray, or become virtual dictators. Bishops therefore like to assert their control over the prophets by asserting their right to ‘test the spirits’, and to observe the prophets’ performance and behaviour over a period of time before their ministry is confirmed.¹⁶¹ In some situations, leaders may find it necessary to go so far as to rebuke and expel the spirit of divination.¹⁶² More mundanely, monopolizing all the church roles and functions, especially that of handling money (considered a particular threat to Roho spirituality), and showing a lack of respect for other leaders, are signs that a prophet is exceeding his responsibilities and endangering the source of his prophecy.¹⁶³ In earlier days, indeed, a prophet’s role was simply to wait upon God for messages, ‘sitting quietly in the corner of the church rather than on the platform’, and not taking any part in executive leadership.¹⁶⁴

Even more sensitive to the bishops are the cases of false prophecy, which may be considered conceptually distinct from that of prophets guided by the spirits of divination. Indications of false prophecy are prophecies that divide rather than build up the church, and prophecies that scandalize and terrify rather than encourage the faithful. A prophecy that proves wrong in the results may not necessarily be false, but ‘people did not know

¹⁶¹ The relevant Biblical texts are 1 Cor. 14: 22-40, 1 Thess. 5: 19-21, 1 Jn. 4: 1. In the ‘Revised Constitution of the Holy Spirit Church 2002’, prophets are made accountable to the council of the assembly by which they were recognized and habitually serve. It may be noted here that Sangree, observes that the traditional dream prophets among the Tiriki (*ba-ngoli*) operated only under the approval of the ritual elders, and that one reason for the relative success of *African Israel* in Tiriki location was the ability of their leader there, Joseph Ganila, ‘both to utilize and to subordinate Zionist type dream prophets after the manner of the traditional Tiriki ritual elders’. ‘The Dynamics of the Separatist Churches’, pp. 11-13 (my italics).

¹⁶² See Appendix 5.5.2.

¹⁶³ OI, K. Mwangale, 21.2.02 (Doc. 110), Kitumba, pp. 22-30, where the case of a prophet accusing a priest of killing a pastor (through spiritual means – the consequence of ‘throwing money at the pastor’s feet’ – something strictly forbidden in custom) is discussed. The matter was partially resolved by the priest concerned going to worship in another congregation.

¹⁶⁴ OI, K. Mwangale, 23.7.02 (Doc. 130), Kitumba; PC, A. Obede, 1.8.02, Nairobi.

how to explain it'. Thus the prophesied death of a church leader might, if it failed to occur during the time predicted, be reinterpreted as the spiritual death of his or her leadership.¹⁶⁵

Part Six. Towards interpretation

Interiority: the Spirit in the heart

It might appear that the primary concern of the Roho Christians is the observance of rules, both moral and those concerning ritual impurity – indeed, that their ethical concerns focus on the observance of external laws. Far from it. The concept of purity (*usafi, utakatifu*) of the people of the Spirit is both external and internal. The interior disposition of the human spirit or heart is reflected in an outer life of purity; equally, external acts of sin or of impurity must necessarily contaminate the holiness of the human spirit within. Indeed, of these two inseparably connected aspects of life, the interior disposition is the more important. The 'life of the Spirit' demands a transparency, an outward living-out of what is within, whether this is the joy and peace of the Spirit, or sinful and fleshly – in which case it is to be opened up, repented of, and cleansed, in acts of public repentance. Among many Protestant Christians of the East African Revival, it is customary to confront new acquaintances with the question 'are you saved?' (Swahili, *umeokoka, umeokolewa?*). This practice enables people to know immediately in what relationship they stand with each other.¹⁶⁶ But Roho Christians (traditionally, at least) distrust this formulation. This is partly on the theological grounds of its assumed

¹⁶⁵ OI, J. Shitochi, 7.3.01, (Doc 87), Kitumba, where such a prophecy is reinterpreted.

¹⁶⁶ In this respect, it is a parallel to the traditional discussion between two people meeting for the first time, in which they would explore the various possible ways they might be related.

arrogance,¹⁶⁷ but also because it is not necessary to ask someone his or her stand before God. It is enough to look in their face (which glows with a certain honesty and transparency) and into their eyes (which look directly at you and not askance); to listen to their speech, and to their manner of praying.¹⁶⁸ Their interior disposition will be revealed.

The reintegration offered by ‘life in the Spirit’

To live according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to know the Spirit’s power, and the peace of heart that the Spirit brings, is the goal and prize of the *watu wa roho*. It is described as ‘a state of supreme happiness’.¹⁶⁹ It was for this that Yakobo Buluku, Daniel Sande, and Elijah Kerere suffered beatings and death, that the *avakoyani* (Lulogooli, ‘people of Bukoyani’) counted it a blessing to be regarded in the community as mentally disturbed, and as ‘witches’, that the early leaders of the Holy Spirit movement gave up hopes of advancement in the Friends’ church and colonial society, and that many of those who came after them left employment in the towns for a materially poor existence in the ‘reserve’ after their conversion. How can this profound and life-changing experience be located in, related to, the radical transformations – political, economic, sociological and religious – that were taking place in Vihiga as colonialism began to bite in the 1920s and 1930s? Reserving many issues for the next chapter, I discuss here the reintegration of life offered by the new faith, and the re-assertion of communality.

¹⁶⁷ OI, S. Lukayu, J. Sande, K. Mwangale, T. Nyando, 23.9.99, (Doc.71), Mahanga, pp. 4-5. ‘We do not use the word *kuokoka* because that person who is saved knows his behaviour (*mienendo*), and he is confident that he does good. We in *Holy Spirit* know that we still live in a world of sin, and that we must repent daily and on every occasion.’ ‘...we are still involved in the war against Satan, and we are still in the midst of the sins of the world’.

¹⁶⁸ OI, S. Lukayu, J. Sande, K. Mwangale, T. Nyando, 23.9.99 (Doc.71), Mahanga, pp. 4-5.

¹⁶⁹ OI, E. Joji, 22.9.99 (Doc. 101), Wamuluma.

Reflecting on his initiation as a diviner in Cameroun, Rosny concluded that its purpose was to enable him to perceive emotionally, and not just intellectually, the violence of society – the violence that it was the role of the diviner to discern and manage in a traditional society that abhorred its open expression. But he rejects the attempt to explain his experience in psychoanalytic or psychotherapeutic terms. The diviner to whom he was apprenticed did not force him to confront the violence within himself, as a psychotherapist would have done, but only that of others.¹⁷⁰ The ‘life of the Spirit’ suggests by contrast an attempt to deal with the anger and violence of both the internal and the external world, and to do so by bringing the two worlds into consonance with each other.

In traditional society someone of hidden motives was profoundly distrusted, and was likely to be counted as an enemy, a sorcerer, or a witch.¹⁷¹ In more modern society, as will be seen, the missionary churches came to be characterized by Roho Christians as ‘churches without the Spirit’. Such an expression implied that Christians in missionary congregations were likely to be duplicitous, serving the interests of the world and colonial society on the one hand, and on the other claiming to be faithful followers of Christ. (In the language of chapter one, they were taking advantage of the convenient dichotomization of modernity). The early Roho Christians sought to abolish this distinction or gap between interior thoughts and external actions that both traditional

¹⁷⁰ Rosny, *Healers in the Night*, p. 251.

¹⁷¹ Compare the popular Swahili expression, *hana maneno* (literally, ‘he is without words’), which means ‘he has only one word, and that is consistent’, or ‘he is what he says’, and expresses approval of someone’s directness and simplicity.

society and missionary Christianity seemed to encourage. Mutual openness and accountability were essential to the building and maintenance of fellowship. If the missionary Christians were to repent openly, and make themselves accountable to the fellowship, there would be no gap between their inward disposition and outward profession, and in consequence, they would be obliged to abandon their 'worldly' goals. As I show in the next chapter, they would then recognize the principle of reciprocity rather than that of accumulation.

A similar movement towards interiority and consonance, which stressed repeated open confession, 'being cleansed from sins in the blood of Jesus', and mutual accountability, began in Rwanda in 1931/2. In its earliest days its members - known locally as *balokole* (Luganda, 'the saved ones') and later as the East African Revival - manifested millennial expectations, including the neglect of crops.¹⁷² Their early converts practised ecstatic gifts of the Spirit, quoting the prophecy of Joel, until the missionaries diplomatically suppressed them in a largely successful attempt to keep the revival within the missionary churches.¹⁷³ The stress on consensual decision-making, and the need to have regular daily meetings of the fellowship in order to 'walk in the light' suggest that the *balokole* created for themselves a similar identity space within colonialism as the *watu wa roho*. The rationale was shared by both movements: given the temptations facing Christians on every hand, public confession and mutual accountability were essential if a Christian

¹⁷² Robins, 'Tukutendereza', p. 227.

¹⁷³ Robins, 'Tukutendereza', p. 216ff. The missionaries used the argument that ecstatic phenomena were signs of spiritual immaturity, and they would soon pass. The same argument, in a less extreme form, was taught by Japheth Zare in *Holy Spirit* and by Zakayo Kivuli in *African Israel*, as an attempt to draw the line between the extreme ecstatic manifestations of the earlier Roho churches, and what they considered to be more appropriate manifestations in a more modern society. Their principle objection was the practice of rolling on the ground (*kugaagaa*, Swahili). (Information from Bishop I. Senelwa and Rev. Daniel Oguso.)

were to maintain ‘the life of the Spirit’, or to continue ‘walking in the light’. If the individual Christian ignored the voice of the Spirit in his heart, the Spirit would speak through his or her fellows, until the ‘sinner’ submitted to the group norms.

As noted in chapter one, modernity brings about the rise of individualism, and the disembodiment of one’s sense of identity from social relations.¹⁷⁴ In traditional Luyia society a person is partly constituted by kinship and community relations which extend beyond death and beyond the material world, through the impact upon the individual of the mystical forces examined in this chapter, such as ancestors, witchcraft, etc. With modernity a dichotomy develops between private and public, as also between body and soul, and between object and subject, and the connection between these oppositions becomes problematic. In the Roho understanding, the channels between the distinct spheres are kept open through the work of the Holy Spirit. God is seen to act through his Spirit in ‘public’ to correct the ‘private’, through dreams and prophecies revealing personal sins. This is true even when, as sometimes happens, the individual who receives a prophecy has hitherto known nothing about it. He or she must still repent.¹⁷⁵ This is to recognize the need for a communal conscience.¹⁷⁶ In another area of modern dichotomization, the people of the Spirit re-asserted the essential connections between matter and Spirit. In their re-construction of traditional Luyia purity codes according to

¹⁷⁴ See above, chapter one, pp. 15ff. , a section based chiefly on Friedman, *Cultural Identity and Global Process* pp. 194-232.

¹⁷⁵ In this, the Roho practice bears a similarity to the witch-cleansing rites of Central Africa, where it is believed that some people are witches without knowing it, and must confess what they have never before known about themselves.

¹⁷⁶ In a very perceptive passage, Welbourn writes: ‘Spirit, *ruach*, is felt as a more permeable, a more potent, form of matter, a fulfilment, not an abrogation of man’s ‘natural’ condition. More importantly, it is concerned not with communication between psyches but with relationships between persons. *The group, not the individual, is the primary point of reference; and it forms, as it were, a field of personal force of which its members are nodal points...* Witchcraft and extra-sensory perception act because one person is in the same personal field as another.’ Welbourn, ‘A Metaphysical Challenge’. My italics.

their understanding of Leviticus, they taught that matter must be pure to ensure the presence of Spirit; and the same understanding lay behind their practice of healing through spiritual means alone.

Communality vs. the alternative realities

The communal conscience also acted through the Roho laws of purity. These focused attention on danger and impurity, and the countervailing power of Spirit, in such a way that communality (understood as the voice of the Spirit acting in the Christian community) retained its sanctions in the central areas of birth, Christian and traditional initiation, death, and sex, against the growing individualism of colonial society. These rites of passage focus attention on the link between the holy and the successful passage of an individual through the various stages of communal life. They culminate in what may be considered the Roho service *par excellence*, the forty days memorial service. Ruel reflects that traditionally such rites concerned themselves not with the simple passage from birth to death, but from birth through physical maturity to ‘the abiding maturity of being memorialised within a living society’, as an ancestor.¹⁷⁷ As a step towards this, the elder acquires significant functions of advising and blessing the younger members of society. (In chapter six I shall show how these traditional social concepts are re-affirmed within the structures of governance of Roho churches). Thus Roho symbolic structures affirm the patriarchal values of the communal mode of production. It is to be noted that adoption of the Levitical purity laws, especially concerning menstruation, had the effect of making Roho women impure for substantially longer periods than in traditional society. As might be expected, the contradictions in Roho churches are between elders

¹⁷⁷ Ruel, *Belief, Ritual, and the Securing of Life*, p. 9, of the Kuria people.

and youth, and between elders and women. At the same time these contradictions are sharpened by a countervailing force in Roho ideology: the democratization of healing and prophecy through the Spirit.

This last point suggests that the Roho faith was not a simple reversion to the traditional life, which in fact it perceived as ‘confusion’. The Spirit commanded individuals to take a conscious, personal, and very costly step into a new life, which required owning sin, and confessing it personally. This is a move towards what Behrend calls the ‘culpabilization’ of sin.¹⁷⁸ Sin is personal and individual, and must be sought out even, or especially, in one’s intentions, and then dealt with by repentance and the expulsion of evil spirits. At the same time individual sin is a public reality, because it is contagious and destructive of community. The new convert is therefore called also to prophesy to the public sphere ‘as Jonah did to Nineveh’.¹⁷⁹ But because the internalised conscience is not strong enough to stand alone, it must be supported communally, by the very public witness of wearing a turban, cap, or headscarf, at all times in public, and by embroidering the church’s name or badge on one’s ordinary clothes.¹⁸⁰ In this way, the Holy Spirit is seen to bring both the personal and public spheres into concordance – indeed, to destroy the distinction itself – so that the inner spiritual and mental life is at one with the public life.

Roho spirituality also deals with the personally de-centring nature of the traditional world, and the multitude of its ‘public’ kinship obligations and jealousies, by subjecting

¹⁷⁸ ‘Culpabilization refers to the creation of a consciousness of guilt that no longer attributes responsibility to another – as in the idiom of witchcraft – but which places the blame upon oneself.’ Behrend, ‘Holy Spirit Movement’, p. 250.

¹⁷⁹ See above, p. 114.

¹⁸⁰ The frequent public testimonies of the *balokole* serve the same purpose.

all subordinate loyalties to one God. At the same time it works to reduce modern dualism and fragmentation by focusing on the God who is present in both the private and the public spheres.¹⁸¹ In this way, it acts paradoxically as one of the countervailing forces present in modernity - *away* from differentiation and dualism, towards an understanding of the underlying unity of experience. Thus Roho spirituality draws on both modernity and traditional values to promote purity and community. 'The Spirit Himself guards the land.'

In order for the Roho churches to create this new faith, they had to withdraw from the wider society. Helpful here is the psychoanalyst Erikson's analysis of the development of the self across the human life cycle in terms of the emergence of crises and the formation of resulting new identities.¹⁸² He distinguishes between 'whole' identities and 'total' identities. Total identities are those defined primarily by the creation of boundaries, in which everything within is good and everything outside is evil. They are necessary steps towards the development of a new, more mature, identity, in which responses appropriate to an earlier stage but which are not relevant to the new level of maturity are rejected. Total identities are a natural and appropriate response to crises, but need to be alternated with whole identities, in which the diversity of others and oneself is accepted and which represent a more inclusive balance between the inner and outer world. An analogy may be drawn with the Roho churches. In order to define themselves against the powerful alternative realities of the traditional religious understanding on the one hand, and

¹⁸¹ F.B. Welbourn, who had considerable personal experience of AICs in Western Kenya, observed this in 1970. 'Independent churches were an attempt to rebuild...a society which would again be unitary in man's relationship to other men, to nature and to the unseen powers'. Welbourn, 'A Metaphysical Challenge'.

¹⁸² As summarised in Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*, p. 157.

missionary Christianity and the colonial vision on the other, it was necessary for Roho Christians to develop a very clear identity with strict boundaries. In the next chapter I examine further their creativity during this early period of isolation and boundary-drawing.

Chapter Four

The Founders' Vision: Engaging with colonial realities

And afterwards,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams,
your young men will see visions.¹

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I described the core teaching of the Roho churches as repentance and a clean heart, and sought to locate it in relation to the religious heritage of the Luyia. In this chapter I describe its elaboration into the founders' vision in the context of the public history of Kenyan colonial society in the 1930s.

The vision began to be articulated by the people of the Spirit during a period of isolation, of fasting, praying and waiting on God amidst fears of persecution. From 1936, their contacts with other Roho Christians among the Luo led them to clarify and solidify the Roho vision over and against the colonial and missionary ideals. Later this vision was carried into what might be called 'colonies of the Spirit' in what was then Central

¹ Joel 2: 28.

Province, among the Kikuyu and Meru, peoples of rather different traditions. Roho Christians faced their real challenge, however, not in the rural, largely traditional, society of Vihiga or elsewhere, nor even in the world of the missionaries and their converts (with whom at least they shared a common religious language), but in the outposts of European colonialism and commerce, in the settler farms and plantations, and in the increasingly dominant city of Nairobi.² Here, in what has been called ‘intensive contact situations’,³ the confrontation between the Roho labourers and clerks and their colonial masters, controllers of these ‘model’ enterprises or institutions of European ‘development’ and ‘progress’, was direct and ‘up-front’. It should be of no surprise that Roho Christians showed considerable uncertainty about how to engage effectively with these powerful European and increasingly global realities. Nor that the debate on the nature and extent of this engagement has been the most open, the most significant, and the most enduring of all debates within the Roho churches.

In the first part of this chapter I consider the colonial administrators’ vision for Kenya during the 1930s and the economic realities of the decade, and how they were translated into reality for people in Vihiga. During this period, the confidence and sense of purpose of the British colonial administration may be said to have been at its peak. In the second part I explore the Roho Christians’ development of the founders’ vision, both in contrast to the colonial and missionary vision and also in relation to certain Luyia traditional values and concepts. The extent to which the founders’ vision remains viable today is an issue I leave for chapter six.

² Soja, ‘The Geography of Modernization - A Radical Appraisal’, p. 37. Nairobi became a City in 1952.

³ Van Binsbergen, *Religious Change in Zambia*, p. 280.

Part One: The colonial context of the 1930s

Wage labour in the European sector

White settlers began arriving in Kenya in 1903, and immediately began to need African labour for the development of their farms and plantations. Although the settlers' attempts to involve the colonial administration directly in labour recruitment were defeated in 1921, the administration did ensure by other means that there was a plentiful and cheap supply of labour. Registration became the keystone of the post-war labour policy. A registration certificate (the notorious *kipande*) was imposed on all African males over the age of 15. The *kipande* had to be carried at all times when moving outside the native 'reserve', and because it contained labour details, enabled the administration to follow up and prosecute any employee who left employment without his employer's permission.⁴ More significant, however, than these policies in persuading African peasants that they must leave their homes and families to work on white estates and farms was the burden of taxation. Direct taxation through the hut and poll tax, and indirect taxation through customs duties on imports, were fixed deliberately at levels far above the ability of Africans to pay by means of income from their cash crops alone.⁵

⁴ Berman and Lonsdale note its efficiency: in the first year of operation, of the 2790 reported deserters, 2364 were followed up and prosecuted (*Unhappy Valley, Vol. 1*, p. 113).

⁵ Berman and Lonsdale, op. cit., p. 115, quote Buell's estimate that in 1924 the total tax bill for Africans exceeded their income from cash crops by £320,000. The 1927 Labour Commission found an average family income of 90-100 shillings per year, of which 28/- was paid in direct taxes. In 1929 in Nyanza Province alone (roughly the current Western and Nyanza Provinces) the minimum earnings of the 50,000 labourers employed outside the province were £300,000 for the year. In the same province, £66,059 was collected in (direct) taxation in the year. (Native Affairs AR 1929, pp. 41, 83.) In 1935, the inhabitants of Nyanza Province were calculated to have earned in production and wages (from within and outside the Province) about £500,000. The Native Affairs AR 1935, p. 55, notes that 'After deducting the £202,000 odd pounds which they paid to Government in hut tax, they still had the balance to spend...'

The consequence was that African men were forced onto the European labour market in very large numbers.⁶ Indeed, there were more Africans in employment in Kenya than any African colony except Belgian Congo, and a higher proportion of the total population than anywhere else except for Transkei and Basutoland. By 1929 in North Kavirondo District (contemporary Western Province), an average of 44% of able-bodied males were reported in employment each month.⁷ Because many Africans spent only a portion of their time in any one year in wage employment, the actual percentage of those employed at some time during the twelve months was much higher.⁸ In October 1929, however, the world economic crisis hit Kenya, causing a rapid fall in the prices of produce.⁹ By 1931, this in turn had substantially reduced the employment of Kenyan African labour, a state of affairs that continued to 1933, when wages were described by the colonial administration as ‘having reached a level where further reductions are impossible.’¹⁰

But by the late 1920's, another factor than taxes was keeping Africans in wage employment. In the densely populated southern locations of North Kavirondo, there was already insufficient land for subsistence. The official gazetting of ‘Native Reserves’ in 1926 had limited the opportunity for expansion into new lands – most of which were now

⁶ Berman and Lonsdale, pp. 107-110, for this paragraph, except where specified.

⁷ Native Affairs AR 1929, p.117. But see Kitching's comments on the unreliability of colonial statistics (below, f.n.17). He gives these figures for ‘major labour providing districts’, among which Vihiga would certainly be included: 25% of adult males were in the labour market by 1918, 30% by 1925, 40% by 1930, and 50% by 1948. (Kitching, *Class and Economic Change*, p. 251.) Nasimiyu's analysis of labour recruitment from North Kavirondo during the period 1914-1945 gives somewhat lower figures. Nasimiyu, ‘Women in the colonial economy of Bungoma’, p. 65.

⁸ In 1923, excluding the pastoral areas, the administration reckoned the proportion of adult male Africans for the country *as a whole* who were employed at some time during the year was as high as 75%.

⁹ Kitching, *Class and Economic Change*, p. 57.

¹⁰ Native Affairs AR 1933, p. 123.

occupied by, or set aside for, white settlers.¹¹ By 1931, the administration was reporting congestion in many Kavirondo locations.¹² Vihiga was particularly affected. In 1933, Dougall reported that the population in Kakamega was 600 to the square mile, 900 in Maragoli, and 1200 in Bunyore.¹³

The Kakamega gold rush

The economy had recovered by 1935, and 1936 and 1937 were described as years of prosperity.¹⁴ Significant in this fairly rapid recovery was the discovery of gold in 1931 in Kakamega, and in Central and South Kavirondo Districts shortly afterwards. Although it is difficult these days to imagine Kakamega as a major mining centre, in the height of the rush it was predicted that the town might become another Johannesburg.¹⁵ The potential gold field was believed at one time to extend from Butso (north of Kakamega), through Idakho and parts of Marama and Kisa,¹⁶ as far south as Maragoli Trading Centre (Lunyerere).¹⁷ By 1933, the Kakamega gold fields employed as many as 600-800 European miners, and 8000 labourers, all from the Kavirondo districts, the Maragoli

¹¹ In the subsequent Native Lands Trust Ordinance of 1930, these areas 'were reserved and set aside for the use and benefit of the Native tribes of the Colony for ever', and legal provision was made for expansion and excision (with compensation by addition of an equal area) where necessary. Native Affairs AR 1930, p. 83.

¹² Native Affairs AR 1931, p. 7.

¹³ Figures quoted in Letter from JWC Dougall to JH Oldham, 13.1.33. Lugard Papers L77/1 257-259. Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, p. 21, gives rather lower densities based on the 1932 census of 180 in West Kakamega, 600 in North Maragoli, and over 1100 in Bunyore. Kitching points out that all population statistics before 1948 (or 1942 in the case of labour statistics) are unreliable. (*Class and Economic Change*, p. 243).

¹⁴ Native Affairs AR 1936, p. 3; 1937, p. 5.

¹⁵ See, for example, *Daily Express*, 27.2.33. Art. by Mr. Harold Pemberton on his visit to the goldfields. Lugard Papers L77/4 114. Also *Tanganyika Standard*, 'Gold in Kenya Colony – The Possibilities at Kakamega', 3.9.32, Anthony J. King Papers, MSS Afr. s. 1281 /1.

¹⁶ Lugard Papers L77/3 25.

¹⁷ Native Affairs AR 1934, p. 13. In fact, in all the areas mentioned, very small scale mining and alluvial panning for gold by individuals or families is still occasionally practised at the present day.

being in particular demand for underground work.¹⁸ The colonial administration now found itself with a political crisis on its hands. The issue was the threatened excision of the gold-bearing lands from the Native Reserve, gazetted in 1928, and confirmed in 1930 (by the Native Lands Trust Ordinance) ‘for the use and benefit of the native tribes of the colony for ever.’ That ordinance contained the provision that any excisions must be compensated for by land of equal area and value.¹⁹ There was much African concern in North Kavirondo that if gold were found in large quantities, substantial areas of land would be alienated.²⁰ The Provincial Commissioner for Kavirondo, H.R. Montgomery, wrote confidentially in 1933, ‘It is futile to state... that the Natives welcome the miners. They do not, they bitterly resent the presence of Europeans in this country...’²¹ The existing Luyia political association, the North Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association (NKTWA), succeeded in getting questions raised at Westminster.²² The fury also gave birth to a more radical African body, the North Kavirondo Central Association (NKCA). The NKCA wrote directly to the Friends African Mission Board in Indiana to complain that the Friends missionaries were making money out of Africans by grinding maize for the miners at a profit. Indeed, the close links between the FAM at Kaimosi and the gold-mining operations during this period contributed to many Africans grouping ‘all white

¹⁸ Letter from JWC Dougall to JH Oldham, 13.1.33. Lugard Papers L77/1 257-259; Native Affairs AR 1933, pp. 123-4.

¹⁹ Lonsdale, ‘Political Associations’, p. 620; Native Affairs AR 1930, p. 83.

²⁰ Labour Party International Dept., Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions, Report of Baraza Held at Kilimu’s Camp 22.6.32, with PC Nyanza and DC North Kavirondo. Lugard Papers L77/1 57.

²¹ Letter from HR Montgomery to ‘Uncle Jimmy’ [Colonel Montgomery], Kisumu 6.6.33. Lugard Papers L77/1 133. The DC North Kavirondo reported ‘...1933 started badly with intense political unrest engendered partly by a misunderstanding of the intentions of the Native Trust Lands (Amendment) Ordinance, and partly by a feeling that Government had taken sides with the miners against the local natives, and that the latter could expect no redress.’ (Native Affairs AR 1933, p. 4.) One reason for this resentment was that the Native Lands Trust (Amendment) Ordinance, permitting the Administration to temporarily exclude land from the Reserve, for which compensation might be paid in cash, not in land, had been rushed through in December 1932.

²² Lugard Papers L77/1; Lonsdale, ‘Political Associations’, p. 622.

people together in their thinking', and failing to distinguish between the roles and objectives of European missionaries, miners, and administration.²³ In the event, however, the quantities of gold found did not warrant the development of large-scale mining, and from 1937 the production of gold began to decline.²⁴ Once the threat of widespread dispossession had diminished, the miners and their employees seem in the end to have been generally accepted as a positive benefit to the local economy.²⁵ But it was these years of concern and agitation that constituted the formative years of first generation Roho Christianity.

Colonial administration in Kenya – the vision

The British colonial administration never missed an opportunity to 'fly the flag'. The Governor visited Nyanza Province in 1932, 1935, and 1937, and was publicly paraded whenever possible at *baraza* (Swahili: public meetings).²⁶ Very substantial festivities

²³ King, *Pan-Africanism & Education*, p. 201. The comment was Dr. Bond's, a missionary of the FAM. Kasiera, *Development of Pentecostal Christianity*, pp. 438, 440, notes some additional factors that led to a popular perception that the Friends missionaries were allies of the government and miners. Also Ford both interpreted for the Chief Native Commissioner when he came to Kakamega to explain government policy over the mines, and held services for the European miners once a month. These actions of Ford led the North Kavirondo Central Association to claim that it was Ford who was responsible for inviting the miners to Kakamega.

²⁴ Native Affairs AR 1937, p. 67.

²⁵ Given the polarized nature of the political debate at the time over the impact of gold-mining, this is a little difficult to assess. The *Tanganyika Standard*, 'Land Policy in Gold Area of Kenya', records Sir Albert Kitson, writing a favourable and pro-mining report to the London *Times*, 18.1.33, as follows: 'Employment has been given to several 1000's of natives who are well paid, live in their own homes, and enjoy their pastimes among their own people. Their farm produce is sold to prospectors and miners without having to be carried – by women – long distances to the market. Timber required for mining purposes is sold to the miners.' (Anthony J. King Papers, MSS Afr. s. 1281 /1.) Certainly substantial quantities of produce were sold to the mines, and considerable employment created. The total cash wages paid out to approximately 11,000 African workers in the three Kavirondo Districts and Lolgorien for 1934 was about £66,000; including rations, £92,000. Judged by the standards of the Native Affairs Department, which was often quite critical of private companies' facilities and provisions, the quality of food, medical provisions (with two doctors at Kakamega), and living accommodation at the mining camps was reported as excellent (Native Affairs AR 1934, p. 164-9; 1935, p. 185-7; 1937, p. 10). Another of the consequences of the gold-rush was that a majority of Luo and Luyia seeking paid employment during the mid-years of the 1930s were able to obtain it without going outside Kavirondo. Native Affairs AR 1935, p. 159.

²⁶ Native Affairs AR 1932, p. 4; 1935, p. 3; 1937, p. 3.

were prepared at Provincial and District headquarters for the Silver Jubilee of George V in 1935, and again for the Coronation of George VI in 1937 (which in Kisumu was presided over by the Governor himself).²⁷ Lonsdale gives an account of the 1935 celebrations in Kakamega in which the district commissioner (reading the governor's speech) compares the progress achieved since Queen Victoria, when

very few people had any clothes except skins and blankets and hardly any knew how to read. Now you have railways and roads, schools and hospitals, towns and trading centres, which give you the opportunity for development which civilization and good government bring in their train.²⁸

There was a parade of police, a display by the local scout group, games for Africans (the slippery pole, blindfold football biffing, etc), a fancy-dress soccer match between Europeans and Indians, and church services. This was a conscious use of event and the creation of ritual for a political purpose. Such ceremonies were intended to inculcate in a readily acceptable form the controlling values of colonialism. They were adapted subsequently by Kenya's post-colonial governments for similar purposes of state, and in this latter mode form a significant counterpoint to the present-day public ceremonies of the Roho churches, which I explore in chapter five.

'Modernization', 'progress', and 'development': what these words meant in terms of administration policies on the ground can best be appreciated by taking a typical year's activities. The Native Affairs Department's Annual Report for 1937 describes the year as one of 'progress and prosperity' in North Kavirondo:

²⁷ Native Affairs AR 1935, p. 2; 1937, p. 2.

²⁸ Ranger, 'State and Peasantry in Colonial Africa', pp. 113-4, quoted by Lonsdale, 'The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa', p. 235.

The District Commissioner's report is a record of the building of courts, houses, bridges and hide bandas;²⁹ latrine pits were dug, improved water supplies installed, and soil conservation measures introduced.³⁰

There was a 'combined pit-latrine, protected fire-place, and improved maize crib campaign.' The District Medical Officer reported some opposition to the introduction of windows in huts, for fear of theft.³¹ In addition to the soil conservation measures mentioned above (necessitated by 'over-grazing', especially in Bunyore and Maragoli), the Agricultural Officer with his substantial corps of African assistants were active in many areas.³² They calculated the quantity and value of the District's production of crops, ensuring that the highest quality was produced.³³ They promoted the production of rice and tobacco in new areas. They supervised the running of three Local Native Council go-downs (produce stores). In the few years immediately preceding 1937, they had laid down rules for the sale of produce, divided the Province into zones for cash crops, campaigned against the weed 'striga', promoted the production of English vegetables, the planting of fruit trees, and the cultivation of tomatoes and drought resistant crops. They worked to improve the quality of local chickens, to encourage egg production, and to upgrade livestock.

²⁹ *banda*, Swahili: shed, shelter

³⁰ Native Affairs AR 1937, p. 9.

³¹ Native Affairs AR 1937, p. 109.

³² In 1936 there were 157 'native agricultural instructors and grain officers' working in the Province as a whole (Native Affairs AR 1936, p. 103).

³³ Native Affairs AR 1937, p. 131ff.

The marketing of all this increased and improved produce was, from 1936, to be rationally organized. Marketing was now to be controlled by licence, so that the local producer got a fair market value through the promotion of competitive buying.³⁴

The philosophy behind this intense activity is reflected in a medical report for 1932. In this year not only did one African in four in the colony receive medical treatment,

it is apposite to mention here...the educational effect of hospitals both on in-patients and on visitors. Native hospitals are now almost without exception well-run, up-to-date institutions; the contrast between their cleanliness and comfort and the standards ruling in native homes constantly stimulates comparisons in the minds of native patients that are productive of the best results. One of these results is the impulse to produce more with a view to being able to afford similar comforts.³⁵

In this way European purity laws (in the form of physical cleanliness) were considered powerful enough not only to prevent disease, but also to promote consumer demand and productivity - a striking tribute to the power of Western capitalism to incorporate all other values (including healing) into its controlling vision. I consider below the Roho perception and refutation of this ideology.

The Jeanes School: Education as ‘development’

Responsibility for education was largely that of the missions, whose schools were often inefficiently organized, and with inadequate resources. But Government too lacked the necessary funds to meet the increasing African demand for a non-denominational, efficient, and rational education service.³⁶ After the 1st World War, the African demand

³⁴ Under the powers granted the administration by the Marketing of Native Produce Ordinance 1935. Native Affairs AR 1935, p. 153; 1936, pp. 46, 151.

³⁵ Native Affairs AR 1932, p. 74

³⁶ Native Affairs AR 1931, p. 52; 1932, p. 63.

for education began to rise dramatically,³⁷ and the British colonial administration came under increasing pressure to become involved more actively in its provision. It began to require missions to open schools, instituting in 1924 a system of Grants in Aid.³⁸ Later, in 1934 the allocation of these funds was vested in District Education Boards, composed of representatives of the administration, the missions, and the African community.³⁹ The few government-run schools served rather as 'beacon' projects.⁴⁰ The pride of the administration's educational efforts during this decade can be regarded as Jeanes School, Kabete, just outside Nairobi, opened in 1925.

Jeanes School offered a course for African school supervisors which was combined with the principles of community development, along the model of the Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, which had promoted a differentiated syllabus for the African-American.⁴¹ In the Jeanes' scheme, village education would not be the entry point for westernization; rather, it would become the means of improving traditional life.⁴² Jeanes training stressed the importance of building progress on African foundations. The African Jeanes teacher had to study traditional customs in order to distinguish good from bad.⁴³ The badge of the

³⁷ Rasmussen, *Quaker Movement in Africa*, p. 48.

³⁸ Rasmussen, op. cit., p. 51.

³⁹ These were established in 1934. Native Affairs AR 1934 pp. 63, 142; 1936, p. 63.

⁴⁰ The Government African School in Kakamega opened in 1932. This was a senior primary school with a strong concentration on agriculture. Native Affairs AR 1934, p. 36.

⁴¹ In Kenya, the concept of differentiated education had the dubious advantage of appealing both to the settlers (education for Africans that would increase their economic value while preventing their political growth) and to some of the liberals from missionary and administration circles (development of African education along 'African' lines). Africans themselves were only consulted indirectly through Aggrey of Achimota, who was appointed specifically for this purpose to the Commission sent to Kenya in 1924. 'The need of the Europeans for artisans, and the gradual improvement of the Reserves could be simultaneously encouraged under Jones's slogan of 'adaptation of education to the needs of the community.' (King, *Pan-Africanism & Education*, pp. 49, 118, 122.) In fact, the remit of the school when started was the Reserves alone.

⁴² King, *Pan-Africanism & Education*, p. 150.

⁴³ King, op. cit., p. 157.

school, a fire burning on the three cooking stones, was itself a traditional object lesson: the three stones stood for 'Health, Character, and Industry'.⁴⁴ To the horror of many African Christians, church services even used African tunes,⁴⁵ and some expressed concern that Jeanes graduates might return to their roles as school supervisors critical of the missions.⁴⁶

The school inculcated the role administrative officers at the time thought appropriate for progressive and educated Africans in the 'reserves'.

Their influence, apart from their work in the schools themselves, in the inculcation of better teaching methods, in the improvement of housing and sanitation, in the promotion of sound agricultural methods, is already marked, and will increase with the passage of time. There is hardly any sphere of social service, from the organization of a co-operative shop to the management of a football association, in which their help is not utilized or their leadership sought.⁴⁷

This was the model by which the administration preferred to proceed, through slow, small-scale but intensive change, by practical example and benevolent paternalism.⁴⁸ For its adherents, however, the Jeanes school came too late. Alliance High School, opened in 1926, and Makerere College in Uganda, to which an education at Alliance might lead, had a far stronger influence on the Kenyan educational system.⁴⁹ In the end the Jeanes

⁴⁴ JWC Dougall, 'Circular Letter No. 6', from the Jeanes School, 8.8.27. TG Benson Papers, MSSAfr. s. 1367 (1).

⁴⁵ JWC Dougall, 'Circular Letter No. 7', from the Jeanes School, 5.1.2.28. TG Benson Papers, MSSAfr. s. 1367 (1).

⁴⁶ JWC Dougall, 'Circular Letter No. 7'.

⁴⁷ Native Affairs AR 1932, p. 64. A list of the activities undertaken by the Jeanes' graduate Elisha Shiverenge, serving with the FAM, can be seen in his reports to the school, in the Benson Papers. See also King, *op. cit.*, p.172.

⁴⁸ For a missionary appreciation of the Jeanes School, see Philp, *New Day in Kenya*, p. 159.

⁴⁹ Alliance High School, the mission-run boys secondary school with government backing, which came to produce nearly all the nationalist leaders of Kenya, opened the following year. From the perspective of today, Alliance was a much more influential educational institution than Jeanes School. But it was mission-run, and many administrators feared the political implications of giving higher academic education to Africans. In fact the training at Jeanes was much more expensive than that of Alliance, and was more than

School ended up training chiefs, and Alliance High School the future Kenyan politicians. It is significant for this story, however, that the most famous of all the Roho church leaders of Vihiga, Zakayo Kivuli, was trained at Jeanes School between 1927-29, and again in 1931.⁵⁰ Undoubtedly his education at Jeanes subsequently helped him adapt the Roho vision to the doctrine of material progress. Perhaps equally as significant (in the negative sense) was the fact that no Roho church member ever attended Alliance High School, whose pupils were to dominate the political and administrative leadership of newly independent Kenya.⁵¹ The Roho vision was never understood in this highest echelon of Kenyan society, except by a few politicians such as Kenyatta himself and Odinga.

Colonial administration – the reality

By the 1930s, compulsory labour for public works had been much reduced, and wage labour had become generally accepted as part of life. People in the village would have felt the presence of colonial administration most strongly in three ways: in tax collection, in the constant instructions, regulations, and exhortations the administration issued in pursuance of its modernizing and rationalizing mission, and in the administrative, judicial and extra-judicial steps it took to ensure compliance with these instructions. In 1932 there were 30 prisons and 34 detention centres in Kenya, and as many as 16,324 sentences of detention and 2,751 of imprisonment were passed for contravention of local ordinances

twice as expensive as the most costly European education in government schools. King, *Pan-Africanism & Education*, pp. 124, 159, 175.

⁵⁰ 'Historia ya Marehemu M.P.D. Kivuli', 1987 ('History of the late M.P.D. Kivuli...').

⁵¹ The significance of Alliance High School is indicated by the following figures of Alliance alumni among the new Kenyan elite who ruled the country after independence: 8 of the first 14 African MPs elected 1958; 13 of 33 African MPs elected 1961; 10 out of 17 of the first republican Cabinet; 18 of the 26 top Africans

(i.e., for administrative not criminal offences) under the Hut and Poll Tax, Native Registration, Native Authority, and Vagrancy Ordinances.⁵²

Commercialization, monetarization, and disaggregation

By 1931 77% of the southern locations of North Kavirondo were under cultivation or lying fallow – a higher density even than any of the Kikuyu districts, except for that of Dagoretti, bordering on Nairobi.⁵³ It is reasonable to assume that a number of householders had already moved into the commodity production of surplus food crops, vegetables and fruit, mainly through women spending longer hours in the *shamba* (Swahili, ‘farm’).⁵⁴ Overall, however, Kitching considers that the 1930s saw only the beginning of capitalist penetration of Kenyan agriculture.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, more and more men during the decade moved out of their villages searching for work. Wagner thinks 30% were away at any one time by 1937, and very likely a considerably higher proportion of Maragoli.⁵⁶ This decade also saw the steady increase, from initially small figures, of independent artisans offering a non-traditional trade such as bicycle-mending, carpentry, and tailoring. These were men who had learnt their skills in mission and government workshops and schools, and sometimes from Asian *fundi* (Swahili, ‘artisans’).⁵⁷ They were to become a very significant class for the future development and growth of the more ‘progressive’ Roho churches, such as *African Israel*.

in the highest administrative grade, and 4 of Kenya’s 6 ambassadors by 1965. Quoted by Greaves, *Carey Francis*, p. 199, from Rosberg & Nottingham, *The Myth of Mau Mau*, p. 76.

⁵² Native Affairs AR 1932 pp. 120-121.

⁵³ Kitching, *Class and Economic Change*, p. 42.

⁵⁴ Kitching, op. cit., pp. 55, 148.

⁵⁵ Kitching, op.cit., p. 107.

⁵⁶ Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, Vol. 2., p. 87

⁵⁷ Kitching’s reflections (p. 177) on Wagner’s details (op. cit., Vol.2, p. 17.)

The significant disaggregation of rural society began in the 1930s in densely populated locations close to the centres of commercial and government penetration, such as the Vihiga locations. This steady growth of the rich at the expense of the poorer members of society had a variety of causes. In addition to direct financial remuneration, the chiefs and headmen had always gained some indirect rewards through patronage and occasional access to government initiatives, credit, new ventures, and crops. From 1925, the creation of Local Native Councils (LNCs) opened up further channels for ‘progressive’ mission-educated Africans - they could serve on the new councils, and work to improve education, agriculture and trade. The LNCs gave loans for shops, maize mills, hide *bandas*, and lorries.⁵⁸ Moreover, the councils became substantial employers within the Reserves.⁵⁹ Naturally those closest to the councils, including the members themselves, would benefit from these new resources, at the expense of all who paid the hut or poll taxes and other council dues. Kitching states that these councils were the ‘hubs of progress in the Reserves... For the progressive educated individual African...[in] successfully running a transport business or a school, in buying land, in growing large maize surpluses and in sending one’s children to school, one was in one’s own eyes a living refutation of the colonial stereotype of the “backward native”’.⁶⁰

In this way the late twenties and early thirties saw the steady growth of a richer, more educated group in African society, able to benefit from formal education, and from its

⁵⁸ Kitching, op. cit., p. 189.

⁵⁹ Kitching, op.cit., pp. 190, 193. The LNCs paid most primary school teachers, most African medical staff, most agricultural extension officers and vets, and nearly all artisans who worked for a wage, in addition to their own clerks.

⁶⁰ Kitching, op. cit., p. 193. See also Haugerud, *Culture of Politics*, pp. 119, 126-7.

contacts with the administration, through which it gained access to salaries, loans, and contracts, enabling it in turn to invest in the beginnings of commercial agriculture or in business. In other words, the commodity economy – in which accumulation drives out reciprocity – began to grow at the expense of the natural or moral economy.⁶¹

During this decade the Christians were still a small minority in Kenyan African society. Philp's figures suggest 16.8% of North Kavirondo were Christians – the proportion would have been higher in Vihiga – but this was still a minority, and of these not all were literate.⁶² Those with better education - mostly adherents of the missions - were often employed on significantly higher wages than the average.⁶³ This elite used some of its above-average 'off-farm' income to buy up land in the village, and employ the poorer members of the community, so that the elite and their wives were free to use their time for trade or in more directly profitable enterprises.⁶⁴ In poorer households, where the husband was away working as a low-paid labourer, the wife was left alone, unable to increase her own productivity or that of the family *shamba*, or to buy land, and possibly surviving in part by hiring herself out to work on the farms of others.⁶⁵ Kitching notes that until the 1950s, at least, the great majority of smallholders were in neither of these extreme categories.⁶⁶ But the model of 'progress' and 'development' at the village or community level displayed by the rural elite, and promoted by both administration and

⁶¹ Although not completely: the two continue to co-exist. Haugerud, *Culture of Politics*, p. 109.

