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# **African Church or Western Mission?**

**The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya Seeks Her Identity 1968–1996**



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## AFRICAN CHURCH OR WESTERN MISSION?





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## Foreword

Kenya is the homeland of my childhood. When I first left Kenya in 1979, I missed it immensely. I did not feel at home in Finland. I wanted to return to Matongo to my friends, animals, and flowers. Life felt miserable for several years.

I returned to Kenya as an adult missionary in 2012. Naturally, I realized that everything had changed. The wonderland of my heart was gone! I now began to consider the causes and consequences. These reflections inspired me to study.

I thank everyone who has contributed to the completion of my research, Professor Ingvar Dahlbacka and Docent Kim Groop, Archbishop Emeritus Walter Obare, Archbishop Joseph Ochola, Professor Emeritus Tormod Engelsviken, Professor Emeritus Jouko Talonen, DTh Rune Imberg, and a large number of my other Kenyan and Western brothers and sisters. Asanteni – Thank you. Mungu awabariki ninyi nyote – God bless you all!

Finally, I thank and praise my Savior with a song in Ekegusii which still rings in my heart. My childhood church of Matongo roared with a joyful singing as the church-filled congregation – mostly Kenyans with a few Westerners – praised our Lord Jesus Christ: “Ira erieta ria Yeso, As’ogoichana kwao, Erieta ri’omogoko As’orogendo rwao. Erieta rigiya, As’ense na Igoro [Take the name of Jesus in your sorrow, the name of joy on your journey, the precious name on earth and in heaven].”<sup>1</sup>

17 October 2021, Pulkila, Finland  
*Martti Arkkila*

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<sup>1</sup> Ogotera Gw’Ekelutheri (Lutheran hymnbook in Ekegusii), 61.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Research Assignment

The aim of this study is to explore the struggle for independence of a small Kenyan Church to find her ecclesial identity in the national, spiritual, and communal sense. Pivotal to this process was the leadership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, three main persons characterizing this struggle. These were James Otete Nchogu (1968–1980), John Momanyi Kururia (1980–1988), and Francis Nyamwaro Onderi (1988–1996), who guided the Church towards finding her identity. This process culminated in the election of the first bishop in 1996. As this was the culmination of this chain of events, it is therefore natural to conclude the study by this year.

The events are described by historic-scientific means using a genetic method. They are viewed from a cause-and-effect perspective, primarily in chronological order. This also applies the main chapters and their thematic breakdown, i.e., Kenyan leadership, Church-mission relations, and theological reflection. In line with the genetic time perspective, the study reflects the simultaneous development of Kenyan society and places the Church in her context as part of a larger whole in the era of postcolonialism. The arena of events is the encounter of different cultures. A culture unknown to itself sometimes seemed threatening and frightening. Yet, it helped to understand one's own culture. In this process, the importance of African communality emerged. The search for and strengthening of social (collective) identity<sup>2</sup> was inextricably linked to the African way of life culminating in the Churches and their activities. "Church" in Africa means "social body"<sup>3</sup>. All of this is focused on in more detail below.

During the research period, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya was predominantly united and served as a single diocese led by Kenyan leaders instead of Western missionaries as before. Ordained Kenyan pastors were now responsible for the previously lay-led mission. This development was significant and had far-reaching consequences. At the same time, the Church had to respond to growing Western influence. New mission societies entered the field. Power struggles between Kenyan leaders, missions, and missionaries were ongoing and played an important role in this development. The situation was challenging. The Church went into a constant struggle to find out, whether

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<sup>2</sup> The concept of social identity can be defined as an interpersonal interaction referring to a group's perception of itself or as a perception that individuals outside the group have about it. Social identity encompasses many different aspects, such as ethnic, cultural, and religious, and could further be defined as a situational and relational process of various cultural meetings. Stier 2009, 29–31, 66–72, 99.

<sup>3</sup> Jonas Ideström defines "Church" as a social body, which is in constant motion, shaped by her social and historical context. Ideström 2009, 41–45.

she was an African Church or just a Western mission. This research focuses on the most intense period of this battle.

Theologically, the Church was guided by Nordic missions. These represented a similar type of Christianity, namely Scandinavian Lutheran revivalism sharing a strong Bible-orientation and a claim of personal conversion. Although united with the main lines of Lutheran theology, some of their practices and beliefs differed, affecting the practical life of the congregations. Through theological controversies, the importance of Lutheranism emerged, recalling the basic mission of the Church. Was the actual mission of the Church found in the proclamation of the Gospel or other activities? Theological reflection is thus an integral part of this study.

The Church longed for recognition and appreciation in a communal sense. Therefore, questions about her nature and social status became central. These issues culminated in questions about leadership and ecclesiastical unity. Indeed, one of the Church's particular challenges was to remain united despite the influence of several ethnic groups and nationalities. All of them had an impact on Church life and had to be considered when making plans and decisions. One vital question is whether unity in diversity was even possible during the period under study. It finally remains to be seen whether the Church found the identity she was looking for, and if so, in what way and to what extent this happened.

When Westerners join the Kenyan world, they make many surprising discoveries they never knew before. On some levels, Kenyan and Western people are like coming from different worlds. For this reason, understanding each other sometimes leads to insurmountable difficulties. This also happened in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya. However, children can cross cultural boundaries more easily than adults. They look at the world with open eyes without a critical attitude and learn to understand the events around them in a natural way. Such a perspective will hopefully be reflected in the following pages as the researcher has become acquainted with the Kenyan culture already as a missionary child since the late 1970s.