⁶² In 1936, Philp calculated for the country as a whole that the Christians formed only 3.6% of the total population. *New Day in Kenya*, p. 150. I have corrected his classification of North and Central Kavirondo missions in Appendix IV, and adjusted my totals accordingly.

⁶³ Kitching, op. cit., p. 269.

⁶⁴ Kitching, op. cit., p. 198.

⁶⁵ Kitching, op. cit., p. 241. The statement of Kitching that the wife would sometimes sell the family *shamba* is highly unlikely for the Maragoli.

⁶⁶ Kitching, op. cit., p. 241.

missions, became and remains a powerful life goal for the majority in the village.⁶⁷ In relation to this model the different Roho denominations, and individual members within them, can be located along a continuum from rejection to emulation of ‘development’, both in the articulation of their distinct founders’ visions, and also in the shifts over time of the interpretations of those visions. I turn now to consider the Roho response to this controlling vision of colonial and missionary Kenya during the 1930s.

Part Two. The emerging Roho response to colonial ideology and reality

‘The Naked Girl’, or the Roho response to monetarization

The gold mines, which paid better wages than most other employers, encouraged the commercialization of Maragoli life.⁶⁸ There is some evidence that Roho Christians (who in this period were still relatively few in numbers) opposed this employment, both on what seem to be practical grounds of safety and also because it was spiritually dangerous.⁶⁹ Similarly, the introduction of consumer items in local shops and markets met with Roho opposition. Many refused to buy or wear shoes.⁷⁰ They refused to travel by bus or lorry. In a later decade, Archbishop Zare preached against the purchase of one of the most desirable and prestigious consumer items, a bicycle – and then spoilt his testimony by buying it himself.⁷¹ The only item the ‘people of the Spirit’ purchased regularly in the early days was ‘blue’ – or laundry whitener for their *kanzu*. ‘They had

⁶⁷ Warren (*Social History and Christian Mission*, pp. 122 ff.) notes the conscious efforts of the missions to create a bourgeoisie.

⁶⁸ Kitching, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

⁶⁹ OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00 (Doc. 1), Nairobi, p. 60.

⁷⁰ In *Holy Spirit*, at first only Japheth Zare wore shoes, but following a prophecy, gave them away. Later while on a journey in Luoland, he was forced to walk where there were many thorns, and was given *akala*, or sandals made from vehicle tyres. PC, Bishop Mwangi, S. Nyanza, 16.9.00.

accepted the word of God and *needed nothing else*.⁷² One spiritual song of the period sings of ‘the Spirit alone’ (*omwoyo murara*) – nothing else was necessary for life. Another, ‘If you want to get home, you must roll in the dust’, was a reference to rolling on the ground in repentance and in search of the Spirit. The highest goals were to be achieved by the humblest means, and by those most antithetical to the new gospel of ‘progress’. For most Roho Christians in this decade, poverty was to be accepted, even if it brought suffering. ‘We will not forsake prayer, we will continue in strength’.⁷³

One sermon never forgotten by the Roho Christians of Vihiga, and dignified with the term ‘prophecy’, is that of the Friends missionary Bwana Rees. He warned the Maragoli that a naked girl would come to ‘finish’ their girls, and draw all the men after her. Then, having won his hearers’ attention, Rees pulled a silver coin from his pocket.⁷⁴ This prophecy is frequently quoted by Roho believers in Vihiga, offering as it does some consolation for their generally accepted lack of financial acumen. In the first generation Roho churches, money is still considered to be a dangerous source of impurity. In *African Holy Spirit*, it is cleansed from evil spirits before being offered to God, as is also done frequently elsewhere in Roho churches.⁷⁵ Desire for and constant contact with money is

⁷¹ PC, Albert Obede, 2001.

⁷² OI, Avisia, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00 (Doc. 12), Nairobi, p. 61.

⁷³ HSS (Doc. 21) No. 32, *Mtatia da va Setani*.

⁷⁴ OI, Avisia, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00 (Doc. 12), Nairobi, p. 58.

⁷⁵ Like other material objects, money can retain the contagion of evil from its recent history and can transmit the evil to others. Because of its ‘promiscuous’ behaviour, money is always potentially dangerous. Rev. A. Obede gave me an example (PC, 22.12.80) from *Holy Spirit*. Someone who was believed to have killed another brought money to the church. The elders refused to accept it, but two church members took it, by name N. and B. B. later died, and N. has become mentally disturbed. The cause is believed to be the unclean money they received.

In Maragoli tradition, a chicken would be given to the driver of a hearse. This would be set free to escape in the bush or on a road corner, to take away with it any contagion of evil caused by the unwillingness of the deceased to accept his/her new state. At the present day, money may be substituted for

considered harmful to the spiritual ministry of a church leader or a prophet.⁷⁶ It is widely believed that business and the Spirit do not mix.⁷⁷

There is here a surprisingly deep Roho longing to return to the pre-monetary period - a period that might be termed 'pre-lapsarian' in view of the negative associations money carries in Roho religious thought – even if, at the same time, such a return is recognized as quite impractical.⁷⁸ (It was also illusory, in the sense that even in pre-colonial Kenya, commercial enterprises and wealth differences were already present.)⁷⁹ This general mistrust of money must be seen against its historical background. The colonial government's demand for taxes paid in money was the means by which Kenyan Africans were forced into the wage labour system of the colonial economy, the means by which, in fact, the domestic economy became articulated and subordinate to European capitalist agriculture and business. Roho reluctance to become involved in the monetary economy had deep if largely unstated political roots.⁸⁰

the chicken. This money must not be taken home by the driver. He should use it to buy some food or drink which must be consumed on the way – so that the contagion is lost.

Among some Akurinu churches, money was not permitted in the church at all, the biblical reason being that Jesus drove away the money changers from the temple. OI, Kisibo 9.3.00 (Doc. 41), Ibwali, p. 9.

⁷⁶ OI, Mwangale 21.2.02 (Doc. 110), Kitumba, pp. 18-20. When Archbishop Manoah Keverenge was serving as Treasurer of KUIC, he was repeatedly advised that it was not appropriate for a spiritual leader to be handling money.

⁷⁷ OI, Mwangale 21.2.02 (Doc. 110), Kitumba, pp. 12-13. Bishop I. Senelwa told me in conversation in his house at Womulalu that money is the source of life of people today, but that it kills the Spirit. (PC, 22.8.02.)

⁷⁸ See the conversation recorded in Appendix 5.11.2 between Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo and myself. Unfortunately the favourable tone with which Savatia speaks about the pre-monetary days is not apparent from the printed text. For him it is the items of exchange that symbolize the former society: livestock as against money. The same nostalgia for the pre-monetary economy was expressed by Irene Maleya, in Appendix 5.11.3.

⁷⁹ Haugerud, op.cit., pp. 109-112. This would have been noticeably less true for Vihiga than Central Kenya, however.

The disaggregation of Luyia society brought about by education and commodification was itself an issue to Roho Christians. Two stanzas of an early Lulogooli Spiritual song *Avayuda muvuhambe* juxtapose wealth and oppression in a way that suggests the appearance of conspicuous material wealth (as distinct from the traditional wealth indicated by cattle, or by numerous human dependants) is a sign of the end of the times, a state brought on by oppression:

The Jews were in bondage
In Goshen the land of Egypt.
Salvation came through Moses
I will never go back to the home of Pharoah.

They will not all get to our home
In the land of Canaan.
They will not get there with Jesus
Jerusalem the home of Jesus.

When you see wealth
And gold increasing
And rumours of war
It shows the end is near.

They will not all get to our home
In the land of Canaan.
They will not get there with Jesus
Jerusalem the home of Jesus.⁸⁰

Along with the political referents of 'Egypt' for the missionary church and colonial society, I suggest that the song refers to the new wealth accruing to those able to exploit

⁸⁰ It may be noted here that money is also (together with most other consumer items) one of those items that should not be carried into the Mung'oma cave of the eponymous ancestor Mulogooli. This is a recent purity law developed under the influence of Roho spirituality.

⁸¹ The song begins in Lulogooli: *Avayuda muvuhambe / Mu Goshen kivara cha Misri / Uvunanuli vwaza nende Musa / Sindirana hango ha Farao*. PC: A. Obede 27.5.00 (Doc. 2). The song refers in part to Jesus' warning in Matthew 24: 6 about the end of the age.

their connections with the colonial regime, principally those who had received a missionary education and who in Vihiga were members of the Friends Church.

Formal education and the Holy Spirit

Early Roho members had a somewhat uncertain attitude to western education. On the one hand, many of their early leaders had received this education themselves, and did not hesitate to use it. Jacob Buluku had worked as a clerk for the Local Native Council.⁸² Archbishop Japheth Zare was a teacher in the village school at Bukoyani.⁸³ Both his sons, and Daniel Sande's sons, benefited from their education. But the hostility of the Friends, and the beating of the Roho leaders caused a significant drop in attendance at the Friends schools after 1930.⁸⁴ The expulsion or withdrawal of the parents from the church frequently meant expulsion of their children from school, although in Vihiga there were so many denominations it was often possible to move from one denominational school to another.⁸⁵ Elsewhere in Kenya independent churches were frequently permitted to run their own schools, especially in Central Province, and to a lesser extent in Nyanza Province.⁸⁶ The Roho churches certainly tried in Vihiga: Jacob Buluku, and later Japheth

⁸² Barasa, 'History', p. 5.

⁸³ OI, J. Zare & J. Sande, 22.0.99 (Doc. 135), Bukoyani, p. 3. The inscription on Japheth Zare's gravestone describes him as the first headmaster of Bukoyani.

⁸⁴ Rasmussen gives the decline in attendance at Friends schools as from 18,000 in 1930 to 13,000 in 1933. (Rasmussen, *Quaker Movement in Africa*, p. 63.) Another cause is likely to have been the economic depression during these years.

⁸⁵ For example, Joseph Zare, son of the *Holy Spirit* archbishop, learnt first at the village school in Bukoyani, run by *Holy Spirit*, sat an exam at the Friends school at Magui. Then, because of the conflict between Friends and the people of the Spirit, he attended the PAOC school at Madira. OI, Joseph Zare, 22.9.99 (Doc. 68), Bukoyani, p. 6. JWC Dougall in 1933 indicates the difficulty of distinguishing church and school among the 'sub-grade' schools of the Friends: 'They are churches as well as schools, and each is a centre for joint effort and a potential instrument for social change'. JWC Dougall, Secretary to the Committee on Education, Kenya Missionary Council, 1933, quoted in Painter, *Hill of Vision*, p. 60.

⁸⁶ The schools run by the Kikuyu Independent Schools Association (out of which the African Independent Pentecostal Church was formed) were a very significant contribution to the nationalist movement. See Anderson, *The Struggle for the School*, pp. 112 ff. In Nyanza, Nomiya Luo Church ran its own schools

Zare at Bukoyani; Eliakimu Keverenge at Lukuvuli. The problem in Vihiga was that without grants in aid, they could never rise above the level of the most junior primary school, and it was often the policy of the colonial administration to prevent such schools in the first place, or to discourage grants.⁸⁷

Some accepted the teaching that the Holy Spirit could provide all the education that was necessary, and did not pursue formal education for themselves or their children.⁸⁸

Another reason was simply poverty. The relative lack of formal education among Roho Christians had its effect. It was one reason for the rejection of western medicine, since the mechanism by which the medicine worked could not be understood. This led to first

from its beginnings in 1916, and some were recommended for DEB support, although this was later withdrawn. KNA CN/17, AR for 1950 (AR 1535); KNA CN/22 AR for 1954 (AR 1539).

⁸⁷ When Buluku opened a school in 1937, the N. Kav. Monthly Intelligence Report for October recorded an intended prosecution. 'We do not want to start the Independent School problem in this Reserve.' (KNA IR 66, of 2.11.37.) Twenty years later, despite the subsequent official registration of AICs under the Societies Ordinance, the policy was the same:

These "Dinis" should be closely watched and enquiries made as to whether churches they have built have received the proper approval. I feel that the best way to stem their progress is to refuse to recognize them as bodies capable of managing schools, as quite a lot of religious enthusiasm derives from the educational advantages which go with religious conformity. Until these "Dinis" can offer the reward of education services, their appeal, particularly among the younger generation, will be restricted.

(KNA HOR 33, JA Smith to RT Peacock 1957 (Lurambi Division, North Nyanza). See also Sangree, *Age, Prayer, and Politics*, p. 220, where he states that no AIC in Tiriki was permitted to run a school. In Maragoli, low-level primary schools were run at Bukoyani and at Lukuvuli, but since the churches were unable to obtain grants-in-aid, pupils were then forced to transfer elsewhere. OI, M. Keverenge, 19.8.02 (Doc. 118), Lukuvuli, p. 26.

⁸⁸ Sometimes reliance on the Spirit is a substitute for the education that was not obtainable. Prophet Shitochi of *Holy Spirit* wanted to go to school but was refused by his parents. The dream he reports that solved the problem of illiteracy also indicates his great desire for education. 'God helped me in a very big way. I saw [in a dream] newspapers being spread on the wall and then God started teaching me how to read those papers. On the papers were members of parliament and God asked me to tell the names of each MP, which I did. There was a loud clapping of hands and a voice said 'He is fit'. I then [still in the dream] took Book One – a very small book – and someone started showing me how to read. Since then I have been reading my Bible and letters.' (OI, J. Shitochi, 7.3.00 (Doc. 87) Emwiru.) High Priest Kaos of Church Group of Light, reported that he only reached Class Two (second year of primary school) because of lack of fees. 'Then I said the Holy Spirit should lead me.' OI, Kaos, 10.10.99 (Doc. 89) Kabras.

generation churches taking a vow before God not to use western medicine.⁸⁹ By natural extension, they also rejected other commodities they did not understand, such as soda, and fertilizer on their fields (although manure was acceptable).⁹⁰

The rejection of elitism

It is in relation to the elitism implicit in the Protestant missionary programme that ‘the all member ministry’ of the Roho churches can best be understood. Here is a recent opening prayer at a baptismal service, which despite the multiplication of formal posts in the church since the early years, conveys the continuing spirit of the participation of everyone:

Let us all believe and pray....the meeting will go ahead if we believe that the Spirit will lead us. *(Yes!)* Give the drummers skill. *(Yes!)* Give the singers the hymns. *(Yes!)* Bless us Lord. *(Bless us!)* Bless the priests. *(Bless them!)* Bless the pastors. *(Yes!)* Bless the Reverends. *(Yes!)* Bless the mothers. *(Yes!)* I commit everyone including the children into your hands. *(Yes!)* Even our visitors, Father, I put them into your hands. *(Yes!)* Bless them and cleanse them and continue to protect them. *(Yes!)* What we can’t pray for, we believe that the Spirit will continue to pray for us. *(Pray!)* I pray this in Jesus Christ who is our saviour. *(Amen.)*⁹¹

The contrast to the missionary-led churches, where power and leadership became increasingly concentrated in the small elite who had received formal biblical or

⁸⁹ It is generally but not universally believed that Archbishop Japheth Zare never used medicine. (Bishop Mwangi disagrees: PC to A. Obede, 16.9.00, (Doc. 135) S. Nyanza). When I visited the late Archbishop on his deathbed in 1987, it was explained to me that he was suffering from an acute attack of malaria, but had taken no drugs. Archbishop Eliakimu Keverenge of *Lyahuka* also refused to take drugs or visit doctors until shortly before his death from cancer of the oesophagus in 1988. I was myself one of those who persuaded him to visit a specialist in Kakamega. The present High Priest of *African Holy Spirit*, Timoteo Shitsimi, is a diabetic, but has never taken drugs. This has undoubtedly limited his activities, but many of his followers would maintain that he has kept the faith. There are many other examples. Naturally this policy caused conflict with the government authorities, both in the colonial period, and more recently with post-colonial governments.

⁹⁰ The Priest Isaya Maleya Buluhu, of *Holy Spirit*, who lived from 1885-1984, died without ever eating bread or soda. OI, Irene Maleya, 20.8.02 (Doc. 137), Bukoyani.

⁹¹ *Holy Spirit* Baptismal Service, Shauri Moyo (Doc. 8) p. 1.

theological training, is clear, and is another reason for the popularity among the Roho churches of the egalitarian and gender-free prophecy from Joel 2: 28-29.

The wearing of *kanzu* has a similar function. Hay analyses the cultural conflict that took place in the nearby Luo location of Seme in Central Kavirondo, during the period 1906-36. This centred on the adoption of Christianity, clothing, and new agricultural implements (new hoes and the introduction of the plough).⁹² The innovators were the early Christians, who had become committed to the doctrine of economic and social progress on the Western model. These were people who saw themselves ‘as people with a mission, as pioneers who were expected to be “modern”, and as converts whose new religion provided protection against the jealousy and resentment of their neighbours’.⁹³ With regard to clothing styles – a clear marker of one’s loyalties in the culture wars – early colonial administrators and missionaries favoured the introduction of the *kanzu*⁹⁴ to replace the former nudity, partial nudity, or various garments of skin.⁹⁵ But, Hay notes, Western forms of clothing had become the norm by the 1930s. The more progressive men favoured shorts, jackets, and shirts, and the women long cotton dresses:

⁹² Hay, ‘Material Culture’.

⁹³ Hay, ‘Material Culture’, p. 14. For an amusing description of the *jopango* and *jonango* (migrant workers and wearers of European clothes) in Siaya during the early years of the 20th century, see Cohen and Atieno Odhiambo, *Siaya*, pp. 111-116.

⁹⁴ Johnson’s *Swahili-English Dictionary* of 1939 gives a very full description of this garment as worn at the coast: ‘formerly the usual outer garment of men, but now rapidly being superseded by European or semi-European dress. It is a long-sleeved calico gown, described by some of the earlier visitors to East Africa as a ‘bed-gown’, reaching from the neck to the ankles, usually plain white or yellowish brown..., with or without lines of silk stitchwork, red or white, on the neck, wrists, and front, fastened with a small button or tassel at the throat. Worn over a loin-cloth, often with a light doublet, or under a coloured sleeveless open waistcoat (*kisibau*) or a cloth cloak (*joho*).’ In their desire for simplicity in all things, the Roho members wore the *kanzu* initially without embroidery, although various forms of decoration have more recently crept in to distinguish different ranks in the church. See Plate 1.1.

⁹⁵ The *kanzu* had been introduced to Buganda - for long a source of cultural influence in Western Kenya - during the previous century, and to this day remains the traditional dress of the Baganda elders.

...the almost infinite number of possible gradations in the quality of, fabric, cleanliness, and newness of purchased garments – and the accoutrements of hat, shoes, socks, belts, watches, umbrellas, and fancy-canes – provided visible clues to the newly emerging distinctions between rich and poor in the 1930s.⁹⁶

This was in Luoland. But the evidence available suggests a very similar process took place in Vihiga, with the proviso that the Southern Luyia traditionally regard their neighbours the Luo as more ‘fashionable’ with regard to dress than themselves. In the culture wars of Vihiga, the people of the Spirit positioned themselves mid-way with regard to the traditionalists and the progressives. They believed the outer clothing signified the true identity.⁹⁷ Rejecting both skins and nudity or partial nudity, and the expensive new consumer items of Western fashion,⁹⁸ they continued to wear a simple unadorned *kanzu*, a shorter one for work and the fuller garment for worship, when it had largely passed out of fashion elsewhere. And when necessity dictated that migrant workers adopt western dress, the denominations introduced rules against the wearing of black, or of strongly patterned cloth (*madoadoa*, Swahili). In general, ties were forbidden to men as a sign of pride, and jackets frowned on in church.⁹⁹ The rules were there to maintain a simplicity and modesty of dress, to restrict the desire for new and fashionable items of clothing, to protest at the arrogance of Europeans and those Africans who copied

⁹⁶ Hay, ‘Material Culture’, p. 12.

⁹⁷ Thus, Archbishop E. Joji, speaking about the arrest of Roho priests who had refused to join the Kenya African Rifles during the 2nd World War said that the Spirit had refused the *clothing, shoes, vehicles, and the use of anything that related to war*. OI, E. Joji, 22.9.99 (Doc. 101), Wamuluma. OI, E. Joji, date, (Doc. 134), Wamuluma. See also the Spiritual Song in Appendix 5.9.1.

⁹⁸ In 1936, the Provincial Commissioner, Nyanza, noted that in Central Kavirondo, Africans were spending 60% of their cash income on clothing, excluding footwear and hats. Quoted by Hay, p. 15.

⁹⁹ It is uncertain whether the objection of some deceased to being buried wearing a tie which from time to time is communicated to their descendants in dreams (and requires disinterment to remove the offending article) is simply based on the natural restrictions the tie offers to the throat or has some deeper cultural significance.

them, and to restrict the visibility of any emerging new elite among the Roho members themselves. In this they have largely succeeded up to the present day.¹⁰⁰

Time

Commodification gives time itself a monetary value. The witness of the Roho churches here is striking. Until today, some denominations (e.g., *Holy Ghost Ruwe*) specifically refuse to limit the duration of their services, since 'the Holy Spirit is in control', and all Spiritual churches will normally be responsive to the flow of the Spirit in meetings such that clocks and watches are set aside. This is a very clear rejection (at least, in people's closest approach to the transcendent) of the time values taught by the early missionaries. In Western Kenya mission stations and in many villages of mission converts that were known appropriately as 'lines' (due to the regular layout of the houses), people were woken by bells, called to prayer by bells, were instructed to start and stop work, and to prepare food, by bells, and were sent to sleep by bells - all rung according to a rigid timetable.¹⁰¹ Thus the time values of industrialized Europe (and the monastic orders) were imported into rural Africa with the intention of training Africans *to work hard and value their* - or their employer's - *time*. But the Holy Spirit's time was his or her own.

¹⁰⁰ Although it is interesting to observe that *Divine*, whose members told me in the early 1980s that ties were forbidden as a sign of arrogance, now requires its pastors to wear black bow-ties as part of their liturgical dress. In the more traditional *Holy Spirit*, contemporary youth are conscious of how unfashionable their dress is. At a youth convention, one of those present gave the following testimony: 'When we came, how did we come? Me and you, when we came to God, we left behind everything in the world which we had done in the past. We put on these sacks [i.e., *kanzu*], so that you can't even tell who is a woman here...' *Holy Spirit* Youth Conference at Ogada, 24.11.00, (Doc.30), Ogada.

¹⁰¹ Daniel Sande lived in lines like these at Madira. Not only was there rigid time-keeping but also strict cleanliness around the houses, in the digging of latrines, and in the washing of cooking utensils. OI, J. Zare & J. Sande 22.9.99 (Doc. 135), Bukoyani, p. 4.

Note, too, the preference for *kesha* and services for spiritual warfare at night rather than during the day, when the whole community can meet together without distractions, and spiritual forces are closer and more easily discerned.¹⁰² In this we can see not only a continuation from the African religious heritage, but a rejection of industrialized society's belief that the night is for sleeping in preparation for the 'real work' which is done in the day. On the contrary – the 'real work' is to allow the Holy Spirit to reveal the sources of evil in the community, and to strengthen people for spiritual warfare – and this is best done in the night.¹⁰³

Gender roles

It is impossible to cover adequately this subject here.¹⁰⁴ Gender roles in traditional Luyia society were very distinct. They ate separately, they kept to their own groups at festivities and dances, and they had separate responsibilities and duties in the home and farm. In the house the two sexes occupied separate areas (See Fig. 3).¹⁰⁵ The front, public area, was for the man; the rear for the woman. Even today in Tiriki, a man who fails to perform his role effectively by fathering children will be buried at the back of the house, in the woman's area. The sex dichotomy extended into relationships with ancestors: a man

¹⁰² 'In black Africa, the world of the night and the invisible is perhaps the best place for hearing the good news of Jesus' descent into hell (1 Pet. 3: 19-20) and then announcing liberation to the African who feels menaced by occult powers.' Ela, *My Faith*, p. 141.

¹⁰³ See Presler's fascinating study of the *pungwe*, the all night community gathering in Zimbabwe, traditionally a time for meeting with the spirits of the ancestors, which was transformed by the guerrilla movement to an occasion for empowerment and communal solidarity against white rule. Zionist prophets played a role in these events. After independence, the *pungwe* movement has become a major source for inculturation and renewal in both mission and AIC denominations. Presler, *Transforming Night*.

¹⁰⁴ Mombo, 'A Historical and Cultural Analysis of Abaluyia Women', analyses the impact of Quaker Christianity on gender roles, and concludes that it had very little effect on what she terms the 'engoko' ideology – except in purely symbolic ways, such as permitting women to eat chicken (*engoko*). My opinion is that the situation is no different for Roho women, indeed that their situation may have deteriorated.

¹⁰⁵ Wagner, 'Abaluyia of Kavirondo', pp. 41-2. For the drawing of the house, I am indebted to Pastor Peter Ndenga and Jackson Lwoyero.

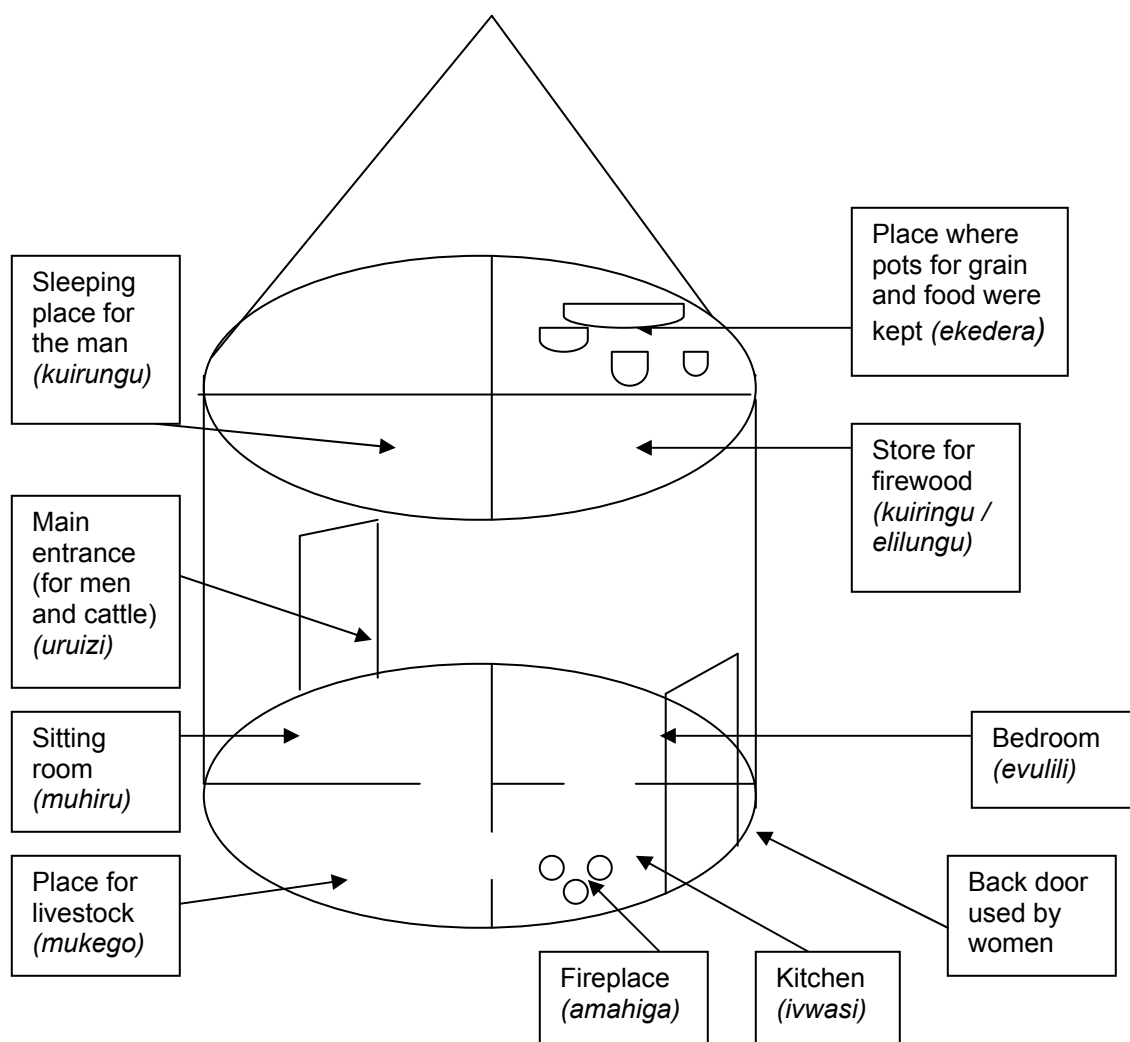


Fig. 3 Diagrammatic representation of traditional Maragoli house.

Note 1) the upper level for storage and for the man to sleep during periods when custom restricted him from sleeping with his wife. 2) the division of the ground floor by partitions into areas for men and women, with corresponding doors.

would be directed by male ancestors, a woman by women. But in the community rituals of the Maragoli, women participated alongside men, except at certain stages of circumcision. They could not however become priests or offer sacrifice. Wagner suggests that such gender rules were based more on the principle of patriliney than on women's uncleanness. When the Spirit came, he fell equally on men and women, and men and women became and are prophets. In general Roho churches still assert the patriarchal control by the male elders of women, and the subsequent restriction of women in

leadership to roles only affecting other women. (The exceptions, as of Mama Rebecca Kivuli and Mama Bishop Trufosa Imali, prove the general rule because of the opposition they generated among traditionalists). But Roho faith adds an additional disqualification to women both in spiritual leadership and at home: the Levitical rules governing women's uncleanness.¹⁰⁶ Thus any concept of the liberation of women in the more traditional Roho churches can only be located in their freedom from interference in their own women's ministries, and in their household and domestic duties;¹⁰⁷ and exceptionally in their prophetic roles – which are still subject to the ultimate control of the elders. But attitudes are changing, as will be seen in chapter six.

‘The Spirit has separated us, halleluya!’

In many respects, then, early Roho spirituality was in flight from the modern world. Its intense concern with rules of purity and the elimination of spiritual dirt and contamination parallels the colonial European obsession with physical cleanliness and tidiness amidst African 'dirt'. Both suggest a siege mentality. The beatings, persecution and deaths reinforced a view of the world as negative and simply to be endured. This was particularly so in the case of *Holy Ghost Ruwe*, which – as a consequence of the massacre at Musanda - developed its own secret language, a transliterated form of Luo, which is still taught to this day.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ After teaching a session on Jesus' welcome of women at a *Holy Spirit* women's convention at Kisumu, 27.4.00, I was politely contradicted by a women's leader, who stressed the subjection of women to men.

¹⁰⁷ The absence of Roho preachers from the home on extended preaching trips left the wife at home with very substantial responsibilities as farm and home manager. (OI, I. Maleya 20.8.02 (Doc. 137) Bukoyani.) But this is experienced by very many women in Vihiga as their husbands migrate in search of work.

¹⁰⁸ Hoehler-Fatton, *Women of Fire and Spirit*, pp. xx-xxii.

No wonder, then, that a strong initial thrust of the Roho movement was towards separation.

The Spirit has separated us, halleluya! (x 2)

The Spirit has separated us,

From the Jewish people,

The wicked weep.

We will walk with Jesus, halleluya!

We will walk with Jesus,

We will walk with Jesus at the end of times,

The wicked weep.¹⁰⁹

This song celebrates separation (*'kwahura'*), a significant concept in the early Roho churches, and one that gave its name to one of the Holy Spirit denominations, the Lyahuka Church of East Africa. The origin of the term is in the formative events of 1927:

At Kaimosi, Elijah Otieno's wife cautioned other people against referring to us as the 'people of the Holy Spirit' wondering whether the people of Friends Church don't have the Spirit too. They therefore opted to call us *Avahuki* [the separated ones].¹¹⁰

This is the separation that led to the *avakoyani* being called mad by their relatives and neighbours, and to the Roho Christians' designating their accusers in response as 'puff-adders'.¹¹¹ The visual boundary between the Roho Christians and other Christians was initially the wearing of badges on the *kanzu*, but later, when other denominations adopted western clothing for worship, it became the wearing of the *kanzu* itself.¹¹² Since (in the early years) the badge itself could bring mockery and beating, it was a severe test. In Nairobi and places of employment, it was the badge sewn on one's ordinary working

¹⁰⁹ HSS, No. 37, *Roho ya Kwahura*.

¹¹⁰ OI, Eliakimu Keverenge c. 1987 (Doc. 91), Lukuvuli, p. 1

¹¹¹ OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00 (Doc. 12), Nairobi, p. 68.

¹¹² All PAG members continued to wear *kanzu* for worship until about 1948. O.I. Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00 (Doc. 12), Nairobi, p. 2.

clothes, or the wearing of a turban, that served as a public witness.¹¹³ Socially, and among family and clan members and neighbours, the boundary was drawn by the ‘hard law’ that forbade Roho people to shake hands with others.¹¹⁴

The concept of separation meant logically that it was not possible to obey the message of Jesus of Nazareth from within the structures and systems of colonial society, nor – for that matter – from within traditional society. The suffering and ostracism this life of separation involved found its justification in the theme of carrying the cross:

The saved conquerors
 ‘Luya, halleluya, ‘luya!
 The saved conquerors
 ‘Luya, they carried the cross, ‘luya!

Repeat, inserting the names of founders, e.g.:

Rubai conquered
 ‘Luya, halleluya, ‘luya!
 Rubai conquered
 ‘Luya, they carried the cross, ‘luya!¹¹⁵

Annual commemorations of the martyrs underline the theme of suffering. The special red banner used by *Holy Spirit* for these celebrations recalls the blood spilt. As already noted, suffering is picked up again in the pictures of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary

¹¹³ OI, J. Avisa, 13.10.99 (Doc. 13), Mutsulyu, p. 2. In his testimony, Bishop Senerwa says: ‘ My spirit desired only to repent all the time, and I changed my behaviour completely. Then I decided to remove my shirt so that it could be sewn with a cross. My fellow young men told me that I had become mad, and from that time I saw girls as nothing.’ OI, I. Senerwa, 24.9.99, (Doc. 70).

¹¹⁴ The expression is Archbishop Kisibo’s. OI, J. Kisibo, 9.3.00, (Doc. 41), Ibwali, p. 4.

¹¹⁵ HSS, (Doc. 21) No. 4, *Vaguuta Vahona*.

crowned with thorns, popular among Roho members.¹¹⁶ In this imagery the theme of pain is carried right into the heart and spirit.¹¹⁷

‘Glory dwells at Emmanuel’s’

Time is passing by, always going
We are tired of shame, surrounded by trouble
Even so we are about to enter heaven
Glory dwells at Emmanuel’s.

Jesus is a well pouring out down here
Waters of life coming from Him
They are delicious waters, they satisfy
Glory dwells at Emmanuel’s.¹¹⁸

The Roho vision located the ‘good life’ beyond this one. Very early in the history of the Roho movement, some ‘people of the Spirit’ expected to be taken to heaven directly. The accounts of these events are disputed, probably because the incidents now seem somewhat foolish or disreputable. According to one informant, who claims to have been an eye witness, some Roho followers of PAOC (*Pentekote*) were so convinced in 1930 that this ‘rapture’ would take place immediately that they distributed their cattle among their relatives, telling them ‘This Friday, we are going on a pilgrimage’. They put on their robes. Elima, wife of Ibrahim Mfuyi, sang of the dream she had had:

I have seen a land high up in the clouds
Look at me now
I need you always
We live with Jesus

¹¹⁶ OI, J. Kisibo 9.3.00 (Doc. 41), Ibwali, p. 14.

¹¹⁷ Constant reflection on this imagery probably provides protection against the contemporary ‘prosperity gospel’.

¹¹⁸ HSS, (Doc. 21) No. 10, *Zinyinga Zivitanga*.

Happy in heaven.

They left their houses in the morning at 6 a.m. and gathered at Bukuga (between Vihiga and Kima) under a *musengeli* tree. They stayed there until evening, in firm expectation, 'because Elima's dream was good.' 'She saw that that city there was completely new, and she had nothing to do except to wait to go there.'¹¹⁹ Another story, of a different event, is that the Roho people of Bukoyani deliberately destroyed their crops in anticipation of their immediate journey to heaven. This is denied by Bukoyani people themselves, who say that crops or livestock were lost simply because they were neglected in their three years of total absorption in prayer, fasting, repentance, and seeking the Spirit.¹²⁰ At all events, these early intense eschatological hopes did not endure long.

The local community as the arena for Christian struggle

A common feature of the testimonies of Roho men - if they are, or were, labour migrants - is that once they receive the Holy Spirit, or grasp their particular vocation, they are called to return home. This retreat to the 'reserve' can be seen in the lives of Alfayo Odongo, Prophet Adolwa, Prophet Shitochi, Philip Lukayu.¹²¹ In a variant of the same experience, the Spirit may tell someone not to seek employment again. Japheth Zare, after working on a farm at Scott, returned home to get married, received the Holy Spirit,

¹¹⁹ OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00 (Doc. 12), Nairobi, p. 67.

¹²⁰ Joel Sande reports, 'When the Holy Spirit came on these people, he turned them upside down and they could no longer go to the farm to cultivate. It was the mothers who worked and fed the children and the male elders remained in prayer and in repentance and visions came to them.' OI, Lukayu, Sande, Mwangale, Nyando, 23.9.99 (Doc. 71), Mahanga.

¹²¹ OI, J. Shitochi, 25.1.02 (Doc. 104), Emwiru, Kisa, pp. 9-14; OI, Lukayu, Sande, Mwangale, Nyando, 23.9.99 (Doc. 71), Mahanga.

and was never employed again.¹²² His successor as archbishop, Ondolo, says briefly ‘...young men were recruited to go and work in plantations in Kiambu. When one got tired with Kiambu, we would then move on to Nairobi. So I left Kiambu and went to work as a gardener at Super Club, at Golf. When I came on leave, the Holy Spirit took me and I joined others in Jacob’s house...’.¹²³ He never worked again.¹²⁴

Roho headquarters are in the rural areas, and are normally the birthplace or former home of one of the founders.¹²⁵ The concept of ‘headquarters’ itself dates only from the 1940s and 1950s, when the Roho movement was forced to define itself in distinct denominations in response to Government pressure. Before then, the movement was based on the homes of the leaders. It is the names of these centres - Bukoyani, Lugala, Nineveh, Boyani, Ibwali, Sinai, Pergamo, Musanda, Ruwe - that resonate today among the faithful and serve more strongly than denominational names to distinguish one loyalty or faith commitment from another. Although elsewhere the term ‘Holy City’ may appropriately describe such complexes, I have never heard it so applied among the Roho churches, for whom the city is not a positive symbol. Nor are they generally referred to as ‘Zion’ or the ‘New Jerusalem’.¹²⁶ Although the larger headquarters of the Roho churches may nowadays include such things as nursery schools (very common: at Bukoyani, Lugala, Boyani, Nineveh, Ibwali, etc.), village polytechnics (i.e., artisan training schools: at Boyani and Tumbeni), clinics (at Boyani and Bukoyani), a printing press (at Nineveh),

¹²² A. Obede, ‘The Founding Fathers’, (Doc. 98) p.1; OI, Joseph Zare 22.9.99 (Doc. 68) p. 1. Although in this last document, Japheth’s son Zare says this was not usual at the time, the elder Zare set a precedent.

¹²³ OI, C. Ondolo, 27.9.99 (Doc. 100), Bukoyani.

¹²⁴ Joel Sande (OI, J. Sande, 3.5.00 (Doc. 84), Muhanda) says that the Spirit specifically forbade priests (*kuhani*) from working for Europeans.

¹²⁵ The HQ of Akatsa’s *Jerusalem* is in Nairobi – but this is not a typical Roho church.

bible and theological training centres (at Nineveh and Boyani) – these are all subsequent, modern developments and are additional rather than central to the core role of the headquarters.¹²⁷ These are places where God’s presence has been specially known – even in such events as a massacre - and where pilgrimages are made for central worship events, revival meetings, conventions, and conferences. Often they are the places where the founders are buried, and where an elaborate *makumbusho* (Swahili: ‘memorial service’) is conducted every year. These are significant ritual occasions when the history and spirituality of the founding fathers is remembered and taught. Sometimes sites are located near the headquarters which are associated with the church’s history, such as the rock of Givaveyi, where Zakayo Kivuli miraculously produced water out of a dry rock in imitation of Moses in the desert.¹²⁸

In short, the headquarters are centres of power, both spiritual and political. But the *original* retreat to the village still needs to be explained. This is of some importance because increasingly, to quote Kitching, ‘the family holding became a place to which one returned in slack periods or whilst waiting for news of new and better opportunities’.¹²⁹ Thus to return to it with the intention of *staying* indicates a definite stand against prevailing socio-economic trends. Two factors encouraged this perception of the ‘reserve’ as a more appropriate environment for the cultivation of Roho spirituality. The first was the great mobility of wage labour, which - despite attempts by Government in

¹²⁶ The latter term is used by *Legio Maria* of their founder’s headquarters in South Nyanza, but this church represents a somewhat different spirituality, with very strong Roman Catholic roots.

¹²⁷ With the exception of African Divine Church, Boyani, where the headquarters seems much more instrumental and less expressive in function (to use Fernandez’ terms).

¹²⁸ Welbourn & Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home*, p. 76; Kasiera, op. cit, p. 540.

the 1970s to limit employers' use of casual labour - continues to the present day.¹³⁰ The instability of employment recurs time and time again in Roho testimonies.¹³¹ Coupled with this was the non-availability or the unsuitability of urban housing for families. In pre-colonial Kenya, except for the Swahili / Arab towns along the coast, urbanization was almost non-existent. Urban life came into being as a response to the demands and expectations of colonial administration and industrial and business concerns.¹³² Colonial towns were very clearly only for Africans as workers and servants, and families were discouraged.¹³³ During the colonial period there were strict regulations that required all Africans resident in towns without a work contract to be registered and obtain a permit from the administration.¹³⁴ The consequences of this policy continue to the present time. Following political independence, the surplus labour created by the colonial administration primarily for the agricultural export economy flooded into the hitherto restricted urban centres. In what is now termed the 'informal sector' they form a labour reserve for urban industry as the former 'native reserves' did for the settler farms.¹³⁵ Today in Nairobi, over 50% of the population live in the shanty-towns on 5% of the land,¹³⁶ and know that they can look forward to no settled life there in the future. Even

¹²⁹ Kitching, op. cit., p. 253.

¹³⁰ Kitching, op. cit., p. 244.

¹³¹ See Appendix 5.2.2, 'Testimony of Bishop Avisa', for an example. Archbishop Ondolo's brief testimony reveals the same instability of employment.

¹³² Soja, 'The Geography of Modernization', p. 37; Obudho, 'Urban Primacy in Kenya.'

¹³³ A survey of Nairobi by Davies in 1939 revealed 25,886 African men living in the municipality, and only 3356 women. He calculated the minimum living wage to be 21/- for a single man, and 38/- for a married couple. 16,000 Africans were earning less than 21/- per month. 5,701 had no house at all. Cited by Hake, *African Metropolis*, p. 51.

¹³⁴ By-laws were passed for Nairobi in 1930 requiring passes to be issued to 'all natives who stay in Nairobi more than 36 hours and who are not in employment for some master in Nairobi'. The Chief Registrar of Natives complained about the 'hundreds of searches' that had now to be made in response to enquiries from Police and the Municipality concerning individuals suspected of vagrancy. AR Native Affairs 1930 pp. 139-140.

¹³⁵ Soja, 'The Geography of Modernization', p. 42.

¹³⁶ United States Agency for International Development, *Nairobi's Informal Settlements Inventory*, p. 1.

today the poor and casually employed find it difficult to achieve a stable and moral life in the towns.

In consequence, there is a strong sense that the rural community is the true arena for Christian life and formation. Indeed, reverting to a theme developed in the last chapter, it is in this rural community where someone is indubitably known for what he or she is. For most Kenyans, such a community of face-to-face interaction with neighbours and kin remains 'a crucial reference point in individual competition for rank, acceptance, and security.'¹³⁷ In these geographically restricted, localized societies, it is very difficult to conceal one's actions, and where for the Roho Christian the inner and the outer lives are most nearly fused.¹³⁸ In rural areas, people can more easily find repentance, and maintain their life in the Spirit, through being continuously accountable to the moral community of the believers. It is the form of society most consonant with the Roho ideological preference for the communal or domestic, rather than the industrial capitalist, mode of production.

Localizing the source of divine power

The former chairman of *African Israel* remembers the miracle Kivuli performed at Givaveyi in these words:

My father told me that they had a dream, and the dream said that 'Go and climb the rock and pray. After praying, you will see something coming out of the rock.' Now they went and prayed with the High Priest, who is Paul David Kivuli, who originally prayed for

¹³⁷ Haugerud, *Culture of Politics*, p. 133.

¹³⁸ An argument strongly put to me against the appointment of a certain bishop was that no-one knew where he stayed in Nairobi - something quite impossible in the rural community - which suggested a questionable private life.

the rock, and water had to come out. When the people saw this, they bursted [sic] in Spirit and bursted into tongues; now, many of them believed. We had so many people coming from different places, wanting to hear the news that came from the rock. They wanted mostly to know whether it was true. The people went round the stone rejoicing, rejoicing of the God of Israel, how he happened to make this great miracle to them.

Now, the church began to spread, and people began to know that we are a church which really speaks of Jesus Christ, because we read that Jesus is the rock, and water comes from Jesus, so our first doctrine begins from the rock. So we are the children of the rock. We can be proud and say that we are born from the rock.¹³⁹

Direct access to God's power and to revelations of the Holy Spirit, without being mediated by Western missionaries or dependent on Western theological education, is in itself a deeply empowering experience in a colonial or post-colonial situation where all earthly power is held by others. Friedman, writing of the impact of a modernizing, hegemonic centre upon the peripheries says: 'In many parts of the periphery where there is a kinship organised polity, there is a tendency to orient oneself to the modern in such a way that the strength or force, the *mana* that reproduces society appears to come ultimately from the conquerors, the outsiders, and 'stranger kings' who come from the very source of power.'¹⁴⁰ In accepting a global faith, AICs aligned themselves with change; but in indigenizing the channels of the Holy Spirit – the source of power – they recovered control of their own social and community values. It was in the 'reserve', in the land in which they had ancestral rights, that these manifestations of divine power were given. In a more recent expression of the same thrust towards the local sourcing of divine power, *Holy Spirit* has adopted the custom of referring to its founders as 'Saints': St. Jacob, St. Daniel, St. Philip (at Lugangu). Mother tongue languages are used in

¹³⁹ OI, Harun Mudegu, 1978, Nineveh, in *Rise Up and Walk* (film).

worship among the Roho Churches wherever feasible, even if this involves several translations. This is in clear contrast to the usage in African pentecostal churches, where the preferred languages are English and Swahili. In this respect, since in East African societies language use is an indicator of socio-economic status, Roho church leaders frequently reject these ‘prestige’ languages in favour of their mother tongues.¹⁴¹ In multi-ethnic congregations in towns or at major celebrations, leaders take delight in encouraging different language groups to sing their own songs in their own tongues to their own tunes.

The spiritual healing of the Roho churches returns health care to the local community, in this case the church, which offers healing from its own (divine) resources, so that it is not necessary to have recourse to external experts.¹⁴² On a practical level, many who are not committed to spiritual healing alone have resort to their priests or prophets when medical care is too expensive, as it often is for many in contemporary Kenya, or when it fails.

Part Three. Confronting the past: locating community obligations and loyalties in Roho theology

Retreat to the traditional rural community with its complex clan and ethnic obligations (as distinct from migration to the settlement schemes, established in post-colonial Kenya,

¹⁴⁰ Friedman, *Cultural Identity*, p. 172.

¹⁴¹ Scoton, quoted by Kanyoro, ‘Unity and Diversity’, p. 225. Challenged by the African pentecostals on their use of mother tongues during an OAIC evangelistic ‘crusade’ in 1994 in Kibera, Nairobi, which united AIC churches of different traditions in a multi-ethnic event, the Roho leaders said specifically that it is the mother tongue ‘that carries them up to heaven’. Kanyoro reported that 82% of those who spoke English and Swahili as well as a Luyia dialect reported dreaming in Luyia – which she refers to as ‘the language of the sub-conscious’. ‘Unity and Diversity’, p. 233.

¹⁴² Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, pp. 78-9.

which have a population of mixed ethnic origins) meant however continual confrontation with Luyia tradition. This is the area where Roho spirituality comes most adequately into its own, creating a response of great subtlety and imagination. In the previous chapter I have shown how the core Roho doctrine of repentance and a pure heart developed in relation to the traditional Luyia religious heritage. Here I consider the further elaboration of that doctrine that occurred as Roho Christians began to engage more deeply with their religious heritage.

Claiming the local landscape: Mung'oma and sacred hills

Wagner describes only one communal sacrifice that united members of different clans among the Luyia peoples.¹⁴³ This was among the Maragoli, who sacrificed twice a year during the growing seasons to avert crop failure. The sacrifice (*ovwali*, Lulogooli: a sacrificial fire) was offered inside a cave believed to be the home of the eponymous founder of the Maragoli, Mulogooli, and into which only priests (*avasalisi*) from the Nondi sub-clan of the M'mavi clan, might enter. It was addressed to the Supreme Being (*Isahi* or *Emungu* / *Imungu*), to the ancestral spirits (*emisambwa*) and to a certain Ang'oma, the first to have ever offered sacrifices on the site at Mwigono, before the arrival of the Maragoli, and after whom the cave is now named (Mung'oma).¹⁴⁴

The contemporary Mung'oma prayers are offered once a year, just before Christmas, for the prosperity of the New Year. The rite has become Christianized, with a number of

¹⁴³ For a full account of this traditional sacrifice, which has had a significant influence on Roho practice in Maragoli, see Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, pp. 290ff; 'Abaluyia of Kavirondo', p. 37. Wagner also records a more recently established shrine, but lacking the drum, at the hill *itavwongo muguva* (Zabwongo,

minor church leaders acting as elders of the traditional shrine.¹⁴⁵ Prayers are made but an animal is no longer slaughtered. Access to the cave is not - as before - restricted to two or three priests from a particular clan, but open to all who, according to laws of purity which owe much to the influence of the Roho churches, are considered ritually clean. *Nyasaye* has largely but not completely replaced *Emungu* / *Imungu* as the name by which God is addressed. This ceremony has been taken up by a body known as the Vihiga Cultural Society,¹⁴⁶ which sponsors an annual pilgrimage to Mung'oma during its Christmas festivities, and which, with the assistance from the Kenya Government, has reconstructed the house of Mulogooli at the site.¹⁴⁷

The use of hills for prayer is common in Roho tradition. In Vihiga District in addition to Mung'oma and Vindizi, there is also Givaveyi (the rock out of which Kivuli made water to appear) near Jebrok. Only 2 kms away, near Gimarakwa, is Archbishop Kisibo's own sacred hill called Vwali (or Ibwali – the place of *ovwali*, sacrificial fire), a traditional site which he specially cleansed for Christian prayers.¹⁴⁸ Kisibo names as exceptionally holy

on the border with Bunyore), where the rival priests of the Logovo clan sacrifice at the same time for the people of eastern Maragoli.

¹⁴⁴ Pilgrimage to Mung'oma 20.12.00 (Doc. 73) p. 9.

¹⁴⁵ A prayer offered by one of the cave attendants before the pilgrims entered the cave during the Vihiga Cultural Festival of 2000 shows a syncretism quite remarkable in present-day Maragoli: 'Before we pray [spits twice on the ground], the spirits [*misambwa*], when we walk, be with us [spits to the ground twice] let us walk in you. Only the name of Jesus is what will lead us here.' Pilgrimage to Mung'oma 20.12.00 (Doc. 73), Mung'oma.

¹⁴⁶ An organization started in 1979, and sponsored by the late Moses Mudavadi (d. 1989), a senior Government minister, and MP for Vihiga and then Sabatia between 1969 until his death.¹⁴⁶ He was a strong supporter of AICs. His son, Musalia Mudavadi, who 'inherited' the parliamentary seat, also became a senior minister, and for a short period in 2002 Vice-President, until defeated in the 2002 General Election. The Vihiga Cultural Society, which attracted the frequent attendance of President Moi at its annual festivities on 26 December every year, serves an (unofficial) political function within Vihiga District of strengthening the role of the Maragoli, and (hitherto) the sitting MPs. See the Vihiga Cultural Society's *Andimi*, 2nd ed. 1993.

¹⁴⁷ OI, K. Mwangale 21.2.02 (Doc.111), Kitumba, p. 16.

¹⁴⁸ Appendix 5.8.3.

sites in Kenya, Mount Elgon (used much by Elijah Masinde of *Dini ya Msambwa*¹⁴⁹), Mount Kenya (used both by traditional Kikuyu religionists and by Akurinu),¹⁵⁰ and Menengai Crater, Nakuru, which God told Kisibo that people were unjustly neglecting since it was the very centre of the world, and therefore an especially powerful place.¹⁵¹

This is not just a recent Roho tradition. Those 'people of the Spirit' who eventually became members of *Lyahuka* used from the earliest days to visit a large rocky outcrop called Imbinga, with a rock-shelter at its base (see Plate 6.2).¹⁵² Jacob Buluku and his group of Roho Christians used to pray regularly (Wednesdays and Saturdays) at Vindizi. This is a small hill about two kilometres from Vihiga, possessing on its summit an amphitheatre in the rocks and trees, which the European missionaries also used to visit from time to time.¹⁵³ Currently overnight prayers (*kesha*) are held there by *Holy Spirit* on or about 23rd December every year, a significant public event which some non-church members also attend, and which in the stillness of the night can be heard for several kilometres around (Plate 6.3). As with the revived Mung'oma, the intention is to pray for

¹⁴⁹ See below, chapter five, pp. 240, 286.

¹⁵⁰ See Lambert's 1930 report on the Arathi in Embu (KNA EBU/13 AR for 1930 (No. 434); and Appendix 6.5 for the visits of Mary Wanjiru.

¹⁵¹ Appendix 5.8.1; OI, J. Kisibo 9.3.00 (Doc. 41), Ibwali, p. 8. I have also prayed with Kisibo in a cave at Wuothogik, Mihuru Bay (South Nyanza). Wuothogik means in Luo 'the end of the road' – it is at the far end of a narrow rocky peninsula stretching out into Lake Victoria. Kisibo has also offered prayers on Homa Bay Mountain, called 'Asagu' (op. cit., p. 7).

¹⁵² Priests only were permitted to enter. The tradition ceased when in 1997 elders who had visited, fell sick, and Archbishop Manoh Keverenge encouraged them not to go again. They believed the sickness was a sanction against their lack of purity. (PC, M. Keverenge, Nairobi, 2.7.02.) Clause 2(f) of the *Lyahuka* constitution, dating from 1972, reads 'We have a flag for our church and also we go to mountains for prayer'.

¹⁵³ OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo 8.5.00 (Doc. 12), Nairobi, p. 12. Kasiera, *Development of Pentecostal Christianity*, p. 376, dates the practice of visiting hills and mountain cliffs for prayers in the early morning to 1928 for South Maragoli.

the New Year, that the ‘line be crossed successfully’, and the year be free from danger. Prophecies in this connection may be declared.¹⁵⁴

Ancestors: Their debated role as symptomatic of divided loyalties

In seeking through the founders’ vision to separate themselves from the capitalist world of colonial settlers and employers, the Roho Christians proposed a return to the domestic mode of production, a mode controlled, and partially embodied in, the patriarchal family structure. Clans and families had always been governed in symbolic terms by the ancestors and in practical terms by senior clan elders whose seniority and personality fitted them for the post, the duties of which included officiating at sacrifices. In Roho practice, therefore, it is not surprising that ancestors continue to have a significant role in governance, but now it is the *church* founders that appear in dreams, visions, and prophecies, sometimes together with Jesus, and offer guidance to the Roho community.¹⁵⁵ In this way the churches maintain the structure of an extended family or clan.

The revival of Mung’oma and its meaning for senior Roho leaders deserves special attention. Mung’oma, even in its revived ‘carnivalized’ form, is a veneration of, and an appeal to the Maragoli ancestors. Kefa Mwangale, a priest (*omusalisi*, pl., *avasalisi*, Lulogooli; *kuhani*, pl. *ma-*, Swahili) in *Holy Spirit*, is also one of the traditional elders of

¹⁵⁴ Rasmussen, *Modern African Spirituality*, p. 104, points out that in the Roho church tradition mountains are used especially for prayer for the nation and on the occasion of grave events.

¹⁵⁵ Eg, in the Memorial Service for Daniel Sande, 5.11.99 (Doc. 61), Muhanda, p. 4, 5, in which Daniel and Philip Lukayu spoke through a prophecy warning the church to pray for the senior post of the church. See also Appendix 5.1.7 for a prayer invoking the presence of the church founders at the opening of worship.

the Mung'oma shrine. The continued use of the title *omusalisi* is itself an indication of the Roho desire to preserve the traditional moral community, not only in the church, but also in the wider ethnic group. An *omusalisi* is a wise, unblemished elder, whose role in both Roho custom and Luyia tradition is to pray for and bless the community or the church on public occasions.¹⁵⁶ In its contemporary manifestation Mung'oma has been largely Christianized. To Mwangale, Mulogooli and his wife Kaliyesa, the eponymous ancestors of the Maragoli people, have become the Adam and Eve of their people, set in place and taught by God the Creator, dividing the land between their sons, and creating the four original 'houses' (*zinyumba*) or clans of the Maragoli.¹⁵⁷ One of the gifts God gave Mulogooli was knowledge of the spirits of *emisambwa* (meaning here both 'the spirits of the ancestors' and 'the rites dedicated to their veneration and the preservation of the Maragoli people').¹⁵⁸ That is, Mulogooli was the person through whom the ancestors came into existence, and by whom God was able to transmit the techniques, wisdom and laws for the guidance of the Maragoli. These techniques included the means by which the ancestors and their descendants were able occasionally to communicate with each other through sacrifices and other rites. It was by means of obedience to God's laws mediated in this way that the early Maragoli enjoyed prosperity and blessing (another 'prelapsarian' image).¹⁵⁹ Given Mwangale's belief that it is the one (Christian) God who put

¹⁵⁶ Wagner, 'Abaluyia of Kavirondo', p. 37; *Bantu of Western Kenya*, p. 79: 'The *omusalisi* must be known for his kindness and honesty...; he must be past the age of sexual desire, and also the record of his former sex-life must have been beyond reproach (he must not, for example, have seduced any married women, nor must he ever have been suspected of sexual perversions); he must always have observed the customs (*amalago*) and ritual prohibitions (*emigilu*) of the clan; he must never have been suspected of witchcraft (*ovulogi*) or even of sorcery (*ovuvila*). In short, he must be a person without *embala*, i.e., without any failures and blemishes in his past and present life, if his sacrifice is to be favourably accepted by the spirits.' These requirements largely hold today for *makuhani* in the Roho churches.

¹⁵⁷ OI, K. Mwangale 21.2.02 (Doc. 111), Kitumba, pp. 3ff; p. 36.

¹⁵⁸ OI, K. Mwangale 21.2.02 (Doc. 111), Kitumba, p.8.

¹⁵⁹ Mwangale is adamant that these traditions (*emisambwa*) were given to the Maragoli by God, and are not simply Maragoli inventions. OI, K. Mwangale 21.2.02 (Doc. 111), Kitumba, p. 41. Archbishop Joji of

Mulogooli on earth, he has some uncertainty as to why God should have given the *emisambwa* – frequently demonized in Roho tradition - this protective role, but such a respectful lack of knowledge befits a very junior descendant contemplating the work of the original founders.¹⁶⁰ He distinguishes between the ancestral *emisambwa* who inhabit and perform their guardianship role at Mung’oma, and more recent spirits of the family who return to visit the homestead if they are constantly talked about.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, he also understands that both Mung’oma and Vindizi are of the Old Covenant.¹⁶²

When the ancestors disturb their descendants without due cause, they are identified with evil spirits, and the ‘confusion’ of traditional life. On other occasions, they are regarded as acting with divine sanction in founding and establishing the Maragoli, and preserving them until the present day (as in many of the Mung’oma traditions). On yet others, they are revered as valued and significant family members. At the personal level, respect for ancestors helps to explain causes of unforeseen evil in daily life; promotes respect for a people’s founding traditions; shows commitment to protecting that people’s prosperity and identity in the future; and enables people to continue in relationship with family members who have died. But at a structural level, ancestors are used to articulate what under the impact of Christian teaching and of modernity have become distinct, and contradictory, aspects of reality. People desire to return to the domestic mode of

Gospel Holy Spirit expresses a similar understanding of the Mung’oma traditions in OI, Joji (Doc. 101); and in the prayers he offered at the Mung’oma ceremony of 2000 (Pilgrimage to Mung’oma, 20.12.00 (Doc. 73) p. 3.) See also the conflation of the *emisambwa* (gods, ancestral spirits) and Jesus in the cave-attendant’s prayer in this chapter, f.n. 145, and the equation between the ‘God of our ancestors’ and Jehovah God, in a prayer offered in the name of Christ, by Mzee Eng’oma, made in the same text of the Mung’oma ceremony.

¹⁶⁰ OI, K. Mwangale 21.2.02 (Doc. 111), Kitumba, p. 8. At one point Mwangale slides into calling *emisambwa* djinn (*majini*, Swahili), until he corrects himself (p. 42).

¹⁶¹ OI, K. Mwangale 21.2.02 (Doc. 111), Kitumba, p. 43.

production, yet know intuitively that this is no longer possible, and that the future requires the establishment of new, non-patriarchal, social forms, more suited to modern capitalism. Hence ancestors are sometimes revered, and sometimes treated as demons.

From a more narrowly theological perspective, the relationship between Mung'oma and Vindizi reflects the on-going debate on how much the Roho churches should depart from Luyia tradition, and how to relate this inheritance to their Christian faith. It also exemplifies the natural, continued, and spontaneous acceptance of traditional forms of religious expression, forms that have now, however, been filled with a specifically Christian content. Indeed, it is this Christianizing of traditional forms that emerges most strongly as the defining structural principle of Roho spirituality.

Part Four. Conclusion: Towards a personal and communal reality

Between the cognitive and the intuitive

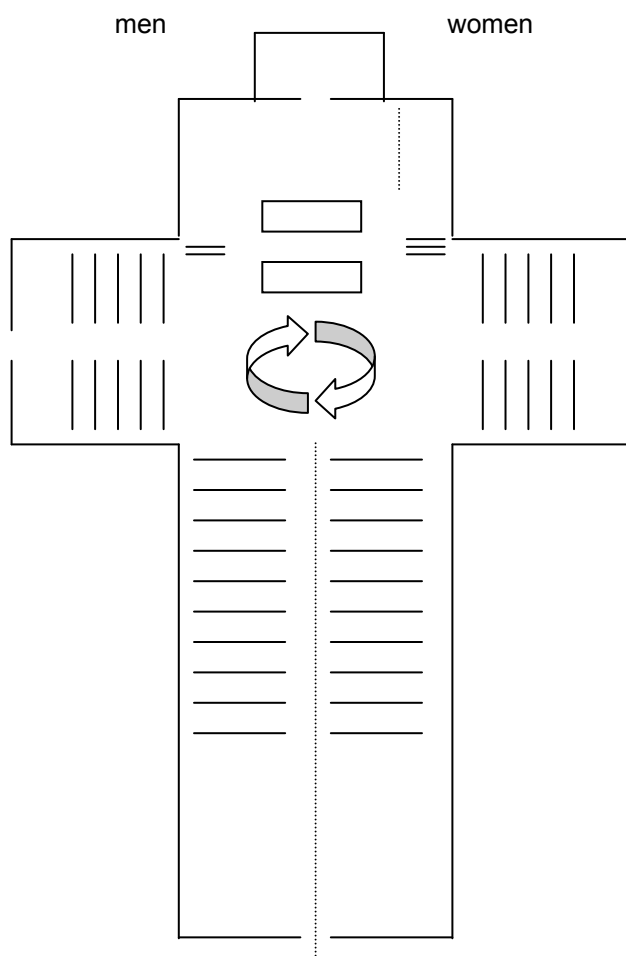
It has been argued that 'inhabited spaces' are structured in such a way as to reflect the organizing principles of the socio-political systems of that particular society, and that they help to socialize that society's members into its particular social system and world-view.¹⁶² The principle may be extended to 'sacred space', that is, the structure of churches and other spaces used for worship. Taking the ground plan of a typical Western Kenya Spiritual church and examining how it is used for worship can thus help to elucidate the relationship in the Spiritual churches between certain modes of activity. I use here an example of the headquarters church at *Holy Spirit* Bukoyani. Although this is a modern

¹⁶² OI, Mwangale 21.2.02 (Doc. 111), p. 35.

¹⁶³ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, p. 89, cited by Comaroff, *Body of Power*, p. 54.

building, the plan is an old one – very similar in fact to the *African Holy Spirit* church building at Kimingini, which dates from the 1930s. The church, indeed, is not in itself arranged significantly differently from the buildings of Protestant mission churches in the

Fig. 4. Plan of Holy Spirit Church Bukoyani Headquarters



same locality. The congregation is arranged on benches on either side of a central aisle, which divides male from female. They face the church leaders. The senior leaders are seated, behind a short partition, on the platform (Swahili: *madhabahu*; Lulogooli, *uvwali* – ‘the place of sacrifice’). Traditionally only women beyond the age of childbearing were permitted in this more ‘holy’ area. Junior leaders sit below the platform, behind a table, or in the wings (transepts) of the church.

Thus the authority structure manifests itself in what (apart from the transepts) is physically reminiscent of a school. The plan emphasizes discipline and a top-down relationship between the leaders and worshippers – the confrontation, and opposition

between leaders and followers characteristic of colonial and post-colonial government *baraza* and educational institutions.¹⁶⁴

So far, this is not distinct from the plan of the mission churches. Now comes the difference. Though the Holy Spirit can be received when the worshipper is in any bodily posture or physical location in the church, the most usual place to receive him is in the central open space in front of the platform. This happens when the worshippers have moved out of the straight lines of the benches, and are dancing in a more or less circular movement in this open space. As the excitement of worship increases in response to the repeated beat of the drums, and the presence of the Spirit is more strongly felt, the circular movement of ecstatic worshippers and drummers becomes very pronounced. Moreover, to encourage the descent of the Spirit, preachers often come down from the platform and move among the congregation, either during the sermon itself, or during the songs that punctuate it. The role of the senior leaders on the platform is meanwhile to maintain general supervision and order. In short, the movement of the Spirit - while subject to discernment and management from the platform - is essentially free, popular, and democratic, and takes place in situations of face-to-face activity. If we compare the ground plan of the church to the human body, with the platform representing the head and the leaders sitting on it as the cerebral function, then the Spirit falls in the heart. This is precisely where – according to the analysis offered in the previous chapter – the Spirit might be expected to fall. Indeed, it is fairly rare to see leaders filled with the Spirit on the platform – for this to happen, they must come down and join with the people in their dancing and drumming.

¹⁶⁴ See Haugerud, *Culture of Politics*, p. 3., and below, chapter five.

In this way the rational / disciplined and the ecstatic / free modes of worship are held in tension. Neither mode is denied its role, and a healthy tension is kept between the rational, controlling, function of the elders on the platform and the popular, non-rational reception of the Spirit achieved by bodily activities in the heart of the church. In this holistic understanding of life, the Roho churches manifest most clearly their stand against the secular and materialist traits of modernism, while at the same time maintaining the discipline of rationality.¹⁶⁵

The function of desire

Roho leaders distinguish between the ‘spiritual’ teaching of the Gospel brought by Europeans, and the deeply subversive effects of the Western economic system. Listen to Priest Mwangale, a former government informer for the colonial and then post-colonial regimes until he came to understand the results of their policies and became a member of *Holy Spirit*, as he reflects on the European introduction of new consumer items. He begins with sugar – which many Luyia initially rejected on the grounds that it was a kind of drug - and then turns to the introduction of maize, which he recalls Odinga Oginga opposing in 1938:

Jaramogi [Odinga] and his group came and deceived people in the whole of Nyanza to uproot the maize, saying that if they ate it, they would become barren. People uprooted it from their farms, but still the European persuaded them, he brought [things] through the port, he brought education, and everything, until he controlled [lit: ‘embraced’] our minds.

¹⁶⁵ In fact, this latter discipline was as strong in the traditional meetings and discussions of the clan elders as in the imposed colonial and missionary authority structures, and was one reason for the expulsion of the ‘undisciplined’ people of the Spirit from the Friends church.

He brought medicine, brought drugs to swallow which make the blood of people get over-heated and do shameful things.¹⁶⁶

From this perspective, consumerism and the persuasive introduction of new products are how Europeans seduced Africans to become part of their world system, through the continual stimulation of desire (*tamaa*, Swahili – the word frequently has the negative connotations of ‘greed’, ‘avarice’, ‘lust’).¹⁶⁷ Mwangale concludes, indeed, by suggesting that the excitation of sexual desires is simply one means by which this is achieved. By contrast, Roho teaching encourages a strict disciplining of the appetites.¹⁶⁸ Indeed, it appears to be the universal witness of Roho Christians that the Spirit himself reduces desire, especially sexual desire – which may be considered the type *par excellence* of all desire.¹⁶⁹

The moral reality at the heart of life

But self-discipline, and its corollary, separation, should not be viewed purely from a negative standpoint – the laws of purity and restriction of appetite in fact promote a strong concept of the oneness and the God-givenness of life.¹⁷⁰ From this perspective, Roho spirituality is not a failure to confront European technical and material power and a consequent retreat into magical irrelevance, so much as a movement *into* the deeper

¹⁶⁶ OI, K. Mwangale 21.2.02 (Doc. 111), Kitumba, p. 24.

¹⁶⁷ Mwangale continues in the interview to discuss the example of his daughter, who has used so much skin-lightening cream that she no longer looks African at all.

¹⁶⁸ Another witness, Irene Maleya, also of Holy Spirit, regards the modern way of life with its many and various material needs, as fundamentally destructive of the life of the Spirit in that it is driven by desire. ‘Desire began when money came, and the payment of [school] fees, so that someone thought continually how to get money to pay fees.’ OI, Irene Maleya, 20.8.02, (Doc. 137), Bukoyani.

¹⁶⁹ Archbishop Kisibo: ‘Yes, the Spirit effectively prevents bodily desire ...’ (OI, J. Kisibo, 31.8.02 (Doc. 136) Ibwali.) Rev. Emmanuel Simwa, a colleague of mine and member of *Holy Spirit*, told me that when he was first converted as a young man, and became a member of an Akurinu church, he spent two years in close proximity to girls of his own age without feeling any desire for them.

¹⁷⁰ Countryman, *Dirt Greed and Sex*, pp. 14, 21-2.

reality at the heart of all things, a reality that is personal, communal, and moral. This I take to be the explanation of the frequently-made comparisons between the gifts of Spiritual intuition and knowledge and mechanical or electrical devices, rather than a claim of recourse to magical power as an alternative to technology. As an example: Archbishop Kisibo one day decided not to wait at home for the interview I had arranged with him, but to set out on a journey. In fact I was delayed in Nairobi, and unable to keep the appointment. We met the following day in Vihiga, when he assured me that he had expected this to happen, comparing his fore-knowledge of it to a telephone (a common comparison), and implying that he had access through the Holy Spirit not to a better technology but to a deeper reality, a underlying spiritual unity that bonds people together. In a similar way, Bishop Senelwa compared the Holy Spirit to ‘the words in the air. Without a radio you can’t grasp anything but if you get a radio and switch it on, it’s then you realize there are a lot of words in the air. The radio to get the Spirit of God is just prayer and confession, and then you can experience the Spirit of God personally.’¹⁷¹ In fact there is extremely little that in the Roho churches that can appropriately be described as ‘magical’ in its use.¹⁷²

The fundamental assumption here is that the nature of reality is not dry matter but matter and spirit interwoven, and that in the inter-relationships of individual, community, and creation, it reflects the moral purpose of its creator. These relationships are upset by giving way to excessive desire, the source of evil and individualism, and contravention of the laws of purity. The Spirit illuminates this reality through testimony, dreams, and

¹⁷¹ In conversation with him at his house in Womulalu on 22. 8.02.

revelations, providing meaning and depth to day-to-day life. The presence of the divine is therefore recognized and experienced in the mundane (a reason why there is little felt need for the sacraments).

The founders' vision is an interweaving of concepts, traditions, values, and images from the Bible, from tradition, and from the colonial and modern worlds. But this mix (*bricolage*) was, and is, controlled and dominated by values and purposes that are essentially religious. As an African response to Western modernity, a response based in rural society, the vision has been typically concerned not with economics or politics, nor with increase in production or the rationalization of society, but with the *restoration of morality* as the means of healing personal lives and the disrupted community. Buried within this response, however, are assumptions that privilege the communal or patriarchal society – precisely because it kept its mode of production under local, 'moral', control.¹⁷³

¹⁷² The one exception is the way some people understand the wooden cross, 'Moses' or Aaron's staff', discussed in the previous chapter.

¹⁷³ For more on this non-western concern for the restoration of morality, see Bayart, *The State in Africa*, p. 12, which Behrend cites and develops in 'The Holy Spirit Movement', p. 246.

Chapter Five

The Flag in the Marketplace

Look at the way the world is spoilt:
The world is bankrupt, it has no stand.
The nations are frightened of being overturned.

Welcome that day when the hopeful
Will enter the arms of the Lord,
Saying, 'We waited for you Lord Jesus to come to save us,
To remove us from troubles here in the world.'¹

Introduction. 'Each man under his standard with the banners of his family'²

In this chapter I discuss the Roho attitude to politics, or more precisely, their involvement in the public sphere.³ As will be seen, this is highly ambivalent and often contradictory. I begin the discussion with a symbol borrowed from the political arena, but used at the heart of the churches' ministry and worship - *flags*. Among Western Kenya Roho churches, in both Nyanza and Western Provinces, flags are symbols of a distinct identity. Each denomination is distinguished by a flag in its own colours (see plates 7 & 8), as it is

¹ Translated from a chorus in Swahili sung at *Holy Spirit* Youth Conference 24.11.00 (Doc. 30) Ogada.

² Num. 2: 6. This biblical reference usually quoted to support the use of flags also seems to bless the existence of distinct denominations as families or clans.

³ Rajaei makes a useful distinction: 'The public sphere directly concerns the exercise of power, and is thus linked to the powers that be, whereas civil society is not directly concerned with power.' *Globalization on Trial*, p. 86.

also by a particular rhythm of drumming. The people of the Spirit at Bukoyani claim to have raised their flag first in 1931.⁴ The Luo-speaking Holy Ghost movement followed in 1934, with the tragic consequences already noted in chapter two.⁵ The flag is carried in front of open-air processions of witness (Swahili: *ma-gwaride*)⁶, and is sometimes swept from side-to-side, as if clearing the way ahead of the dancing and singing congregation that follows in its wake. As already noted, among the Holy Spirit denominations baptism, without the use of water, and in the Spirit, takes place under the flag.⁷ When a congregation or *kijiji* first achieves official recognition, it is given a flag, on which is sewn the name of the denomination and of the particular congregation or assembly, and usually an appropriate Bible verse. For congregations that meet in the open air, under trees, on road verges, in market places or on waste ground, the flag planted at the place of worship is a call to worship, a sign of the Spirit's presence, and an indication of the congregation's approved status.⁸ In many denominations, the flag colours or motifs are repeated on the colours of the hat or headscarves the members wear in daily life. In addition, during mass events, such as services for testimony (*ushuhuda*, Swahili), in processions, at funerals, or weddings, the display of flags is extremely colourful (see plates 9 & 10). At a funeral the slow lowering of massed flags over the open grave can be

⁴ 'The History of the Holy Spirit Church of East Africa', (Doc. 170) records 'January 18th 1931, they started playing the drums and carrying a flag. The man who played the drum was Tiego. The man who carried a flag was Festo Asivila.' Translated from Lulogooli. Note the significance given to these simple acts. The North Kavirondo AR for 1938 refers to the 'Wa-Roho' of N. Maragoli Location carrying banners. KNA DC/NN 1/20, AR for 1938 (AR 1330).

⁵ Hoehler-Fatton, *Women of Fire & Spirit*, pp. 55-6.

⁶ The word originally meant a military drill or parade. See Johnson, *Swahili-English Dictionary*.

⁷ As it does also in *Zion* and in *African Israel*, and in many of the Akurinu churches of Central Kenya.

⁸ The use of a particular flag is frequently contested in court cases between rival branches of a denomination seeking legitimation. For this reason, at OAIC we have been asked to include the design of flags in the revision of the church constitutions that we have been facilitating (e.g., for *Holy Spirit* and *Zion*.)

deeply moving. The flag is therefore imbued with deep spiritual and emotional significance.

The early Roho churches (*Holy Spirit, Holy Ghost Musanda, African Israel, African Divine*) preferred a combination of the same colours: red (for the blood of Jesus and/or the churches' own martyrs); white for the purity and sanctity of the Holy Spirit and the hearts of believers; and green for the 'environment' - the intense green of the natural vegetation and crops of well-watered Western Kenya, not, here, an 'eco-friendly' colour but given the negative interpretation of worldliness.⁹ These are present-day interpretations of the colours, and are generally accepted. I have not been able to discover any traditional colour symbolism in Luyia culture, and there is plenty of room for other interpretations (see Appendix 2 for further details). One reason for this is that the design and colours of the flag are normally received in dreams or visions, frequently at the founding of the church.¹⁰

Although it was the Salvation Army, which arrived in Western Kenya in 1921, that provided the immediate model of the use of flags in specifically Christian contexts, the historical socio-political referents of the Roho churches' flags are to be found rather in the 'invented traditions' of British colonialism and militarism.¹¹ Ranger considers that

⁹ Although the first flag at Musanda was pure red, as is the banner that has traditionally been raised at *Holy Spirit's* commemoration of its martyrs. Red, white and blue is another 'remembered' colour of the first flag (see the colours of *Holy Ghost Ruwe*). Is this a memory of, or in competition with, the British Union Flag? See Hoehler-Fatton, op. cit., p. 56.

¹⁰ Priest Ainea Babu described how the African Israel flag 'came down out of heaven' in Ankele, *Rise Up and Walk*, a film shot in 1978.

¹¹ Kivuli specifically claimed that his model was the British Army (Welbourn & Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home*, p. 84, f.n. 27). The use of the word 'regiment' in the 'African Israel Church History' for 'denomination' supports this (see Appendix 4.)

such traditions in British colonial Africa had a number of purposes: to inculcate a spirit of service, respectability, and self-respect into the white colonial officers, to introduce selected Africans into the ruling class, and to socialise the rest into accepting their subordinate role in the colonial world.¹² Considerable significance and ceremony was attached to the raising and lowering of the British Union Jack at colonial government *bomas* or headquarters every morning and evening. (Indeed, you could be arrested if you did not stand to attention while this was done, a tradition which the post-colonial state has continued until recently with the Kenyan national flag). The colonial army on parade marched with its flag (the ‘colours’) to the fore, the custom which was also that of the Salvation Army and later the Roho churches. Later, from 1951, the Kenya Africa Union – the first ‘national’ African political organization in Kenya¹³ - successfully adopted the use of a flag for rallying its supporters during its nationalist meetings.¹⁴ The raising of a flag by the AICs during the colonial period can therefore be seen as an assertion of a distinct identity vis-à-vis the colonial polity. A flag is above all a public statement. Welbourn refers to clashes (occurring before 1958) between *African Israel* supporters and those of the Salvation Army over the erection of their respective flags in the same

¹² Hobsbawm defines invented tradition as ‘a set of practices normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.’ The contrast is with custom. Such traditions also served to legitimate the newly independent national states. (Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, pp. 1 & 228 respectively.)

¹³ See Berman, *Control and Crisis*, pp. 322-338.

¹⁴ At one such meeting at Nyeri in 1952, Kenyatta deliberately stood under the flag and explained the significance of its colours to great applause. ‘It has three colours as you see - black at the top, red in the middle and green at the bottom. Black is to show that this is for black people. Red is to show that the blood of an African is the same colour as the blood of the European and green is to show that when we were given this country by God, it was green, fertile, and good, but now you see the green is below the red and is suppressed. (Tremendous applause.) [Further explanations follow...] Now do you approve of our flag? (Answer “Yes” amidst tremendous applause). Does anyone not approve of it? If he does he is to stand up. (One poor misfortunate individual who misunderstands the question stands and is carried by the crowd over their heads to the perimeter and told to become a European.)’ Corfield, *Origins & Growth of Mau Mau*, pp. 301, 304, 307, 314.

place. On one occasion, the *African Israel* supporters in Maragoli were reported to have torn up the Salvation Army flag on the grounds that it was a symbol of servitude to the Europeans; on another Salvation Army members claimed the right to set up their flag because it had been given to them by the King of England.¹⁵ In Nairobi, *Holy Spirit's* flag was not used until 1958, at a time when *uhuru* was beginning to seem inevitable, and even then, the church saw themselves as making a bold gesture.¹⁶ Nevertheless, despite the political referents, Roho churches did not use flags in an overtly political way. Rather, they borrowed this political symbol from the dominant culture, for use in a project profoundly subversive of all polities of the world, conversion to the life and rule of the Spirit.¹⁷

Part One. The Public Event

Ushuhuda – Meetings of witness

Roho churches participate *as churches* in three types of public or community meetings: *ushuhuda*, or public meetings for testimony and witness; funeral services and *makumbusho*; and *baraza* (Swahili, 'public meetings') of various types, but principally (in Vihiga) interdenominational prayer meetings. *Ushuhuda* are events in which the church processes to a public place, such as a market, or a significant bus-stand, for prayers and preaching to attract and convert the non-member. These services frequently

¹⁵ Welbourn & Ogot, op.cit., p. 106.

¹⁶ OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00 (Doc. 12), Nairobi, pp. 24-25. The *Holy Spirit* flag was raised in Nairobi in 1958, as soon as the church had formally applied to the Registrar of Societies for branch registration in Nairobi. It was the second church (the first being the Salvation Army) to have marches with a flag in Nairobi. Joel Sande says it was the Holy Spirit that enabled them to raise their flag in Nairobi despite the colonial pressure. OI, J. Sande 3.5.00 (Doc. 84), Muhanda.

¹⁷ On the occasion the *Holy Spirit* flag was used for the first time in Nairobi, 'we went all round the town... until people really knew that these people are the church of God.' OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00 (Doc. 12), Nairobi, p. 24.

ask for God's blessing on the community and nation. *Holy Spirit*, for example, has an annual *ushuhuda* at Mbale, normally on 6th January each year. Various congregations of the church in *kanzu*, with drums, flags, and percussion instruments, march from their home villages in an often quite spectacular procession. On 1st January 2000, two different 'regiments' were choreographed to enter the marketplace at the same time from different directions, arriving with a most impressive swirl of colour. This was a public and dramatic claiming of the centre of Vihiga District on a significant day for most Kenyans - the first day of the year, on which one should aim to do and behave as one hopes to continue for the rest of the year.¹⁸ A sermon was preached to convert outsiders, the church HQs was held up as a place of blessings and healings, but the church also offered public prayers for cleansing and for protection in the year ahead.¹⁹ On 14th January 1990, at the only KUIC prayer meeting held in Nairobi, a spectacular *ushuhuda* was held in the public grounds at Kamukunji, site of many historical political meetings. The purpose was 'to pray for the President, the government and ruling party, and the people of our nation at the start of the new year' – a blessing of the nation.²⁰

Funerals and memorial services (*makumbusho*)

Funerals and *makumbusho* are among the most significant communal events in the culture of Vihiga. At funerals and memorial services, people search for *meanings*: the meaning of the *lives* of the deceased (which family and clan members, neighbours, and

¹⁸ It is said, for example, that if you eat well on 1st January, you will do so for the rest of the year. The first day of the new millennium, however, was not given much extra significance among the Roho churches of Vihiga. The General Secretary of *Holy Spirit* joked during the *ushuhuda* at Mbale, 'Have you heard that this century has been given another name? I don't know whether it is Millennium or Miriam.' Millennium Witness, 1.1.00 (Doc. 22), Mbale, from which extracts are given in Appendix 5.1.4.

¹⁹ See Appendix 5.1.4.

²⁰ KUIC B/1/2 Circular Letter to the Press, 8.1.90.

leaders from community and church, all attempt to elucidate), and of their *deaths* (both the immediate physical causes, and the more significant spiritual or mystical causes are sought anxiously). Different actors contest in offering alternative explanations or emphases, according to their own interests and beliefs. As an example, the funeral of Rev. Ayub Kedogo, General Secretary of *Zion*, at his home in Tigoi, Tiriki, took place on 28th July 2001. Since the deceased had been active not only in his own church, but in ecumenical and community affairs, and was a former secondary school headmaster, on the day of burial representatives were present of his family, clan, and church, and from a wide range of organizations. All spoke of his activities and work during his life.²¹ Some also addressed the deeper, and more intractable issue: how was Ayub's sudden death in a road accident to be explained? Some individuals from within his own clan and church, known to have opposed him bitterly during his life, had refused to attend the funeral. This is traditionally considered a sign that they wished ill of the deceased, and might be responsible for the death (although naturally the individuals against whom rumours are already spreading might not want to attend such an emotionally charged event).

On this particular occasion, Ayub's wife, Gladys, in a long speech of an hour's duration, offered indications that the death was 'of God'. On the morning of the fatal accident, she said that Ayub had read with her a passage from Mark (8: 31ff) in which Jesus speaks about his suffering and death. Later, arriving at the site of the accident, she recounted that she had found her husband's body with the head looking down, and had exclaimed

²¹ These included the Committee of Vihiga ex-British Army Servicemen, the Senior Assistant Chief, representatives of the District AIDS Control Committee, Kenya United Independent Churches (six bishops or archbishops spoke), the Organization of African Instituted Churches, the National Council of Churches

‘When Jesus was about to die, he looked down, and Reverend, you also looked down!’ Finally she spoke about the duties of a Christian widow. Their eldest son then spoke, insisting that the death was ‘a good death’, and according to God’s plan. His father was not killed by anyone as people were saying. In fact, his father was now happy as he contemplated heaven. These, and remarks by other speakers, were intended to stop the allegations that he had been killed by some close relatives or for some other reason.²²

Such open allegations of witchcraft or poisoning can divide the community, and church leaders must use their political skills as ritual elders and draw on the resources of the community to bring reconciliation and healing. Traditionally all significant family members are given an opportunity to speak, and each denomination and clan present is invited to sing a hymn. The Roho tradition of extended greetings, in which each section of the community greets and is greeted, can assist here.²³ These time-consuming activities – rejected by many non-Roho churches - have the merit of promoting inclusiveness.

At such funeral services, the church leader who is master of ceremonies acts both pastorally and politically. He or she must manage the event so that people can

of Kenya, politicians, and teachers of primary and secondary schools. Selected Speeches from Rev. A Kedogo’s Funeral, 28.7.01 (Doc. 93), Tigoi, and the Funeral Programme.

²² For example, during Gladys’ account of the last hours of her husband, she said he had given his wife instructions that when she should speak to a meeting in Maragoli on the dangers of HIV/AIDS, she should do as she had done with the Tiriki. She should stress the dangers of using one shared knife during the forthcoming circumcision of boys. Here, Gladys was making both the customary factual statement of events occurring immediately before death, but also an indirect reference to an earlier conflict with the Tiriki elders. The elders had objected to Gladys’ openly speaking on a KBC radio programme about Tiriki circumcision practices, and had demanded Ayub pay a substantial fine. The elders’ annoyance was privately discussed by some at the funeral as a further possible ‘source’ of enmity.

acknowledge the true significance of the life of the deceased, are enabled to mourn, and be consoled.²⁴ At the same time, suspicions concerning the death need to be aired positively and not destructively, and the community eventually re-united in a shared understanding, in which the sermon and other Christian references will play a significant part. Inevitably, too, the mourners will reflect on the trend of their own lives, and how they themselves will be judged by the community at their own funerals. In this way these services provide profound and frequently repeated lessons in community ethics. In conducting these events, it is Roho rather than other church leaders who are closer to the often unexpressed beliefs of people, who have a more sensitively modulated Christian response to them, and who are prepared to give adequate time during the service to allow significant issues to emerge.

Baraza

The third category of public meetings, the *baraza*, is a term I have borrowed from the practices of colonial and post-colonial governments. Haugerud describes the origin and characteristics of the governmental form.²⁵ During the colonial period, *baraza* were public meetings between community leaders (nearly always men), and colonial officials. The function and style were constrained by administrative concern to preserve ‘stability’ and to suppress political activity. In both colonial and post-colonial usage, their use has been primarily to communicate government policy, and dissent or ‘politics’ have been

²³ For example, Patron Bishop Isaac Mugodo as the preacher at the *makumbusho* of Laban Busaka spent several minutes running through the congregation greeting each group. *Makumbusho* of Laban Busaka 28.9.00 (Doc. 6), Kisumu, pp. 10-11.

²⁴ It is against tradition and remains very unusual for a woman, even if an ordained pastor, to conduct funeral services.