## 1.2 Literature, Sources and Terminology

Much literature is available on the general history and the Church history of both Africa and Kenya. Likewise, the literature on global Christian mission and missiology is extensive and growing.<sup>4</sup> Its essential part appears in the chapters "The African Context" and "Kenya of East Africa". This literature is not presented separately in this context due to its general nature.

The literature, which focuses on the actual research topic, culminates in the histories of the mission societies that worked within the Evangelical Lutheran

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<sup>4</sup> In Finland, interest in mission history and missiology has also been growing, especially during the last two decades. As examples of that, see Ahonen 2000, Nurminen 2003, Groop 2006, Lounela 2007, Kuusisto 2011, Haapiainen 2014, Jern 2019, Heininen 2021.

Church in Kenya. These histories are written from various viewpoints, levels, and lengths. These have been prepared by former missionaries and therefore they mainly concentrate on missionary achievements. Mission Director Brita Jern's dissertation, *Så länge hemmafronten håller* [As long as the home front holds] describes mission activities from a home-front perspective and challenges future research towards the path of reorientation. However, in focusing on the activities of the Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland (SLEAF), the presentation of the overall Church remains unnecessarily thin. Reijo Arkkila's study, *Menkää maitten ääriin asti* [Go to the farthest corners of the Earth], presents the activities of both SLEAF and its sister organization, The Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland (LEAF), up until 1980. Here too, the focus is on the side of the mission. The anniversary publications of the remaining three mission societies, *I Jesu spår* [In the footsteps of Jesus] (Swedish Lutheran Mission, SLM), *Såtid, vekst og modning* [Time of sowing, growth and harvest], (Norwegian Lutheran Mission, NLM), and *The Spirit of God is Moving* (World Mission Prayer League, WMPL), also focus on describing missionary achievements.

The research from the perspective of the overall Church is limited. Rune Imberg's study, *A door opened by the Lord: The history of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya*, goes through the history of the Church up to 1968. First, he clarifies historical and geographical facts concerning Kenya as a country. He then studies the early Christian presence in East Africa and goes on to analyze the effect of the Lutheran pioneer work of J. L. Krapf. He points out the far-reaching connection between Krapf and the Swedish Lutheran Mission (SLM). He continues by explaining how the SLM while looking for a new mission field, found Kenya and Kisii-land. He proceeds to describe the development of the mission into an independent Church. Besides the general progress, medical, school, and evangelization work, he then analyzes the theological development from a low-Church-laymen-led mission into a liturgically more structured and pastor-led Church. Lastly, Imberg indicates certain areas, which would be important to future research: leadership, theology, new mission societies, Matongo Lutheran Theological College (MLTC), and ethical issues.

In the preface, Imberg mentions that he mainly focused on written sources rather than oral sources. He then concentrates on the history of the Swedish Lutheran Mission and the prehistory of the ELCK. Thus, there is not so much about the national view of the Church. It is here that a different angle would have been needed to bring in the views of the Kenyan people. The African perspective remains overly thin. Despite this, *A door opened by the Lord*, as a first comprehensive study on the history of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, is a backbone for future research, as is the case in this current study.

The early days of the Church's independence are highlighted by Gustav Norrback in *Kenyamissionen 1963–1973*. The peaceful exchange of leadership between himself and James Otete is briefly described, which indeed was an important milestone on the Church's path to adulthood. Norrback guided the

Church out from the midst of a serious leadership dispute and into the hands of a Kenyan leader. His work provides vital information about this significant transition period. Further, his assessment of the state of the Church is particularly valuable in understanding future development.

Jaakko Lounela's dissertation, *Mission and Development: Finnish Pentecostal, Lutheran and Orthodox Mission Agencies in Development Work in Kenya 1948–1989*, gives an excellent cross-section of development work in the Church. He shows how differences in faith led the mission agencies to formulate different solutions to similar problems. His survey also shows how the funds of the Finnish government offered opportunities for the expansion of the work of the mission agencies. Countless numbers of Kenyans received health, education, and employment when Nordic governments channeled development funds through several mission agencies. The leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya realized that they would not be able to manage these projects in the future because they were neither self-supporting nor profit-making. Despite the delight brought about by development aid, the Missions were unable to respond to these urgent cries. Thus, Lounela's research revealed that these projects were not exclusively of benefit in the Church, but instead, they harmed her spiritual work. In this light, Lounela gives an interesting perspective on evaluating the development in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya. A significant shortcoming is that Lounela's research ignores the Kenyan archives.

The Master's Thesis of Antti Kuokkanen, "When the Money Ran Out A study of the Financial Crisis of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya in the 1990s", concentrates on economic and financial questions. It gives background information on the reasons behind the Church's financial problems. It indicates how the critical situation was strongly influenced by a different approach to life. For Africans, events are viewed as a whole, human encounters being especially important. The emphasis was on human relations, honor, and mutual understanding. The status of dishonesty and theft, for example, was conditional, relative to the case. While the Africans were oriented towards the "present and local", Europeans analyzed and organized the facts of life and were oriented towards "results". Kuokkanen's ambition was not to be an outsider, instead to place himself into the position of a Kenyan. Although this paper is academically insufficient, Kuokkanen succeeded in his goal. An emerging Kenyan perspective sheds additional light calling for future research.

In his article of 2008 "Structural Tensions and New Strategies"<sup>5</sup> of the *Norwegian Journal of Missiology* [*Norsk tidsskrift for misjonsvitenskap*], Erling Lundebj describes some trends of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya over the period 1990–2005. He points out, that the Church was functioning quite well until the 1990s, but then experienced "severe turbulence". At a time, when the Kenyan state was facing major political changes in the early 1990s, unrest

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<sup>5</sup> Before this, a similar article was published in Norwegian. Lundebj 2006.

was also increasing in the Church. It manifested itself in leadership disputes, ethnic conflicts, and financial problems. In his article, Lundebry does not fully document his sources. This undermines its scientific value. At the same time yet, he holds up events to be reflected upon and questioned healthily. Thus, this thesis is of benefit to the research at hand.