²⁵ Haugerud, *Culture of Politics*, pp. 73ff.

considered dangerous or unpatriotic. As adapted by KANU politicians²⁶ and extended to include ordinary people, they have included a ‘collusively “hyped” display of support for the president by officials and populace alike.’²⁷ Haugerud argues that *baraza* are used to construct a rhetoric to justify rule and limit discussion, and to train people in the use of such a rhetoric; to indicate shifts in power alignments, and as a social act. In the past, indeed, ‘not to attend [was] to reject the moral authority of those individuals’.²⁸ *Baraza* help to create Kenya as ‘an imagined community’, a community in which the political hierarchy is reproduced by its display in the *baraza* itself.²⁹ In short, these meetings help to define as authoritative certain ways of seeing society.³⁰

In a number of ways AICs have borrowed from *baraza*. In Vihiga, the most obvious borrowing is the form of the public meetings of Kenya United Independent Churches, and more recently the interdenominational prayer meetings, in which the Roho churches play a leading role.³¹ Both types of meetings are held in Mbale, and it is these meetings I refer to here as *baraza*, although they may also be considered as *ushuhuda*. The goal has been to assert the Christian, and specifically the AIC, presence within the administrative

²⁶ KANU being the Kenya African National Union, the governing party from *Uhuru* in 1963 until 2002.

²⁷ Haugerud, op. cit., p. 91.

²⁸ Haugerud, op. cit., pp. 99-100.

²⁹ Haugerud, op. cit., p.102.

³⁰ Haugerud, op. cit., p.103.

³¹ At the Mbale prayer meeting of the Vihiga Interdominational Fellowship (aka Interdominational Prayer Team) on 29.8.99, the following 22 denominations were represented (AICs are italicized):

<i>African Brotherhood Church,</i>	<i>African Church of the Holy Spirit,</i>	<i>African Divine Church,</i>
<i>African Holy Zionist Church,</i>	African Inland Church,	<i>African Interior Church,</i>
<i>African Israel Nineveh Church,</i>	Anglican Church of Kenya,	<i>Christian Brotherhood Church,</i>
<i>Church of Africa Sinai Mission,</i>	<i>Church of Bethlehem,</i>	Friends Church,
<i>Gospel Holy Spirit Church,</i>	<i>Holy Spirit Church of EA,</i>	<i>Independent Lutheran Church,</i>
Baptist Church of Kenya,	<i>Kenya Divine Christian Church,</i>	<i>Lyahuka Church of EA,</i>
Maranatha Church,	Pentecostal Church of Kenya,	Pentecostal Holy Spirit Ch. of
Roman Catholic Church.		Kenya,

and political centre of Vihiga District, and to articulate some of the church leaders' concerns, either in prayers or in memoranda.³² The organizers usually hope to attract a visit from the president himself – with the possibility (hopefully) of 'eating *ugali*' at the president's discretion³³ - but failing that, local Government ministers, MPs, and senior administrative leaders have been very welcome.³⁴

I have already noted the spectacular visual display of flags at these three types of public events. The massed processions of church members in bright robes, the singing and drumming, and the interplay of order and spontaneity (the latter especially in prophetic interventions, the often unscripted interjection of songs, and in the participation and rivalry of speakers, some of them excellent orators), make these occasions strikingly dramatic. They are an indigenous art form that is both participatory and educative, in which people seek collectively to know God's will and his power, and which has a remarkably strong appeal. Although on the local rather than national scale, they are a construction and an assertion of meaning in the public sphere comparable to the invented traditions and rituals of the state ceremonies on public holidays (chapter four, p. 173).

There was also a Sheikh from Vihiga Mosques, and a bishop from Sabcrynsk Church (which proclaims a local prophet, Elijah Shiyonga Maikova, as Messiah.)

³² The prayer meeting at Mbale on 29.9.99 presented a memorandum to the government through an assistant minister who attended. The memorandum addressed the following concerns: corruption at the Registrar of Societies, and a claim that churches should not be registered as societies; assistance from the government in obtaining title deeds, and in the towns plots of land [a particular complaint of AICs]; protestant churches to be given the right to teach religion and counsel in schools; against sexual immorality; church leaders to be encouraged to attend District Development Committees and others; assistance in promoting education on HIV/AIDS and for care of orphans.

³³ The phrase is metaphorical. During the run-up to the General Election of 1992, KUIC leaders asked for a substantial sum per head of church to the President 'to assist us to boost you politically... and to complete their existing projects'. They did not get it. ('Memorandum to the President', 1.10.92).

High priests of the community

The original founders of *Roho* churches were not necessarily the marginalized. Daniel Sande was a substantial farmer, planting cabbages, English potatoes, pineapples, oranges, lemons, pawpaws, and sugar cane, as well as the usual subsistence crops.³⁵ Jacob Buluku had shops at Mbale. Zakayo Kivuli was a senior figure in the community, and a member of the Location Council. Although the earliest pioneers left their farms and properties to spend time in prayer and fasting, and later on tours of preaching and evangelism, the separation between things of the Spirit and of the world was not absolute. Within the current or recent leadership of *Holy Spirit*, of those who were or are of the generation of the sons of the founders, Joseph Zare was a trade union leader in Nairobi, Joel Sande was a civil servant in Nairobi from 1953 to 1980,³⁶ Kefa Mwangale has been the Chairman of the Vihiga Lands Tribunal,³⁷ Alfred Kisango was a committee member of a nearby coffee co-operative. These are not posts of national significance, but they reflect the desire of today's elders to play a role as community leaders. Just as traditionally the elders had the function of handling the evils that emerged in society through the detection and punishing of wrong-doers such as thieves, night-runners, and sorcerers, through political, judicial and mystical means,³⁸ so the present generation aspires to the same role. Indeed, as in traditional society, the ability to preserve the peace is perhaps the most

³⁴ For example, Minister Moses Mudavadi, Assist. Ministers Samson M'Maiti, and Eric Khasakhala, MPs Pancras Otواني, and Bahati Semo, on 15.2.88; Bahati Semo on 26.3.89; Assist Minister Vincent M'Maiti, on 15.12.91, Assist. Minister Yusuf Chanzu at the Mbale Prayer Meeting on 29.8.99.

³⁵ PC, A. Obede, 15.5.02; OI, J. Sande 3.5.00 (Doc. 84), Muhanda. After his father's death, Joel Sande was able to attend Secondary School because of the cattle at home.

³⁶ PC, A. Obede, 15.5.02

³⁷ OI, K. Mwangale, 21.2.02 (Doc. 110) Kitumba, p. 7.

³⁸ OI, Avisia, Savatia, & Mugodo, 8.5.00 (Doc. 12) Nairobi, pp. 5-8, 44.

sought-after gift.³⁹ Later in this chapter I examine various attempts by the Kenyan AICs, including the Roho churches, to extend this role to the national level.

Spiritually the Roho leaders exercise the traditional functions of Luyia ritual elders of blessing and cursing, and of exorcism. At Vindizi and at the Mbale *ushuhuda* at the start of the year, *Holy Spirit* leaders facilitate the successful 'crossing of the line' between the old and new year, offering cleansing from the sins and evils of the past and blessings for the year ahead. The function of the interdenominational prayer meetings and the meetings of KUIC at Mbale is partly to claim a similar benedictory role in the administrative and political affairs of the District. Implicit in the leading role the Roho churches take in these events is the hope that they will usurp any claims the missionary churches might have to represent the church in Vihiga. This is why it is important to Roho leaders that political or administrative leaders actually appear in public, so that they may stand and receive the church leaders' blessings and prayers *and be seen* to have done so. Similarly, at the time of elections, political candidates, either for parliament or the local councils, visit church leaders and seek their blessings.⁴⁰ In such events, the ultimate sanction against wayward politicians would be to withdraw or refuse blessing, although I have not heard of or seen this being done publicly.⁴¹

³⁹ Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, p. 77.

⁴⁰ Whether it is possible for a church leader to pray for a political candidate, and to give him or her a blessing, without at the same time identifying with their cause, is much discussed.

⁴¹ The contrary is often the case: church leaders seek the blessing of politicians. I lent my car during the General Election of 1992 so that some KUIC bishops could pursue a popular KANU leader in an unseemly chase at night through the villages of Tiriki, in the hope of obtaining a financial 'blessing'. They did not find him.

Exorcism and cleansing takes place at most public events. At funerals and *makumbusho* there is a particular concern that the ritual status of the family has been disturbed, and malign forces (whether human or spiritual) may have been at work. In *Holy Spirit*, the exorcism at the *makumbusho* often takes place at the grave itself. This public form of exorcism has its traditional origins in the role of the elders and especially the priests (*avasalisi*) in driving away evil spirits and sickness from the community, with drums and maraccas,⁴² and in the cursing of evil-doers, especially sorcerers.⁴³ Even today, in a communal act of cleansing the inhabitants of Vihiga drive evil spirits from the community towards Lake Victoria by making noise with kitchen utensils (traditionally with gourds), normally around the beginning of the year.⁴⁴

The ‘political’ culture of Roho churches

Roho churches are intensely political bodies in themselves. In this respect they reflect the traditional concerns of Luyia elders. Of the Tiriki in the mid 1950s, Sangree said that they ‘tend to regard the world in political rather than in economic terms’, and were more interested in relationships and patterns of power and authority than in ‘developing and organizing new modes of “getting and spending”’.⁴⁵ Such skills remain necessary to ensure survival and prosperity at the rural grassroots, since many day-to-day activities depend less on the legal right of access to bureaucracy than to personal influence or persuasion.⁴⁶ The Roho churches provide excellent training in and arena for political

⁴² OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00, (Doc. 12), Nairobi, pp. 3, 43.

⁴³ OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00, (Doc. 12), Nairobi, p. 8.

⁴⁴ OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00, (Doc. 12), Nairobi, pp. 43-4;

⁴⁵ Sangree, *Age, Prayer and Politics*, p. 153.

⁴⁶ Haugerud, op. cit., pp. 145-6.

skills such as oratory, the cultivation of patron-client relationships, and ‘building a name’. Moreover, Roho leaders’ skills in organizing and mobilizing supporters, through both open and covert means (not excluding techniques such as character assassination), and in managing the often short-lived loyalties of grassroots adherents, remain central to the maintenance and growth of the church.⁴⁷ A leader’s performances – whether at the public meetings I have noted above, or in the innumerable events internal to the church – can affect his or her standing in the church and community. Because leaders’ reputations can be adversely affected if they are refused permission to speak at such events, substantial (outsiders frequently say ‘excessive’) programme time is given to ‘greetings’. After significant ceremonies and services, it is usual for participants to relax afterwards for a meal or for tea, and to engage in exhaustive discussions of the merits and political significance of different performances. The finely articulated structure of the Roho churches ensures participation in these activities at all levels. From what in political terms might be called ‘cells’ at the lowest level of the village church (*kijiji*), upwards through the assemblies or monthly meetings, to quarterly meetings, and those of higher church structures such as centres, regions, or dioceses, church members participate ceaselessly in performances which may result in their promotion (or occasionally, demotion) within the church. In the more traditional Roho churches, this process is facilitated through a grassroots, sometimes populist, democracy, often inadequately constrained by constitutional procedures – which are, indeed, rarely understood (see chapter six).

⁴⁷ This is characteristic of pentecostal movements. See Gerlach and Hine, *People, Power, Change*, pp. 33-61.

One consequence of this struggle for position and influence is that the Roho denominations are usually on the edge of splintering into two or more groups.⁴⁸ As a result, the need for unity is constantly repeated. A remarkably popular sermon text is what to Anglo-Saxon cultures would be considered the obscure reference of Ps. 133:⁴⁹

How good and pleasant it is
when brothers live together in unity!
It is like precious oil poured on the head,
running down on the beard,
running down on Aaron's beard,
down upon the collar of his robes.
It is as if the dew of Hermon
were falling on Mount Zion.
For there the Lord bestows his blessing,
even life for evermore.

The patriarchal connotations of the beard and robes are not missed. Indeed, as traditionally the male exercised the public functions in the community, it is not surprising that most of this 'political' activity is male.⁵⁰

Shared assumptions on the role and techniques of leadership

AICs and the national political culture of Kenya share cultural values about the roles and methods of leadership, the functions of public meetings, and on the significance of public performance in human life. Such a shared culture enables ideas and techniques to cross

⁴⁸ Leading to a deplorable number of law suits.

⁴⁹ E.g. *Holy Spirit* Fundraising at Idumbu, 27.1.01 (Doc. 4), p. 2; *Holy Spirit* Youth Conference, Ogada, 24.11.00 (Doc. 30.) p. 20.

⁵⁰ This tradition persists strongly at the village level. In exercises we facilitated in OAIC-sponsored workshops with churches and communities in Vihiga, we asked different interest groups (based on gender and age) to list the number of activities a typical member performs in an average day. Without fail the groups of men listed as a significant activity items like *kupiga hodi-hodi mitaani* (Swahili, visiting your neighbours to discuss the affairs of the village) or walking to the market to pick up the news of the day. The women's equivalent is meeting with other women in church fellowship groups or Mothers' Unions, but these are usually weekly rather than daily activities.

over easily from political meetings to liturgical functions (and vice-versa). It shapes and partly explains the constant and continuous shifts of alignment and power in Roho churches that so absorb their members.

Returning to the analysis of the *baraza*, I examine first the division between those ‘on the platform’ (*madhabahuni*, lit., ‘at the place of sacrifice’), and those in front. (In very small *baraza*, the distinction is between those seated on chairs behind the table and those in front on the ground). Haugerud says that, in this very visible distinction, ‘the *baraza*... captures one of the most important divisions in Kenyan society:... between individuals with profitable ties to the state’ and those without.⁵¹ It is not just that AIC leaders seek sometimes to take advantage of this demarcation in public or political events.⁵² The distinction between those with access to the benefits and responsibilities of office and those without is reproduced within the Roho churches also. Subsidiary functions of the inter-denominational and KUIC prayer meetings at Mbale are to display to the ‘groundlings’ the church hierarchies in each denomination, and to demonstrate in public the unity of the different denominations. At such meetings, denominational leaders also rival each other in the extent to which they can claim power and influence.⁵³ It is hardly surprising that these religious *baraza* have gained relatively little popular support. To the ordinary church member seeing hierarchies on display is neither particularly spiritual nor

⁵¹ Haugerud, op. cit., p. 146.

⁵² I watched with amusement as a well-known Roho bishop tried to inveigle himself onto the President’s platform on the occasion of the latter’s visit to the Vihiga Cultural Festival on 26.12.00. The bishop failed, and then had to hunt ignominiously for a vacant chair on the lesser platforms where councillors and church leaders like myself were already seated.

⁵³ At the interdenominational prayer meeting at Mbale on 29.8.99, two senior archbishops disagreed in public over who had the right to claim that he was my ‘sponsor’ in Vihiga. Although I had already greeted the congregation, when each archbishop spoke, I was obliged to stand up and greet them again in my capacity as the ‘client’ of each archbishop.

useful, and has to compete with the need to look for daily bread. In fact, church leaders (whether in *baraza* or in other church functions) often feel the need to descend from the platform in order to dance with, or to preach with power to, the congregation.⁵⁴ This suggests that the distinction between those on the platform and the rest – and therefore the political assumptions behind *baraza* – are borrowed from the administrative and political fields and are not indigenous to Roho spirituality.

One other tradition shared between church and political leaders is the attendance at major public functions as a test of loyalty to the leader. This tradition, well-established in post-independent national politics, is seen in the churches on the occasion of Christmas celebrations and other significant events. Non-attendance at these events is frequently interpreted to mean disloyalty to the leadership.⁵⁵

Rhetorical techniques used by both politicians and church leaders include the process of attracting and focusing the attention of the audience by means of leading certain stylized corporate actions and refrains. Among these are purely verbal slogans (the ‘*Harambee!*’ of Kenyatta, and the ‘*Harambee! Response: Nyayo!*’ of Moi, to ‘*Mirembe! Response Mirembe!*’, and many other greetings of the Roho churches).⁵⁶ These are often used in

⁵⁴ At the Mbale meeting in 1999, Kivuli II descended from the platform to dance a spiritual chorus with the members of his church. The gesture was part of ordinary spiritual worship, but in the context of the denominational rivalry of this particular *baraza*, it also recalled the custom of political leaders coming forward to join with their supporters during dances of praise.

⁵⁵ E.g., the separation of members from *African Israel* at Luanda in 1970 was precipitated by the refusal of the minister responsible to attend the Christmas celebrations at the church’s Nineveh HQs. The group eventually joined *Kenya Israel Church of EA*. (‘Hadithi ya J.H. Alubale’, n.d.) At a *Holy Spirit* seminar in Nairobi, the General Secretary got all those present to stand up and be counted by congregation in order to see who was present, and which congregations might be wandering from the fold. Seminar at *Holy Spirit* Shauri Moyo, 5.3.2000 (Doc. 131), p. 5.

⁵⁶ See below, f.n. 124 for *nyayo*.

conjunction with physical gestures such as the ‘one-finger-in-the-air’ sign of loyalty to KANU,⁵⁷ adopted by many Roho leaders to mean anything he or she desires at the time.⁵⁸ In churches of the Holy Spirit family, speakers often run and jump in the air when greeting the congregation. This tradition acts to cleanse the thoughts and emotions of worshippers, and enables them to concentrate afresh on the speaker.⁵⁹

In fact, the rhetorical and homiletical repertoire of the Roho churches is far wider and deeper than the equivalent available to politicians. The Bible alone is an inexhaustible source of shared referents and meanings. A vital hermeneutical tool in its exposition is the spontaneous interjection of congregational hymns and choruses during the services and sermons. Sometimes these hymns are the choice of the speakers themselves, as in the ‘debate’ conducted in a service of *Holy Spirit* church at Bukoyani on the issue of whether small businesses were spiritually acceptable. Each speaker relied on his knowledge of spiritual songs to counter the arguments of his opponent.⁶⁰ At other times the songs are the choice of song leaders in the congregation, usually women. (This is regarded as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.) In encouraging the speaker and directing him or her along

⁵⁷ This is the anticipated response to Moi’s command of *tingisha* or *tingiza* (Swahili, literally and correctly meaning ‘gyrate the hips’ as in a dance, with sexual connotations, but in this context ‘shake a finger’).

⁵⁸ At the *ushuhuda* of *Holy Spirit* at Mbale on 1.1.2000 (Doc. 22, p. 9), the Assistant Archbishop instructed the crowd to ‘lift up one of your fingers and twirl it in the air. Do not raise all five fingers but only one, for today is the 1st of January 2000.’

⁵⁹ In my own experience, in temporarily disturbing the normal bodily rhythms of the actor, this running and jumping also offers entry to forces in the personality that are not normally conscious – giving the actor a spiritual power much sought after by the Roho churches.

⁶⁰ See Appendix 5.11.1. In the same service, the Assistant Archbishop, shocked by a challenge to his authority, called upon the Assistant General Secretary, Rev. Obede, to lead some songs to strengthen him before he preached. The songs Obede immediately selected from his memory were of struggle and ultimate victory: ‘Let’s strengthen our resolve for the journey, and we’ll reach heaven; with our songs and the victory, we look ahead to joy,’ and ‘The hills and the valleys will be laid low; the Word of the Lord will stand.’

a path of exposition not hitherto anticipated, such interventions make preaching a hermeneutical activity in which all participate.⁶¹

In a very perceptive analysis of the religious separatism of the Roho churches in Vihiga during the 1950s, Sangree argues that it is a ‘regression back to traditional separatist political behaviour which has been displaced to the religious realm.’⁶² He refers here to the traditional “‘stateless” and “segmentary”” form of Luyia government by elders of autochthonous clans, in contrast to the imposed bureaucracy of the British. If Sangree’s modernist use of ‘regression’ is replaced by the concept of the continuation of traditional values, particularly those of the ‘more personal kinship or friendship oriented modes of social organization’ that Sangree attributes to Luyia tradition, his analysis still holds for the early 21st century. In Western Province, both Roho and ‘mainline’ churches continue to be strongly influenced by the politics of clan rivalry.⁶³ Indeed, as the rewards of developmentalism continue to decline, there are signs that clan loyalties in both church and ‘secular’ groupings and organizations are consciously being revived as part of the struggle to gain the best possible share of what remains. Certainly potential and actual schisms among the Roho churches have in no way reduced in number.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Rev. Thomas Oduro, in his paper ‘Spontaneous Hymnodal Hermeneutics’, presented at an OAIC Consultation with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Nairobi, February 2002, makes this point at length with reference to Ghanaian AICs.

⁶² Sangree, ‘The Dynamics of the Separatist Churches’, p. 15.

⁶³ I have found the clan politics of *Holy Spirit* alone impossibly complicated to follow, the more so because they are rarely discussed in public. But they dominate thinking on positions of leadership and representation. Recent examples of clan feeling in the public arena of Vihiga Division are the ‘coronation’ of an elder in the Avagonda clan, something that has not been seen for a long time, and the renaming of Bukoyani Village to Matagaru in response to clan pressures.

⁶⁴ In my contacts and work with AICs of Vihiga, I have had to take cognizance of actual or potential schisms in the following denominations: *Zion* (1), *Divine* (several), *African Israel* (several), *Roho Israel* (several), *Lyahuka* (2), *Interior* (2), *PET* (1), *Sinai* (1), *Bethlehem* (2). The situation is no different among the ‘main-line’ churches.

Part Two. Roho churches in a hostile administrative and legal environment

The spiritual nationalism of the Roho churches

Although the Roho churches of Vihiga never confronted the colonial governments openly, they could not have maintained their independence in a climate of missionary and administrative disapproval without a strong nationalism of the Spirit. This was clearly manifested in the early opposition of Jacob Buluku to Europeans continuing to serve as preachers and church leaders, now that the Spirit had been given to Africans.⁶⁵ The Church Records Book of *Lyahuka* records the following prophecy for 1942, given when they were gathered for prayer on the mountain:

‘when they prayed for the year and for the events that were to take place within the year, the response was revealed that the white people are just to go, and that they will try to stay but they will not succeed, and there is going to be a problem over that issue.’⁶⁶

During the colonial period, however, the power differential between government and governed was so great that Roho churches could do no more than seek to maintain their way of life and their freedom to preach.⁶⁷ This led to occasional acts of passive resistance, such as continued refusal to take medicine or go to hospital, and defence of

⁶⁵ The interpretation of Joel Sande on these events is: ‘The leaders of Friends Africa Mission... denounced the [new] teaching because they knew that their jobs were in danger because the Holy Spirit would show the members everything that they were required to follow and do... And this was their intention in Vihiga when Yakobo and Daniel told people to let the European go home so they could rule themselves. Because the Holy Spirit would be their teacher as Jesus said. It was then that the war of the Spirit began.’ OI at Mahanga, (Doc. 71), pp. 1, 4. See also OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00 (Doc. 12) Nairobi, p. 27: ‘They taught, ‘The Spirit says that the European will go and the African will administer his own church. The European will go and freedom will remain for the African.’

⁶⁶ The ‘mountain’ is most likely the Lyahuka prayer hill at Imbinga, which is shown in Plate 6.2.

⁶⁷ Savatia contrasts the Roho churches’ avoidance of open confrontation with the provocative behaviour of Elijah Masinde: ‘People said that the European came with a gun. They said when he takes the gun out of his bag, it goes ‘tap’ and you’re dead. It was this that made people afraid. So the people of the Spirit said, “If that’s the way it is, we will pray to God.” Elijah [Masinde] refused and with the bible said “If you want to kill me, kill me.”’ OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00 (Doc. 12), Nairobi, p. 36.

their right to beat drums at night,⁶⁸ or to build churches in defiance of administrative orders.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, this creation of a free space in which they asserted their own identity in defiance of that desired by the missionary and colonial administrator was not an insignificant act of political nationalism.

During the Emergency Roho leaders sought to be distinguished from the fighters and sympathizers of Mau Mau (for whom the wearing of beards and uncut hair was customary).⁷⁰ Neither did they wish to be identified with Dini ya Msambwa, whose followers also beat drums and let their hair grow.⁷¹ In Kiambu in 1954 and in Kisii in 1959 the administration imprisoned Roho leaders until they realized they were not members of these proscribed movements.⁷² (In Kiambu, having been released, they started enthusiastically drumming and singing and were arrested again at Tigoni police station. On their second release they were warned not to drum or sing any more until they

⁶⁸In 1944 the government health services conducted vaccination at Vihiga against an epidemic of tuberculosis. *Holy Spirit* followers under the leadership of Japheth Zare refused and took their sick to be prayed for in the church at Bukoyani. (OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00, (Doc. 12) Nairobi, p. 30.) On another occasion (n.d.), a government campaign against the prevalence of tropical ulcers (yaws) resulted in Zare being arrested for having warned people against going to hospital. The case was not proved and he was released (OI, J. Avisa, 13.10.99 (Doc. 13), Mutsulyu). Members of *Holy Spirit* were also taken before the DO for making noise at night. They defended themselves successfully by arguing that the European mining engines (presumably pumps) were making just as much noise but were permitted to continue. PC, I. Senelwa, 18.8.02, Womulalu.

⁶⁹In the Church Record Book of *Lyahuka*, (Doc. 141), the entry for 6.1.41 predicts bloodshed and imprisonment. 'God said we should be like Noah when he was building the ark.'

⁷⁰KNA/HOR/319. 1.3.55. The departing DO of Kandara Division, Fort Hall, writes of the Arathi (or Akurinu) 'Beards being a Mau Mau badge must be shaven off.' See also OI, Joseph Zare, 22.9.99 (Doc. 68), Bukoyani, p. 3.

⁷¹Welbourn & Ogot, op.cit., p. 84, refers to an *African Israel* circular of 1952 from Nineveh in which members of Mau Mau and Dini ya Msambwa are denounced. See also Annual Report for Central Nyanza 1952, (KNA AR 1537 CN/19). Joseph Zare records an incident in which the government authorities came especially to Bukoyani to question the leaders about why they wore their hair long 'like Mau-Mau'. (OI, Joseph Zare, 22.99 (Doc. 127), Bukoyani.)

⁷²OI, J. Mwangi, 14.9.00, (Doc.15), S. Nyanza, p. 8.; OI, Joseph Zare, 22.9.99 (Doc. 68), Bukoyani, p. 4. For administrative notice of the arrest in Kiambu, see KNA AR 333 (KBU/45) AR 1954 of FA Loyd.

had returned to Western Kenya.)⁷³ In fact administration officers and even their *askari* (Swahili, soldiers) came to respect the Roho churches as essentially law-abiding.⁷⁴ But (to quote Patron Bishop Mugodo) in their prayers and conversation Roho Christians used to say, ‘ “We know the European will go and freedom will remain for the Africans themselves to rule their country.”’⁷⁵ For of course leaders like Yakobo Buluku had prophesied it in the early 1930s.

‘Holy Rollers’: European fear of the non-rational

In British colonies, AICs were regarded from their beginning as actually or potentially subversive.⁷⁶ Religious movements that derived their authority from any source that was not mediated through Europeans or European-legitimated structures were symbols of an alternative, non-colonial society. In Kenya this European suspicion was reinforced by incomprehension of the ‘irrational’ or ‘pentecostal’ (‘Holy Roller’)⁷⁷ aspect of Roho activities, and later by the real or imagined violence of Dini ya Msambwa in Elgon Nyanza and Pokot in the late 1940s.⁷⁸ Dini ya Msambwa appeared – to the uninformed –

⁷³ Barasa, ‘History of Holy Spirit Church’, p. 11.

⁷⁴ OI, Joseph Zare, 22.9.99 (Doc. 68), Bukoyani, p. 9.

⁷⁵ OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugoso, 8.5.00 (Doc. 12), Nairobi, pp. 26-7.

⁷⁶ Much of this section is taken from an earlier paper of mine entitled ‘Towards the legitimization of AFCs: the work of the Organization of African Independent Churches in Kenya’, which I withheld from publication.

⁷⁷ ‘Holy Rollers’ is a derogatory term used at the time for any pentecostal group, European or African, which permitted or encouraged ecstatic manifestations. Used by some colonial officers of the Roho and Akurinu. See KNA DC/NN 1/22, AR for 1940, (No. 1332); also KNA EBU/16, AR for 1946 (No. 453).

⁷⁸ Dini ya Msambwa (sometimes spelt ‘Musambwa’ or ‘Misambwa’) was involved in two incidents in Western Kenya in 1948 at Malakisi in Bungoma and in 1950 at Kolloa in Pokot which caused a total of 43 deaths. For Dini ya Msambwa, see Wipper, *Rural Rebels*; Buijtenhuijs’ response, ‘Dini ya Msambwa: Rural Rebellion or Counter Society?’, and Wipper’s counter attack, ‘Rural Rebels & Colonial Kenya’; there is a short bibliography in *Rural Rebels*, p. 18, f.n. 4. For Elijah Masinde, see Shimanyula, *Elijah Masinde*; Simiyu, *Elijah Masinde*; Wipper, ‘Elijah Masinde – A Folk Hero’. The bibliography of Mau Mau is too extensive to quote here, but see Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya*, as an introduction.

to resemble Dini ya Roho.⁷⁹ If concrete links between the two movements have never been properly demonstrated, many Roho members had (and continue to have) great respect for Elijah Masinde as a prophet who took his calling to its logical conclusion of open confrontation with the colonial and post-colonial states.⁸⁰ In consequence he was continually imprisoned by the governments of both.

In the much more significant and traumatic case of Mau Mau, members and leaders of nationalist AICs, the African Independent Pentecostal Church and the African Orthodox Church, were directly involved in the oath-taking that led up to the Government's declaration of Emergency in 1952. These denominations were banned in consequence.⁸¹ As a result, AICs of all sorts were damned by association.⁸² Administrative officers would often use their influence to stop AICs from obtaining grants-in-aid for schools, or plots for the building of churches.⁸³ The leaders of Roho churches in Vihiga, however, never sought

⁷⁹ There was particular concern that the Roho church in Kabras and Trans-Nzoia had considerable sympathies with Dini ya Msambwa. See KNA HOR/13, DC/NN/2/10 (HOR P.M. Gordon to E.J.A. Leslie, of 10.7.53); KNA DC/NN 1/39, AR for 1959 (No. 1352) of RC Mills); KNA HOR/1075, PC/RVP 3/1/2 (HOR of 1952, JH Lewis – JB Carson). The minutes of a liaison meeting held in the DC's office, Bungoma, on 19.12.60 refer to 'frequent sympathetic mention in Dini ya Roho meetings of the "lost religion" which could only be Dini ya Msambwa.' OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00 (Doc.12) p. 35, goes some way to confirming this Roho sympathy for Masinde and his movement, but the Roho churches drew the line at political or violent action.

⁸⁰ For example, OI, J. Shitochi, 25.1.02 (Doc. 104), Emwiru, Kisa, pp. 48-49; OI, Avisa, Savatia, & Mugodo, 8.5.00 (Doc. 12), Nairobi, pp. 34-38. The generation that lived through the fifties possess a stock of legends about Elijah Masinde in which he is given almost mythical status, and in which his mystical powers succeed in overcoming the bureaucratic rationality of colonial political power. Such legends are a source of political power in themselves, as the response of the colonial and post-independent governments reveals. See Appendix 5.10.1 for Savatia's vernacular telling of some of these legends, which is taken from Doc. 12. See also Wipper, *Elijah Masinde – Folk Hero*.

⁸¹ AIPC was revived in 1963 and registered as AIPCA on 13.2.64; a sister church, the National Independent Church of Africa, strong in Embu and Meru, was registered on 7.2.64. The African Orthodox Church of Kenya was registered on 5.7.65.

⁸² On the connections the colonial administration made between Mau Mau, Dini ya Msambwa, and the AICs, see also Sangree, 'The Dynamics of the Separatist Churches', p. 7.

⁸³ OI, Joseph Zare, 22.9.99 (Doc. 68), Bukoyani, p. 10; see also chapter four, f.n. 87. A few administration officers were surprisingly sympathetic: the reports of HE Lambert on the activities of the Arathi (Akurinu) in Central Province and of those Kikuyu groups with Western Kenya links are detailed and show a genuine interest in the movement. (KNA EBU/13 AR for 1930 (AR 434); KNA KBU/33, AR for 1942 (AR 314).)

direct confrontation with the government. Rather, throughout the colonial period they tried to build relationships of trust with the administration. Japheth Zare saw that the chiefs of Maragoli (Chief Agoi and Chief Munubi) were generally favourable to *Holy Spirit*; when called to Kakamega by the administration to answer questions concerning the church's stand on medicine, he maintained it was the believer's own decision not to go to hospital, a position against which it was difficult for the administration to act.⁸⁴ Kivuli showed great concern to win the support of the colonial administration, and one occasion hosted the governor at Nineveh.⁸⁵

Mau Mau was for all Kenyans, as for the colonial administrators and missionaries of the time, a defining experience. Government propaganda that presented it as an atavistic movement of an African tribe under the impact of modernization contributed substantially to negative perceptions of the uprising. The Corfield Report of 1960 is the best-known, if a rather late, example of the argument.⁸⁶ Mau Mau was caused, said Corfield, by 'the failure of the Kikuyu to adjust themselves fully to the needs of... sudden change, together with the planned exploitation of the attendant stresses and strains.' Such change had been brought about by 'social, economic and governmental problems which arise when a new civilizing influence impinges with suddenness on a primitive people who had stagnated for centuries.'⁸⁷ By characterizing a large number of people as

Also DC Luke reporting on 'breakaway sects' in Isukha, Idakho, and Kisa in 1955 questions the assumption of Chief Shivachi that Dini ya Roho adherents are being *forced* to forgo medical treatment. KNA HOR 22 (Annual Report for Central Division, 1955) DC Luke to AC Loggin.

⁸⁴ OI, Joseph Zare, 22.9.99 (Doc. 68), Bukoyani, p. 3.

⁸⁵ Welbourn & Ogot, op. cit., p. 84.

⁸⁶ Another, earlier, colonial government publication, which was in a similar vein and influenced Corfield, was Carothers, *The Psychology of Mau Mau*.

⁸⁷ Corfield, *Origins and Growth of Mau-Mau*, p. ii.

‘mentally disturbed’, or ‘primitive’, such interpretations avoided consideration of the roots of the injustice against which Mau Mau was fighting.

It was against this background of European fear of African ‘atavism’ and ‘irrationality’ that Sangree did his ethnographical research in the mid-1950’s among the Tiriki. He describes frankly the difficulties he encountered trying to attend church services of *African Holy Spirit* and *African Israel* in Tiriki, North Maragoli, and Isukha.⁸⁸ The church leaders and members were suspicious of European intentions;⁸⁹ Sangree and his wife were also anxious about possible hostility from the churches, and the unpredictability of their ecstatic manifestations. These latter ‘lent the feeling that at any moment the rest of the congregation, and then the elders, and finally perhaps ourselves might be swept up by an uncontrollable frenzy.’⁹⁰

Bureaucratizing the Roho churches

How were the rationalistic bureaucracies of government, and its systems of control, direction, and repression, to manage the Roho churches? I have described above the process by which the colonial administration attempted to get a grasp on the people of the Spirit by encouraging them to choose leaders who could be held responsible.⁹¹ These measures were purely local arrangements between the administrative officers and the

⁸⁸ Sangree, *Age, Prayer, and Politics*, pp. 173-182.

⁸⁹ ‘Separatist church leaders and parishioners were aware enough of the suspicions with which they were viewed by most Europeans to cause them to fear that one or another aspect of their ritual or worship activity might cause offence or be misinterpreted; consequently they had developed a fairly standard set of procedures for dealing with the curious or suspicious European.’ Sangree, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

⁹⁰ Sangree, *op.cit.*, p. 182. This was my fear, too, in the late 1970s when I approached Roho churches for the first time, and before I came to understand a little of what was going on.

⁹¹ See chapter two, pp. 80-8. Rasmussen, *Modern African Spirituality*, pp. 40-48 gives a full account of this process of bureaucratization among the Holy Spirit churches.

people of the Spirit, who were still not organized into denominations. The next step in conforming them to the demands of bureaucracy was their registration as societies, with constitutions, modes of election, and annual returns.

The Societies Ordinance of 1952 was introduced at the start of the Emergency as part of the colonial government's response to the burgeoning Kenyan nationalism of which the Mau Mau uprising was the best-known example. Under the Ordinance any society not being a society registered, or exempted from registration, was deemed to be an unlawful society, against which action could be taken under Section 69 of the Penal Code.⁹² The Ordinance instituted a Registrar of Societies, who offered a draft constitution for the guidance of bodies required to register. The model constitution is really more appropriate to a golf or tennis club. Authority is located in the executive committee and derived from an annual election by members at an AGM every year. The Ordinance was not immediately enforced on AICs in Western Kenya, but in 1955 the Secretary of Defence instructed all PCs to ensure that 'all splinter groups' apply for registration or exemption.⁹³ Commenting on the attempts of the local administration to organize the Roho churches during the 1950s, Sangree regarded it as a sham.⁹⁴ Nevertheless,

⁹² Corfield, *Origins and Growth of Mau Mau*, pp. 247, 248.

⁹³ KNA/MC/159, 25.6.55

⁹⁴ In a significant passage that deserves quoting in full, Sangree writes: 'The North Nyanza administration, since Mau Mau, has attempted to force the [Dini ya Roho] and other independent sects each to establish a centralized administrative organization administered by a high priest or administrative secretary. It became clear to my wife and me, however, that the supreme authority of the High Priest of *Dini ya Roho* was essentially a bureaucratic fiction and that many local parish groups had an enormous, almost schismatic degree of autonomy. A number of new attempts at separatism occurred during our stay in North Nyanza which were thwarted by active administrative intervention permitted under the Mau Mau emergency regulations. Generally these would-be separatists were persuaded to take up membership in another mission group or form a new local branch of one of the independent sects. As a result of this current governmental intervention and virtual prohibition of new sect formation, there were only about half a dozen well established and officially recognized independent sects in the southern portion of North Nyanza during our

registration was required, and offered an opportunity to politicians and those with some understanding of bureaucracy to make links, or to increase their influence, with the Roho churches.⁹⁵

The independent government renewed and extended these bureaucratic requirements in the Societies Act of 1968. Both items of legislation provide for the de-registration of societies. Although the Registrar's supervision of churches has been relatively light,⁹⁶ the threat of de-registration has until recently made AICs in Kenya fearful of government. Only a few de-registrations have been necessary to enforce respect for the law.⁹⁷ Within Vihiga District, the Divine Christian Church of EA – which had separated in 1964 from African Divine Church – was banned in 1972 as a result of continued disputes over leadership.⁹⁸

AICs marginalized as 'anti-development'

These legal provisions must be understood in relation to the government suspicion of AICs. Originally regarded as harbingers of African nationalism, there was a window of

stay in the region, but the intra-sect squabbles and quasi-schisms continue with little sign of change.' Sangree, 'The Dynamics of the Separatist Churches', p. 9.

⁹⁵ Few members of the Roho denominations had the necessary education to draft constitutions. Ajega wrote those of *Divine*, *Zion*, and *Roho Israel* in his own home. (OI, Ajega, 4.6.87, Zululu.) Other prolific writers were Ochwatta, and Oginga Odinga. According to Savatia, *Holy Ghost Musanda* borrowed the constitution of *Holy Spirit*, and were advised by Tom Mboya simply to change the name Holy Spirit to Holy Ghost and present it to the registrar. (OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00, (Doc. 12) Nairobi, p. 22.)

⁹⁶ There have been very few demands for the presentation of accounts, for example, which is also provided for in the Act.

⁹⁷ The legislation was used in Kenya to ban Jehovah's Witnesses in 1973 as a society 'dangerous to the good government of the Republic of Kenya' (from 27.4.73 – 24.8.73): DN, 28.8.73. See also T. Hodges, *Jehovah's Witnesses in Africa*. The African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa with over one million adherents had their registration suspended in 1969 for a period and were threatened with cancellation of their registration by the Central Province PC over continued disputes in the church. (DN,

opportunity immediately before and after political independence in 1963 when it seemed possible to both AIC and mission church leaders that AICs would become the new ‘established’ churches. During this period – which I consider in detail below – the missionary-led churches saw the AICs as a serious threat to their dominance. In response, in 1958 the ecumenical Christian Council of Kenya (CCK) introduced a category of probationary membership specifically to cater for the admission of AICs, speaking of ‘the very real possibility of such groups linking up with others in a Council of African Churches which would do grievous harm to the Christian Cause....’⁹⁹ In 1960 the Anglican Bishop-elect Neville Langford-Smith wrote, ‘We are now in the midst of crisis. *The next five years will decide the future of Kenya*, of the survival of catholic Christianity in this land.’¹⁰⁰ Indeed (as will be seen below) during this period the AICs themselves took steps to come together in order to promote the idea of an ‘established’ indigenous church. But the vision faded rapidly. President Kenyatta continued to defend and worship with the AICs, of which in many respects he regarded himself a member, and in his declining years frequently invited Akurinu to join him in worship at State House, Nakuru (see plate 11.1).¹⁰¹ The Kenyan elite, however, educated at Alliance High School and

30.8.83, 8.9.83.) The colonial ban on Dini ya Msambwa was lifted by Oginga Odinga as Minister for Home Affairs on 21.4.64, but the movement was proscribed again on 22.10.68.

⁹⁸ The parent church itself was also banned briefly but in error.

⁹⁹ *CCK Annual Report for 1957/8*, Chairmen of Committees’ Reports, Item no. 16.

¹⁰⁰ *CMS Outlook*, August 1960. Italics in the original. See also the article in the *Reporter* of 17.7.64, attacking the union of AICs, and quoting Corfield, ‘when he wrote that the rapid transition of Africa and the Africans had “produced a schizophrenic tendency in the African mind – the extraordinary facility to have two separate lives with one foot in the present and the other in witchcraft and savagery.” This, backed by the fierce nationalism which exists in Africa and Africans today is what, in the view of the established church, makes the present merger most dangerous.’

¹⁰¹ EAS, 16.4.68: ‘President Kenyatta assured the Holy Ghost Church of Kenya led by Rev. Zakayo Kamuchu that government did not discriminate and declare that a particular religion should be the one to be followed.’ DN 27.4.73: ‘President Kenyatta tells how Kenya fought for Uhuru by setting up her own church and schools’ – a report of a long speech on this subject on the occasion of his laying a foundation stone at Gakoe African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa. See the photos of Kenyatta worshipping with Akurinu in Std and DN, 15.7.75; Std. 23.9.75, 18.11.75 (both with Moi joining in, the former at an

other missionary institutions, regarded AICs as atavistic, divisive, sub-Christian, and (perhaps the principal complaint of the post-independence period) as ‘anti-development’.¹⁰² Expressive, loosely-structured, movements like the AICs were of little use to these leaders intent on the modernization of the nation.¹⁰³

AICs in the one-party state

Ochieng’ argues that during the 1960s there were two transfers of power in Kenya: the first from the British to the nationalists; the second from the nationalists to Kenyatta.¹⁰⁴ After the assassination of Mboya and the elimination of Odinga as an effective rival, with the banning of his KPU, the sole opposition party, in 1969, this second transfer of power was effectively complete. Western Kenya AICs now felt themselves increasingly under threat. To take a few newspaper headlines at random in the last years of the Kenyatta government: ‘Beware of Breakaway Churches’¹⁰⁵, ‘Religious Sects Under Fire’¹⁰⁶,

occasion of a visit from the African Orthodox Church of Kenya); Std. 20.1.76, 16.3.76, 28.12.76, 7.3.78. In his *Facing Mount Kenya* (first published 1938), Kenyatta had included a chapter ‘The new religion in East Africa’ giving a sympathetic account of the Arathi, or *Watu wa Mngu* [sic], the forerunners of the Akurinu of today.

¹⁰² Kipkorir, ‘The Alliance High School’, passim but especially p. 378, notes that most of the leaders of church and state who came to power in the early 1960s had been educated at Alliance High School. They had given little thought to the development of African culture, and had received a *dirigiste* formation. Their political success in negotiation with the British, together with the suppression of the popular grassroots uprising of the Mau Mau, confirmed these tendencies.

¹⁰³ Compare the Zambian elite’s negative attitude to AICs, which was strongly influenced by the Lumpa Church uprising in 1964. In some respects Lumpa were seen as competing with the ruling party UNIP for loyalty of the peasants. See van Binsbergen, *Religious Change in Zambia*, p. 294 ff. The shock of this uprising and its bloody repression had an impact beyond Central Africa.

¹⁰⁴ Ochieng’, ‘The Kenyatta Era’, in Ogot and Ochieng’, *Decolonization and Independence*, p. 94.

¹⁰⁵ DN, 30.10.74: ‘[The Attorney-General] observed that the church was becoming a kind of trade, and that some people of various denominations were trying to break away and form their own churches. He warned members to be careful about such people’.

¹⁰⁶ Std. 10.4.75: ‘Followers of some religious sects in Nyanza Province spend most of their time on roads beating drums, thus neglecting work in their shambas and other development projects, the Nyanza Provincial Commissioner, Mr. I.K. Cheluget, has said.’

‘Children Left to Die’¹⁰⁷, ‘Sect followers “refused” census’¹⁰⁸, ‘Sect being watched closely’¹⁰⁹. When Moi succeeded to the presidency in 1978, this government suspicion continued.¹¹⁰ In addition Moi himself and the leaders of the larger missionary-founded churches alleged that foreigners were entering Kenya with the deliberate intention of dividing the people by starting new sects.¹¹¹ Both indigenous and foreign ‘sects’ began to be considered ‘divisive’, and therefore potentially subversive. Indeed, Moi actively discouraged the registration of new church ‘splinter groups’,¹¹² and NCKK supported him in this stand.¹¹³ In October 1984 the Attorney General, Matthew Muli, eventually decided to stop further registration of new or splinter churches, and threatened also to scrutinize those already registered with a view to their de-registration.¹¹⁴ As a result of an allegation in Parliament, the OAIC itself had been caught up in a Government investigation during the previous month, and it may have been this case that prompted the

¹⁰⁷ Std. 22.7.78: ‘Three children died after catching measles because their parents refused to allow them medical treatment as it was against their religious beliefs.’ The parents were imprisoned for 6 months.

¹⁰⁸ DN Oct. 79(?): 35 members of a religious group were accused of refusing to answer census questions.

¹⁰⁹ *Nairobi Times* 30.5.78: District Officer for Mossop ‘told a *Baraza* at Kurgung Trading Centre that the Government would not hesitate to ban the Dini ya Roho if its activities were found to be hindering development.’

¹¹⁰ For example, DN 19.4.80: ‘Woman who “kept God’s word” jailed’: ‘A woman who told a court that God had warned her that people of her religious persuasion should not be photographed, has been sent to jail for seven days.’ DN 4.9.83 ‘Believers set free’: ‘Eighty-three members of Musanda Holy Ghost Church in Kisumu who had been charged with feasting at a party without a permit have been set free.’ Std. 20.1.83: ‘Faith-healing Sect Banned by D.O.’ *Nation* 22.2.83: ‘Churches mushrooming in the country should be investigated, the minister for Tourism and Wildlife, Mr. Elijah Mwangale, said yesterday.’ Std. 28.4.83: ‘Who needs splinter sects?’ – editorial.

¹¹¹ *Target*, 3-16.6.79, 15-28.7.79 (Two editorials from the NCKK fortnightly paper urging proper scrutiny of new churches.)

¹¹² Std. 28.5.79, DN & Std. 18.8.80.

¹¹³ See the reports of the General Secretary of NCKK, Rev. John Kamau, during this period. In the *NCKK Reports for 1978*, he strongly supports Moi’s refusal to register ‘breakaway groups’ and ‘numerous foreign groups’ (p. 11); the same theme recurs the following year (*Reports for 1979*): ‘the officers of this Council are in contact with the Government authority concerned to curtail the apparent easy way of registering dissident rival groups in our own churches’; in the *Reports for 1982*, he attacks indirectly the work of OAIC in its work with AICs: ‘We have a number of doubtful characters offering to train theological students for our locally founded churches...’, probably referring to Bishop Markos.

¹¹⁴ *The Weekly Review*, 9.11.84, p. 13.

Attorney General's above decision regarding further registrations.¹¹⁵ *The Weekly Review*'s analysis of these events in November records that Moi believed that 'of the 800 or so registered sects, perhaps only ten to fourteen were genuine.'¹¹⁶ In fact, very few AICs were de-registered.¹¹⁷ The argument the OAIC put up in its defence was that it was serving the large number of smaller AICs which up to that time the NCK had largely ignored. The NCK General Secretary now acted to simplify its application procedure to encourage more AICs to become members.¹¹⁸ On the government side, however, registration of new churches became almost impossible. This strict policy was not relaxed

¹¹⁵ See the DN 28.9.94 for a report on the previous day's discussion in Parliament. Having been denied registration under the Societies Act with no reason given, and no response having been received to an appeal against the decision, it had in December 1981 registered under the Companies Act as African Spiritual Services Ltd., a non-profit making company limited by guarantee. This was a procedure permissible in law, but worrying to the Kenya Government, especially when the OAIC continued to use its original name alongside the company name. Frederick Omidio, MP for Bahati in Nairobi, but originating from Vihiga, asked in Parliament whether the OAIC was a subversive organization and why it should operate under the Companies Act. In the event, the All Africa Conference of Churches, and eventually the National Christian Council of Kenya, supported the OAIC, and it was eventually registered in 1985 with a change of name from 'Independent' to 'Instituted'. One explanation of the politics behind Omidio's parliamentary question is given by Bishop Markos, *Come Across...*, p. 90; J. Kigani, in personal communication with me in 1985, attributed it to an attempt by *International Holy Spirit* (of which he had been General Secretary, see below, p. 271) to supplant OAIC in the partners' and government's favour.

¹¹⁶ *The Weekly Review*, 9.11.84, p. 14. The report seems to be based on an interview with Muli, and mentions the practice of registration as a company. The figure given for the total number of 'sects' registered appears very high and may include branches of churches, which were often registered separately. My own records suggest that, at the time, not more than 250-270 African founded churches were registered. In addition there would have been a rather smaller number of missionary 'sects'.

¹¹⁷ The neo-traditional movement 'Tent of the Living God' was de-registered in February 1990 under pressure from church leaders. (DN 5.2.90.) Moi later ordered the arrest of its leaders for 'subversion'. KT 16.2.90

¹¹⁸ OI, Richard Ondeng', Deputy General Secretary of NCK, 31.5.85, Nairobi. Despite this change of policy, it had had relatively little long-term effect. Up to the date of writing a large AIC like *Divine* is still not a member of NCK in its own right, despite two attempts at joining.

until 1993, in the new era of multi-party democracy.¹¹⁹ In recent years, the present system of registration of churches as ‘societies’ has been much criticised.¹²⁰

Van Binsbergen argues that the post-colonial state has had problems in its own legitimation, particularly in a society where many peasants feel themselves only marginally involved in the state and its bureaucracy.¹²¹ One function of the churches in the immediate post-colonial years was to lend their support, and that of their many grassroots members, to the government. This alliance was based on the shared ground of ‘development’. AICs, however, were seen to have different values than the approved model of ‘development’. In Kenya, a few openly opposed national registration (required for the issue of identity cards) or refused medical treatment, and were regarded in consequence as positive ‘enemies’ of progress. More fundamentally, it can be argued that government did not have the categories for understanding the dynamic and fluid organizational structures of AICs. Gerlach and Hine, writing of pentecostal churches in the US, call such structures *polycephalous*, *segmentary*, and *reticulated*.¹²² By ‘segmentary’, the two authors mean a movement ‘composed of a great variety of localized groups or cells which are essentially independent, but which can combine to

¹¹⁹ Political parties themselves were registered under the Societies Act. Once many of these were registered, it was difficult in principle to maintain a rigid ban against church registration. However, in practice, only applications backed by recommendations from significant KANU leaders were likely to be acceptable. 1993 saw 27 new churches or church organizations registered, and one branch, and 22 refusals. In 1994, 21 churches or organizations were registered, and 2 branches, with 86 refusals (Figures compiled from the Kenya Gazette for 1993 & 1994.)

¹²⁰ This was the first point in the Memorandum presented to Minister Musalia Mudavadi at the Interdenominational Prayer Meeting at Mbale on 29.9.99. See also discussion in ‘Hansard’ for 12.4.94, in which the Attorney General suggests the registration of religious bodies, political parties, and welfare societies, under their own acts. The proposal was repeated during the Inter-Party Parliamentary Group discussions in 1997, and a working committee was set up. Its recommendations are now awaiting the conclusion of the Constitutional Review Commission, due to report in 2003.

¹²¹ Van Binsbergen, *Religious Change in Zambia*, pp. 303–4

¹²² Gerlach and Hine, *People, Power, Change*, pp. 33ff. The authors regard Mau Mau as structured in a similar way.

form larger configurations or divide to form smaller units.’ Fission takes place without any reference to central decision-making. ‘This constant re-arrangement adds a dynamic to movements which can be confusing to outside observers’. ‘Reticulation’ describes ‘an organization in which the cells, or nodes, are tied together not through any central point, but rather through intersecting sets of personal relationships and other inter-group linkages.’ In fact the survival of Roho denominations depends on getting the right balance between this dynamic fluidity and the central authority and bureaucracy of the church hierarchy and HQs. For these reasons, so long as the present model of development was retained, Roho churches could never be regarded as allies with the state in the same manner as the mission-founded churches, with their stronger administrative frameworks. It is perhaps significant that the Roho church in Vihiga with the greatest physical development, and the strongest relationship with the Provincial Administration, is *Divine* – which also has an authoritarian leadership.

Repression and democratization

By the mid-1980s *any* autonomous structures appeared to conflict with the centralized and unitary one-party state which Kenya had become.¹²³ During this period, the rhetoric constructed in *baraza* around the President’s ‘Nyayo Philosophy’ of ‘Love, Peace, and Unity’ was used to justify increasingly severe measures of repression.¹²⁴ The large

¹²³ Kenya was a *de facto* one-party state from 1969 and *de jure* from 1982 to Dec. 1992. Ogot in Ogot & Ochieng’, *Decolonization and Independence*, pp. 202, 245.

¹²⁴ DN 8.3.83: ‘A-G warns churches’: ‘He said, “The Government is very concerned about the mushrooming of too many splinter churches in the country of late. This is a sign that people in some church leaders and other religious groups were not united *as would be expected of them in line with President Moi’s Nyayo call of peace, love and unity.*”’ (My italics.) *Nyayo* is Swahili for ‘footsteps’. Originally used

mission-founded churches found themselves increasingly in conflict with the Government, becoming in the process a significant force for democratization.¹²⁵ These churches were partly able to take this stand because of their very large membership, and because they had significant moral support from their overseas partners. This was not the case with the AICs, whose members – like most of the populace – cowered under the repression. Most AIC constitutions already contained a clause to the effect that the church had no political aims.¹²⁶ (The mission-founded churches were generally exempt from registration by a provision dating back to the 1952 Ordinance, and had no such constitutional constraints against taking ‘political’ stances.) From the 1960s to the early 1990s, AIC leaders considered it wise from time to time to arrange to visit the President to make a pledge of loyalty (when they could afford to do so).¹²⁷ With the proviso that ‘non-involvement’ in politics was never interpreted by the authorities to stop AICs from openly supporting the ruling KANU party, the Roho churches remained a-political well

by Moi on succeeding to the presidency to indicate he would follow the same policies as his predecessor Kenyatta, the slogan increasingly meant that the country should follow *his* (Moi’s) footsteps. For a generally sympathetic account of nyayoism, see Ogot ‘The Politics of Populism’, pp. 192-200, in Ogot & Ochieng’, op.cit. For the Anglican critique of nyayoism during this period see Benson, ‘Ideological Politics’.

¹²⁵ For a summary of church-state relations during this period, see Throup, ‘“Render unto Caesar”’; Pirouet, ‘The Church and Human Rights’.

¹²⁶ E.g., the African Divine Church constitution, approved 2.6.61, said under ‘Objects’, (k) ‘Our Church does not co-operate with politicians of this country, and will not co-operate with politics of this country.’ The phrase suggests the colonial administration’s profound distrust of African politicians. Indeed, *Divine* has remained consistently loyal and supportive of both colonial and post-colonial administrations, despite the DO Vihiga’s concern in 1956 that they were ‘potentially subversive’. (KNA/HOR/37) In 2001 the PC Western Province was guest of honour at the graduation of the first students from the *Divine* Bible School at Boyani. He commented that this was the first time he had ever attended such an event in an AIC. In contrast to the blunt rejection of politics in the *Divine* constitution, the relevant clause in the African Israel Church Nineveh constitution, approved 17.9.64, is rather more theological. It reads: ‘Objects:...(d) Not to enter into earthly politics’.

¹²⁷ E.g., Photos in DN Photo Library of *Nomiya* visit, 14.5.64; *Roho Israel* leaders after meeting with government 7.6.69. Leaders of AIPCA visited the President in 1979 (DN, 22/7/79). See ST, SN, 19.5.85 for a visit of the Akurinu. Etc, etc.

into the mid-90s.¹²⁸ At times, indeed, it might seem that the Luyia Roho churches were solidly on the side of the KANU government.¹²⁹ One of the few exceptions was John Kivuli II's espousal of the newly-formed opposition during the 1992 general election.¹³⁰ Indeed, at an OAIC workshop in 1998 on constitutional reform, many heads of churches reported they had never even seen a copy of the Kenya Constitution.¹³¹ One Roho bishop remarked that in the past anyone who had been seen with a copy was automatically held to be subversive.

The democratization signalled by the repeal of Section 2A of the national constitution on 10th December 1991, thus permitting the formation of new political parties, also eased the state's habitual distrust of AICs. It is significant in this context that the Presidential Commission on Devil Worship, set up in October 1994, focused its attention on freemasonry, Mormonism, and Jehovah's Witnesses, rather than on the indigenous 'sects'.¹³² More recently, the government has been preoccupied by the rise of Mungiki. This neo-traditional Kikuyu movement that combines politics and faith in an explosive combination in a manner reminiscent to Dini ya Msambwa condemns Christianity as exploitative and divisive, and as a tool of Western colonialism and neo-colonialism, and

¹²⁸ In this, they were generally simply following the only politic or feasible course, as Hastings puts it, 'to accept the one-party state... while hoping to retain a basic independence.' Hastings, in Gifford, *Christian Churches and Democratization of Africa*, p. 44.

¹²⁹ Gifford quotes the case of the bishop of a Nairobi congregation of *African Holy Spirit* who registered over 1000 candidates for KANU in the multi-party debate that ran up to the 1992 elections. But as Gifford suggests, this kind of public support of the Government stems as much from a search for respectability and rewards (clients seeking patrons) as from any ideological position. Gifford, op. cit., p. 4.

¹³⁰ Archbishop John Kivuli II of *African Israel* openly supported the new opposition party Ford Kenya during the 1992 elections. By 1997, he had switched parties, and ran for selection as a KANU candidate for Hamisi (Tiriki) constituency – being defeated (as he says) by the chicanery and trickery of his opponents.

¹³¹ The conference, held at Limuru, was attended by the Special Branch, who contributed to the discussion on reform.

advocates a return to traditional religion and values. The movement has increasing supporters among the landless and unemployed youth, and considerable political muscle in some areas of Nairobi.¹³³ By comparison, the Roho churches' somewhat similar critique of capitalism – as argued in earlier chapters – is largely symbolic. Indeed, their historical ability to restrict it to this level, and prevent its emergence into open political consciousness, has in contrast to Mungiki given the Roho churches in districts of their historical strength a certain belated respectability.

Part Three. A window of opportunity into national politics, 1960-1968

I return now to consider in more detail what happened when the Roho churches and other AICs in the period immediately before and after political independence sought to become significant actors at the national level. They did this through conciliarism – the coming together of diverse AICs into local and national councils, a process in which the Roho churches of Vihiga played a leading role.¹³⁴

Early attempts of AICs to unite

As seen in chapter two, the Roho churches of Vihiga were originally one movement, and continued for long to have close fellowship with each other, and with the Luo-speaking groups of Musanda / Ruwe. Even after divisions had begun to occur between North and South Maragoli, between sabbatarians and the others, and between Dini ya Roho and Dini ya Israeli, these relationships continued. As *uhuru* began to seem inevitable in the

¹³² KT 21.10.94,

¹³³ See Wamue, 'The Politics of the Mungiki'; 'Mungiki Movement in Kenya'; '“Mungiki Movement”: a New Religious Movement'.

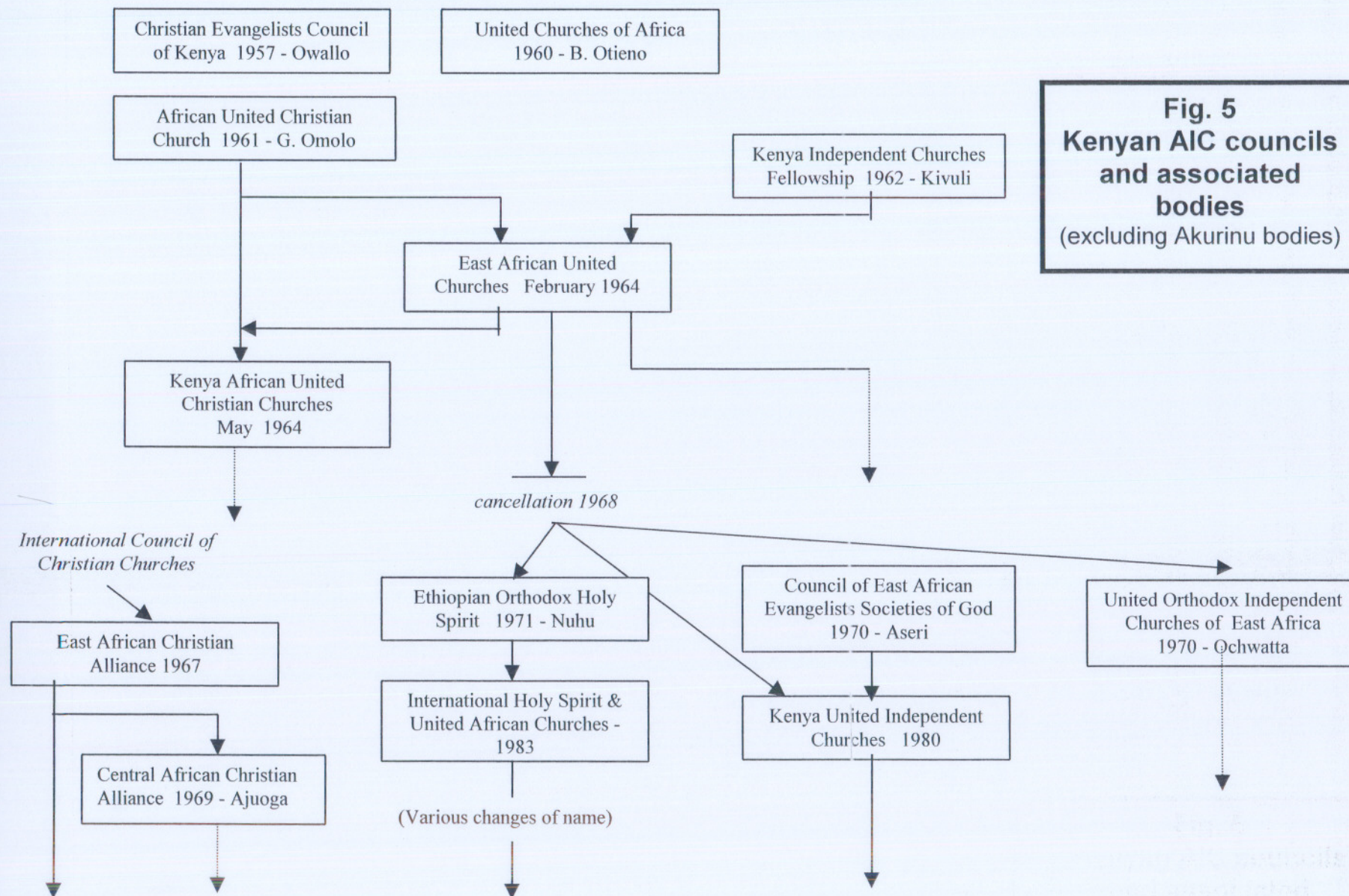
late 50s, the role that AICs might play in the political geography of an independent Kenya began to interest the more astute Vihiga Roho leaders. How were AICs to relate to the future government? Could they take over the established role of missions like CMS and the Church of Scotland Mission? Was it feasible to establish relations with the mission-founded churches and with the CCK (which had only so far admitted one AIC member)?¹³⁵ Some measure of unity among themselves would increase the effectiveness of their representation and negotiation. In 1957 Charles Gideon Owallo of *Nomiya* proposed the formation of a council of AICs called the Christian Evangelists Council of Kenya.¹³⁶ Kivuli and his secretary Isaac Ajega attended the initial meeting from Vihiga.¹³⁷ Apart from one other meeting in July the following year, nothing more seems to have come from this initiative. In January 1960 Benson T. Otieno, at that time a leader in the Church of Christ in Africa (CCA), a recent and large ‘nationalist’ schism from the Anglican Diocese of Maseno, described in a letter to the CCK journal *Rock*, the efforts of a number of Western Kenya AICs to unite in the United Churches of Africa.¹³⁸ This, he said, was in response to CCK’s rejection of three AICs (*African Israel*, *African Interior*, and *African Brotherhood Church*) as probationary members. In the same issue, the CCK General Secretary replied to Otieno, strongly regretting CCK’s decision, and welcomed the new council, urging that it should not be considered as a ‘rival council’ to CCK.

¹³⁴ In this account I focus on councils and events in which the Roho churches of Vihiga were involved. For a broader perspective see Barrett and Padwick, *Rise Up and Walk*.

¹³⁵ This was African Christian Church and Schools, which represented almost the entire church community built up by the Africa Inland Mission at Githumu, Kandara, in Central Province. ACC&S separated from AIM in 1948 on the grounds that AIM had not provided enough education for its converts. Despite their independency, they were hostile to Kenyatta and the Kenya Independent Schools Association, and strongly loyal to the government during Mau-Mau. See KNA HOR 319 (HOR of Kandara Division, Fort Hall, of 1.3.55, WH Thompson to FA Peet). Thompson also advises his successor concerning AAC&S ‘...every endeavour should be made to hurry up its affiliation to the Christian Council of Kenya.’

¹³⁶ Welbourn & Ogot, op. cit., p. 107.

¹³⁷ Others present were Matthew Ajuoga, Benson T. Otieno, & Ismael Noo.



However, this attempt also failed. More successful was the formation in 1961 of the African United Christian Church. This had a large number of Luo-speaking denominations as members but none from Western Province.¹³⁹ (Kivuli distrusted the political views of some of the leaders, and refused to attend.) This council was to become one of the two rival Kenya-wide AIC councils in 1964.

Mindolo and the Kenya Independent Churches Fellowship

The ecumenical conference on African independent churches in September 1962 in Mindolo, Zambia, was attended by Kivuli, Ajega, and Ajuoga (the bishop of CCA).¹⁴⁰ Photographs of Kivuli at Embakasi Airport in Nairobi, still to be found at Nineveh, are like a familiar icon of the era: African nationalist leaders arriving back from negotiations in metropolitan countries with political victories in their pocket. The general thrust of Mindolo was to promote the eventual accession of AICs into membership of ecumenical councils after a prior period of growth into mutual understanding. Kivuli took this

¹³⁸ See his letter in *Rock*, the CCK newsletter, Jan. 1960, and the response from the CCK General Secretary.

¹³⁹ Denominations associated with this council were: *Nomiya*, *Holy Ghost Church – Luo* (later known as *HGC Musanda*), *Holy Ghost Church – Bantu* (later known as *HGC Ruwe*), *Evangelistic Ch of EA*, the beginnings of *Holy Trinity Ch in Africa* (a split from CCA), *Peace & Mercy Ch of Africa* (Lumbwa), and *Holy Ghost Ch Sabato* (later to be united with *Holy Spirit*). Obiero, Ms.

¹⁴⁰ The consultation at Mindolo was organized by the WCC Department of Missionary Studies, at Mindolo Ecumenical Centre, Kitwe, Zambia, from 6-13 September 1962. Of the 35 participants only a handful were from the AICs. See the Consultation's 'Statement' in Hayward, *African Independent Church Movements*, pp. 70-83, with its sections on 'Admission to Christian Councils' and 'Bridges of Understanding and Reconciliation'.

African Israel and CCA had sought membership of the Christian Council of Kenya in 1957. *African Israel* was offered a 'consultative association' in 1963 (AICN Files 3/1, J.C. Kamau to Kivuli, 26.6.63) – which did not imply necessary progress to full membership. It became a probationary member in 1969, and did not gain full membership until 1974, one year before the General Assembly of WCC was due to meet in Nairobi (and grant *African Israel* membership of that body, together with *African Holy Spirit*). CCA was admitted into consultative association by 1964, and into probationary membership the following year, but withdrew on 27.1.66 after it had failed to find a sponsor to enable them to become full members.

message seriously, and as a first step towards this goal, invited a number of Western Province AICs to Nineveh on 27 October 1962 to consider coming together in a new association. This body, the Kenya Independent Churches Fellowship (KICF), was registered on 22.2.63.¹⁴¹ The churches involved were *African Israel*, *African Holy Spirit*, *Holy Spirit*, African Orthodox Church (Gisambai), *Divine*, and *Zion*. Kivuli was chosen as Chairman and Ajega as Secretary. The KICF in its constitution specified very clearly that one of its purposes was to seek ecumenical affiliation and advice from the Christian Council of Kenya (CCK), the All African Conference of Churches (AACC), and the World Council of Churches (WCC).¹⁴² The improvement of welfare, health education, church building, church organization and management, and education were other objects. Kivuli and Ajega had no doubt sensed where the immediate future lay for the churches in a newly independent Kenya: in overcoming past disagreements between themselves, and forming an alliance with the state for 'development'. Membership of the KICF Executive Committee was restricted in the constitution to specified churches in Western Province – effectively, the Roho churches of Vihiga and Kakamega, plus the African Orthodox Church of Gisambai.¹⁴³

At the same time they had been invited to become members of the International Council of Christian Churches, which they accepted. (*Target*, 25, May 1966.)

¹⁴¹ 'Kenya Independent Churches Fellowship', Nineveh, mimeo, 1963, 1 p., (K.I. Brown Papers) makes the link between Mindolo and the founding of KICF quite explicit. Note that Welbourn and Ogot, op. cit., p. 107, call this group 'The Kenya African Independent Churches Fellowship'.

¹⁴² Among its objects were:

- : 'a. To foster fellowship and unity by opening the door for close co-operation within the independent churches and the older established churches: thus to make bridges of understanding and becoming members of the c.c.k. [sic.]...
- c. To seek for help and advice from the Christian council of Kenya to encourage us to train our Ministers in Bible and Theological Training....
- h. To ask for an individual Church to co-operate and join the C.C.K. and to seek the affiliation with the:- a. All Africa Churches Conference. b. The World Council of Churches.'

'Kenya Independent Churches Fellowship Constitution', n.d.

¹⁴³ The African Orthodox Church in Nyanza (almost entirely in Tiriki) was originally an off-shoot of the Kikuyu nationalist church, the African Orthodox Church (Karinga). During the Emergency when the

In 1964 KICF came to constitute one of the regional groupings of the Kenyan African Communion Churches (East African United Churches). Despite, however, enjoying the bonds of a shared mother tongue, the close geographical proximity of the various church headquarters, and a long history of working together, KICF did not prosper in the long-term. Funding was always a problem. Disputes within *Divine* led to the withdrawal of participation by the larger *Divine* group at Boyani.¹⁴⁴ Eventually the fellowship died a natural death.¹⁴⁵

James Ochwatta and the links between the Roho and nationalist AICs

The history of AIC conciliarism in Kenya is dominated by the careers of individuals who have been captured by a vision of AIC unity as a route to political significance. One of these was James Onesiforo Riddo Ochwatta, who was born in 1929 in Mombasa, but later returned to Nyanza, his home area (See Appendix 6.4 for more on his life).¹⁴⁶ Ochwatta had strong connections with *African Israel*, with some of the Kikuyu independents and increasingly with the African Orthodox Church of Reuben Spartas in Uganda. He hoped to build links between the Kenyan AICs and the Coptic and Ethiopian Churches, which he visited, and held out to Kenyan AIC leaders the prospect of international recognition (and possible funding) through this route. Kivuli proved resistant to these Coptic

Kikuyu part of the church was banned, the group in Tiriki declared an affiliation with the Orthodox Church in Uganda (probably largely to stop being banned themselves). They are now part of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Irinoupolis. See Sangree, *Age, Prayer and Politics*, pp. 189-190; and below, f.n. 206.

¹⁴⁴ The disagreement was between Saulo Chabuga and Hezekiah Muhindi. Muhindi eventually left *Divine* to form the Divine Christian Church (see above, p. 98) whose General Secretary, Raphael Monyo, served for a time as General Secretary of KICF. OI, Moses Aseri, Gimarakwa, 30.8.86.

¹⁴⁵ Its registration was cancelled by the Registrar of Societies in 1972 for failing to make the necessary annual returns.

¹⁴⁶ Variant names are Jacob (for James) and Ochwata or Ochwada.

blandishments, but did appoint Ochwatta briefly as the secretary of *African Israel* (on 29 July 1964).¹⁴⁷ It was on the basis of this relationship between Kivuli and Ochwatta that the most ambitious of all AIC councils of the period was to be built.

East African United Churches and Kenya African United Christian Churches

Ochwatta had begun his courting of Kivuli in September 1963, promising him the likelihood of his election by a council of AICs as Metropolitan for the Province of East Africa, and recognition by the Egyptian and Ethiopian Coptic Churches.¹⁴⁸ Early the following year, he had Felix Ndirangu of AIPCA write to invite AIC leaders to a meeting at Mercury House in Nairobi on 21.2.64.¹⁴⁹ Some 35 AICs were represented. It was decided that four different AIC groupings should unite in order to help the newly independent government bring understanding and progress. These were KICF from Vihiga and Kakamega, African United Christian Church (sic) from Nyanza, the Kikuyu Independent Churches, and the African Orthodox Churches.¹⁵⁰ The society was registered on 3 April 1964 as East African United Churches and Orthodox Coptic Communion, with a constitution that expressed a desire for relations with the WCC and the World Peace Council, and which clearly affirmed Ochwatta's intentions to strengthen the links with the Coptic Orthodox.¹⁵¹ The claim implied in the name of the new body that it represented 'East Africa' no doubt reflects Ochwatta's connections with the Ugandan African Orthodox Church. Within a few months the Kenyan members of EAUC

¹⁴⁷ AICN File EAUC 1/27 & 1/31.

¹⁴⁸ See the letter of William Onyango to Kivuli, n.d. [Sept. 1963] AICN Files 1/7.

¹⁴⁹ D. Obiero, 'A Brief History of the Kenya African United Christian Churches'.

¹⁵⁰ Circular memo, signed F. Ndirangu and B. Otieno, n.d., AICN Files 1/7.

¹⁵¹ E.g., 'Object (b) To assist and enable members Churches to build Churches and to obtain aids from other Christian Churches abroad through the old established Churches, and Historical African Churches of

were calling themselves ‘Kenya African Independent Communion Churches of East Africa’, as the Kenyan ‘province’ of EAUC. For simplicity, however, I refer to the Kenyan branch as EAUC.

With the enthusiasm and sense of opportunity that comes with the birth of a new nation, the EAUC leaders immediately got down to business. Within two months of the initial meeting, Ndirangu and Ochwatta (now describing himself as Brother James Ochwatta, the Joint General Secretary for East Africa) were writing to the Prime Minister, Jomo Kenyatta, apologizing that there were still three AIC leaders who had not yet become members.¹⁵² The list of members nevertheless was impressive, embracing senior figures from the Luyia and Luo Roho churches, the Kikuyu independents and Akurinu, the African Brotherhood Church from Ukambani, and the African Orthodox. However, a rival meeting was called in Nairobi from 20th-23rd April by Gideon Omolo and the *African Israel* assistant general secretary Benjamin Otieno.¹⁵³ This set up the Kenya African United Christian Churches (KAUCC).¹⁵⁴ Some 32 different churches attended,

ALEXANDER AXUM ETHIOPIA etc in accordance with Pan-African line.’ [sic] ‘Constitution and Rules of East African United Church and Orthodox Coptic Communion’, 1st page only. AICN Files.

¹⁵² Letter from EAUC to Kenyatta, AICN Files 3/2, 21.4.64. They reported the names of those that had joined:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Rt. Rev. D. S. Kivuli: Grand Metropolitan (Chairman of Bishops) | [<i>African Israel</i>] |
| 2. Rt. Rev. Musa Thuo (bishop) | [<i>Kenya Foundation of the Prophets Church – Akurinu</i>] |
| 3. Rt. Rev. Kabonge Ngala (bishop) | [<i>African Brotherhood Church</i>] |
| 4. Rt. Rev. Jafeth Sare (bishop) | [<i>Holy Spirit</i>] |
| 5. Rev. Philipho Ciande | [<i>AIPCA</i>] |
| 6. Rev. Barnes Alwoho [sic] (bishop) | [<i>Holy Ghost Ruwe</i>] |
| 7. Rev. Jacob Omwakwe (Vicar of Orthodox) | [<i>African Orthodox Church Gisambai</i>] |
| 8. Rev. Jathan Muranga (bishop) | [<i>African Holy Spirit</i>] |

¹⁵³ DN 24.4.64; *Taifa*, 25.4.64.

¹⁵⁴ Omolo and Otieno obtained registration for the new council by changing the name of the African United Christian Church. Ndirangu to Kivuli, n.d., AICN Files 1/6.

mostly not very different from the EAUC members, except that polygamous bishops were admitted.¹⁵⁵ A struggle now began between the leaders of the two rival councils.

In April 1964, the Minister for Home Affairs, Oginga Odinga, had lifted the ban on Diniya Msambwa. Then in May and June the government had to decide what action to take concerning Maria Legio (later known as *Legio Maria*), a new denomination which had emerged with great rapidity from the Catholic Church in Nyanza.¹⁵⁶ From its beginning in early 1963, by the end of that year the movement had gained as many as 90,000 converts. The church was still unregistered and apparently a threat to public order. On 19th June 1964 one of its founders, Simeon Ondeto, and two other leaders were jailed for a month. On 30th June, Odinga reported to Parliament in person: ‘according to a thorough investigation, the Legion of Mary movement in Nyanza was harmless and non-political.’¹⁵⁷ On the same date Ndirangu and Ochwatta wrote on behalf of EAUC an ‘open letter on freedom of Maria Legio’ to the Prime Minister. On the weekend of 11th / 12th July, Kivuli went to Gem-Rae (Nyanza) with Ochwatta to meet with Gaudencia Aoko – *Legio Maria*’s other founder. What took place at the meeting is not clear, but shortly afterwards a constitution for the new church was sent from EAUC to Kivuli, who was supposed to present it to Gaudencia for her signature.¹⁵⁸ The new church was registered in January 1965. Ochwatta, Kivuli, and another officer of the council, Lucas Nuhu, all claimed to have been responsible for persuading the Government to register the

¹⁵⁵ KCH, p. 270. This was a concession to Luo bishops.

¹⁵⁶ For the origins of this movement, and the details given here, see Dirven, ‘The Maria Legio’.

¹⁵⁷ Kenya Government *National Assembly, House of Representatives Debates, Official Reports* 3 (1), Columns 512-526; 773-382 for the respective debates.

¹⁵⁸ ‘Constitution of Maria Legio of Africa’, AICN Files 1/27. It resembles that drafted by Ochwatta for *African Israel*.

church, but Odinga's influence must have been decisive.¹⁵⁹ From now on *Legio Maria*'s representatives (notably T.J. Munjal and Stephen Ondiek Odhiambo, later a government Assistant Minister) appear active in EAUC.¹⁶⁰

The adhesion of *Legio Maria* to EAUC had two effects. One was to increase the almost apocalyptic fear of some in the 'established churches' that the AICs would take over African Christianity and return it to 'savagery'.¹⁶¹ The second was to increase the rivalry between KAUC and EAUC. KAUC members condemned *Legio Maria* as non-Christian. Kivuli, on the other hand, knew that the practice of polygamy by AIC leaders was a strong reason against their acceptance by the wider Christian community. Since some KAUC bishops were openly polygamous, he was unwilling to work with them.¹⁶² The relationship each council had with the government was another cause of bitterness. On 30 May 1964 KAUC had met at Kaloleni Social Hall in the presence of Kenyatta and Bildad Kaggia,¹⁶³ but increasingly KANU and the government seemed to favour EAUC. KAUC even claimed that they were under pressure from Kenyatta and Odinga

¹⁵⁹ OI, Lukas Nuhu, 7.3.85, Nairobi; OI, J. Opeywa 23.4.85, Nairobi; OI, J. Ochwatta, 20.3.85, Nairobi. I have not seen the original constitution. The constitution approved by the Registrar of Societies 8.6.67 shows signs of Ochwatta's draughtmanship, but it excludes Gaudencia Aoko, who was to be 'the auxiliary spiritual leader' in the draft sent by EAUC to Kivuli in 1964.

¹⁶⁰ Munjal was already signing letters of EAUC as the Assistant Administrator by the end of July 1964 (AICN File 1/26 (n.d.).)

¹⁶¹ See the *Reporter* of 17.2.64, which quotes Ochwatta's claims that EAUC would have a membership of 800,000, in comparison with Anglicans and Protestants of 350,000, and his vision of the newly united AICs as 'the beginning of a Pan-African movement.' In consequence, the writer argues, '...orthodox [established] Church leaders in Kenya are now very anxious about the effect of such a movement would have on the souls of their flocks... most of the sects prey on primitive fears and superstitions and flirt with sorcery.'

¹⁶² Kivuli to Ngala, n.d., AICN File 1/30. The issue of polygamy had received considerable attention at Mindolo. See the report, *African Independent Church Movements*, ed. Victor E.W. Hayward, in which a whole chapter is given to the issue.

¹⁶³ Kaggia was a radical who had earlier formed his own nationalist religious movement (Dini ya Kaggia, or 'Jo-Kaggia'), and served briefly in the first of Kenyatta's government, but resigned when he realised that Kenyatta would not tolerate his continued advocacy on behalf of the dispossessed freedom fighters. Ogot and Ochieng', op. cit., pp. 94-5.

to join EAUC, which was now becoming a ‘governmental’ organization.¹⁶⁴ Certainly EAUC played considerably on their connections with government and KANU, and Kenyatta’s ‘membership’ of the Kikuyu independents.¹⁶⁵ Odinga’s sympathy with AICs, and especially with *Legio Maria*, was well-known.¹⁶⁶ In 1962 Kivuli had prophesied that KANU would win the forthcoming elections, and he may have expected to become the leader of a state church of AICs – or, at least, to be regarded as the national spiritual leader.¹⁶⁷ He was reportedly given a car as a gift from the government, while Elijah Masinde received a Landrover.¹⁶⁸ In a letter Kivuli wrote to Kenyatta later in 1964, he identified the EAUC even more closely with KANU, and proposed the name of Odinga as the EAUC’s preferred candidate for Vice-President.¹⁶⁹ (Odinga was appointed Vice-President in the new republican constitution of December 1964.¹⁷⁰) EAUC was also acquiring a significant public role. Ochwatta agreed with the CCK that on the next Kenyatta Day four EAUC leaders would pray in a public service. Meanwhile, the rival KAUC elected Benjamin Oundo of *Nomiya* as ‘Archbishop of the Kenya Nation’.¹⁷¹

The rise of Lucas Musasia Nuhu

¹⁶⁴ ‘Press Statement by Private Reporter’, 24.7.64, AICN Files.

¹⁶⁵ This was frequently referred to in EAUC’s correspondence, AICN Files 1/5, 1/16, 1/24, 1/33.

¹⁶⁶ In a 1961 speech, Odinga expressed fears that the Anglican church in Kenya would continue the British government’s influence in Kenya. “It is well known that religious leaders play a major role in our day-to-day affairs in Kenya.” (DN 13.4.61) He saw the AICs as a counter to this influence from the missionary churches, and as part of the nationalist movement. (Odinga, *Not yet Uhuru*, pp. 61-75.) After independence it was widely believed that Odinga gave financial support to *Legio Maria*. (See Dirven, ‘The Maria Legio’, pp. 163-167.) Certainly he courted the support of the Luo Roho churches and other AICs. There is a photograph in the Daily Nation files of 1.10.69 of Odinga ‘with the Head Priests of African Independent Churches’ in the aftermath of the assassination of Tom Mboya and Odinga’s recent detention.

¹⁶⁷ Welbourn & Ogot, op. cit., p. 109.

¹⁶⁸ OI, J.D. Otiende, [1st Minister for Education], 18.8.86, Mbale. The date of the donation is uncertain, but Elijah Masinde was not in favour for very long, so it is likely to have been in the second half of 1964.

¹⁶⁹ Kivuli to Kenyatta, n.d., but before 8.12.64, AICN File 1/37.

Lucas Musasia Nuhu is another of those figures recurring in the history of AIC conciliarism whom Welbourn has likened to the European *episcopi vagantes*.¹⁷² Nuhu was born about 1917 in Maguyi, Vihiga, and became a member of *Holy Spirit* after marrying the daughter of Daniel Sande.¹⁷³ In 1958 Nuhu, then living and working in Nairobi, met two leaders of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church on a visit to Kenya. Nuhu claims that the purpose of their visit was to establish links with Kenyan AICs. Fr. Noor, an Ethiopian then living in Nakuru, began to act as liaison officer and to appear in AIC meetings. Nuhu was invited to Ethiopia, purchasing an air-ticket with the help of his friends.¹⁷⁴ While in Addis Ababa he met with Archbishop Theophilus, and prophesied that Russia would enter Ethiopia.¹⁷⁵ He also claims to have had an audience with Haile Selassie. Speaking of these events more than twenty years later, Nuhu compared himself to the Old Testament Prophets. People had now benefited from his obedience – indeed, the freedom of the world was not possible without God’s freedom in the Spirit.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁰ Created by the first constitutional amendment of October 1964. For the political history of this period, see Gertzel, *The Politics of Independent Kenya*; Ogot and Ochieng’ in *Decolonization and Independence*, pp. 91-109.

¹⁷¹ AICN Files 1/34, KAICCEA office to Kivuli, 9.11.64.

¹⁷² Welbourn and Ogot, op.cit., f.n. p. 105.

¹⁷³ What follows on Nuhu’s life is taken from an interview with Nuhu himself, 7.3.85, Nairobi, supplemented by reports from a research assistant, Joseph Kigani, who worked as the General Secretary of International Holy Spirit and United Indigenous African Churches closely with Nuhu. The date 1917 is taken from his biography printed in *Target*, Dec. 1971. Nuhu had contact with various denominations (Friends, Salvation Army, and PAOC) in both Vihiga and Nairobi during his boyhood and youth, and then in 1937 married Lena, daughter of Daniel Sande of Madira. Under pressure from the people of the Spirit at Bukoyani to conform to their ideal of a suitable husband, he became their member. In 1942 he returned to Nairobi where he has spent the rest of his life as a builder and contractor. He started the first *Holy Spirit* congregation in Nairobi in his house at Ziواني and then (from 1955) at Shauri Moyo. During this period of the Emergency the church welcomed also adherents of the *Akurinu*, of the Luo Roho churches, and of *Divine and African Israel*, to worship with them in Nairobi. OI, Joseph Zare, 22.9.99 (Doc. 68), Bukoyani, p. 8.

¹⁷⁴ PC, J. Kigani, 1986; *Target*, Dec. 1971.

¹⁷⁵ Archbishop Theophilus, second in the Ethiopian hierarchy, was later to become the next patriarch, took an interest in the evangelization of non-Christian Africa.

¹⁷⁶ OI, L. Nuhu, 7.3.85, Nairobi.

The collapse of EAUC

Nuhu was one of the founding members of EAUC.¹⁷⁷ His ambition to play the leading role was facilitated by various allegations of financial corruption in the office, including that of selling scholarships to study overseas. Ndirangu appears to have been arrested and jailed for two years and Ochwatta to have fled to Uganda.¹⁷⁸ By 1967 Nuhu was chairman of the EAUC Council.¹⁷⁹ Finance remained a problem. Nuhu wrote many letters to leading politicians in other countries asking for funds, in particular to assist refugees.¹⁸⁰ Few of these requests were successful. In the second half of 1965, however, the Russian Orthodox Church wrote to Reuben Spartas to say that it would make a gift of £25,000 to EAUC.¹⁸¹ What became of this offer is not known. EAUC also obtained a plot in Shauri Moyo, Nairobi, from Nairobi City Council, but were never able to build on it.¹⁸²

Member churches' suspicions about the financial activities of the officers of EAUC were not lessened by the rise of Nuhu,¹⁸³ and a crisis was reached which led to the withdrawal

¹⁷⁷ In an interview in *Target* (May-June 1964), Nuhu claims that EAUC was founded as a result of his own efforts. By October of the same year he was signing letters for the EAUC under the title 'Protocol Bishop'. A letter of late 1964 or early 1965 complains that Nuhu 'wants himself to be recognized by KANU and government as leader'. (W. Mwangi to Kivuli, AICN Files, 3/5)

¹⁷⁸ OI, L. Nuhu, 7.3.85, Nairobi. Certainly by 1966, Ochwatta was in Kampala, helping Spartas declare his African Orthodox Church autonomous. 'Confirmation of the Constitution of the African Orthodox Church', Kampala, 21.9.66.

¹⁷⁹ DN 1.4.67.

¹⁸⁰ OI, J. Kigani, 6.3.85, Nairobi. An example is a letter to the Prime Minister of Israel, 24.4.66, which was acknowledged by the PM's Office. In a letter from Nuhu to K.I. Brown 21.8.64 (KI Brown documents), Nuhu says that he has written many times to the US government, asking for aid.