## Sources

As the previous research on the overall Church is limited, the emphasis in this study is on sources that are scattered across many different localities and countries. The archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya are in Kenya, while the archives of the mission societies are in their own respective countries, Finland, Norway, and Sweden.

The ELCK minutes, reports, and letters are archived at Itierio Head Office in Kenya. The Studio files are located in their premises opposite the head office. Some of this material had been written in Kiswahili, some in English. The entire archive was open for research without any restrictions. It is mostly in good order. Fundamental information about the administrative and operational development of the Church can be found there. Statements made by the Church leadership are particularly important in conveying the Kenyan perspective. In addition, as a reflection of self-esteem and identity, these come to the forefront among the primary sources in understanding the Church's longing for independence.

Minutes, reports, official letters, and surveys concerning Matongo Lutheran Theological College are stored in its separate archive room and library at the MLTC. The theses of previous students are located at the library. In addition to the archival material, the presentations of the International Confessional Lutheran Conferences at the MLTC should be mentioned. They are published in small booklets and found at the MLTC library: "We Believe, Teach and Confess", "The Theology of the Cross", "The Gospel is the Power of God", and "The Three Witnesses". In them, both missionaries and Kenyan leaders write about theological topics contemporary to the Church. The MLTC material is particularly important in forming an image of the theological development of the Church.

Each Mission Society has its archives, except for the World Mission Prayer League (WMPL)<sup>6</sup>. The Swedish Lutheran Mission archive is in Stockholm, the Swedish Lutheran Association of Finland (SLEAF) and the Lutheran Association of Finland (LEAF) archive in Helsinki, the Norwegian Lutheran Mission (NLM) archive in Oslo. They consist mainly of both official and personal letters, work reports, and missionary plans. The languages used are English, Kiswahili, Swedish, Finnish, Norwegian, Danish and Icelandic. These sources give information on how and to what extent the development of the Church happened from the viewpoints of missionaries. Through correspondence, it was

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<sup>6</sup> The WMPL Head office has no archive. MA, Email from Mike Koski 2.7.2019.



possible to access information, which was not found anywhere else. The official correspondence of senior executives are used to understand the interrelationship between the missions and the Kenyan Church, but also the differences between the Western and Kenyan cultures. Personal letters do contain mundane information as well. Via these an overall picture is mirrored from an everyday perspective associated with a strong flavor of the life lived.

Missionary performance is highlighted in many publications: *Bibeltrognä Vänner's Missionstidning* [Mission magazine of the Bible-believing friends] (SLM), *Hemåt* [On the way home] (SLEAF), *Kotimatkalla* [On the way home] (LEAF), *Salamu* [Greetings] (SLEAF), *Sanansaattaja* [The herald of the Lord] (LEAF), *Sändebudet* [The herald of the Lord] (SLEAF), *Ut i all verden* [Out into the world] (NLM), *Utsyn* [Viewpoint] (NLM), World Vision (WMPL). Each mission society also has its annual reports pitched at various levels, both published and unpublished. While focusing on the missionary achievements, these reports often convey a one-sided picture of the overall situation. Therefore, their use in this study is limited. In addition, quite a few former missionaries have their private archives.

## **Interviews**

In Africa, the events of history live in people's minds and are largely unrecorded. Thus, it is essential to encounter African people face to face. Otherwise, the reality of their history would remain hidden. The African memory data is therefore particularly important. For this study, it was accessed through interviews conducted by the researcher between 2014 and 2020, which are kept in his private archive.

The interviewees comprise 56 Kenyan Church employees and active congregational members as well as 37 Western missionaries. The interviewees were selected according to both their responsibilities and their area of work. Their level of education had facilitated their selection for these positions. This being the case, they had a readiness to communicate information at an adequate level. The interviews followed an open-interview format. The interviewees were free to talk about their work. Open questions were used to uncover those issues especially important to the interviewee. Clarifying questions were added to ensure sufficient understanding. Most of the interviews were conducted at the interviewees' homes or workplaces. Eleven of these were done over the phone. The information obtained in the interviews has been repeatedly checked with the help of other interviews and, whenever possible, other sources.

The interviewees brought with them information inaccessible from other sources. They revealed that some matters, which were self-evident to Kenyans, were completely unknown to missionaries and vice versa. The aim was thus to seek to close these gaps and move towards a mutual understanding. This researcher has sought to humbly engender an open and respectful attitude to the Kenyan way of thinking even when it was difficult to understand from a Western perspective. It remains for others to assess whether this was achieved

in any small measure. In any case, all the interviewees expressed their gratitude for being heard. Some even felt that this was the first time this had happened.

Collecting sources has taken time, energy, and money. However, it has been rewarding. Seeing places and people face to face has added depth and historical focus. Realizing, that history is alive has inspired the researcher. As obvious as it is, we, the people of the present moment, are a part of history.

## Terminology

Some concepts and terms need further clarification. Particularly, an understanding of certain theological terms is essential in describing the development in the Church. Thus, some of those relevant to this study are briefly highlighted and their significance illustrated.