¹⁸¹ Gachukia to Kivuli, 17.8.65, AICN Files 1/4; Nuhu to Kivuli, n.d., but before 4.9.65, AICN Files, 1/2.

¹⁸² One half was later occupied by the women's organization Maendeleo ya Wanawake. When I visited in 1986, the remaining plot had not yet been built on, but the Vicar Emissariate for the East African Orthodox Church was living there in a shack.

¹⁸³ At various times Nuhu was soliciting funds for the purchase of the office building (Munishiram House) out of which he was now operating, the building of a secondary school, a technical school, the assistance of refugees, and for the proposed construction on the Shauri Moyo plot. Meanwhile he was running his own business as a building contractor from the office premises. OI, J. Kigani, 6.3.85, Nairobi.

of Kivuli from the organization sometime between late 1965 and early 1967.¹⁸⁴

According to Joshua Opeywa, treasurer of the Nairobi branch of *African Israel* for fifteen years until Kivuli's death, money had been received from overseas which had been kept hidden from the chairman (Kivuli). Kivuli then called a meeting of the council, and denounced the officers for dishonesty:

The Holy Spirit came to Africans. We, Africans, were to be the light and truth of God, and according to the Word of God there are to be whites and Asians as members of the Spirit churches. It is certain the Holy Spirit does not like lying... When those people find us speaking the truth, they'll associate with us... I've found that your words are not honest, because they are not in the Holy Spirit. Therefore the Holy Spirit does not like it, and I will go and join the NCKK.¹⁸⁵

Kivuli felt that the lesser-educated leaders (like himself) were being exploited in the office by those with greater ability in English. He and a leader of the Akurinu, Musa Thuo, walked out 'as children of one parent'.¹⁸⁶ Their withdrawal was followed by others, and this effectively broke the organization. EAUC was finally de-registered on 29.3.68, in a miasma of allegations of misappropriation of funds.¹⁸⁷

So ended the most ambitious attempt to unite the Kenya AICs, and to create a national platform from which the AICs could influence the nation. The window of opportunity for the AICs had been lost. The CCK, led by staff who in this period were significantly ahead of the leaders of its member churches in their perception of national trends, won for itself the position of the Christian voice of the nation. When in 1964 European and African

¹⁸⁴ As the correspondence in the AICN files indicates.

¹⁸⁵ OI, J. Opeywa, 23.4.85, Nairobi. Kivuli's speech is a reconstruction by Opeywa.

¹⁸⁶ A further explanation of Kivuli's withdrawal was offered by H. Ajega, (OI, 29.8.86, Nairobi): that he feared the Orthodox were likely to take over the organization.

¹⁸⁷ It is said that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had made EAUC a gift of 5 million shillings which was seized by the KANU government on the grounds that EAUC could not administer it effectively. It has been

church leaders met at Limuru with government representatives under CCK auspices to discuss 'The Role of the Church in Independent Kenya', the note of fear and anxiety that had been so prominent some years earlier had been replaced with a quiet self-confidence. The meeting included a number of AIC representatives including *African Israel* and *African Holy Spirit*.¹⁸⁸ In 1966 CCK renamed itself the *National Christian Council of Kenya* (NCCCK).¹⁸⁹ Thus the natural advantage of the AICs – their undoubted loyalty to the nationalist politicians - was pre-empted by the foresight, honesty, and bureaucratic expertise of the ecumenical council.

Part Four. Successor councils

Successor bodies to EAUC

The collapse of EAUC left the great majority of AICs who were not affiliated to NCCCK rather isolated. Various attempts were now made to register replacement AIC councils, but all were rejected.¹⁹⁰ Ochwatta and his associates Makodawa and Gadhura succeeded in launching the United Orthodox Independent Churches of East Africa only by taking

impossible to confirm such a statement, which is repeated in various forms by all involved. See OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00, (Doc. 12) Nairobi, pp. 32-33.

¹⁸⁸ These church representatives are presumably included in the group referred to by the CCK General Secretary, John Kamau, as follows: 'Other delegates had never been to such a conference involving people from all tribes and denominations. This afforded them a new experience, but they could not be expected to contribute fully...' He also notes the astonishing fact that 'this was the first conference of this kind in Kenya to which African and European leaders came in partnership.' 'The Churches Role in Kenya', CCK, 1964.

¹⁸⁹ Despite the close liaison between the mission churches and the colonial regime, the staff of CCK had been selected during the years immediately prior to independence for their credibility in the nationalist movement. (Throup, 'Render unto Caesar', p. 144.) John Kamau, the Council's first Kenyan General Secretary, had been detained in a Mau Mau detention camp.

¹⁹⁰ Names of bodies and dates of refusal of registration: Bishop Stephen Ondiek's 'United Churches of Africa', 6.2.69; Ayub Njenga's 'National United Churches Association of East Africa'. 6.2.69; Joshua Kiari's 'United Churches of East Africa', 10.12.69; Reuben Mudengani's 'United Independent Churches of East Africa', 1969; T.J. Munjal's & Nabii Nathan Muranga's 'United Orthodox African Independent Christian Churches of Kenya', otherwise known as 'United Orthodox Independent Zion Churches of Kenya', 22.11.71.

over the registration of an already existing body and changing its name.¹⁹¹ It made no significant impact on Kenyan AICs.¹⁹² Ochwatta, now based in Kampala, was regarded by many AIC leaders as too manipulative and had become marginal to AIC concerns in Kenya.¹⁹³

Another society successfully registered at this time was the Council of East Africa Evangelists Societies of God (22nd July 1970) with Rev. Moses Aseri (*ex African Israel*) as General Secretary. This was a legal umbrella for a number of pentecostal preachers working independently, but strongly influenced by evangelists such as TL Osborne.¹⁹⁴ It declined over time, underwent a change of name to Kenya United Independent Churches on 10th July 1980, and in this guise was revived as a fellowship group for Vihiga Roho churches in 1983, becoming in the process the spiritual descendant of the KICF.

¹⁹¹ The Saved Evangelists Association, whose name was changed to United Orthodox Independent Churches of EAA on 18.6.71. The new body claimed the following membership according to KCH: *African Israel*, AIPCA, African Brotherhood Church, *Musanda Holy Ghost*, African Coptic Orthodox Church, the Holy Ghost Coptic Church of Africa, *Holy Spirit*, Holy Spirit Church of Zayun, and the Independent Orthodox Church. When Horner ('An East African Orthodox Church') interviewed the AIPCA Secretary General he denied that his church had any links with what he called 'the Coptic association', lest AIPCA's independence be compromised. Ochwatta in an interview with Horner claimed the following members: AIPCA, East African Israel Church, *Holy Spirit*, and the African Orthodox Independent Church in Nyanza and Uganda.

¹⁹² A letterhead of 1971 reads 'United Orthodox Independent Churches of East Africa – Coptic Patriarchate of All Africa. With the compliment of the Patriarchal Vicar and successor of the Archbishop Alexander William Daniel the First Primate of Sub-Sahara Africa. PO Box 1487, Kampala' (i.e., Ochwatta). He thus claimed the blessing of Reuben Spartas, and Daniel William Alexander (who had revisited the Ugandan African Orthodox Church in 1968 to put the case with the Ugandan government of the church's autonomy vis-à-vis the Greeks) as well as the Copts.

¹⁹³ PC from a number of AIC leaders. Ochwatta consistently upheld the KANU government when under attack from other church leaders. E.g., DN 14.1.74, 24.1.74. It is appropriate to close this account with the note that in 1976 President Amin closed the Ugandan Orthodox Church, arrested and tortured Spartas, murdered two of his Ugandan priests, and expelled Ochwatta, together with another Kenyan, and an Ethiopian Bishop. DN, Std, 7.1.81.

¹⁹⁴ O.I. Moses Aseri, 30.8.86, Jebrok; 'Constitution and Rules of the Council of East Africa Evangelist Societies of God', Aims and Objects.

Potentially the most promising of attempts to unite AICs during this period was that of Lucas Nuhu. Ethiopian Orthodox Holy Spirit and United Churches of East Africa (for simplicity referred to here as *Ethiopian Holy Spirit*) was registered on 28th May 1971.¹⁹⁵ Nuhu's initiative was a sustained attempt to link Roho spirituality with Ethiopian Orthodoxy.¹⁹⁶ At the launch of the new body, two Ethiopian priests were present.¹⁹⁷ There were Ethiopian officers in the society and others from *Holy Spirit*. Nuhu took the Ethiopians to the *Holy Spirit* HQs at Bukoyani. The attempted alliance was received at Bukoyani with considerable suspicion, however, and the *Holy Spirit* officers in the new body were from the small coterie of Nuhu himself. Despite Nuhu's claims, *Ethiopian Holy Spirit* never won significant support from AICs,¹⁹⁸ and was hit by the travelling restrictions imposed on Ethiopian church officials by the 1975 Marxist revolution in that country.¹⁹⁹ The recovery of the organization was not to take place until 1982.

The revival of local conciliarism

The revival of Roho conciliarism in Vihiga was stimulated by the 2nd General Assembly of the OAIC, held in Nairobi in November 1982, which many of the Vihiga church leaders attended.²⁰⁰ The following month, Vihiga church leaders met at Nineveh, and agreed to form a new council. When the question of registration was raised, two

¹⁹⁵ Nuhu claims that after the cancellation of EAUC in 1969, he himself went to Kenyatta to persuade him that the society should be revived under a new name.

¹⁹⁶ 'EOHSUCEA "Agenda"', n.d.

¹⁹⁷ The launch took place in Desai Memorial Hall, Nairobi, on 3.8.71. See 'The History of International Holy Spiritual and United African Indigenous Churches', Nairobi, 1984, 1p.

¹⁹⁸ OI, L. Nuhu, *Target*, Dec. 1971. The constitution of EOHSUCEA is very similar to that of EAUC.

¹⁹⁹ Horner, op. cit., visited Nuhu, and, writing in 1973, reported that Nuhu 'merely stated that "quite a few independent churches" belong to his organization. If so, there is no evidence that any of them has offered financial help even to maintain the completely unequipped room he uses as an office.' See also 'The History of International Holy Spiritual and United African Indigenous Churches', mimeo, 1p., 1984.

possibilities presented themselves: Aseri offered the certificate of Kenya United Independent Churches (KUIC); Nuhu's *Ethiopian Holy Spirit* council was also available. Opinion was divided: the majority of Vihiga leaders supported the use of the KUIC registration;²⁰¹ *Holy Spirit* leaders were reluctant to give up their interests in *Ethiopian Holy Spirit*, and together with *Bethlehem* maintained membership in both councils.

Finally admitting that the Ethiopian connection was of little value, and influenced by the success of the OAIC 2nd General Assembly, the leaders of *Ethiopian Holy Spirit* registered a change of name on 1 February 1983 to International Holy Spirit and United Independent Churches, to be known here as *International Holy Spirit*.²⁰² In the course of the next 18 months, still operating under from Nuhu's office in Munishiram House, but now under the educated leadership of a former Salvation Army member Joseph Kigani, *International Holy Spirit* began to build up an active membership of smaller churches, and to attract promises of assistance from abroad.²⁰³ As a result of Kigani's contacts, the American organization Life Ministry (a branch of Campus Crusade for Christ) had promised financial assistance so that democratic elections might be held in November 1984. The elections were seen by some of the current officers as a threat, and the general

²⁰⁰ This General Assembly was also the inspiration behind the creation of a new AIC body in Zambia, the United Spiritual Independent Churches Council of Zambia, as well as encouraging a revival of AIC conciliarism in Botswana and Lesotho.

²⁰¹ OI, M. Keverenge, 19.8.02 (Doc.118), Lukuvuli, pp. 18-19.

²⁰² Four further changes of name were registered in the course of the next two years.

²⁰³ PC, J. Kigani for the information in this paragraph. In 1984, IHS declared the following denominations to be members of *International Holy Spirit*: *African Holy Spirit*, *Holy Spirit*, *Bethlehem*, Shiloh United Church of Christ, *Ruwe Holy Ghost*, Patmos Fellowship of Africa, Independent Lutheran Church, Kenya Israel, *Legio Maria*, Roho Church of God (= *Roho Israel?*), Church of Zion (= African Holy Zionist Church?), Holy Sinai Matende of EA, *Lyahuka*, *Musanda Holy Ghost*, Holiness Church of EA, East Africa Gospel Evangelization, Africa Chorus Church of EA, Matathia Holy Spirit Church, Israel Assembly of Kenya, Cross Church, United Pentecostal Church, Enderia Church. Some 17 other denominations were waiting for 'processing'. Of the 24 named, a majority are from Vihiga or from a 'family' of churches originating in Vihiga. IHS Letter to Mary J. Sang, 25.6.84.

secretary was forced to resign, with the resulting withdrawal of the offers to fund the elections and development projects. The cancellation of the proposed elections and the withdrawal of the general secretary led to a rapid decline in the strength of the society.²⁰⁴

Kenya United Independent Churches (KUIC)

KUIC was a revival of one of the oldest councils, Kenya Independent Churches Fellowship (KICF), but organizationally dates back to the formation in 1970 of the Council of East Africa Evangelists Society of God (see above, p. 269).²⁰⁵ As well as *African Israel*, *Divine*, *Holy Spirit*, and *Zion* – denominations significant in the history of KICF - KUIC incorporated the more recently registered denominations of *Lyahuka*, *Roho Israel*, *Sinai*, *Bethlehem*, and *Gospel*. In 1993, a pentecostal church, Pentecostal Evangelism Team (ex-PAG), also joined. *African Holy Spirit*, the HQ of which was in Kakamega District, later became a KUIC member in respect of its congregations in Vihiga District. The Bunyore-based nationalist church, *Interior*, was also an active participant, but the African Orthodox Church (Nyanza) was no longer involved.²⁰⁶ To cater for the great disparity in membership between a denomination like *Gospel* with a dozen congregations, and the very large *Divine* and *African Israel*, the churches were treated equally.²⁰⁷ At the elections of the revived society in 1984,²⁰⁸ Archbishop Moses

²⁰⁴ A meeting of International Holy Spirit held at Kaloleni Social Hall in Nairobi led by ‘Archbishop’ Lucas Nuhu to pray for peace and stability during the 1992 General Election failed to attract any of the invited former MPs or City Councillors. KT 9.11.92. In 2002, the organization was still in legal existence. PC, L. Nuhu, 24.1.03.

²⁰⁵ Aseri, ‘Historia Fupi ya Chama cha KUIC kutoka Mwaka wa 1970-87’, mimeo, 2pp.

²⁰⁶ The Nyanza branch of the African Orthodox Church had already lost its independent registration on 2.12.68, and was legally now under the Greek Orthodox Archbishop of Irinoupolis with his residence in Riruta, Nairobi.

²⁰⁷ Kedogo (‘Kenya United Independent Churches’) stresses the principles of the constitution, which are based on the Roho principle of spiritual equality and respect for elders:

‘The organisation will cater for the spiritual and development of the churches but will not interfere with their day to day activities.

Aseri (of *Sinai*, and ‘owner’ of the registration certificate) became KUIC General Secretary. In 1987 he was replaced by the General Secretary of *Zion*, Rev. Ayub Kedogo. The Chairman was initially Archbishop Elphas Sagida of *Gospel*; from 1987, High Priest John Kivuli II took over the chairmanship and held it until the disputes of the mid-90s.²⁰⁹ In its early days, KUIC was encouraged by the interest shown by the then MP for Vihiga, Moses Musalia Mudavadi, Minister of Local Government, who was the guest of honour at a big meeting in Mbale in January 1984.²¹⁰ One of the first actions of the revived council was to make a donation in 1985 of 22 bags of maize to the President in respect of famine relief for Zambia.²¹¹

Looking for a new role in AICs since my resignation from OAIC in 1985, I was invited by Archbishop Aseri and Rev. Kedogo to work with the new council as a development co-ordinator. I joined the council in 1987 and resigned at the end of 1992, and attempted to facilitate an early form of participatory development.²¹² I also encouraged KUIC to establish links with NCK, and KUIC became an NCK Associate Member in 1993.²¹³ (See chapter one, pp. 45ff for other activities of KUIC.) As recounted above, the KUIC leaders asserted a public role in Vihiga District, through their series of annual prayer

The member churches will be served equally and have equal representation in the organisation.
 The heads of the churches will be members of the executive.
 A member church will be assisted in case of the death of the leader.
 Equal development in small or big churches.’

²⁰⁸ See Aseri, op. cit.

²⁰⁹ For information on KUIC I rely on my own experience, the KUIC Files (unfortunately damaged by arson), and Kedogo, ‘Kenya United Independent Churches’, 4 pp., mimeo. Kivuli II’s title of High Priest was changed to Bishop in 1989 and to Archbishop in 1991.

²¹⁰ OI, Moses Aseri, 30.8.86, Jebrok.

²¹¹ KUIC/A/1 Minutes of AGM 1987.

²¹² See Padwick, ‘Towards a Change in Spirituality? Working in Development with Kenyan Spirit Churches’ for an early analysis of my approach from 1987-1989.

²¹³ Letter from Dep. Gen. Sec., NCK, to Archbishop J. Kivuli, 14.5.93.

meetings for politicians and administrators.²¹⁴ To strengthen their public presence they built an office and meeting room at Manyatta near Mbale Town. On my departure in 1992, the organization continued effectively for about 18 months until it fell apart in a series of allegations of financial mismanagement and subsequent court cases during 1994-5.²¹⁵ In 1997, after a series of discussions and attempts at mediation led by Archbishop Richard Ong'anda of *Interior* and myself, new elections were held and the society revived, although with only a shadow of its former vitality. Nevertheless, the Roho churches have come to dominate interdenominational activities in Vihiga District, such as the district branches of NCKK and KCAN (Kenya Christian AIDS Network).

AIC conciliarism as an attempt to influence the national political life

Roho leaders desire to influence the political life. This interest can be traced from the prophecy of Kivuli in 1962 that KANU would win the election, to the invitation to KANU leaders to be present at the founding meetings of EAUC and KAUC, and the significant support given by Luo AICs to Oginga Odinga after the assassination of Tom Mboya in 1969.²¹⁶ This concern for influence in, and acceptance by, the wider Kenyan society has been one of the strongest forces in AIC conciliarism. It was believed in the early years that a strong and effective AIC council would bring significant political rewards, including the possibility of development funding. In pursuit of this goal, Roho churches had little difference in co-operating with the nationalist churches as soon as the transfer of power from the British had been effected.

²¹⁴ In the last few years this function has been undertaken by the Interdenominational Prayer Team of Vihiga District (aka Vihiga Interdenominational Fellowship), organized largely by the Archbishop of Lyuhuka, Manoh Lumwagi Keverenge. See above, pp. 228.

²¹⁵ The allegations were directed principally at an employee.

AIC councils have nevertheless proved unstable and ineffective. Only those with consistent external sponsorship (OAIC, the East African Christian Alliance,²¹⁷ and KUIC from 1987-1994) have succeeded in doing anything more than bringing church leaders together. In part, this is due to the relative lack of formal education of many of the leaders, and an inability or an unwillingness to appropriate and use western bureaucratic procedures, notably those of strict accountability for finances and for the implementation of decisions taken in committees. To return to Fernandez' early typology of religious movements, these are the characteristics of expressive rather than instrumental movements, which focus rather on ritual and ceremonial activities than on practical, pragmatic attempts to deal with the problems the movement's participants face.²¹⁸ The failure of AIC councils relates also to the wider political scene. The politicians' interest in AIC councils in the 1960s declined rapidly when it became apparent they could not get their own house in order. In contrast, the benefits of continuing, or reviving, the colonial alliance between mission founded churches and the state became clearly apparent, especially as these latter churches proved themselves able to obtain and administer overseas funds for development. Not only did the AIC leaders fail to manage the bureaucratic requirements for participation in the new state, they failed to mobilize their own followers in support of this objective. It was too much an affair of the church leaders, who sought to enter positions of power that historically had been denied them. Such positions were part of alien structures that had little meaning or value at the grassroots.

²¹⁶ See photo in DN files of Oginga Odinga with head priests of Luo AICs, dated 1.10.69.

²¹⁷ EACA was an East African Council of AICs established by Bishop Ajuoga as a branch of the ICCC.

‘The Ethiopian complex’

The Coptic and Ethiopian connections of Ochwatta and Nuhu offered a rationale for conciliarism and the promise of world recognition of AICs through an alternative model of ‘legitimacy’ to that to the missionary-founded churches and their ecumenical councils. But AIC leaders were never fully convinced that this was not another imperialism in disguise. Kivuli rejected a Coptic constitution, and withdrew from EAUC partly because he feared an Orthodox take-over. Archbishop Japheth Zare of *Holy Spirit* distrusted the plans of Nuhu and the Ethiopians for the same reason. The Kikuyu independents in AIPCA consistently resisted both Ochwatta and Markos: they were, indeed, *experts* in ‘independency’. Harold W. Turner, for long the doyen of AIC studies, believed firmly that what he called ‘the Ethiopian complex’ was the wrong model for AIC conciliarism and ecumenism, not least because it failed to grapple with the ‘scandal of particularity’.²¹⁹ He argued that in AIC history this scandal was manifested in the fact that it was neither the Egyptian Copts nor the Ethiopians who evangelised sub-Saharan Africa, despite their geographical proximity; but the missionary churches, *because and in spite of* their ‘alliance’ with colonialism. Turner ‘accepted’ the AICs’ search for Christian legitimacy and identity in the ‘black’ Orthodox churches, as a human but mistaken expression of resentment at years of Western domination. It was, however, resistance to western *models of society* that lay deep at the heart of Roho and Akurinu independency in

²¹⁸ Fernandez, ‘African Religious Movements’.

²¹⁹ Turner, ‘Reflections on African Movements’, pp. 108-110.

a settler colony as intensely administered as Kenya.²²⁰ It was this that drove some Kenyan AIC leaders to seek legitimacy in dreams of Coptic and Ethiopian alliances. In fact, the Kenyan churches' practical experience of Egyptian and Ethiopian Coptic initiatives from the mid-1950s to the early 1990s effectively destroyed the credibility of the 'Ethiopian complex'. The end of this era was symbolized by the resignation of Bishop Antonious Markos from his post as General Secretary of OAIC in 1990.²²¹ Coptic initiative had brought AICs together in the OAIC; but Coptic domination could never be acceptable.

Nevertheless, Turner's concern at the use of the wrong model can usefully be re-formulated as a question: would the Kenyan AICs been any more successful in seizing the chance presented by the 'window of opportunity' if they had *not* sought recognition and legitimacy in the 'Ethiopian complex'? The answer is almost certainly negative. During the earlier years, the CCK was still effectively closed to AICs. If the 'Ethiopian complex' were to be discounted, the alternative would have been for the AICs to stand on their own. But this would have run counter to the forces of the time. African peoples and their leaders, African nations, and churches, demanded acceptance and recognition by the wider world. Such demands were deeply rooted and urgently articulated. Ajuoga of CCA found an alternative acceptance and legitimacy through the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC). But if in the long run that route has been no more successful than the hand of fellowship offered by the Ethiopian and Egyptian Copts, at the same

²²⁰ This is essentially a critique of 'critical solidarity' as a missiological method. Should an outsider approaching the AICs be more 'critical' and intent on preserving his or her academic 'objectivity' (Turner's position), or committed to solidarity with AICs in the facilitation of their chosen objectives (my position)?

time it was no *less* affirming either. Wrong model or not, Egyptian and Ethiopian Copts, and MacIntyre of ICCC, responded to the human need of AICs when western ecumenical churches could only offer fine shades of suspicion and rejection.

Part Five. Towards a Roho theology of politics?

Tamaa na siasa: Desire and politics

Roho leaders are generally very clear that politics and the Spirit do not mix.²²² One problem in discussing this is that the English ‘politics’ and the Swahili *siasa* have different referents. *Siasa* is as frequently used in popular speech for ‘negative’ politics such as ‘stirring things up’, ‘agitation for the sake of personal gain’, ‘baseless allegations (*fitina*)’, etc, as it is for the necessary process of determining who has power and what they do with it.²²³

It is not that the Spirit does not speak concerning the state of the nation. The issue for the Roho churches is how such prophecies should be handled. Elijah Masinde is both admired and distrusted, as a prophet-politician who spoke the truth; his mistake – in the view of many Roho leaders - was that he didn’t keep what he had received a secret, and

²²¹ See Markos, *Come Across...*, *passim*, for his account of his ministry to AICs on behalf of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

²²² In 1996, at a consultation in Nairobi between AIC leaders in Africa and Europe and those of other churches, I prepared an opening speech to be read by Bishop Nathan Magomere, of *African Holy Spirit*. In this speech I expounded, *inter alia*, the OAIC’s view that AICs should be more engaged in the political process. The Bishop duly read the speech, and then stated very clearly in contradiction of what he had just read, that AICs had nothing to do with politics. Prophet Shitochi states this principle very clearly. (OI, J. Shitochi, 25.1.02 (Doc. 104), Emwiru, Kisa, p. 46.) See also the prophecies (from another prophet) in Appendix 5.1.2 against a church leader’s involvement in ‘societies’ – meaning political parties.

²²³ In fact, this popular usage appears almost exactly the opposite of the dictionary definition of *siasa*: ‘orderliness, gentleness, carefulness, politics’ (Johnson, *Swahili-English Dictionary*).

try to communicate it in private to the officials responsible.²²⁴ The result was continual conflicts and major and minor disturbances, and his continued persecution by both colonial and post-colonial governments. (There was also of course an over-riding theological difference between Masinde and the Roho Christians.)²²⁵ Shitochi is an example of a prophet who argues that spiritual truths openly spoken will result in conflict and fighting. Such advice is, of course, not only pastorally wise, but also politic when such prophecies concern the government.²²⁶

But distrust of the procedures of politics is also an extension of the Roho teaching on the restraint of desire. Since desire (*tamaa*) produces greed, lust, and ambition, it necessarily leads to conflict – which in turn destroys the peace of the Spirit. Roho churches know only too well the consequences of unbridled ambition for power *within* the church. Their leaders look back on earlier days when the Spirit was more powerful and such struggles did not take place. But for long such struggles have been a daily reality in Roho churches. Occasionally they erupt in violence and result in injury or death. An example is a conflict that broke out in Kabras in 1998 between the followers of the *Holy Spirit* HQs and those of a rival leader. The latter group attacked the procession (*gwaride*) on the road. People were beaten, two so seriously that they afterwards died.²²⁷ Such conflicts in Roho

²²⁴ OI, J. Shitochi, 25.1.02 (Doc. 104), Emwiru, Kisa, pp. 46-49.

²²⁵ Archbishop Elijah Joji tells a story which makes this point: 'Elijah of Msambwa and his group approached me while they were singing. I went near them. In the twinkling of an eye I was carried shoulder high and away I was taken. I was made to sit on a table. At that point they gave me a young woman. Then I was told that if I prayed saying, "Jesus is Son of God", I would be put to death; but if I prayed in the name of Elijah who was prophesied that he will come to change people - "God, hear our prayers through the name of Elijah" – my life would be spared and I would leave with the young woman I was offered.' He escaped from the dilemma by feigning sickness. OI, E. Joji, 29.9.99 (Doc. 101), Wamuluma.

²²⁶ Archbishop Kisibo argues exactly the same. It is also reported that records of 'political' prophecies received at Nineveh by Kivuli I and others were destroyed out of fear of the consequences. PC, D. Oguso, Nairobi, 5.9.02.

²²⁷ For an account of this event in 1998 at Chebwai in Kabras from a participant, see Appendix 5.10.2.

denominations are fairly common, some more serious than the example quoted. They relate in part to issues of the church constitution and governance (see chapter six). It is by a simple extension of their own church experience into analysis of the violent political conflicts in colonial or post-colonial Kenya, most recently in inter-ethnic clashes over land, that lead Roho leaders to oppose *siasa* to the things of the Spirit. It is, of course, a very widespread understanding of politics in Africa that it is the politics of eating or of the belly.²²⁸

Over against this is the equally strong sense that the Spirit means freedom. For freedom to live out the life of the Spirit, and to worship and preach in the way the Spirit required of them, the Roho founders were prepared to die. *Holy Spirit* still celebrates every month the 18th - the date when they finally separated from the Friends Church. Irene Maleya, wife of one of the founders, describes it as the church's *Jamhuri* – the annual national celebration on 12th December in commemoration of the day when in 1964 Kenya finally became a republic.²²⁹ She, with all other church members, celebrates the 18th *every month*. This was, it may be said, a local freedom. But Nuhu (see above pp. 265ff) and other Roho leaders expanded the concept to say that it was the coming of the Holy Spirit that was behind the whole struggle for freedom in Africa. In view of the widespread nature of this belief among the Roho and Spiritual churches,²³⁰ it should be understood as

²²⁸ See Behrend's defence of the ideology of the Ugandan 'Holy Spirit Movement', in 'The Holy Spirit Movement's New World', p. 252.

²²⁹ OI, Irene Maleya, 20.8.02 (Doc. 137) Bukoyani p. 38.

²³⁰ I have heard exactly the same sentiment from *Chef Spirituel* Diangienda Kuntima, of the Kimbanguist Church, speaking about the achievement of political freedom not only in Congo but around the world. See his interview in the film, 'Rise Up and Walk' (Ankele, Univ. of California production 1981). See also Schwartz, in her study of *Legio Maria*, 'Christianity and the Construction of Global History', where she shows how the founder of *Legio*, Simeon Ondeto, is not only given a universal identity as the Black Christ, but the history of the movement - which is almost entirely post-independence - is told in such a way to

a claim to have participated – through the Spirit - in the global movement of liberation from colonial rule in the middle of the 20th century. The prayers and prophecies of the Roho churches that looked forward unequivocally to the departure of Europeans from church and state in Kenya cannot be simply relegated to the status of a footnote because impossible to evaluate quantitatively. As noted above, it was these prayers that sustained those who refused to accept European values and life, and were the very spirit of the anti-Western witness of the Roho churches.

The issue of identity

Kivuli I was very clear that the ‘running of [*African Israel*] must be in the hands of Africans.’²³¹ In the ‘History’ of the church prepared for the Mindolo consultation, the word ‘African’ in the church name is explained as follows:

THE AFRICAN: As the word indicates an African race it does not actually mean that the church forgets other races. The real meaning is that this church has been founded by an African, led and sanctioned by the Africans for the first time to show that God’s power of evangelism does not look on any race in particular, and that any one race can lead God’s people provided that he is spiritually functioned. In this case any race of the world can join this church provided he is aware that the church was first founded, performed, ministered in Africa!²³²

This statement may be considered representative of the stand of the Roho churches in Vihiga. This degree of racial consciousness appears to have emerged simply in response to the equally ‘racial’ control of the mission churches by Europeans during the colonial period. It does not dominate the thinking of the Roho churches at the present time.

Indeed, there are some indications that racial consciousness has been unduly suppressed.

include the nationalist struggle, and to make connections with ‘a variety of personages, places, and events in Africa, European, American and Asian political-religious history.’ (p. 135).

²³¹ Welbourn & Ogot, op.cit., p. 83.

A surprising belief among some older members is that the reason why Africans have not made as much material progress as whites is due to the sin of Ham, ‘ancestor of the Africans’ (Gen. 9: 18-27).²³³ There is certainly no shame at the use of culturally white representations of Jesus and the Holy Family, which are found everywhere in Roho churches and homes. This particular form of racial imagery has also entered into dreams. Two factors prevent the Roho churches from representing themselves as purely ‘African.’ One is that it was an American, Chilson, who first taught people how to receive the Spirit. Whites, too, then, can be people of the Spirit.²³⁴ The second is the New Testament message itself.

‘Israel’

Very strong as a source of identity for the Roho and Akurinu churches in Kenya is ‘Israel’ as a metaphor for the people of God. This usage predates the formation of *African Israel*. In the *African Holy Spirit* church building of Kimingini in Kakamega District, a wooden board (probably dating from 1937) hangs on the wall of the sanctuary (Fig. 6).

**H.S. + ISRAEL
B. KIMINGINI
1927-1937**

Fig. 6 Board at *African Holy Spirit*, Kimingini

The implications are that the name by which the Roho followers preferred to be known at that time is ‘Holy Spirit Israel’. Indeed, the first name of *African Israel* was *Huru Israel*

²³² ‘The African Israel Church History’, mimeo, 2pp.

²³³ PC, Bishop Mwangi, Kisumu, 2000; PC, Timona Almaza, 25.7.02, (Doc. 122), Wanondi.

²³⁴ Savatia describes Keller, the PAOC missionary at Nyang’ori, with whom the people of the Spirit had fellowship after having been driven out by the Friends, as a ‘follower of Jacob’. (OI, Avisia, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00 (Doc. 12), Nairobi. p. 13.) Joel Sande says that the early missionaries could not have entered Africa and coped with wild animals and other difficulties without having being sent by the Holy Spirit. OI at Mahanga, (Doc. 71), p. 4.

Nineve, suggesting ‘the free people of Israel at Nineveh’.²³⁵ ‘Israel’ was used fairly widely across the people of the Spirit as a source of identity during the early years, and continues in use to a lesser degree today, not simply in churches that have come out of *African Israel*.²³⁶ The usage of this term requires further research. I believe that a complex might be constructed from the following elements: the chosen people of God, obedience to the Levitical laws as given by God, and the spiritual independence of Israel from domination as God’s possession alone. The missionary-founded churches are judged by implication: they do not follow these laws, and are therefore no longer the chosen people of God. Nevertheless, the *political* referent of an independent kingdom under the rule of God – while never openly articulated - suggests at the very least the alternative society or kingdom of which Jesus speaks, *which in itself* was and is a challenge to the imperial world.

Conclusion. High priests of the community

The diverse responses of the Vihiga Roho churches to the changing political scene are best understood if we return to the concept of high priest. ‘High Priest’ was the preferred title of the senior leader in *African Israel* until 1989 and remains so in *African Holy Spirit*. According to Wagner, the *omusalisi munene* is a senior elder in the community who through his blameless life, wealth, character, and lineage, has become the chief sacrificial priest of a clan.²³⁷ The office is ritual and advisory, not executive. This agrees

²³⁵ ‘The African Israel Church History’, mimeo, 2 pp., prepared for Mindolo 1962. Welbourn & Ogot, op. cit., p. 83, records the first name as *Huru Salvation Nineveh*. Obviously a number of names were under discussion.

²³⁶ The ‘S [cross]’ on the clothes of Roho Musanda / Ruwe indicates the original name *Israel Msalaba* or ‘Israel Cross’. OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00 (Doc. 12), Nairobi, pp. 14-15.

²³⁷ Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, pp. 79, 285.

with Sangree's characterization of Tiriki religion 'in large measure as an adjunct to or re-enforcer of power relations'.²³⁸

The massacre at Musanda, and beatings by the Friends created martyrs, and authenticated the Roho gospel; but no-one wanted to repeat them, and acts of provocation or confrontation were avoided. Political nationalism emerged only in the embedded imagery of flags, Nebuchadnezzar eating grass, and the 'micro-*uhuru*' of the 18th, and (among Luo Roho churches) the use of their own special language. Roho leaders accepted the colonial regime pragmatically, welcomed the Governor to Nineveh, and explained away European dominance by means of 'the sin of Ham'. At the same time they prayed for the departure of Europeans, preached against missionary-led churches, and participated in the general myth-making that went on around the career of the folk-hero Elijah Masinde. By default, in the management of their churches, they enabled political skills to survive at the grassroots, and promoted inter-ethnic links at a time when the colonial government discouraged Africans from discussing political issues outside the boundaries of their own districts.

The strongest missionary churches in Vihiga offered the Roho churches no appropriate models of church-state relations other than the separation of the spheres. (This is true even at the present time.) Neither the Friends nor the PAOC missionaries were British, and were not in as strong a position as their British counterparts (such as Archdeacon Owen of CMS) to make any kind of political criticism of the colonial regime, the more so because back in their home countries, their churches had an a-political tradition. During

²³⁸ Sangree, *Age, Prayer and Politics*, p. 153.

the 1930s, moreover, the Friends had compromised their advocacy of African interests by their involvement with the Kakamega gold-miners.²³⁹ It was the missions of the colonial establishment, the powerful Church Missionary Society and the Church of Scotland Mission, which had a more active relationship with the colonial government. It was from these latter churches, then, and, from the traditions of their own communities, that the AICs developed understanding of relating to the political world as priests or ritual elders. A mature and significant leader such as Kivuli saw himself as the future chief religious adviser to the new independent government. No wonder, therefore, that in the years immediately before and after *uhuru*, AIC leaders across the country should imagine themselves in similar positions, if not nationally, then at least in their own communities.

During the repressive years of one-party rule, Roho churches - like many other organizations - drew in their horns and retreated into their shells. But their leaders continued to bless, and to cultivate personal contacts with, local politicians. Such a role is not party-political. Mary Wanjiru, a Mukurinu who entered Parliament as an Opposition MP for Ford Asili in 1992, increasingly saw herself as prophesying not just to the government but to the political leaders of the nation, and would brook no interruptions when given the chance to utter in Parliament what she had received from the Spirit.²⁴⁰ Archbishop Manoh Keverenge saw himself as a spiritual leader not only of his own denomination or division, but of Vihiga District as a whole. The role is appropriate for

²³⁹ Lonsdale, 'Political Associations in Western Kenya', p. 623. For their involvement with gold-miners, see above, Chapter 4, p. 172.

²⁴⁰ See Appendix 6.5 for details on this interesting MP, whose spirituality is close to that of Roho churches. For her refusal to be interrupted in Parliament when speaking God's word, see DN 4.2.93, and ST 23.4.95: "“Once a prophesy [sic] has been made that should be the end of the story until fulfilment comes. A prophesy is not for public debate. Once God has revealed something it should be left to rest until he fulfils it.”" Article on Mary Wanjiru, ST 23.4.95.

religious leaders with relatively little formal education, and a preference for pastoral care, prayer, and personal prophecy, rather than political or economic analysis. It has been encouraged by the political culture prevailing in Kenya, which attributes success and prosperity to personal virtues, and regards discussion of structural issues, especially *class*, as divisive, if not actually subversive.²⁴¹ The role gives the illusion of influence while avoiding political conflict; and is probably therefore ineffective in bringing about change.

There are alternative models. One is that of Mungiki. This is a 'counter-society' (to use Buijtenhuijs's description of Dini ya Msambwa²⁴²), which desires to return to the moral economy of traditional society. The combination of a strong religious and a clearly articulated political message is extremely attractive to the dispossessed and unemployed. But this option is not open to the Roho churches. As already noted, their critique of capitalism and its values - unlike Mungiki's - remains at the symbolic level. Moreover, Mungiki does not hesitate to use force to achieve its aims. In contrast, the roots of the Roho movement are essentially non-violent, indeed pacifist. Jacob and Daniel and others who suffered beatings made no attempt to defend themselves.²⁴³ At the time of the 2nd World War the people of the Spirit opposed service in the King's African Rifles,²⁴⁴ and this tradition has continued, with young men being discouraged from joining the forces. The ambivalence the older generation of Roho people show when talking about Dini ya Msambwa is based on admiration for Elijah Masinde's courage and consistency while

²⁴¹ Haugerud, op. cit., p. 108.

²⁴² Buijtenhuijs, 'Dini ya Msambwa', pp. 336-7. He borrows the term from Baechler.

²⁴³ A. Obede presented a paper on this subject at a peace meeting in Nairobi on 27.10.01, somewhat to the embarrassment of the Friends' representative present. (Doc. 121).

²⁴⁴ See Appendix 5.9 for the spiritual song, 'The Clothes of the King's African Rifles'.

deploring his methods.²⁴⁵ Roho churches, then, have a strong fear of the consequences of violent conflict. The constantly repeated message of the Spirit is ‘peace’.

The second alternative is engagement with the process of party politics. Prophetess Wanjiru has already been quoted. John Kivuli II ventured – while still Archbishop - first into mobilization for development in Hamisi constituency (Tiriki), and secondly (for the development itself was by way of preparing the ground) into KANU party politics in the 1997 general elections.²⁴⁶ His intervention in party politics, however, was much criticised among Roho Christians. He himself has admitted to me that he had difficulties in countering the lying tactics of his opponents during the elections for the KANU nominations because as a Roho leader he was unwilling to use such deceit himself. His counterpart in *Holy Spirit*, Rev. Joseph Zare, was assistant chairman of KANU for Vihiga division for a number of years. His role was equally controversial, the influential Prophet Adolwa having on a number of occasions prophesied against his political involvement. During a review of the *Holy Spirit* constitution at Bukoyani, Zare was embarrassed by the storm of approval that the church gave to the suggestion that a clause be inserted in the church constitution requiring church leaders standing in political elections to resign from their church posts.²⁴⁷ (On the other hand, other church leaders advised him that the access

²⁴⁵ For a discussion on how violent the movement actually was, see Buijtenhuijs, ‘Dini ya Msambwa’, pp. 326-7.

²⁴⁶ Kivuli began his development seminars in February 1997 by working through the churches: ‘I ... want to challenge the Churches in Hamisi [Tiriki] to wake up and take up the lead in various community sectors in terms of spiritual, social, political and economic development for and on behalf of Hamisi Community and spread out their arms locally, nationally, and globally.’ He declared he had received a call from God to go to Nineveh – which he interpreted as meaning Hamisi constituency. Circular letter from African Israel Nineveh Church, 27.1.97. The development was to be based on the creation of 29 sub-locational committees in the constituency, which were to identify appropriate development priorities. The issue that emerged on top was the protection of springs.

²⁴⁷ Personal observation, *Holy Spirit* Leaders Convention at Bukoyani, 28.12.01-1.1.02

his political position gave him to the DC and to political leaders was useful to the church.) Roho leaders in other denominations have successfully held posts as councillors in Nairobi (*Divine*) and in Kisumu (*African Holy Spirit*). Nevertheless, interventionists have an uphill struggle to convince the purists among their followers that the practice of party politics is congruent with the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The interventionists have at least tried to engage with the reality of political power in modern Kenya. It is this process of engagement with contemporary realities, entailing an re-evaluation of the founders' vision that is simultaneously practical and theological, that I examine in the final chapter.

Chapter Six

Unbinding the Vows of Heaven

Today's youth refuse to sleep on banana leaves!¹

Introduction. Managing change

I had just arrived back in Vihiga from the UK, and was visiting the *Holy Spirit* HQ at Bukoyani in order to help prepare for the arrival of a party of young people from Ormskirk in Lancashire. As their work project in the village, they would help dig and lay the foundations of a new church clinic, to be built next to the church. In the course of preparatory discussions for this, I was called to a meeting in the church for 'repentance'. Far from sure what I had to repent of (more than usual), nor what sins we had committed as a group that would warrant such a service, I joined the other leaders in the church. The service was opened by the Mother of the Mission:

As I was meditating in my house, I knew that the founders did not build a clinic or use medicine – and if we want to go ahead with the building, we should call a meeting to ask for forgiveness and the untying of the vow.

Archbishop: Jacob, Christopher, and Joseph took a vow not to go to hospital. Later, after Jacob's death, they sat with Isaya Maleya and agreed to let people go to hospital if they wished – but they did not agree to build a clinic! As the third generation in the church, with the fourth Archbishop, we should pray to God for forgiveness for having broken the vow that was there. God asked David to build a temple for him. David did not. It was constructed by his son Solomon. This is such a serious matter that we

¹ *Holy Spirit* Service for unbinding a vow, 5.7.02, (Doc 143), Bukoyani.

cannot do this alone, but we must meet with others, women and men, and to pray for forgiveness.

General Secretary: This matter is very strong, with meaning. We fear the rules put there by our church founders. But just as when rules of companies or institutions change, we also have to change with time. Our founders started in a mud house, and slept on dried banana leaves. They would not sleep on mattresses. But today's youth refuse to sleep on banana leaves! It was the elders who started this stone building. We pray our youth will build many storied houses. Changes must be there. We need to tell God what we want to do. He will hear us.²

Unfortunately I had left my tape-recorder behind, so we had to take notes and afterwards reconstruct the service. It continued with prayers for forgiveness, and for unbinding:

Archbishop: Jehovah, the old men had refused to have anything to do with hospitals, and we are now asking you for forgiveness. In untying the law, Lord – may it be removed!

All: May it be removed!

Archbishop: We ask for forgiveness, do not count us as sinners. The times are changing, Lord, forgive us – may it be removed!

All: May it be removed!

The name of the retired and blind Archbishop Christopher was invoked as one of those present at the original binding, indeed, in this context, almost as a founder himself:

Archbishop: We asked him about the hospital, Jehovah. He agreed wholeheartedly. He accepted it and prayed to you to forgive us. He accepted it, and you accept it also. Forgive us.

All: Let it be so.

Archbishop: Those things they had bound, he himself is still alive, he has unbound them, and for us his children, nothing bad should befall us.