**Conservative** Christianity is a term used to describe groups and movements that prioritize traditional Christian beliefs and practices. Conservative theology is an "umbrella term" that encompasses these movements of Christianity. In this study, *conservative* refers to the biblical-confessional theology that included the legacy of Luther, Orthodoxy, and Pietism. Orthodox-Pietist Lutheranism, i.e., **confessional Lutheranism**, does not dispute the historicity of Christianity but instead regards the Bible as a divine revelation with authority in the Christian Church. Therefore, the Doctrines and Creeds of Christianity are considered truths regardless of the stages of history. **Liberal** Christianity, on the other hand, could be regarded as an attempt to be an alternative to conservative theology but also to atheistic rationalism. In a popular debate, this term is used loosely, but in the present study, it refers to the classical liberal theological school of German origin, which had a great influence on Protestant theology, especially since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to it, liberal theology seeks to reinterpret and reform the original Christian teaching by taking into consideration modern knowledge, science, and ethics, emphasizing the authority of individual reason and experience. It attaches importance to the historical-critical study of the Bible and critically assesses the dogmatic principles of the early Church, which were seen to have been exposed to Hellenistic influences.

**High-Church** and **low-Church** terms originate from the life of the Church of England, the Anglican Church. The true Lutheran high-Church movement was born in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Germany and Sweden under the influence of confessional Lutheranism, Anglo-Catholicism, and the so-called liturgical movement. Gunnar Rosendal's book, *Kyrklig förnyelse* [Church Reform, 1935] is considered the programmatic announcement of the Nordic high-Church movement. According to Rosendal, high-Church theology emphasizes the recognition of the Church, the sacraments, the ministry, the liturgy, and doctrinal continuity. High-Church Lutheranism has often been (especially in Scandinavian Churches) a theologically orthodox revival movement, at least among the clergy, with a strong ecclesiology, standing in opposition to State Church or "Folk Church" ideologies.

Quite early in Lutheranism, the influence of the Reformed tradition and later the Pietistic movement in the 17th century moved the Lutheran Church in a direction that would be considered "low-Church" by Anglican standards. Together with rationalism, Pietism led not only to the simplification or even elimination of certain ceremonial (liturgical) elements, such as the use of vestments but also to the less frequent celebration of the Eucharist. In everyday language, this term refers to flexibility in liturgy and emphasis on lay leadership rather than on a Church hierarchy of pastors and bishops. In both the Lutheran and Pietist traditions, high- and low-Church practices also appear to be mixed.

**Justification** in Christian theology means God's righteous act that removes human guilt and punishment from sin by declaring the unjust righteous, through faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice. This doctrine became a theological turning point that separated the Lutheran and Reformed Protestant traditions from Roman Catholicism during the Reformation. Disagreements over the means of justification gave birth to countless atonement theories within Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant theologies. These disagreements culminated in the question of the participation of the human will in salvation. Following St. Augustine, until the Reformation, Western theologians had generally thought that justification was also influenced by man's own will. This view was largely the same as well in the post-Reformation Pietistic tradition. However, as one of the key issues in the Reformation, Martin Luther sharply rejected this teaching, arguing that the Apostle Paul denied human participation in the process of salvation. The justification was entirely the work of God. Accordingly, Article IV of the *Augsburg Confession* notes that "men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Romans 3 and 4."<sup>7</sup>

In Lutheran theology, **Objective** (universal) **justification**<sup>8</sup> refers to the universality of God's atoning act: Jesus died for the whole world. The question of whether the world could be called righteous on this basis has sometimes provoked heated debate among Lutheran revivalism. **Subjective justification** means that the benefits of God's verdict of "not guilty" are obtained and possessed through faith.

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<sup>7</sup> Vainio 2004 shows how the development of the doctrine of justification in 16th-century Lutheranism was a long and multidimensional process. Although, there were different interpretations of the doctrine itself, a common feature for all of them was the idea that Christ's mercy was the foundation of justification rather than human deeds.

<sup>8</sup> "By his vicarious active and passive obedience Christ has paid the sins of all men and God accepting this payment, has in his heart forgiven all sin of all men. There is not a soul in the whole world which God has not already absolved from all sin. This is called objective or universal justification." Koehler 1952, 14.

**Lutheran revivalism** is a form of a religious activity that manifests itself in revivals, a reawakening of faith or renewal of commitment to religion. It is characterized by an emphasis on the authority of the Bible as well as a personal conversion. The aim is to make Christianity more popular and more influential both individually and collectively. Religious fervor within Lutheran groups, Churches, or communities is renewed through Gospel-motivated outreach. This type of religious movement was represented by all the mission societies working in connection with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya.

**Nationalism** is an ideology and movement that promotes the interests of a particular nation or a group of people to gain and maintain the nation's sovereignty (self-governance) over its homeland. It aims to build and maintain a single national identity, based on shared social characteristics of culture, ethnicity, geographic location, language, politics, religion, traditions, and belief, and to promote national unity or solidarity. It encourages pride in national achievements and is closely linked to patriotism. Nationalism can be combined with diverse political goals and ideologies such as conservatism or socialism. In practice, it can be seen as positive or negative depending on context and individual outlook. The impact of nationalism on Kenya's independence process was significant. This was also reflected in the Churches and their development.

**Self-esteem** encompasses beliefs about oneself as well as emotional states, such as triumph, despair, pride, and shame. Those who have good self-esteem respect themselves. Alongside nationalism, this term is central to the understanding of the research assignment. In the development of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, the issue of self-esteem appeared to be among the driving forces.