All: Nothing.

Archbishop: Hear the voice and the prayer of Archbishop Christopher who accepted development to be in the Holy Spirit Church and for all people.

All: Yes, Lord.

This service for ‘the unbinding of vows’ is by no means unique. In 1987 I participated in prayers led by the late Archbishop Eliakimu Keverenge of *Lyahuka*, in his house, not long before his death from cancer. We asked for forgiveness and sought his release from a similar vow he had made many years ago against going to hospital or using medicine. More recently, Bishop Mwangi of *Holy Spirit* told other church members that if the denomination expected in the future to have the use of a car at their HQ, they should repent of their founders’ vow against travelling in ‘the cars of Europeans’.³

There is, then, a procedure (‘ritual’ would be to over-structure what is a very ad-hoc performance) which is available to facilitate the revision of the founders’ visions, but its success depends on a prior consensus in the church community. The educationist John Hull, drawing from Paul Ricoeur, notes that the very nature of an ideology is that it can only interpret and accommodate challenges in terms of the stereotypes that have been inherited from the past. (Although in fact these stereotypes steadily undergo slight shifts in focus and structure, scarcely observable to their owners.) There is therefore always an *ideological lag* between a group’s understanding of the contemporary world, and the realities pressing upon it from the outside.⁴ This time lag creates situations of *cognitive dissonance*.⁵ Where the need for ideological or

² See Appendix 5.1.3 for this reconstructed service in full. (Service for unbinding a vow, 5.7.02, (Doc 143), Bukoyani.)

³ Conversation between A. Obede et al. & J. Mwangi, 15.9.00, (Doc. 135) Area B. I am not sure whether this refers to the decision of the people of the Spirit in 1942 not to travel in army vehicles in order to resist conscription into the King’s African Rifles. See Appendix 5.9.1.

⁴ Hull, *What Prevents Adult Christians from Learning?*, p. 68.

⁵ Hull, drawing here on social psychology, defines cognitive dissonance as the unpleasant experience of discovering that ‘two or more of our cognitions, or items of our knowledge, or views which we hold believing them to be true, seem to be in conflict.’ He notes that three kinds of cognitive dissonance may be experienced: 1. Dissonance within the belief system itself. 2. Dissonance between the belief system and an alternative belief system. 3. When our beliefs are ignored or disparaged by society or by significant sectors of society. He notes: ‘...cognitive dissonance may stimulate new discoveries and may inaugurate a realignment of the whole system in a more realistic and coherent way.’ Hull, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-9.

superstructural change is not effectively managed and negotiated between church members, consensus is not achieved, and divisions and conflicts result.

The debate I described at the beginning of this work between pro- and anti-development proponents in *African Holy Spirit* was a spontaneous attempt to manage just such a change. But not all such ideological change is so sensitively handled. Archbishop Eliakimu's son, Manoah Keverenge, who became archbishop after the death of his father, has always seen himself as a modernizer.⁶ His father's leadership as archbishop from 1971-1988 was disputed by others in the church, and for a short period in 1986 an old, non-literate, leader, by name Enos Magalaba, headed the denomination as archbishop.⁷ The opposition continued in existence during Manoah's own leadership, forcing him to seek constant support from the government administration, until he eventually lost power in the leadership elections of 2002. What is significant in this struggle in *Lyahuka* is the claim by the opposition to represent traditional Roho spirituality over against Manoah's agenda of open modernization.⁸ Manoah, they said, had been 'injected' (vaccinated or inoculated) when he went to the UK in 1990, and had thereby lost the Spirit.⁹ They accused him of returning to Kenya with funds that he had then used for himself.¹⁰ Finally, they rejected his attempts to train leaders through workshops and seminars: 'the Holy

⁶ OI, M. Keverenge & F. King'ang'a, 19.8.02 (Doc. 118) Lukuvuli. '...my visions was [sic] to change the church and get involved in community / spiritual involvement and get to know the church politics and government politics since there was no difference between the church politics and government politics.'

⁷ OI, M. Keverenge & F. King'ang'a, 19.8.02 (Doc. 118) Lukuvuli; Lumwagi & Leet, 'The Separated Ones'.

⁸ According to Manoah, the traditionalist group has shown active opposition to *Lyahuka*'s sponsorship of the primary school at their HQ church at Ikuvu. OI, M. Keverenge & F. King'ang'a, 19.8.02 (Doc. 118), Lukuvuli, p. 27.

⁹ 'They still say anybody who has ever tempted to go overseas from Holy Spirit Church is never spiritual he has changed and become like the white person [sic].' OI, M. Keverenge & F. King'ang'a, 19.8.02 (Doc. 118), Lukuvuli, p. 17.

Spirit should do the training’. The allegation that Manoah has ‘lost the Spirit’ because of an injection deserves a little more attention. Injections are particularly abhorrent to traditionalists because (a) they force into the body substances of unknown, and possibly of unclean or spiritually malign, origin;¹¹ (b) they resemble in their mode of operation the traditional cutting of the body and the insertion of medicine associated with appeals to the ancestors, now partially demonized; (c) in puncturing the integrity of the physical body they threaten by analogy the holiness of the sacred community;¹² (d) to traditionalists, therefore, injections represent a focussed attempt by organizations based on European culture and values to de-centre and capture the independence and purity of the African for their own hidden purposes. It may also be argued that this protest against ‘injections’ is also a *class* protest, from those who do not have financial access to European medicine, or to trips abroad. Manoah’s response to these allegations did not grapple with the traditionalists’ assumptions at all. ‘I told them that I was injected, and when you are very sick, you should go to hospital, and after all, I am still alive.’ (It is probable that because he failed to engage with them in their own ideological language, he failed to communicate.) It is pertinent to note here that Manoah, although not rich in local terms, is largely self-sufficient economically, and is free to explore the benefits to be obtained from contacts with the modern, administrative, and capitalist sector.

Another Roho denomination, *African Holy Spirit*, has been convulsed for several years in a conflict over church leadership. High Priest Shitsimi, who has been sick with diabetes for a long time and refuses to seek medical treatment, is often therefore

¹⁰ He went to UK for three months to participate in an African Bible Guides Project and came back only with pocket-money. See chapter one, f.n. 133.

¹¹ A belief was current in some Roho circles that European medicines were made from human body parts.

unable to attend to his duties. This conflict has been partly articulated in a similar way, loyalty to Roho spirituality and concepts of purity versus the instrumental ‘effectiveness’ required by modernity. In an attempt to avoid these conflicts in his own denomination, a second modernizing archbishop, Kivuli II, was toying at one time with the possibility of leading a ‘two-stream’ *African Israel*, with separate congregations for traditionalists and modernizers. In fact the idea was never put into effect, and his opponents in the denomination continue to argue that he has departed from Roho spirituality.¹³ For all Roho denominations, how and to what extent to engage with the issues, structures, and expectations created by contemporary Kenyan society – particularly with the increasingly dominant values of modernity and the free market - are questions bitterly contested and fundamental to their future survival.

Part One. The permeability of the founders’ vision

Accommodation and re-envisioning

A spectrum of degrees of engagement with capitalist modernity can already be found embedded in the founders’ visions of the respective generations of Roho churches. Second and third generation churches show a much greater willingness to engage with modern society and the capitalist sector. But even those visions more adapted to modernity experience demands for further change in relation to the contemporary world. I consider here such changes in the founders’ visions under two categories, *accommodation* and *re-envisioning*. I use accommodation for pragmatic, ad hoc changes in daily life, the implications of which have not yet been fully integrated into the controlling complex of symbols that forms each founders’ vision. To illustrate by way of contrast, the service of ‘unbinding the vows’ is not accommodation. That

¹² See Douglas, *Purity & Danger*, pp. 114-28; *Natural Symbols*, pp. 98-99.

service was a management of change considered and carried out at a theological or ideological level, a conscious recognition and ownership of the process known by sociologists as ‘cognitive bargaining’. Such an unbinding of the vows reverberates in, and refocuses, the founders’ vision itself.¹⁴ I call this more profound process ‘re-envisioning’.¹⁵ In fact, the ‘unbinding of the vows’ at Bukoyani, followed by the effective (and surprising) manual work and service in an African village of a dozen young Europeans, led to a further re-evaluation. A number of *Holy Spirit* leaders told me that as a result of the youth exchange, the church community had revised its hitherto predominantly negative perception of European action and values – a perception that historically had a distinct ideological function.¹⁶

Such conscious ideological shifts can only be achieved after a long series of pragmatic decisions, of more or less ‘guilty’ or reluctant accommodations to the demands of daily living. There is, of course, no record of the vast majority of individual Roho members’ accommodations, of hand-shakes, of participation in meals with those outside the fellowship, of consuming ‘unclean food’, of taking medicine, of engaging in trade, of entering church when ritually unclean. These were, or are, considered as sins to be repented of. In the course of time, some church leaders received requests from members to re-consider their rules concerning some of these

¹³ PC, J. Kivuli, 1996, Nairobi.

¹⁴ Hull, op. cit., pp. 11ff: ‘Cognitive bargaining is the process whereby, in order to maintain its plausibility within modernity, a religious belief system undergoes a degree of deliberate modification.’ The service of unbinding achieved what Hull terms the ‘direct cognitive conflict’ that he regards as necessary to achieve ideological re-casting. ‘...the points of inconsistency, of unrelatedness, the places where a dead piece of faith is still mouldering because it is still attached to or lying beside a living piece of faith are deliberately prised open in a situation of confrontation.’ Hull, op. cit., p. 82.

¹⁵ Van Binsbergen, *Religious Change in Zambia*, p. 274, calls this ‘superstructural reconstruction’.

¹⁶ My own work of over twenty years with the church had clearly not achieved this particular result – perhaps because I was co-opted into an ‘honorary African’ role which did not disturb the ideology. At the church’s farewell supper for the British youth visitors, I made a modest attempt to assist the re-envisioning process by suggesting that the founders’ decisions to take a vow against medicine was not a mistake: it was where the Spirit had called them to make their stand at a particular point in history, and that the Spirit was now calling us to another place on the battlefield.

acts, and some relaxation was permitted. For example, in 1959 *Holy Spirit* agreed to modify certain rules for workers in Nairobi: they were permitted to shake hands with their (European) employers, so they might not put their chances of employment at risk by ‘rudely’ refusing.¹⁷ They were also permitted to wear hats instead of turbans. About ten years later, Kefa Mwangale was able to construct a permanent church building at Lugangu *Holy Spirit* church through the profits from the ‘hotel’ (a small canteen) he owned at the nearby market.¹⁸ Archbishop Zare declared in consequence (or, more likely, concluded after a long period of reflection of which this particular event was the precipitating factor), that a church that does not have business people in it cannot prosper. The church then began officially to permit its members to take part in business and to eat in hotels, both hitherto forbidden. Permission for priests and ordinary members to shake hands and to eat with others, and to be free to go to hospital, followed shortly afterwards in 1973/4, on the theological grounds that it was necessary for priests to make friends outside the church.¹⁹

It is because spiritual laws like these function on a number of symbolic levels that changes to them can mark significant shifts in the ideological stance of the Roho churches. The laws act as boundary markers between the people of the Spirit and others, boundaries which constantly reproduce the distinction between ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’; they restrict tendencies towards the individualist accumulation of wealth, and the destruction of the moral economy; they remind believers on a daily or regular basis that God does not approve of aspects of modern capitalist society, and that they are citizens in another kingdom. The steady relaxation of these rules in the more progressive denominations and by the more modernizing church leaders can lead to

¹⁷ OI, J. Zare, 22.0.99 (Doc. 127), Bukoyani.

¹⁸ OI, K. Mwangale, (21.2.02) Kitumba, pp. 10-11.

re-envisioning, in which the changes are more or less successfully integrated within some of the core elements (at least) of the founders' vision.²⁰ Alternatively, pressure for the relaxation or the attempted relaxation of the rules can result in an ideological and theological crisis, which can drive the community into conflict and an expression (on one side) of fundamentalism, a strengthening of whatever ideological closure may have already taken place. Theologically, these two responses to modernity represent on the one hand an attempt by some in the churches at re-contextualizing the founders' vision. Their opponents, on the other hand, do not want to revisit the meaning of the founding events. For them, the community has already achieved 'ideological closure' and the vision has solidified in an 'orthodox' and 'true' interpretation.²¹ It is these more conservative members who could possibly be termed 'fundamentalist'.²²

Some re-envisioning is less conscious, and seems to take place rather in accordance with the *sensus fidelium*. The commodification of time offers some examples for discussion. As already noted in chapter four, among some Luo-speaking Roho denominations no attempt is made to set a time limit upon the duration of the service – 'the Holy Spirit is in control'. One denomination, indeed, forbids the wearing of watches in church.²³ In *Holy Spirit*, the 'argument of images' – or rather, of symbols – is continuing. Clocks now hang prominently in the sanctuary of Bukoyani and

¹⁹ OI, K. Mwangale, (21.2.02) Kitumba, pp. 11.

²⁰ I have relied on some of Mary Douglas' arguments concerning the role of boundaries, ritual, and rules of purity. She did not, however, suggest in *Natural Symbols* that symbolic systems (like those of pre-Vatican II Catholicism) could be modified or re-invented, which is the point I am arguing here. In this connection, Fardon notes 'symbolic systems were best able to communicate when their restricted and verbally inexplicit codings rested on symbols that were able to connect up the entire range of the believer's social and religious experience. If the symbols did not do this then it might be better to change the symbols than recommend a return to tradition.' (Fardon, summarizing a criticism made by Lurkings of the revised Edition of *Natural Symbols*, in *Mary Douglas*, p. 123.)

²¹ Hull, op. cit., p. 68.

²² See below, p. 310, for a discussion of the use of this term with regard to the Roho churches.

Lugangu churches. On the occasion of the night-watch service on Vindizi hill in 2000, the congregation from Lugangu carried their clock in procession from the church to the hill. On the other hand, during the *makumbusho* for Daniel Sande in 2001, the Spirit prophesied through a member that the meeting should end by 2.00 p.m. However, participants' spontaneous contributions forced the leaders effectively to reject this prophecy, with the meeting actually ending about 3.30 p.m. On this occasion the 'Spirit' in the (individual) prophecy was speaking in a more 'progressive' mode than the 'Spirit' present in the wider congregation.

The limits of debate

In this section I seek to clarify the authorities to which Roho churches appeal in the course of this debate. The founders' vision itself is both authoritative, and, as an oral tradition whose re-membering is shared among many of different interests, also relatively open. It acts first as an ideological interpretation of Scripture. It is also a communal memory of the acts of the founders (including the rationale for those acts), and a record of their reception of God's messages through the Holy Spirit in dreams, visions, and prophecies. In its orality, in the authorities to which it refers, and in some of the traditions it conveys, the founders' vision is open to change. In particular, the interpretation of Scripture and the messages from the Spirit continually act to critique and modify the vision.

Scripture is not interpreted by the Roho churches according to a rigid system.

Contemporary Kenyan society is saturated with examples of the use of Scripture as proverb, parable, or wise saying, and as a hoard of stories, images, laws, teachings,

²³ God's Last Appeal Church

prophecies and predictions. The Bible is an open book. Scripture references compete with proverbs in Swahili and mother tongues on the backs of lorries, and other vehicles, and on the inside of buses and *matatus* for the benefit of passengers. At the funeral of the wife of Archbishop Ondolo, when a drunkard came to visit the homestead during the preparations and began preaching, people were amused rather than annoyed, and respected his ability to use biblical references effectively even when intoxicated. Scripture is regarded as a contemporary document, fit for immediate application to any appropriate situation without reference to the historical context of the original text. In such a scripturally saturated society, no-one is completely shut off from alternative interpretations and emphases. Moreover, among the Roho churches, ‘oral tradition’ has not been replaced by the ‘textual authority’ of modernity:²⁴ the scriptural account or teaching is handled, expanded, subverted, and rhetorically exploited, as if it *were* an oral tradition – which indeed it has become. The printed Bible is a kind of a *vade mecum*, a collection of and guide to many stories, which have entered oral culture and thus exist *primarily* in the community’s memory and function as part of its symbolic resources.

In this context, the Bible in the Roho churches is experienced as the word of God especially in oral settings, when it is spoken and interpreted with power in a group or in a congregation. And as any Roho preacher will tell you, what defines certain sermon events as authoritative – what makes them the vehicle of the Holy Spirit – is the relationship on the one hand between the speaker’s own emotional and spiritual commitment, his coherence, and his rhetorical skills (especially in the use of narrative and illustrations), and on the other the congregation’s un-premeditated responses,

²⁴ Rajae, *Globalization on Trial*, p. 85.

audible, visual, and emotional. In its reliance on orality and spontaneity, this use of Scripture as authority shows a continuous engagement with the reality experienced by grassroots members, and therefore demonstrates also a considerable degree of flexibility.

Scripture is frequently used rhetorically to argue a point in discussion and debate – for or against the practice of praying on mountains, for example;²⁵ or to support the rite of baptism in the Spirit without water.²⁶ I give an example from a KUIC workshop we facilitated on ‘culture’. In contemporary popular Kenyan parlance, culture is usually understood as ‘traditional customs’ (*utamaduni* or *mila* in Swahili²⁷), and regarded as a fixed and largely unchangeable inheritance. Our first workshop session was on ‘Expectations’. Mrs Gladys Kedogo (whom we met in the last chapter at her husband’s funeral) mentioned the Luyia practice of Levirate marriage as one of the customs she wanted discussed. In order to illustrate what she meant by the term, she referred to the Book of Ruth, and to the marriage of the widowed Ruth to her late husband’s kinsman Boaz. Surprisingly, she then used the biblical story to suggest that the Luyia custom should be restricted. She argued that Ruth was not taken by her brother-in-law immediately after the funeral, as often in Luyia custom. (In the text itself, of course, Ruth has no immediate brothers-in-law, and she has to return to Judah to look for a husband from others of her late husband’s kin.) Then, she

²⁵ Kisibo is a clear advocate and practitioner of this custom, which he regards as legitimized by the examples of Moses on Sinai and by Jesus with the Sermon on the Mount. At the same time, however, he refers to John 4: 21. In this passage Jesus relativizes the tradition, prophesying that a time will come when people will neither worship God on a mountain nor in Jerusalem, but in Spirit and truth. OI, J. Kisibo, 9.3.00, (Doc. 41) Ibwali.

²⁶ For a good example of the Roho use of scripture in preaching in support of a particular teaching, see Appendix 5.7.2 for Bishop Jethro Avisi’s sermon on Spirit baptism.

²⁷ This is popular Kenyan usage. In coastal Swahili, *utamaduni* means ‘civilisation’, and the word normally used to express the wider concept of culture is *itikadi*, ‘faith in a body of customs or traditions’. See Johnson, *Swahili-English Dictionary*.

suggested that Boaz took Ruth only because she was still young,²⁸ implying that older widows should not be treated in this way. Gladys was making rhetorical use of a biblical story, one known orally, to question a traditional practice frequently supported from the same narrative, and in so doing attempted to promote a shift in the founders' vision away from the patriarchal values of the domestic mode of production towards a more independent role for women. In this way the Bible can be used to promote 'critical openness' (which I discuss below.)²⁹

Another source of authority is the Spirit speaking through prophecy, dreams or visions. Normally prophets uphold the founders' laws of purity and separation – indeed, maintenance of such laws may be said to be fundamental to how they understand the indwelling of the Spirit, and their own ministry. But sometimes the Spirit may be said to create a climate for symbolic renewal that subverts these laws. I have noted in chapter four that the 'retreat to the village', and the rejection of European commodities and manufactured goods were characteristic of the original founders' vision. Despite the ideological rejection of the tools and artefacts of colonial capitalist society, the symbolic power of European technology has continued to emerge in Roho dreams and visions, and is associated with the power and intentions of God. Thus a dream that can be dated to the 1950s, and is concerned with the reconciliation of tensions among the *Holy Spirit* congregations in Nairobi, symbolizes the spiritual impotence of one group through the image of a wireless connected to the electrical supply not with a wire but with a thread. (The dreamer

²⁸ KUIC Seminar on Culture, 13.2.01 (Doc. 42), Manyatta. (Ruth also contains the text of 1: 16-17 frequently quoted to encourage young wives to be loyal to their mothers-in-law – a relationship often fraught with tension in Luyia society).

²⁹ John Hull terms this the 'critical openness' of the Christian Scriptures, although in the case of the Roho churches the textual authority has already been subverted by its use rhetorically rather than academically. For 'critical openness', see his *Studies in Religion and Education*, pp. 207-225. 'The

commented that in his dream, ‘the Bishop then asked me whether I had ever seen a motor operating on a thread.’)³⁰ Here, as normally in the Roho churches, the symbol of electricity is interpreted as the power of the Spirit.

This positive symbolic usage of modern industrial technology dates back to the early days of the church. An early song, ‘The Spirit has separated us’, of which the first stanza was quoted in chapter four, continues:

We will go by aeroplane, halleluya (x 2)
 We will go by aeroplane,
 The wicked weep.
 We will walk with Jesus, halleluya! (etc)

We will go by ship, halleluya (x 2)
 We will go by ship the last day
 The wicked weep.
 We will walk with Jesus, halleluya! (etc).³¹

In a more recent dream (c. 1980), which purports to prophesy and legitimize the ministry of Joab Adolwa as prophet, Tabitha, the wife of Kefa Mwangale, dreamt that she was taken up in a helicopter with Jesus and Philip, the deceased founder of the *Holy Spirit* congregation at Lugangu. They eventually landed near Lugangu church, carried the helicopter into the church and placed it in the sanctuary. Adolwa (later to become the prophet at Lugangu) was called, and was placed in the machine. Jesus asked Philip to pray, he did so, and they announced that this machine would last for years and years. They gave Adolwa a telephone to symbolize his future work, and told Tabitha she had spiritual responsibility in the church, before leaving in the helicopter.

very variety of the New Testament becomes the principal educational source for the re-ideologization of Christian consciousness.’ Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adult from Learning?*, p. 79.

³⁰ OI, J. Avisa (2) 13.10.99 (Doc. 13), Mutsulyu, p. 3.

³¹ HSS No. 37, *Roho ya Kwahura*.

Here the helicopter and the telephone both symbolize means of communicating between heaven and earth. In another dream, told and interpreted in 2001, it is a video cassette player that brings messages from heaven.³²

In this way the very objects of desire originally condemned in the founders' vision as the means by which Africans are seduced to the European way of life – or which as ships and planes bring those objects of desire from overseas - have re-emerged as the most *effective, powerful, and comfortable* means of travelling to, or communicating with, heaven. These qualities of the rejected inventions are some of the fundamental attributes of modern technology. Openness to the Spirit's action through the individual and the communal sub-conscious that the acceptance of dreams, visions, and spiritual songs as a source of authority implies, helps in this way to prevent the founders' vision from undergoing ideological hardening or rigidification. It permits the process of re-envisioning or superstructural reconstruction to take place.³³

Equally significant in keeping the door open to dialogue and negotiation with modernity was the fact that the message of the Spirit first came through Europeans. Although the Friends missionaries most fondly remembered (Ford, Chilson, Bond, and Rees) are not revered as founders (critically, they do not appear in dreams), nevertheless they are certainly seen as 'men of God', and in some cases as prophets.³⁴

In the case of *African Israel*, the church's own accounts of the church's founding stress that Kivuli got the permission of Keller, the PAOC missionary at that time, to

³² Dream of Elijah Obede, told and interpreted at Archbishop Ondolo's house, 31.5.01 (Doc. 126) Bukoyani.

³³ See Clark, 'Possession, Vision, and Power in the African Holy Zionist Church', for an interesting analysis of Gladys Kedogo's dreams of being called to a spiritual ministry in the church, and the challenge such an event gives to the founders' vision.

³⁴ For Rees being recognized as a prophet, see above chapter four, p. 184.

separate and found a new denomination.³⁵ Another factor promoting accommodation is the traditional openness and hospitality of the Luyia to strangers, a characteristic that they themselves like to explain by saying that they are people of peace (*mulembe* or *mirembe*) – the commonest greeting throughout all the sub-groups.³⁶ This, too, is a frequently re-iterated theme in the founders' vision, and the greeting itself has spread to some of the Luo-speaking Roho churches.

Critical openness and diversity within the Roho movement

John Hull states that religious education should have as one of its ruling principles the hermeneutical concept of 'critical openness'. By this he means a willingness to encourage a critical analysis of one's own religious traditions, in the knowledge that any theology or ideology must be continuously re-interpreted in order to engage effectively with changes in society.³⁷ What are the other factors that enable the Roho churches – or at least, of some of their leaders – to offer a conscious critique of their own founders' visions?

As already described, the concept of the 'Luyia people' is fairly recent. This grouping of 17 different peoples speaking related dialects was a response to their need to negotiate with the colonial authorities from a position of strength. There are many different cultural traditions among the groups, something that is brought home in a very concrete way every time someone marries from outside their immediate community. This experience of diversity within a broader sense of belonging is repeated in the distinct denominational traditions that can be found within the Roho

³⁵ E.g., in the commemorative 'history' of Kivuli I (1987): 'Historia ya Marahemu MPD Kivuli I',

³⁶ See Appendix 5.5.2 for Kisibo's analysis of the natural 'spirits' of various ethnic groups, with which the Holy Spirit must engage. In his account the Luyia have benefited from having historically enjoyed the presence of a spirit of peace. OI, J. Kisibo 9.3.00 (Doc. 41) Ibwali, p. 12.

churches, and is symbolized very strikingly in their different flags and colours (which as already noted, suggests different *clans* or regiments united in one army). The foundation of the KICF in 1963 and its successor the KUIC in 1982 was partly an attempt to recover the oneness of the Roho movement in its early years. But the meeting of leaders from slightly different Roho traditions undoubtedly also promoted a sense of toleration and understanding of other peoples' faith commitments - a necessary factor in critical openness. This process was taken a step further when KUIC became an associate member of NCCCK in 1993, and when individual denominations became members of the council. It is these ecumenical associations that are primarily responsible for increasing the exposure of many Roho leaders to each other, and to views and understanding of others outside the Roho movement.³⁸ This is the reason, indeed, why the traditionalists in *Lyahuka* oppose education through seminars and workshops.

Here is the 'critically open' Archbishop Kisibo discussing the changes that have taken place in his understanding and practice of the rule of purity against the shaking of hands:

Those rules I used to keep, but slowly I corrected them although there are other rules I still follow, those ... If we look in the Bible when Jesus sent out his disciples, he told them, 'When you go, don't greet people on the way.' So therefore, when we or I, when I prepare myself to go to a church meeting or to go and pray for a sick person, at that time I follow the rule. But when I'm going to a seminar somewhere or on a journey, on those occasions I don't take the law of the church and follow it on my way. It's when I pray for people that I follow the rule of not shaking hands, because I

³⁷ Hull, *Studies in Religion & Education*, pp. 208 ff.

³⁸ The NCCCK, OAIC, and KUIC have conducted many workshops or seminars in a wide variety of subjects to increase AIC leaders' exposure to each other, to other Christian churches, to current thinking and practice on development and church leadership, and in theological education. All the historic AICs in Vihiga have been participating in these events for up to 20 years. For the educational philosophy of the OAIC Theological Education by Extension programme, based on adult education principles and participatory methodology, see Battle, A. & R, 'Spiritual Revival Bible School'.

may have spent the night praying and fasting, asking God to give me strength when I go to pray for a meeting of the sick, so that the power of God will work through me. Otherwise, I can greet someone who had not prepared himself, someone who in the sight of God had not prepared himself at that time. So then that person would make that time of serving God [useless]... we need to search for the holiness of God, so that I can be seen to be in the Spirit, I can be seen to have power.³⁹

Instead of blindly following Christ's command to his disciples not to greet people on the way, he has sought what he understands its purpose to have been according to his own Roho tradition, i.e., maintaining the power of holiness through purity, for the purpose of prayer and healing. He then applies the law only to those situations where its purpose is clear. In so doing he makes a significant shift in *how* he justifies his actions, in a movement away from legalism towards the instrumental effectiveness of modernity and industrial society.

Significant leaders

The role of leaders such as Kisibo in encouraging a move towards critical openness appears crucial. In *Holy Spirit*, Archbishop Japheth Zare is revered as someone who took the church from a relatively rigid and closed community to one that was much readier to engage with the world. His changes with regard to such customs as refusing to shake hands and to participate in business have already been mentioned. He also persuaded people to wear shoes to protect their feet, and to associate holiness with cleanliness, not – as hitherto – with unwashed hair and dirty *kanzu* (partly the consequence of rolling on the ground in search of the Spirit).⁴⁰ He instructed church members to use laundry blue in washing their *kanzu*, and ordered his processions (*magwaride*) with military order and precision.⁴¹ Although hair was still worn uncut

³⁹ OI, J. Kisibo, 9.3.00, (Doc. 41) Ibwali.

⁴⁰ *Kugaagaa* (Swahili: to roll from side to side as if in pain or delirium).

⁴¹ The contrast implied here by members of *Holy Spirit* is with the practice of their sister denomination, *African Holy Spirit*, whose processions are more expressive and less regimented.

in accordance with the commands in Lev. 19: 27, and Num. 6: 5, he required that it be kept clean, washed, and combed.⁴² It was he, too, who negotiated the *modus vivendi* between the church and the colonial government, especially over issues of registration and the use of hospitals.⁴³ He also arranged for the education of Joseph Mahasi through a scholarship at St. Paul's United Theological College, as the first *Holy Spirit* student to receive theological training. (Mahasi later went to Germany but on his return was lost to the church.⁴⁴)

In contrast, many of the practices reformed by Zare are still kept in the sister denomination *African Holy Spirit*,⁴⁵ which can be regarded as significantly closer in its present beliefs and practices to the original founders' vision. Indeed, the opposition to the modernizing efforts of Manoah Lumwagi in *Lyahuka*, a denomination that originally came out of *African Holy Spirit*, draws much of its inspiration from the latter church.

Of the second generation Roho churches, *African Israel* had, as has already been noted, a founder who in his own life successfully integrated Roho spirituality and an understanding of grassroots progress and development typified by improved agricultural techniques and primary health care. His grandson, John Mweresa Kivuli II, has taken the denomination still further towards what he himself has termed 'modernization'.⁴⁶ Kivuli II's exposure to formal education is substantial,⁴⁷ and his

⁴² OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00 (Doc. 12) Nairobi, pp. 61-3.

⁴³ OI, J. Zare 22.9.99, (Doc. 127) Bukoyani.

⁴⁴ As Mahasi told in his own testimony at Japheth Zare's Commemoration, 13.10.2000 (Doc. 11), Bukoyani, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁵ In *Holy Spirit* the wearing of hair as 'dread-locks' is relatively unusual, in contrast to the practice of the sister denomination *African Holy Spirit*.

⁴⁶ Kivuli, 'The Modernization of an African Independent Church'.

⁴⁷ Born 1960, completed East African Certificate of Education ('O' levels) in 1978, sat 'A' Levels as a private candidate in 1981, gained a Diploma in Social Youth Work at Mindolo in Zambia in 1982,

leadership of the church is characterized by the requirement that all ministers should be literate, and to have received formal training; by a use of bureaucratic methods, with recourse to the civil or criminal law courts when considered necessary; and by the setting of an annual budget (in 1994 this was 4.2 million shillings, or about \$60,000).⁴⁸ These funds are raised by a regular and sophisticated collection and transmission of funds from the grassroots to the HQs at Nineveh (something only occasionally achieved in most Roho churches). A core of relatively well-paid members in professional occupations, who can rarely be found in the other Roho churches based in Vihiga, make a very significant contribution to the church. Kivuli is not averse, either, to using modern evangelistic tools such as the Hallelujah Band, a former popular music group from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.⁴⁹ To the astonishment of both the local and *African Israel* community, Kivuli II invited the group to play Christian songs in a Congolese popular music style at the church's 50th Anniversary in 1992 at Nineveh.⁵⁰ As has already been noted, however, this programme of conscious modernization has not been achieved without opposition and significant schisms in recent years.

The loss of the Spirit: Roho Christians conceptualizing change

How do members of the Roho churches themselves understand the changes that are taking place in their practice of the faith? Roho Christians recognize and regret the decline in spirituality that has occurred in recent years and attribute it to a number of

studied part-time at Pan Africa Christian College, Nairobi 1984-89, and was awarded a BA degree in Bible and Theology. Earned a Master of Ministry degree at Trinity Theological College, Singapore in May 1995 (on a partial scholarship from the WCC); and a MA in Intercultural Education at Bethany College, Singapore, in 1995; in 2000/1 he attended Birmingham University UK on a RUNERC scholarship, for a MPhil, but at the time of writing has not yet completed. ('Personal Information')

⁴⁸ Kivuli, 'The Modernization of an African Independent Church', p. 63.

⁴⁹ After some time in Kenya playing in night-clubs and pleasure resorts, the members of the group had converted to evangelical Christianity.

different factors. In the past, during the extended periods that the Roho tradition demands should be set aside for prayer and fasting or for church ministry, it was possible to rely on the support of one's family in agricultural production. At the present time it is almost impossible (in Vihiga) to survive on the produce from one's *shamba* alone. Children are in school, demanding fees, and adults are driven to look for alternative sources of income. Elders no longer have time to discuss and solve community issues, and church leaders have to severely restrict the time available for praying and fasting.⁵¹ As a result, 'The Holy Spirit may not be so powerful at solving problems at home, for instance, lack of money and food.'⁵² Assistant Bishop and Prophet Shitochi laments the fact that a spiritual ministry and poverty seem to be inextricably linked.⁵³ Related to this is the opposition between the ascetic demands of the Holy Spirit and the attractions of consumerism and its numerous goods or 'inventions' (the desirability of which we have seen emerging in dreams and visions).⁵⁴ Other reasons given for the decline in spirituality are contact with money, and education.⁵⁵ In these Roho perceptions of change, a constant is the increasing domination of all aspects of life by economics – one of the most significant consequences of capitalism and the related process of commodification. Moreover, for most Roho members, this is the economics of survival.

⁵⁰ He also raised funds on the occasion by inviting contributions in respect of church leaders dancing to the new rhythms.

⁵¹ OI, J. Kisibo, 9.3.00, (Doc. 41) Ibwali. He adds that these days, moreover, there is a social expectation that church leaders must also be seen to be active in their ministry – in visiting and preaching, not simply in prayer.

⁵² OI, E. Joji, 22.9.99 (Doc.101) Wamulama

⁵³ OI, J. Shitochi, 25.1.02 (Doc.104) Emwiru, p. 50

⁵⁴ OI, I. Maleya, 20.8.02 (Doc. 137) Bukoyani.

⁵⁵ OI, K. Mwangale, 21.2.02 (Doc. 110) Kitumba, pp. 13-14.

Are the Roho churches ‘fundamentalist’?

It may be useful here to attempt to define the position of the Roho churches in terms of the much debated cross-cultural concept of fundamentalism. I have abstracted the following salient characteristics of fundamentalism from Marty’s introduction to Volume Four of ‘The Fundamentalism Project’ (Marty himself shows a reluctance to define the term too closely):

- It is an organized religious reaction to secular modernity.
- It draws on selected beliefs and practices from a religious past.
- It uses these to fortify its own identity over against outsiders.
- It attempts to reconstruct secular society according to its religious goals.
- It inevitably becomes involved in secular life as it negotiates with the processes of modernization. The return to pre-modern society is doomed, and the external environment constantly poses challenges to the self-definitions of the movement.
- It may have greater success in reclaiming intimate family zones than politics or the economy.
- It is not necessarily reactionary.⁵⁶

The Roho churches show many of these characteristics. However, at its foundation the movement (at its own evaluation) was taking the logic of the *newly introduced* Christian faith further than the structure and ethos of the missionary churches permitted, even if in so doing it was reaching back to values of communal society. I would, therefore, restrict the use of the term ‘fundamentalist’ to the *subsequent* reaction in Roho churches against modernity and free market values. It is in this second response to modernity that present-day traditionalists exhibit a fundamentalist desire to achieve ‘ideological closure’, in order to avoid the pain of cognitive dissonance between aspects of the original founders’ vision and the demands of contemporary society.

⁵⁶ Marty, *Accounting for Fundamentalisms*, pp. 1-9.

Part Two. Competing ideologies in the governance of Roho churches

Governance according to the traditional, domestic mode of production

Governance in the Roho churches is the locus for many of these attempts at ideological re-interpretation. This is not simply because those in power have a significant ability to promote or hold back the process of re-envisioning (as Archbishop Manoah's case suggests). The modes of governance themselves are symbolic expressions of particular ideologies. This section explores the connections between leadership models and leadership struggles in the re-envisioning process.

In most Luyia communities, including the Maragoli and Tiriki, right up until the arrival of the British, there was no enduring structure above that of the autonomous clans, except that which was necessary to organize the occasional initiation rites and age groups. Clans were led by a senior clan-elder who was rarely formally appointed, but whose seniority and personal qualities over time won him respect and authority. His responsibilities combined those of judge, priest, and political leader.⁵⁷ He had no rights over the property and family affairs of any except from his own lineage, and could levy no tribute, although he could expect to receive voluntary gifts from those who sought his favour.⁵⁸ But it would be wrong to over-emphasize the role of the senior clan-elder. All family and clan elders met regularly to handle issues arising in their communities. In the village this was done in the early morning, when the elders would sit around a fire drinking beer from siphons. It was at such events (*kurushia* - Lulogooli), that the senior elder presided over the discussions.⁵⁹ In this limited sense

⁵⁷ Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, pp. 77-82; 'The Abaluyia', p. 37.

⁵⁸ Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, pp. 81.

⁵⁹ OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo, 8.5.00 (Doc. 12), Nairobi pp. 53-4.

(i.e., government is the duty of all male elders of good standing) Luyia traditional society was democratic.⁶⁰

The system of church government established by the Friends missionaries was not completely alien to Luyia converts. The official history of the East African Society of Friends notes (somewhat naively):

The simple patterns of Quaker organization can be altered to meet African needs without serious difficulty. The manner of conducting a Quaker business meeting is not too far removed from the procedure in a tribal council meeting. In both situations action is taken after due deliberation by a 'meeting of the minds' without a formal vote.⁶¹

Similarly, leadership in the early years of the Roho movement was charismatic and personal, and based on consensus among the leaders. In the early years, leaders were simply known as 'apostles' (*mitume*, Swahili; *avatumwa*, Lulogooli), meaning literally 'those sent by God'. Authority, however, lay with those who were considered to be most filled with the Spirit, and these were not necessarily the oldest. Indeed, in the relative youthfulness of many early Roho leaders, and their refusal of the authority of the elders of the Friends, something of an initial revolt against patriarchy may be perceived.

This model of informal leadership by the elders continues in use even today in some churches, despite the formal existence of constitutions since the mid-1950s. I visited a committee meeting of *Zion*, at Mulele in Tiriki, which was called in early 2001 to discuss the church's constitution, only to discover after the meeting that the chairman, Archbishop Philip Bulimu, was not able to tell me precisely what committee had been meeting. He had arrived with his assistant from his home in Isukha, and had called the

⁶⁰ Wagner, 'The Abaluyia', p. 43.

meeting, which was attended by any of the church leaders and members (elders) in the neighbourhood who wanted to participate – precisely as *baraza* are organized, or as the *kurushia* was conducted in earlier times.

Despite a basic democracy existing among the elders of community or church, other factors are also at work. In traditional Luyia society, some clans were considered to possess an inherited disposition towards certain spiritual or religious gifts, such as divination.⁶² Similarly, there is an expectation among the Roho churches that a disposition towards the reception and use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is likely to be passed from father to son, although as in traditional custom experience prevents this from becoming recognized as a general rule.⁶³ Archbishop Kisibo reports that his clan was renowned for spiritual leadership, that his own father was a prophet who advised warriors when or when not to go to war, and that he himself was blessed in infancy by Jacob Buluku, who was brother to his father.⁶⁴ Similarly, among the Lulogooli speakers of South Tiriki, the Avamuluga claim to be a priestly clan, and number among their sons the founders both of *African Israel* and of *Zion* (Shem Ogola Mimo) – as was stressed to me on a number of occasions by their descendants who had inherited their leadership roles, John Kivuli II and Rev. Ayub Kedogo.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Painter, *Hill of Vision*, p. 32.

⁶² Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, pp. 75, 347; 'The Abaluyia', p. 37. Among the Maragoli, the AvaNondi clan exercises the traditional right to be the sacrificial elders of the whole Maragoli people. Omonondi is said to have been the eldest son of Omumavi, the eldest son of the eponymous ancestor, Omulogooli. This established the seniority of his lineage, and his eligibility for priesthood. Wagner, *Bantu of Western Kenya*, pp. 80, 291; 'The Abaluyia', p. 37. (I use here the full versions of the names).

⁶³ Thus, inheritance has proved a major factor in the governance of *African Israel*, but the succession passed from grandfather to grandson, since Kivuli I's son, Moses Aluse, who was trained at St. Paul's United Theological College, Limuru, for the leadership role, became mentally disturbed.

⁶⁴ OI, J. Kisibo, 9.3.00, (Doc. 41) Ibwali; OI, J. Kisibo, 20.10.99 (Doc. 117), Ibwali.

⁶⁵ The clan is of Luo origin, from Ugenya.

Consonant with this model of the inheritance of leadership qualities is the resistance offered by some Roho church leaders to proposed changes in their church constitutions that would place an age limit on their tenure of office. Indeed, in the constitutional reviews I have facilitated with both *Zion* and *Holy Spirit* (ongoing at the time of writing) this issue is very hotly debated. The younger generation (those up to the age of 40-45) argue that an age of retirement should be fixed, so that they can look forward to controlling the church while they themselves are still active. But to the traditionalists this is seen as undercutting the very notion of a spiritual vocation and calling inherent in the individual – which they conceive as continuing to their incapacity or death. Indeed, in accordance with the principle of seniority, and unless senility intervened, they might be expected to increase in wisdom and spiritual power the older they become. The Registrar of Societies has recently shown reluctance, however, to approve church constitutions in which senior church leadership (particularly that of the church head or archbishop) is defined as *for life*.⁶⁶

Formerly, and in accordance with this patriarchal model, leaders nominated, or attempted to nominate, their successors. Traditionally the last words and actions of a dying person are invested with considerable significance by his or her descendants, and disregard of a dying person's intentions risks incurring the sanction of that person's curse, which would be considered to have automatic effect. Jacob Buluku personally handed over his leadership of *Holy Spirit* to Japheth Zare on his death-bed, in a ceremony that has Old Testament overtones.⁶⁷ More recently, the Rev. Ayub Kedogo claimed that the founder of *Zion*, his paternal uncle, Shem Ogola, had handed

⁶⁶ A proposed constitution of *Lyahuka* was rejected for this reason. The fact that it was presented by the modernizing Archbishop Manoah demonstrates that individuals are rarely consistent in their own ideology, which can look in two directions at once.

over the leadership of the denomination to him in a similar symbolic manner when he gave him the church files three days before his death in 1980. The meaning of this act, however, is hotly disputed by Ogola's immediate sons, in a family conflict that has disturbed the church for many years.⁶⁸

'Chiefly' bishops: the impact of bureaucratic models

Faced with what (to them) must have appeared a rather inchoate system of autonomous clans, led by elders whose authority was personal rather than official, the British colonial administration sought to impose a system of chiefs on Western Kenya. These chiefs – who were often the most senior elders in the community at the time of their appointment – eventually became civil servants, dependant more on Government favour than on the respect of the community, though of course the two were related. The curse of the system – as far as the colonial administration was concerned – is that clans who lacked a chief to protect their interests conducted continuous campaigns of non-co-operation with the appointees and made frequent complaints against them to the authorities (often merely *fitina* – false allegations).⁶⁹

⁶⁷ See Appendix 5.6.2 for the story, which has passed into the founders' vision of *Holy Spirit*. For comparison with this account see the death of Jacob in Gen. 48-49.

⁶⁸ Ayub Kedogo was the youngest son to Shem Ogola's elder brother. (OI, Gladys Kedogo, Tigoi, 10.1.03.) Other cases of inheritance are in *Divine* (James Chabuga from his father Saulo Chabuga, in 1971, see above p. 99); and John M. Kivuli II as High Priest from his grandmother in 1983, and thus indirectly from his grandfather Paul David Kivuli, who had died in 1974 (see above, pp. 93ff.). But the mechanism of such inheritance is sometimes (as in the last case) as much 'political' as by simple succession.

Inheritance of leadership is not merely a matter for AICs in Western Kenya – it is characteristic of the political arena as well. In Vihiga District, Moses Mudavadi's parliamentary seat of Sabatia was 'inherited' by his son Musalia Mudavadi in a by-election in 1989, after his father's death from leukaemia. Vincent M'Maiti inherited the Hamisi (Tiriki) seat of his father, Samson M'Maiti, in a by-election, in April 1989. In Emuhaya (Bunyore), after the death of the sitting MP, Sammy Muhanji, in a road accident, the resulting by-election was won by Sande Mukuna, the son of Wilson Mukuna, who had been MP from 1973-1983. In these cases, 'inheritance' operated indirectly, as the 'heirs' had to defend their claims in elections. In the last case, the issue was less inheritance through one family than the long-standing struggle in Bunyore between candidates from the Abatongoi clan and the Abamutete clan. (PC, R. Otakwa, 24.1.03.)

⁶⁹ Lonsdale, 'Political Associations', p. 591-3. The Native Affairs AR for 1935, p. 6, states, of the then Kavirondo Districts, 'Chiefs seldom command the loyalty of their whole location; the habit of

This chiefly model was effectively the form of leadership proposed by the churches to the government during the 1950s when they were under administrative pressure to ‘regularize’ their leadership (see above, chapter five, pp. 244-5). The post was dignified with the title of high priest, bishop, or archbishop, the latter borrowed unashamedly from Anglicanism.⁷⁰ When applied to the churches, however, the model had the same problems as had been experienced in the field of secular government. In the first place, resistance was experienced from members of those clans who felt excluded from the rights and privileges of leadership. My own experience in *Holy Spirit* (where the top leadership has been traditionally drawn from a fairly narrow area in Vihiga around Bukoyani) is that clan representation is often at the centre of leadership struggles and policy implementation. In the case of this denomination, however, the increasing focus on leadership through the executive committee has increased the number of significant leadership posts available to be shared among the competing clans (without, however, reducing the bitterness of the competition).

Secondly, church members frequently show an underlying unease at the role of the ‘chiefly’ bishop (or his officers such as the church treasurer) in the collection of church taxes. Until the present day many Roho church members are extremely reluctant to pay tithes and other contributions (of which there are many).⁷¹ It is,

devolution has spread to the leading sub-clans and families who would scarcely be satisfied until every sub-clan had a puppet Chief of its own.’

⁷⁰ The only missionary churches in western Kenya that had episcopal government were the Catholic and Anglican churches. Both in the colonial public arena, and in the geographical area of Vihiga District, the Anglican church had a much greater impact.

⁷¹ The following are the recommended offerings for *Zion*, together with their biblical references, as supplied to me for possible inclusion in the constitution of that church:

kihanwa (gift) : Num. 29: 1-4. Ex. 35:4-9; 35: 24-29. Lev. 3:1-2; 36:2-4; 25:1-9. Heb. 11:4.

izaka (annual contribution) : Lev. 27: 30-34. Deut. 26:12. Mal. 3:7-12.

sadaka (Sabbath / Sunday offerings) : Mat. 5:7; 6:2-4. Acts 10: 1-8. Ex. 22:25-30. 2 Thess 5: 4-6. 2 Cor 8: 3-4.

indeed, only the strongly bureaucratized Roho churches of the second and third generations, such as *African Israel* and *Divine*, that are able to raise significant amounts for use at the church headquarters. Among the other denominations, resistance is often expressed in terms of the concept that money is ‘unclean’, and cannot build a ‘spiritual’ ministry (see chapter four, p. 184).⁷² It is to be noted that traditionally there was no ‘tributary’ chieftainship among most of the Luyia clans (the exception was among the Wanga, who had a hereditary *nabongo* or ‘king’⁷³). The authority of the clan elders was based on reconciliation and consensus, and never extended to any system of formal taxation; and was, moreover, limited to the clan. Resistance to the institution in the churches of a form of tributary ‘chieftainship’, or one based on the colonial model, and to the idea that ordinary church members should contribute to the economic support of their leaders may also be an expression therefore of the ideological attempt of the first generation churches and their descendants to return Luyia society to the domestic or family mode of production. On a number of occasions Archbishop Kisibo of *Roho Israel* has complained to me that the only way to persuade the churches in South Nyanza to pay their church contributions was for him to visit them in person. This forced him to stay there for some days, during which he would conduct his ministry and church business. Often the offering would be in the form of a live animal, which he would then either have to slaughter and eat then and there with his hosts, to take to market and sell (at considerable inconvenience), or to leave behind him. Such a custom effectively

engeso (harvest) : Num. 28: 1-13. Lev. 2:12-13. Gen. 4: 3-7.

kusandiza (thanksoffering) : Ps. 50: 14-15. 1 Thess. 5:18

fungu la kumi (tithe) : Acts 5:1-6.

Despite all these different types of offerings the church has no annual budget.

⁷² OI, J. Kisibo 31.8.02 (Doc. 136) Ibwali.

⁷³ See J. Osogo, ‘Historical Traditions of the Wanga Kingdom’.

restricts what surplus can be extracted from the domestic economy for use elsewhere (as for the upkeep of an archbishop situated many miles from his members.)⁷⁴

In the domestic mode of production, economic and political security was always dependent on maintaining horizontal links and mutual obligations (frequently expressed through social customs and ritual) with neighbours or relatives. With the increasing disaggregation of society, and the creation of distinct socio-economic classes, many such horizontal relationships have become less useful than the vertical relationships of patrons and clients. But the economic implications of these vertical relations are frequently resisted in the Roho churches. The claim is often made among ordinary members of Roho churches of the first generation that the church leaders will 'eat' the money they donate. This claim is ideologically ambivalent. On the one hand it looks back in a nostalgic protest to the domestic mode of production in which there was no extraction of surplus from the community. On the other hand, the claim is expressed in terms of the bureaucratic and instrumental values of industrial society – in which it is assumed that no-one should have the right to 'eat' from tributes or tithes without following clearly-laid down procedures of authorization and apportionment.

The problem of how to increase church giving for their expenses and livelihood is acute for all contemporary Roho church leaders. Like all leaders in contemporary Kenya, they find themselves under pressure to accept the role of patrons, even in such small but frequent requests as those from a church member for the bus fare to travel to hospital or to Nairobi for some official business. Moral and social expectations put strong pressure on leaders to redistribute what is believed to be the profits of their

⁷⁴ The example is drawn from Kisibo's Luo-speaking members in South Nyanza, but illustrates the point. In fact, his church constitution - unusually - does not require that members make *any* financial

position.⁷⁵ In a parallel ‘secular’ context of patron-client relations, the clients would expect occasionally some material *reward* for their loyalty to a family head or elder or a local councillor. This is particularly difficult for Roho church leaders who are usually of the same socio-economic class as their members. Unlike in the missionary-planted denominations, Roho members of first generation churches make very little financial contribution to the support of their leaders. Senior leaders in particular are caught between contemporary social expectations of patron-client relationships and modern bureaucratic demands for transparency and budgeting. Hence there are very considerable obstacles to the successful promotion of a culture of financial accountability.⁷⁶ In contrast, there are a few candidates for church leadership, however, who appear to be motivated predominantly by the increased opportunities the role gives to increase their network of clients – but such candidates are those who have adequate economic standing to create and maintain the role.⁷⁷ The clearest historical example of a member of this group was the Luo businessman Omumbo Achola (1906-1987). Achola, a polygamist on a large scale, built up a chain of butcheries and other businesses in Kisumu, and gave away some of his great wealth to enable Roho churches to erect large church buildings, in exchange for influence

contribution to the church. OI, J. Kisibo, 1.11.99 (Doc.117), Ibwali.

⁷⁵ Haugerud, *Culture of Politics*, pp. 133-4. When expatriates encounter these requests personally, they frequently term the practice ‘begging’, or ‘dependency’, but it is in fact an attempt to extend the effectiveness of the moral economy beyond its traditional limits.

⁷⁶ At the ‘Leaders’ Convention’ of one of the Vihiga Roho denominations in December 2001 which I attended, the National Treasurer presented the year’s accounts, in which he offered a statement of income with no reference at all to expenditure. Modernists were frustrated but not surprised. Welbourn discusses the issue with regard to Kivuli I in Welbourn & Ogot, op. cit., p. 89.

⁷⁷ Two further (disguised) examples: One contestant for the senior post in a Western Kenya Roho denomination was a former politician and businessman. The fact that some years ago he was caught red-handed committing adultery, and subsequently stripped of his robes, should normally have been a bar to his appointment – but conspicuous wealth creates eager clients. In a sister denomination, a former senior church leader supported with funds from abroad has created a rival leadership structure to that of the official church, principally through the use of these external funds to create a clientele (although it must be admitted that he is also a powerful preacher).

among their leaders.⁷⁸ *Holy Spirit* was one of those denominations which accepted his money in order to help erect the large HQs church at Bukoyani.⁷⁹ Other church leaders feared the implications of such patronage. Shem Obaga, the founder of *Zion*, suspecting that Achola would take over his denomination, refused Achola's offer to erect a church, as did the *Gospel* group at Ekese. Achola also helped to fund the evangelistic journeys in South Nyanza of the founder of *Roho Israel*, James Kisibo.⁸⁰

The influence of post-colonial Kenyan political models

The prevailing system of national governance also has an effect on leadership styles and models in Roho churches. This has been particularly noticeable in the debates on the national and church constitutions. At the level of national politics, the increase in the power of the executive that took place first under Kenyatta and then under Moi (until 1992) established a model of strong leadership that was repeated in various lesser degrees and in lesser posts all over the country. From the mid-1980s this model was challenged by a combination of the press, lawyers, and the ecumenical churches (especially through their organ the National Council of Churches of Kenya), and by external donors, and eventually cracked under its own contradictions. The democratic reforms of the early 1990s brought significant changes: first, the repeal of Clause 2a which had created a one-party state; secondly some reduction in the powers of the Provincial Administration; and thirdly and more recently the constitutional review process, which has been hotly contested and is still (at the time of writing) incomplete.

⁷⁸ See 'Omumbo - the god who died', in *Drum* (East Africa), March 1989, pp. 8-10, a typically sensationalist Drum report on this man, factually incorrect as far as the history of *Roho Israel* is concerned. When I visited Omumbo at his house in Kisumu in August 1986, he was suffering from megalomania, and offered me a 'crown' that would make me the ruler of Eastern Africa. I declined politely.

Many Roho church leaders had borrowed wittingly or unwittingly from the authoritarian modes and techniques of KANU government. They frequently ignored their own church constitution - supposing they could understand it - or restricted its circulation;⁸¹ some adopted the disputed method of *mulolongo* (a system of voting favoured by KANU in which the voter queues behind the preferred candidate, or his or her emblem) in their own elections.⁸² Talk of 'a life presidency' in national politics, current during the early 1980s – though never enacted into law – certainly encouraged some bishops and archbishops to think of themselves as in power until they died.

In the democratizing era, church leaders also began to shift, and to realize that one significant cause of the frequent leadership disputes was lack of clarity over procedures of governance. Constitutions were neither used nor understood, and many were in any case inappropriate, having been drawn up during the 1950s at the time of the Emergency and at the behest of the colonial government. Some leaders now began to state publicly that the constitution belonged to the members, and that they had a right to be involved in the changes. When the General Secretary of *Holy Spirit*, Rev.

⁷⁹ OI, E. Joji, 29.9.99 (Doc. 101), Wamuluma. Joji describes Japheth Zare as 'shaking Omumbo's hand', and alleges that Omumbo also bought Zare a bed.

⁸⁰ OI, P. Ndenga, 24.5.00 (Doc. 45), Nyang'ori.

⁸¹ The leader of a large Roho church based in Vihiga is reported to have predicted problems for the government once the multi-party system was re-instituted, and the national constitution became a matter for debate. He said that the reason why he was an effective leader was that the only copy of the churches' constitution was locked in the drawer of his desk. In another church, *Zion*, when the question of constitutional reform came up as a means of resolving a dispute over leadership, it was very difficult to find a copy of the current constitution. Fortunately I had one in my files.

⁸² *Mulolongo* was introduced into parliamentary elections in 1987, to great opposition. In fact because it made the counting of votes open at the level of the grassroots, it actually made it more difficult to rig the results, although the risk of voter intimidation was substantially increased. One of the arguments used in its favour was that this was a more responsible, organic, form of 'African democracy' compared with the 'irresponsibility' of the secret ballot. The method has been used in elections of *Lyahuka* (much against the wishes of the Archbishop), but without proper verification of those entitled

Joseph Zare, came to Nairobi Diocese on 5 March 2000 in order to read the church constitution to the members, he reported that he had already travelled round other dioceses on the same mission.⁸³ He used the jargon of the current national political debate ('the constitution is yours', 'this is an opportunity for you to propose changes' etc), but his presentation was rejected nevertheless. Nairobi church members, always acute in these matters, and conscious of their financial power in the church, challenged him to deny that leaders at the church HQs had recently changed the constitution to suit themselves. Evading the point at issue, the General Secretary agreed to return on another date to spend longer in discussion with the church members.⁸⁴

The attention to *law* in the new shift towards constitutionalism is itself a challenge to the original founders' vision. In the early days of the Holy Spirit movement there was no need for formal laws relating to governance, although the leaders met together to discuss issues of policy, even after their formal division into Sabbatarian, non-Sabbatarian, and *African Israel*.⁸⁵ Leadership was frequently decided through dreams and visions, which, as has already been seen, continue to influence decisions. In particular the combination of law and democracy (considered as 'one man, one vote') is seen as definitely 'unspiritual' in some of the Roho denominations. The issue has become significant recently in struggles for leadership in *Holy Spirit*. The current constitution of *Holy Spirit* states that the Archbishop is to be chosen by the power of the Holy Spirit, citing Acts 1: 24 and 13: 1-3. This clause is a modern reversion to the

to vote resulted in 2002 in accusations that voters were imported who were not church members. OI, M. Keverenge, 19.8.02 (Doc. 118), Lukuvuli, p. 15.

⁸³ Robing of J. Padwick & Constitution Reading, *Holy Spirit*, Shauri Moyo, 5.3.00 (Doc. 55).

⁸⁴ This second meeting never took place. A more substantial review process is currently continuing under the auspices of the OAIC.

original practice of the church.⁸⁶ Two recent operations of this principle can be seen in the processes by which Christopher Ondolo replaced Japheth Zare, and was himself later replaced by the current Archbishop Joel Sande. After Archbishop Zare's death in 1987, three candidates initially campaigned for the new post, later reduced to two. The weaker party then appealed to the General Secretary, Rev. Christopher Ondolo, who was not a candidate, to take up the leadership. A priest (*omusalisi*) said that those who had worked with the founders should be given the first opportunity. (This favoured Ondolo.) People then began reporting dreams that supported Ondolo. When a meeting was held for elections in 1988,⁸⁷ Ondolo's name was brought forward, supported by accounts of dreams, and a balancing candidate was proposed as General Secretary. The proposal went through without a vote. In the case of the subsequent succession to Ondolo, the old man had let it be known that because of his blindness and physical weakness, he wanted someone else to take over. In this case the rival candidates were the Assistant Archbishop Joel Sande (son of Daniel Sande), and General Secretary Joseph Zare (son of Japheth Zare), both with strong claims based on experience and inheritance. Again there was no election (correctly so, according to the current constitution). At the funeral service for his wife, Ondolo declared in July 2000 that he wanted Joel Sande to act as Archbishop. (This was in any case within the provisions of the constitution for Sande's office as the Assistant Archbishop.) His announcement was a testing of the waters. From then on, despite the attempts of his rival to upset this settlement, the arrangement slowly gained wide support. But Joel

⁸⁵ Such a meeting is recorded (with disapproval) in the Church Record Book of *Lyahuka* for 24.12.49, some time after the division over the Sabbath and the emergence of *African Israel*. One of the issues discussed then or slightly later was that of polygamy. (Doc. 141)

⁸⁶ The original constitution had no provision for elections. It was succeeded by a revision which allowed for elections, which was again revised, and the provision for elections removed, in order to block the claims of a rival leader, and to stop him obtaining a court order that elections be held. OI, A. Obede, 18.7.01 (Doc. 92), Nairobi, from which the following account of the succession is taken.

has so far not yet been formally consecrated. In both cases, election through the power of the Holy Spirit has been achieved through an initial testing, followed by a later solidification in the candidate's favour, of the *sensus fidelium*. The whole process has been assisted by dreams.⁸⁸ In comparison with this, it should be noted that in 1992 *Ruwe Holy Ghost* held elections by voting for the selection of its leaders, but after prayer, and only for those candidates who had first been given a 'sign'.⁸⁹

Part Three: Locating the founders' vision in 21st century Kenya

The impact of economic realities

The resistance offered by the founders' vision to the society and values of industrial capitalism has been increasingly undermined by social and economic reality. In chapter four I showed that the original founders' vision opposed the emergence of the new educated colonial elite, with its privileged access to the benefits of various kinds offered by the colonial state in the name of 'progress' and 'development'. In contrast, the model of society implicit in the Roho vision was that of the rural pre-monetary 'moral economy' or 'natural economy', or in Marxist terms, the domestic or communal mode of production.⁹⁰ The spirituality of the Roho churches is, in part, an expression of this ideology. In post-colonial Kenya, in which disaggregation and class

⁸⁷ 'Elections' in this case does not necessarily mean by a process of voting. *Uchaguzi* in Swahili can mean both selection and election. Both the *Holy Spirit* system (no vote) and that of elections by *mulolongo* (voting by standing in line) are described as *uchaguzi*.

⁸⁸ The draft revised constitution of *Holy Spirit* provides for a meeting of leaders and representatives known as the Church Council to appoint the senior leaders. No precise method is stipulated, but clearly if there is a disputed election, there has to be some way of recording the weight of opinion on either side.

⁸⁹ OI, D. Were, 23.1.01 (Doc. 50), Ruwe.

⁹⁰ It is true that the processes of commercialization and disaggregation were already at work to a limited extent in pre-colonial western Kenya, but the Roho advocacy of a return to the domestic economy had an ideological rather than analytical function.

**Box 1 The Crisis of Social Development in Kenya
(1990-1998/99)**

- ◆ Poverty incidence increased from 44.8% in 1992 to 52.3% in 1997. The poor are unable to access education, health and decent housing.
- ◆ Reduction in life expectancy from 59.5 years in 1989 to 54.7 in 1999.
- ◆ No improvements in Infant Mortality Rate from 1989 - 1999 (66 deaths of infants aged 0-12 months per 1000 live births).
- ◆ Increase in under five mortality from 89 in 1990 to 105 in 1998. (Deaths of children aged 1-5 years per 1000)
- ◆ Immunisation for infants under 1 year old reduced from 92% in 1990-1994 to 56% in 1995-1996.
- ◆ Primary school enrolment declined from 95% in 1989 to 79% in 1995; secondary school enrolment fell from 30% (1990) to 22.9% (1999).
- ◆ Access to safe drinking water increased marginally.
- ◆ Marginal increase in food security from 1897 calories per day per adult in 1990 to 1971 calories in 1997. Normative figure is 2250 calories.

Adapted from UNDP *Kenya Human Development Report 2001*, p. 44.

formation has proceeded very rapidly indeed,⁹¹ Haugerud notes that the ‘protection of a rising subsistence standard was the “moral economy” for which citizens held the state accountable.’⁹² So long as living standards were rising slowly across the population as a whole, it was possible

for the Roho faith to maintain its ideological opposition to the new society *because* and not despite the fact that its benefits filtered down to Roho members. But since the mid-1980s living standards for the majority have been falling, not rising.⁹³ (See Box 1 for national statistics.) An economic situation has been created in the country as a whole in which movements like Mungiki, driven by the anger of the landless and jobless, can appeal once again to the vision of a reconstructed moral economy. This widespread pauperization (expressed in the two processes of ‘peasantization’ and ‘proletarianization’) has forced members of the Roho churches to begin to analyse again their attitudes to ‘development’. The result is highly ambivalent. They regret (nostalgically) the loss of spirituality the daily hunt for food implies, and at the same

⁹¹ As early as the early 1970s, the populist MP J.M. Kariuki campaigned against a Kenya where there would be ‘10 millionaires and 10 million beggars’. He was murdered in March 1975 almost certainly at the instigation of some members of the government. Ogot & Ochieng’, *Decolonization and Independence*, p. 103.

⁹² Haugerud, *The Culture of Politics*, p. 198.

⁹³ For a summary of the situation in Vihiga, see chapter two, f.n. 21.

time they struggle (as do their churches) to gain some of the benefits of ‘development’ themselves. Their hopes of benefit from governmental action have generally proved illusory, and access to loans from banks and parastatals has proved problematic and increasingly beyond the reach of the great majority. In consequence, they return to the founders’ vision, modified and updated as it often is, precisely because it implicitly condemns the world of illusory ‘progress’, it gives them dignity, and it accords them value as human beings despite their poverty.

Class formation, modernizers, and traditionalists

It may be hypothesized that the Roho leaders of ‘modernization’ would be those who have themselves benefited from modernity: from small business enterprises, from employment in the modern sector of the economy, from access to external resources, and through their involvement with the structures of the state, particularly from the education system. Experience (for I have not been able to carry out the necessary statistical socio-economic analysis) suggests that this is indeed the case. The modernizers, if rurally based, are in economic terms predominantly the rich or middle peasants who have adequate off-farm income to pay others to do manual work. In 1974 van Zwaneberg characterized these two groups in Kenya as follows:

Rich Peasants: This group has benefited from recent settlement and irrigation schemes, land registration and marketing co-operatives. Many such families own bars, shops, and other enterprises, and have children moving through the secondary schools and University. They employ labour, both permanently and seasonally and undoubtedly have benefited from independence.

Middle Peasants: This group has also benefited from independence...they hire seasonal labour.⁹⁴

With slight modifications, this characterization can serve at the present time. In other words, these people have moved into that group of the village elite whom the first

generation founders' vision originally implied were hypocritical servers of both God and Mammon. Alternatively, the supporters of modernization are in reasonably well-paid employment in administration or the formal sector. The number of rich peasants or urbanites in regular employment is however a small minority in the Roho churches. In contrast, the traditionalists – this argument runs - would be predominantly from the class of poor peasants and those on the margins of existence in the urban centres:

Poor Peasants: ...Due to a lack of sufficient high quality land and knowledge, they have been unable to raise their income since independence. It is this group which probably provides the wage labourers. They continue to use 'traditional' techniques of production and remain largely untouched by the state's extension services.⁹⁵

(In contemporary Vihiga, the income of this group would be supplemented from micro-enterprises and casual labour.) Van Zwaneberg's urban marginalized group is composed of unemployed school leavers, dependants of migrant labourers and squatters, and the dispossessed.⁹⁶

Mwangi wa Githinji's analysis of socio-economic classes in modern Kenya (based on two country-wide surveys of 1988) takes the analysis of class formation a stage further. The articulation of modes of production argument (e.g., van Binsbergen's) assumes that peasant production is useful to, and tolerated by, capitalism, because it relieves the capitalist sector of the costs of the production and reproduction of labour, and enables it to pay lower wages.⁹⁷ But, Mwangi argues, the analysis of class formation hitherto employed in this debate is insufficiently subtle. Instead of defining class by income or land-ownership, he examines household participation in modes of production, and particularly whether those modes are exploitative or not. He notes

⁹⁴ Van Zwaneberg, 'Neocolonialism and the origin of the national bourgeoisie', p.183.

⁹⁵ Van Zwaneberg, op. cit., p.183.

⁹⁶ In my opinion the latter two categories are strongly represented among the Kikuyu Akurinu.

that households in Kenya frequently participate at the same time in several - often contradictory - modes of production, and can be in both exploiting and exploitative relationships. (Such mixed household economies may be said to be particularly characteristic of Vihiga.) For example, a male head of household can be a wage earner and at the same time employ labour himself in a small business (shop) and on the farm. 'The fact that this occurs is bound to have an effect on the way households see themselves and their role in historical change.'⁹⁸ Thus it is possible to take account of conflicting and contradictory class positions occupied by households and household members.⁹⁹ Potentially, at least, this would make it possible to suggest why the Roho ideology of sub-groups or of individuals often appears contradictory.

The economic status and dominant modes of production can be identified for the leaders of Holy Spirit over the past three-quarters of a century. The *Holy Spirit* founders were not at first poor. Jacob Buluku and Isaya Maleya owned market plots at Mbale.¹⁰⁰ The wealth that Daniel Sande left behind after his death was enough for his two sons to be given a good education.¹⁰¹ But they neglected these worldly concerns when the Spirit came. At that time even many of the crops standing in the field were abandoned. Indeed, it may be asked whether, without the traditional dependence on female labour on the farm, the founders' extensive 'cultivation of the Spirit' would

⁹⁷ The question of whether the class of peasants in Kenya is becoming entrenched in this role, or whether it is simply a transitional phase towards the creation of a landless proletariat has been a subject of much debate in Kenyan economic studies. Mwangi, op. cit., p. 155, summarizes this debate.

⁹⁸ Mwangi, op. cit., p. 158.

⁹⁹ Mwangi develops 30 possible household types. According to his statistics, 41.9% of all Kenyan rural households depend entirely on their family farm and family labour for their sustenance (i.e., are 'peasants'). 75% of all households derive a portion of their sustenance from their farms and use family labour for this production. But of these households, 36% engage in non-farm activities. Mwangi, op. cit, p. 161ff.

¹⁰⁰ OI, Avisa, Savatia, Mugodo 8.5.00 (Doc. 12), Nairobi, pp. 67-8.

¹⁰¹ OI, J. Sande, 3.5.00 (Doc. 84), Muhanda.; PC, Rev. A. Obede

ever have been possible.¹⁰² Equally, without the traditional open-handed hospitality of both Luyia and Roho tradition, it would have been impossible for church leaders to travel without money, and stay long periods of time in their members' houses. First generation Roho spirituality and practice is therefore built on a reversion to the domestic economy.

The position of the second generation leaders, however, was more ambivalent. Archbishop Japheth Zare is considered to have built a solid economic and educational foundation for his family on the offerings of the faithful. In this way it may be said that he participated both in the domestic and tributary modes of production and benefited also from the gifts of urban and agricultural workers involved in the capitalist sector. As has been seen, Japheth Zare also relaxed the rules for the socio-economic benefit of those members working in Nairobi. His successor, Archbishop Christopher Ondolo, was a traditionalist, who has remained poor and did not seek to benefit from his leadership role.¹⁰³ Such a purist position is considered to be largely untenable these days, given the size of plots in Vihiga and an increasing dependence on cash to buy food, and for education and medical expenses.¹⁰⁴ In fact most of the present leaders of *Holy Spirit* are relatively well off, and – as will shortly be seen – have engaged effectively with the modern economy, either themselves or through

¹⁰² For this aspect of the traditional domestic economy, see Kitching, op. cit., passim.

¹⁰³ His very modest house was only rebuilt and roofed with corrugated iron sheets some years ago by funds from external sources, through the same link with Cottage Lane Mission of Ormskirk, Lancashire, encountered earlier in this chapter in connection with the youth exchange.

¹⁰⁴ OI, E. Joji, 22.9.99, (Doc. 101) Wamuluma. Moock, writing in 1976 reported: 'After almost a century of exporting labour across the country, people from Vihiga have been completely incorporated into the cash economy. Entry into the labour market on the basis of limited cash needs has ballooned into dependency upon monetary income for actual survival for both the migrant and his rural family... Given small land holdings, even profits from cash crops cannot provide sufficient cash to stretch much beyond family consumption needs let alone cover school fees, maintain the upkeep of the home, pay fares, and other extended obligations and investments.' Moock, *Managerial Ability*, pp. 58-60, quoted by Mutoro, *Women Working Wonders*, p. 57.

their sons, and have both been employed themselves and employ others on their farm plots. Such leaders might be thought to constitute 'natural' modernizers.

But of course the link between faith and ideology, on the one hand, and economic and productive and reproductive activity on the other is rarely so simple. I mention here one contradiction which, despite the general argument of this thesis, will serve as a warning against tying faith too closely to economic realities. In a 21st century Kenya dominated by industrial capitalism, how is the strength of the continued resistance in many Roho churches to the use of bureaucratic and financially accountable modes of organizing the church to be explained? (This resistance creates considerable difficulties as the churches seek to relate to NGOs and external partner churches and organizations.)¹⁰⁵ At the time of writing, three of the five senior executive officers of *Holy Spirit* have worked in the modern capitalist sector: Archbishop Joel Sande, educated up to secondary school, who became an untrained teacher and then was employed by a British company in Nairobi, before joining the colonial civil service as a clerk;¹⁰⁶ General Secretary Rev. Joseph Zare, a metal-worker in various British firms in Nairobi, who became a shop-steward in Kenya Engineering Workers Union, and eventually a manager;¹⁰⁷ and Assistant General Secretary Rev. Albert Obede, formerly an accountant in a Nairobi printing form, and afterwards trained in an Anglican theological college and at the WCC Bossey Centre for Ecumenical Studies. The fourth, Rev. Dishon Osore, (the National Treasurer), is a driver for the Government Provincial Administration in Vihiga District, and a successful small businessman running a grinding-mill and shop in Bukoyani village. Only the Prophet

¹⁰⁵ The shift in thinking required is a leap from a process of articulating policy in accordance with the ground of popular opinion (in which commitment to a course of action is always open to revision), to practical and financial planning and cash-flow forecasts for several years ahead.

¹⁰⁶ OI Joel Sande, 3.5.00 (Doc. 84) Muhanda.

Joab Adolwa (Assistant National Treasurer) who had been a casual labourer in Nairobi during his earlier years, can be said to lack knowledge of the formal techniques required for bureaucratic modern management. In van Zwaneberg's terms these leaders are middle or rich peasants, and in Mwangi's, they participate in mixed modes of production. Yet all of them (and I include myself here) experience an almost overwhelming pull during meetings of the denomination's Executive Committee to revert to traditional styles of clan leadership. I mean here a style of management that is discursive, seeks for consensus, is more committed to procedure than to the achievement of goals, and is more concerned with massaging and managing the feelings of committee members at every meeting than in maintaining consistency in decision-making and implementation – that seeks, in short, unity rather than results. Wagner stated that social harmony was an essential aspect of the 'neutral ritual status' - i.e., the positive sense of well-being - the maintenance of which was the traditional goal of Luyia individuals and community.¹⁰⁸ As has already been noted, unity is also a *sine qua non* among the Roho churches, so this mode of operation is well-founded on both traditional and Roho custom, and is essentially *practical* in a grassroots democratic environment. However, many Kenyan-run organizations operate with much greater attention to bureaucratic procedures and the efficient achievement of objectives. I suggest, therefore, that the fact that this style of management persists illustrates the profound and continuing *moral* commitment of Roho churches of the first generation to the communal values of the domestic mode of production, of the face-to-face society. It is these values, articulated in ideology of the founders' vision, that remain powerful against those of alternative and dominant systems. This is true even though the current leaders of these churches, and many of their followers, have

¹⁰⁷ OI Joseph Zare, 22.9.99 (Doc. 127) Bukoyani.

¹⁰⁸ Wagner, 'The Abaluyia', p. 48.

benefited from employment or engagement in those dominant systems, and continue to do so.

Part Four. Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter I stress the challenges experienced by leaders of the Roho churches to adjust their vision, created and articulated in a struggle against western modernity and colonialism, to the significantly different economic and political realities of the 21st century. I then examine how such challenges make themselves heard within the founders' visions, and result in an ad hoc accommodation or a genuine re-envisioning that re-aligns and re-focuses the symbolic structure of the visions. These visions remain permeable partly because of the Roho use of scripture, which has entered into the community's oral tradition. Scripture is interpreted through participatory events in worship and small groups. Scripture is used rhetorically and by way of illustration rather than in the logical construction of a systematic theology. This usage, and the varied nature of the Christian scriptures themselves, promote a 'critical openness' to Roho tradition. The action of the Holy Spirit in dreams and visions further prepares the psyche for change. Through such means significant leaders have brought about changes in their churches.

But the factor above all that promotes a desire for change is *poverty*. Increasing pauperization in Vihiga has, in the eyes of the church leaders themselves, been a significant cause of the decline in spirituality. The need for money to buy food and for school fees consumes time that hitherto has been spent on fasting, praying, and the cultivation of the Spirit.

One current demand for change focuses on governance (a contemporary concern in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole), expressed in leadership disputes and the amending and rewriting of church constitutions. First generation Roho churches, though often led by strong charismatic personalities, were originally governed by consensus, continuing in this way the Luyia traditions of communal society. Similar traditional assumptions governed (and govern) the Roho understanding of leadership by right of seniority. In this connection, the ‘inheritance’ of church leadership within the family or clan remains an enduring concept.

Second and third generation churches and leaders often have a stronger leadership, closer to that of a chief in the Marxist ‘tributary’ mode, or the somewhat more bureaucratic model introduced by the British. In the first generation churches, considerable resistance to such leaders remains, especially over the payment of ‘tribute’, i.e., the support of leaders through tithes and other offerings. I suggest that such continuing unease reflects an ideological preference among many Roho churches to the present day for the domestic or communal society. The trend of national politics has also had its impact on styles of governance, with a definite shift towards more authoritarian leadership in Roho churches during the years of repression in the 1980s.

Finally, I consider the impact of economic realities – especially, increasing poverty – upon members of the Roho faith. Their response is ambivalent. Roho traditionalists seek to maintain their faith largely unchanged from the early years, rejecting involvement in modern society, business, education and the wider world, which are all seen to be destructive of the Spirit. I earlier referred to this group as the new ‘fundamentalists’ of the Roho faith. Analysing, in Marxist terms, the respective class

positions of traditionalists and modernizers, I suggest that modernizers tend to have an off-farm income, and are, or have been, employed themselves while employing others at home on the farm or in small businesses. In other words, they have negotiated for themselves a relatively positive engagement with capitalist modernity, while retaining their rural roots and home for their continuing communal and ideological values. Traditionalists, on the other hand, have no such positive experience of modernity and capitalism. They often come from areas outside Vihiga, such as Kakamega or Kabras, where land sub-division has not proceeded so far, and are able more or less to survive on their land - in short, where the domestic mode of production remains feasible. Or they are themselves very poor, and their Roho faith allows them to maintain their dignity as human beings because it questions the values of 'progress' and 'development'. Finally, I note that despite the modernizers' commitment to engaging with modernity, for them, too, the ideological attraction of the values of the domestic mode of production remains extremely strong. The value of such an ideology today I reserve for my final conclusion.

Conclusion

This thesis began as an attempt to answer two practical challenges posed by the OAIC's grassroots development work among AICs in western Kenya. The first, to which much of this thesis has been devoted, was to understand why Roho churches have opposed western models of development. The second challenge has been addressed more obliquely, but it underlies nevertheless the general direction of my argument. It can be posed in the form of two related questions. The first is for 'outsiders': how can development practitioners (and by expansion, other 'professionals') engage effectively with such communities of faith? The second is a matter of great concern to such communities themselves in the contemporary context of increasing pauperisation: what is the *practical* value of Roho faith today? In more academic language these two concerns can be combined and reformulated as follows: are there Roho values and symbols that can assist in promoting a positive engagement - not simply a confrontation - with the increasingly dominant realities of globalization and free market capitalism?

The search for an answer to these questions led me first to attempt a general characterization and definition of Roho churches (see p. 110) and to offer a historical overview of their development in Vihiga District. In the course of this overview I clarify for the first time the families and generations of Roho Christianity in Vihiga District, and underline the extent of their connections and interaction with Roho

communities among the Luo. Despite its origin in various missionary denominations, the Roho faith that developed was remarkably consistent and coherent. I argue that the crucial period in its articulation was the first half of the 1930s, in the context of a largely traditional Luyia society under intense pressure from colonial administrators and missionaries to rationalize and modernize. In this crucible Roho faith was created, in a reaction intensified and particularized by two historical factors revealed through a use of neo-Marxist analysis of modes of production. First, at the time of the almost simultaneous arrival of colonialists and missionaries around 1900, Luyia society was still composed of patriarchal, segmentary communities of clans engaged in the domestic or communal mode of production. In this respect it was markedly different from some other societies in West and Southern Africa which historically have also given birth to spiritual AICs. The economy was not yet monetarized and, since the surplus generated in the community was still controlled by that community in its own interests, its functions continued to be understood in personal, communal and moral terms. Secondly, the impact of colonialism and the Christian missions upon this society was rapid and intensive. Within the very short period of twenty to thirty years, Luyia society had become articulated to a mode of industrial capitalism, and the majority of its men were employed as wage labour in colonial mines, farms, plantations, businesses and homes. Thus, the form of independent Christian faith that was forged in the resulting reaction was dominated by a desire for the re-assertion of local control and the rejection of western values that were considered destructive of communalism. In his description of *African Israel* as a 'church-tribe',¹ Welbourn understood the social and political structure into which Roho faith was poured; but it is the linking of Roho faith and its symbolic system to the social formation of 1930s

¹ Welbourn & Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home*, p. 85.

Kenyan society, and more specifically to the articulation of the traditional communal mode of production to modern industrial capitalism, that has facilitated my systematic analysis of Roho faith and spirituality. That the founders' vision of the Roho churches should address issues beyond the narrowly religious sphere is hardly surprising.

Traditional society did not know the modern autonomy of separate spheres of knowledge and action, and in particular those of religion, politics, and economics, and in Kenya the introduction of such dichotomization was closely related to forces of colonial exploitation. For the Roho churches to reassert the integrity or holism of social and religious acts, and a balance in church life and worship between the rational and the intuitive, was therefore a fundamental rejection of the ruling values of colonialism. To appreciate this is to restore 'meaning' and 'sense' to a faith regarded by most colonial observers (and many modern 'progressive' onlookers) as atavistic or incoherent.²

The Roho form of local or vernacular theology is characterized by a strongly developed pneumatology, particularly valuable for its understanding of the Spirit's role in community. Central to Roho theology is an understanding that sin and ritual impurity make someone vulnerable to attack from evil forces and hinder the beneficent protection and blessing of God. It is the Holy Spirit alone that has the power to cleanse evil from the heart through repentance and exorcism. At the same time the Spirit acts as the guardian of the community, speaking through prophecy and uncovering hidden evil and evildoers. Indeed this is the Spirit's *essential* function, which enables the community of faith to deal appropriately with sources of evil. The Spirit's presence also enables the moral community to be reconstructed by creating a

² See my summary of the actor-centred perspective of Long in chapter one, pp. 30-31.

consonance between the inner motivation of the individual and the will of the community.

But Roho faith is not simply a nostalgic return to traditional communality, or to the 'tribe'. Rather, Roho Christians perceived traditional society as 'confused' by the decentring spiritual forces of witchcraft and people's evil intentions. To counter this, Roho faith restricts the interference by the deceased in community affairs, condemns witchcraft and divination, and claims power over evil forces and spirits. It makes a decisive step towards culpabilization and the responsibility of the individual before God, but within the context of his or her accountability to the Spirit present within the believing community. (In their concern for accountability to the faith community I suggest that the people of the Spirit resemble closely the *balokole* of the East African revival.) Moreover, Roho faith is a democratisation both of the patriarchy implicit in traditional religious roles and of the elitism of missionary Christianity. In Roho Christianity both sons and daughters prophesy and young men and old men see visions and dream dreams (Joel 2: 28).

The founders' vision that emerged from the initial period of intense creativity was what Erikson has characterized as a total identity: distinct, and marked out by clear boundaries, from the alternative and competing realities of traditional and colonial societies. The laws of purity maintained Roho Christians in a state of physical and spiritual purity which was the prerequisite for the Holy Spirit's presence, and demanded the consequent separation of the people of the Spirit from the rest of the world. But this period of boundary-building was necessary for the definition of their identity, not least vis-à-vis colonial society. Here, Roho Christians perceived that

through the process of commoditization, money had become the means of fulfilling excessive and unnecessary desires (*tamaa*). Such desires tended towards lust and envy, and consequently to hatred - sins destructive of community and of African integrity. Involvement in business enterprises therefore became problematic for Roho Christians. Some radical Roho thinkers perceived that European capitalist society was itself built upon the stimulation of desire for consumer goods – and that it was by such means that Europeans had been able to control African's minds and corrupt their spirits. Roho believers therefore rejected many European consumer items in favour of locally-made goods, the production of which could be understood and controlled. Thus western medicine was unacceptable. This rejection of consumerism also enabled Roho Christians to protest against the emergence of a social and educational elite, and in particular against those individualist 'progressive' Africans whom they considered to be exploitative and divisive of community. Such extreme rejections of colonial and capitalist values were, however, more characteristic of the first generation Roho churches than of those founded later. Zakayo Kivuli, building upon his education at the Jeanes School, achieved an integration between Roho faith and practical development. But for him also, such enterprise remained acceptable only if it was small-scale, remained under local control, and the surplus was used according to community values.

Globalization moulds and creates local identities. In our present-day context, the value placed by Roho Christians on the traditional face-to-face community as the place where a Christian life could best be cultivated, and a full humanity achieved,

can be better appreciated.³ In such local communities were the Roho HQs; here were found the mountains and rocks that were used as sites for special prayers; and where God worked his miracles. I have suggested that the attraction of these rural communities continues to exercise and dominate the symbolic thinking of the Roho churches, a factor that inhibits the development of strong church bureaucracies and the transmission of funds from local communities to the national HQs, and which promotes the constant fissiparity of Roho Christianity.

The thesis turns next to deal with the second challenge: how Roho churches can engage with pressures of globalization and the free market, and with what seems to be their effects in western Kenya – the pauperisation of society. First I consider the Roho leaders' own perception of their role in the wider society. I show that, strictly speaking, these churches are not a-political. Their leaders desire to influence public life, but through a role similar to that of the traditional priest (*omusalisi*) – a role of reconciliation, advice, and blessing, well characterized by the traditional Maragoli sacrifice at Mung'oma, and its subsequent Roho adaptations into prayer on mountains for the blessing of the nation. The ambivalence of Roho leaders to party politics is precisely because they deny the modernist and secular logic of the autonomy of the political sphere, and its separation from the spiritual. Such ambivalence is symbolized in the use of *flags* in Roho churches, the significance of which has hitherto escaped analysis. In present-day Kenya flags are taken as a 'normal' form of Christian expression, but originally they asserted the existence of a kingdom, an army, a power, - spheres that enjoyed a certain autonomy, even if only symbolic, from colonial authority. Unfortunately the Roho experience of oppression under the colonial

³ In this the Roho Christians were not far from the thinking of many missionaries also. See Casson, 'To Plant a Garden City ...'.

government, and of marginalization and manipulation by most post-colonial administrations since then, has discouraged their natural development towards a more positive engagement in the public sphere. I have recounted in some detail the untold story of how, as soon as national leadership began to pass into African hands, Roho leaders combined with other AIC leaders in an attempt to gain a significant national role. But their ideological rejection of elitism, together with the colonial suppression of Roho independent schools, had not prepared them educationally for such a task, and the project failed. As the nationalist AICs of Central Kenya knew well, the capture and use of political power requires first learning its tools. Today the debate on the political role of Roho members remains open. The new 'respectability' of the historic Roho churches in contrast to such movements as Mungiki will continue to create opportunities for their public involvement in the future.

My account of 'unbinding the vows', and the continuing debate between modernizers and traditionalists, shows clearly that Roho leaders are aware of such emerging challenges. The critical issue is to what extent the symbolic system of Roho Christianity, based as it is on rural communal society and the domestic mode of production, with its associated respect for patriarchal values, can achieve an appropriate re-envisioning towards a more positive engagement with urbanism, modernity, and the free market. In fact, I have shown that because of the permeability of Roho structures of faith such a process of cognitive bargaining has been under way in the churches for many years. I suggest that its future effectiveness requires the continual re-creation of face-to-face communities, and the preservation of some of the values associated with them, in particular those of egalitarianism, the moral economy, and reciprocity rather than accumulation. Other elements equally strongly embedded

in the founders' visions, of patriarchy, a suspicion of money, a resistance to processes of accountability and management by objectives, and of separation from the world – such elements need to lose their symbolic centrality. This is not, however, to suggest that Roho churches need to adopt the prosperity gospel and an individualistic ethos characteristic of some African pentecostal churches. Part of the value of religious systems is to recall people to values and models of society and Christian faith currently under threat,⁴ and a retention of some of the symbols of communal society will assist this process.

In development studies this thesis asserts the necessity of engaging with the realities, visions and symbolic systems of local actors. In the field of theology it offers a continuing reminder that religious systems predispose their members to certain models of society and economics – and that theology cannot be divorced from practical realities.⁵ It reasserts the value of vernacular theologies, especially in the task of preventing weaker societies from becoming swallowed up by immensely more powerful global players, including by dominant forms of Christian faith. Finally, in AIC studies, it presents AICs as evolving churches grappling with the pressures of modernity amidst increasing economic difficulties, and seeking light on the path ahead by a process of re-envisioning, a re-evaluation of the visions created by their founders during a similar era of economic and political crisis.

⁴ Countryman, *Dirt, Greed and Sex*, p. 217, citing his own *Biblical Authority*, pp. 77-93.

⁵ See Appendix 3 on how alternative spiritualities impact on life styles and economic behaviour in the village.