## 1.3 The African Context

### 1.3.1 Africa and Christianity

North Africa, Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia were home to the early Christian Church, which grew steadily up to the seventh century. After this, she decreased rapidly due to the spread of Islam. The last Christian villages in North Africa seem to have disappeared in the fifteenth century. Upon arriving in the sixteenth century there were only two Christian Churches alive, the Coptic Church in Egypt and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.<sup>9</sup>

In the 16th century, Portugal became a maritime power. Congo-Angola, Mozambique and Mombasa became territories under its control. Fort Jesus was built in present-day Mombasa between 1593 and 1595. The chapel inside its

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<sup>9</sup> Hildebrandt 1987, 25–30, 32–37. In this context, no attempt is made to present in detail the position of Christianity in Africa, but only to provide an overview of the complex course of events. See for more information, e.g., Sundkler and Steed 2000.

walls was one of the first Christian Churches in the whole area. Portugal lost the battle for domination of the Mombasa region in the early 18th century but ruled Angola, and Mozambique until the mid-20th century.<sup>10</sup> In the early spread of Christianity, the Portuguese did not achieve significant victories. Sahlberg explains the failures of the Portuguese mission work: Portuguese were more interested in trade than in mission, they practiced tyrannical rule through the slave trade, lacked cultural sensitivity and a desire to integrate into African culture, had mass baptisms, and did not rely on national leaders.<sup>11</sup>

Protestant Christians began to take an interest in Africa from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the rise of the English and Dutch sea powers. On a large scale, this interest materialized in the late 19th century, when spiritual revivals in both Europe and North America aroused growing interest in world mission. Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Lutherans, etc. now left for Africa in increasing numbers. Politically, Africa was divided among European rulers at the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885. Even religious spread then largely took place according to this division: Congo became the base of the Catholic Church, despite its difficult colonial period under Belgium. The countries surrounding Congo formed her main areas of influence in Africa. The Anglican Church found her base in the former British colonies, avoiding the French-speaking regions, which strongly defended their own territories. Lutheranism was best rooted in the German-ruled areas. Elsewhere in Africa, except for Ethiopia and Madagascar, its overall impact has been limited.<sup>12</sup>

The independence of the African colonies began in the 1950s, with Libya and Ghana being the first. Most African states had gained independence by the late 1970s. The unexpected spread of political independence surprised Western rulers who were not ready for the new situation. Eventually, they relinquished their power, but at times it required intense encounters and struggle. At the same time, independence also took place on the front lines of Christianity. Missionary Churches got their national leaders, African Independent Churches survived and grew completely without foreign guidance, and Pentecostalism with its African prophets activated ever-growing crowds.<sup>13</sup> Christianity was rooted throughout sub-Saharan Africa as the only real challenger to Islam. The triumph of Islam had stalled on a line where Christians no longer withdrew by renouncing their faith. This conscious commitment to Christianity became the power of African Christianity leading to active evangelism and missionary outreach.<sup>14</sup> Africa, which had previously been the subject of a Christian mission, had now itself become its ambassador.

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<sup>10</sup> Barret 1973, 29, Baur 1994, 86–91.

<sup>11</sup> Sahlberg 1986, 13 ff.

<sup>12</sup> Anderson 1977, 105 ff, Baur 1994, 215–260, Simojoki 2016, 103–113.

<sup>13</sup> Meyer 2004, 447–474, Stanley 2004, 52–83.

<sup>14</sup> Hildebrandt 1996, 38–42.

### 1.3.2 Postcolonialism in Review

The postcolonial theory deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies and with those societies' responses. The study of the controlling power represented in colonized societies began in the 1950s with the work of Frantz Fanon and reached its climax in the late 1970s with Edward Said's *Orientalism*, often credited as the founding text of the postcolonial theory. The term "postcolonial" per se was first used in literary studies such as *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) referring to cultural interactions within colonial societies. Postcolonial theory has taken many different shapes and iterations over the years, but all of them share a fundamental claim: the world we inhabit cannot be understood except in relation to the history of imperialism and colonial rule. Despite frequent criticism from outside as well as within the field, the postcolonial theory remains one of the key forms of critical humanistic interrogation in the world of academia.

In general, there is a consensus in accord with the strong claims of postcolonial theory that colonialism disrupted and even destroyed traditional social, cultural, economic, and political structures in Africa. In Kenya alone, a unique type of political and social structure, containing many of the features of democracy prevailed before the advent of colonialism.<sup>15</sup> Robert Maxon, professor of history, points out some of the effects of colonialism that remained influential in postcolonial Kenya: a centralized administration led by an "imperial presidency", racial segregation, a security apparatus with an expanded police force, huge bureaucracy, the censorship of the press, the violation of basic human rights and civil liberties, corruption, ethnic politics and electoral system, the skewed structure of the economy, federalism.<sup>16</sup> The direct impact of colonialism on Kenyan society was astonishingly substantial and according to Maxon, mainly negative.

One can argue, however, that despite all the negatives, colonialism also had its positive side. It had a substantial impact on the modern development of Africa through the formation of administrative, and governmental structures, the building of educational and health institutions and the improvement of infrastructures such as transport and communication systems. Furthermore, in all this development, religion played a major role. The political history of Africa was indeed strongly influenced by Christian missions and missionaries. Thus religion, for good or worse, also has to be considered as one of the powers behind colonialism.

J.H. Sindima names missions as one of the "agencies of the colonial machinery". By this, he refers to the relationship, which often prevailed between the missions and the governmental administration in the colonies. Missionaries were important to governments for many reasons: to legitimize

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<sup>15</sup> Ludeki 2007, 235–242.

<sup>16</sup> Maxon 2013, 1–37

colonial rule, to mediate with the Kenyan population and those in power, to educate people for the service of government, to maintain schools and health care, etc. In turn, the government provided security for the missionaries and missions. The government and Church often shared the same goal: to educate African people “through true religion and principles of civilization”.<sup>17</sup>

A much more contradictory picture emerges when evaluating colonialism in political and sociological terms. First, through Church activities, missionaries became involved in the country’s political struggle as important actors. Missions became thus not simply the allies of the authorities but also users of their power. This led to unnecessary and devastating power struggles within the Churches. Second, Churches became actively involved in ethnic politics and the establishment of fixed ethnic identities. The division of Africa in accord with Western ambitions in the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885 was the starting point for this development. Ethnic categories became the basis for the colonial administration and influenced the future development of independent governments. This resulted in increasing ethnic conflicts. Third, the Churches provided not only spiritual resources for converts but also economic and cultural resources, so that the converts benefited from education and health care. Many of them were eventually even employed by the Churches. The fight for these resources created power struggles and distorted spiritual activity in many Churches.<sup>18</sup>

Colonialism also played a decisive role in the transformation of Africa’s leadership structure, which shifted from local chiefs to Western authorities. Traditional leaders had to submit to the new rulers, thereby losing most of their power in the communities. The African lifestyle, where leaders, people, religion, and everyday life all belonged together, was now changing according to Western priorities. Personal well-being took precedence over the community. This was also reflected in an understanding of religion mainly as a personal matter. The natural and mutually beneficial relationship between leaders and their people no longer supported everyday life.<sup>19</sup> The era of postcolonialism came face-to-face with a leadership crisis. Although a Western leadership style did not fit in Africa, its effects had come to stay. With only a few exceptions, many African leaders followed Western priorities and for the sake of power were willing to strive for personal well-being instead of the good of their people, thus forgetting the opposite ideals of both their ancestors and their new Christian faith. Communities, in turn, were no longer able to control their leaders, who were corrupted by power. All of this had a devastating effect on African society.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Sindima 1998, 1–3.

<sup>18</sup> Samarin 1966, 288–297, Van der Veer 1996, 1–21, Longman 2001, 163–186.

<sup>19</sup> Afeke 2002, 109–113, Masango 2003, 316–318.

<sup>20</sup> Masango 2003, 318–320. Zambia’s first President, Kenneth Kaunda, established a working relationship between the tribal chiefs and his government. Afeke 2002, 4, 136–141, 150–151.

In Africa, religion and society are inseparable forces. Life is viewed as a whole, encompassing everything related to it, a God-relationship as well as earthly matters. A Western modern attempt to explain everything based on individualistic or purely on scientific assumptions does not do justice to the African context, where “every individual is immersed in religious participation starting before birth and continuing even after death”.<sup>21</sup> Colonialism affected all of African society, including the Churches, which were hoped to serve as shelters in a society that no longer felt like home. After colonialism, many African countries developed into much more Christian countries than before. This was not because whites were so eager for it, but because Africans themselves wanted to see God as part of life. UHURU meant to them not only freedom from colonial rule but also the freedom to profess their faith in Almighty God.

### 1.3.3 Mission Theological Insights

In the mid-19th century, the spread of Christianity in Africa was in full swing. In addition to proclaiming the Gospel, the missions established schools, hospitals, and other institutions led and governed by themselves. The American Rufus Anderson (1796–1880) and the Englishman Henry Venn (1796–1873) now introduced a program of “three-selves” to give birth to Churches that would be “self-propagating, self-supporting and self-governing”. This vision inspired several generations of missionaries, especially those sent by Anglo-American Protestant denominations in the 19th and early 20th centuries.<sup>22</sup> However, few missions were able to break free from the burden of colonialism, reflecting paternalistic or even racist attitudes. Despite the rhetorical goal of giving birth to independent Churches, only very few Africans were accepted into leadership positions.<sup>23</sup>

The Lutheran World Federation Conference of 1974 in Nairobi discussed the statement of the Ethiopian Church Mekane Yesus, which strongly criticized the missionary and developmental nature of Western Churches. Ethiopians did not understand the Western distinction between development projects and evangelism. In mission work, everything was to serve the main mission, to bring the Gospel message forward. This was best accomplished through a holistic encounter with man. The mission was to support this teaching assignment of the Church in every possible way.<sup>24</sup> The strong statement of the Ethiopians aroused reflection on the actual motive and nature of mission work.

In the 1970s, the dominance of Western culture began to be questioned. At the same time, the relationship between faith and culture became the focus of attention. The message had to be made understandable in its context. This shift

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<sup>21</sup> Omolo 1997, 14.

<sup>22</sup> Anderson 1988, 98–118, Harris 2004, 61–85.

<sup>23</sup> Stanley 2004, 52–83.

<sup>24</sup> Ahonen 2000, 267–269. See chapter “Paternalistic Guidance”.



in focus gave birth to countless new methods and terms, especially among evangelical denominations: *Contextualization* refers to the active formulation of a message to make it more attractive to potential converts, *indigenization* describes the sending of a general message in a locally comprehensible form, *inculturation* means an open process of interaction in which old and new forms merge into synthesis.<sup>25</sup> The concept of "transformation" becomes important in the 1990s. It was brought up by David Bosch (1929–1992) in his work: *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Through his Paradigm theory, Bosch explores missionary dynamics in the light of the New Testament and Church history. He argues that context had always influenced the task in both good and evil. God's mission (*Missio Dei*) aims for holistic change in people, communities, and social structures.<sup>26</sup> Like Martin Kähler, Bosch considers mission to be the "mother of theology".<sup>27</sup> Warren Newberry adds a new triad to the classic Anderson-Venn goal: a viable indigenous Church should be "self-theologizing, self-missionizing, and self-caring."<sup>28</sup> Paul G. Hiebert introduces the concept of "worldview". His model of "critical contextualization", one of the most commonly cited models in evangelical dissertations, describes the process of understanding and evaluating cultural practices in the light of biblical teaching.<sup>29</sup> These are just a few examples of the ever-increasing interest in missiology. Through them, it can be seen that the focus had shifted from the actual Christian message to the way it was conveyed.

The key to Africa's opening up to Christianity was the biblical mission. Initially, mission societies and missionaries from abroad were needed. The real breakthrough in rooting took place when missionaries withdrew from leadership and made room for changes that were close to Africans, growing and thriving on their initiative. The missiological challenge of this Christian victory, however, was to take into account the eternal dimensions of the Christian message: Life does not reach its fulfillment until the future in heaven through Jesus Christ. Like the Ethiopians in the 1970s, one may have to ask: was mission work during postcolonialism still focused on the Gospel or other priorities such as worldly prosperity?

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<sup>25</sup> Ahonen 2000, 179–184, Moreau 2005, 321–348. The nature and objectives of contextuality have been thoroughly elucidated in many studies, like Kraft 1979, Luzbetak 1988, Taber 1991, Bevans 1992, Hiebert 1994, Shreiter 1997.

<sup>26</sup> For this, see Bosch 1991. Bosch's monumental work has been criticized for its small Third World contribution as well as for forgetting the poor. Nor, according to the critics, does it adequately address the importance of families and communities or the issue of power. The intensifying effect of Pentecostalism is also lacking. Matthew Michael further argues that despite his efforts to the contrary, Bosch did not reach the true African perspective. Michael 2014, 79–98.

<sup>27</sup> Bosch 1991, 16.

<sup>28</sup> Newberry 2005, 95–115.

<sup>29</sup> For this, see Hiebert 2008.

## 1.4 Kenya of East Africa

### 1.4.1 Geography and People



Illustration: Map of Kenya. AKA.

Kenya is located in East Africa at the Equator. It is bordered by Tanzania to the South, Uganda to the West, South Sudan and Ethiopia to the North, and Somalia to the East. The Indian Ocean lies in the South-East. Kenya, with a surface area of 580,367 square kilometers, encompasses a wide range of climate zones: desert, highlands, lakes, savannah, coast, and mountains. Along the coast, the climate is tropical. This means rainfall and temperatures are higher throughout the year. The further one goes to the interior of Kenya, the arider it becomes. Although Kenya is centered at the Equator, it shares the seasons of the southern hemisphere: with the warmest summer months in December–March and the coolest winter months in June–August. The population in 1968 was just over ten million (by 1996 almost 28 million), comprising over 50 different ethnic groups. These can be classified into three different linguistic groups: Bantu (67%), Nilotic (30%), and Cushitic (3%). The Kikuyu (22%) was the largest ethnic group followed by Luhya (14%), Luo (13%), Kalenjin (12%), Kamba

(11%), Kisii (6%), and Meru (6%). The six largest ethnic groups comprise about half the Kenyan population.<sup>30</sup>

Each ethnic group had a solid social structure led by regional ethnic leaders or elders in the community. Cohesiveness was maintained by rites of adulthood. Through them, ethnic members achieved the socially accepted age group, which was highly valued. Being part of a community meant safety. In the Kenyan community, it was impossible to live alone. A Kenyan family did not only mean a core family but also included grandparents, aunts, and uncles with their families. People supported one another. Especially the elderly were highly valued because of their life experience. Traditionally, every Kenyan family owned a small "shamba" [field] which was enough for their use. Corn, millet, rice, sweet and British potatoes, cassava, coffee, and tea were grown. In addition, many had some domestic animals, cows, goats, sheep, chickens, and donkeys. Breeding cattle was important especially among the Maasai, who believed that God had given all cattle to their care. The new era, with its industrialization, the migration to the cities, and the increase in education, began to shatter family communities and bring about a flavor of rootlessness, especially among the young generation.<sup>31</sup>

Nairobi was founded in 1899 on the Athi River in the south of the country, 1700 meters above sea level. It quickly grew to replace Mombasa as the capital of Kenya, this happening in 1907. Nairobi is Kenya's commercial center. Already during the colonial period, it was a center for the colony's coffee, tea, and sisal industry. After independence in 1963, it became the capital of the Republic of Kenya.<sup>32</sup> At that time, Nairobi had about 300,000 residents (by 1996 almost two million); Mombasa, the oldest and second-largest city had about 200,000 (by 1996 almost 500,000), Nakuru 40,000 (by 1996 almost 200,000), and Kisumu, as an inland port on Lake Victoria, had 25,000 residents (by 1996 almost 200,000).<sup>33</sup>

One of the most significant sources of income for the state is tourism. Kenya has a considerable land area devoted to wildlife, where the "Big Five", the lion, leopard, buffalo, rhinoceros, and elephant, can be found. The annual migration of a million wild animals occurs between June and September, attracting valuable foreign tourism. Two million wildebeests migrate 2,900 kilometers from the Serengeti in neighboring Tanzania to the Masai Mara in Kenya. This migration is listed among the Seven Natural Wonders of Africa.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Wienecke-Janzen 2009, 166–167, Norrback 1973, 11–16.

<sup>31</sup> Norrback 1973, 36–45, Sääksi 1977, 52–58, 68–72.

<sup>32</sup> Wienecke-Janzen 2009, 169. The continuous expansion of Nairobi angered the Maasais, as the city was destroying their land to the South. It also angered the Kikuyus, who wanted the land returned to them. This friction had connections to the Mau Mau Uprising. For Mau Mau, see Bethwell and Ochieng' 1995, Odhiambo and Lonsdale 2003.

<sup>33</sup> [Http://populstat.info/Africa/kenyat.htm](http://populstat.info/Africa/kenyat.htm). Accessed 02.03.2020.

<sup>34</sup> Davies 2007, 168–177.

Independent Kenya adopted a constitution that provided the freedom of religion and belief, including the freedom to manifest any religion through worship, practice, teaching, or observance. At the time of independence, more than half of the population was Christian, this increasing by 4% per annum.<sup>35</sup> Christianity had a huge impact on the Kenyan people, who were positive, friendly, and social in life. Almost all of them relied on God's guidance. Many of them were poor by a white man's measure, but rich in heart. Family played a major role in life. Fellowship with friends and relatives was highly valued. Time was tied to this moment, which was the most meaningful thing in one's life. The future was not much considered.<sup>36</sup> In Kenya, even the white man felt at home.

#### 1.4.2 Political Development

The European and Arab presence in Mombasa dates to the Early Modern period, but the actual European invasion of Kenya did not take place until the 1890s. The British Empire established the East Africa Protectorate in 1895, from 1920 onwards known as the Kenya Colony. The Legislative Council of Kenya, the legislature of Kenya between 1907 and 1963, consisted at first solely of persons of European descent. Eliud Mathu became the first Kenyan member in 1944. Up to the 1950s, many British settlers moved to Kenya to cultivate the best agricultural areas of the region.<sup>37</sup> From the beginning of the colonial period, it seemed clear that the British intended to establish a "white man's country".

Kenya's first steps towards independence and freedom – **Uhuru** – can be traced back to the early 1920s. It was yet only after World War II that the yearning for freedom became so intense that it forced indigenous Kenyans to start fighting for it. The struggle for Uhuru was long and arduous. It also affected missions and Churches. While the East-African revival movement proclaimed spiritual change in the Christian lives through repentance, the strong opposition movement Mau Mau, attempted change by literally fighting for it. Both movements drifted into conflict with each other. Their confrontation in the 1950s was bitter. The Mau Mau included racial hatred, rebellion against the government, violence against dissidents, and as well anti-Christian features, such as giving the Kenyan leader, Jomo Kenyatta, Messianic referential. The Mau Mau was a turning point for colonialism, and it also affected on Christian Churches. Especially the Anglican and Presbyterian Churches were forced to take big steps toward Africanization, with other Churches following their example. The Mau Mau Uprising had already ended when Kenya became an independent state on 12 December 1963.<sup>38</sup> The era of colonialism was over.

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<sup>35</sup> Wienecke-Janzen 2009, 166–167, Sääksi 1977, 123–131.

<sup>36</sup> Sääksi 1977, 63–75, 125–127.

<sup>37</sup> For the history of Kenya, see Ochieng' 1985.

<sup>38</sup> Anderson 1977, 128–134, Baur 1994, 480–481. The Mau Mau had two sides: on the one hand, it was a Kikuyu movement but, on the other, a national liberation movement. Mandani 1996, 189. In the scientific world, there are disagreements about its true impact on Kenyan society.

Nationalism was the driving force behind the Mau Mau. It was tempered by a desire to get rid of both colonialism and the injustices of subjugation. It evolved primarily from Kikuyus' dissatisfaction with colonial policies. The Mau Mau was a radical movement with violent behavior. Although it represented the negative side of nationalism, it positively furthered Kenya's struggle for independence. Nationalism was thus a necessary ingredient in the development of independence in Kenya as in many other African countries. This development rested on the nationally inspired people and their leaders, whose desire was to promote their nation politically, economically, and socio-culturally. The "Mau Mau Chief"<sup>39</sup> Jomo Kenyatta, the first president of the independent Republic of Kenya, was a charismatic leader, who led his people into a new era with a vision:

All the Africans were in slavery, all wanted to fight for Uhuru, all waited for freedom. We should always remember this [...] As long as we live together as we now do, our responsibility is to maintain UHURU because there are many who would like to spoil everything for us.<sup>40</sup>

Kenyatta himself was not enthusiastic about the Mau Mau movement and condemned the violence it used. However, he was practically forced to join it as otherwise he would not have maintained power in the country. "If Kenyatta had continued to denounce the Mau Mau, we would have denounced him. He would have lost his life," Fred Kubai<sup>41</sup> explained.<sup>42</sup>

Together with his party, the Kenya African National Union (KANU), Kenyatta shared a noble vision. They rejected both Western capitalism and Eastern communism but instead strove for African socialism. This would guarantee full and equal political rights for all citizens, rich and poor alike. Kenyatta encouraged his people to work together for the Nation's better future. This vision culminated in "Harambee [doing together]", which became his famous slogan. However, Kenyatta's dream was never realized. Instead, Kenya continued on the path prepared during the colonial era: authoritarian rule, centralization of power, lack of a truly representative and accountable government, economic statism, underdevelopment and social inequality of wealth, ethnic origin, gender, and race. During Kenyatta's time, respect for

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<sup>39</sup> The Mau Mau wanted to own Kenyatta by giving him this honor.

<sup>40</sup> Were and Amutabi 2000, 1–17. "It is beyond our comprehension to see how a people can reach a 'higher level' while they are denied the most elementary human rights of self-expression, freedom of speech, the right to form social organizations, to improve their condition, and, above all, the right to move freely in their own country. These are the rights which the Gikuyu people had enjoyed from time immemorial until the arrival of the 'mission' of Great Britain." Kenyatta 1938, 197.

<sup>41</sup> Fred Kubai (1917–June 1, 1996) was one of the Kapenguria Six of the Kenya African Union arrested in 1952, tried and imprisoned. He was a Kikuyu, and a leader of the Kenya Transport Workers Union and the East African Trade Union Congress. Kubai organized attacks against the government in Nairobi. In May 1950, he was tried and acquitted of the assassination attempt of a city official. On 22 October 1952, Fred Kubai, together with Bildad Kaggia, Kung'u Karumba, Jomo Kenyatta, Paul Ngei, and Achieng Oneko, was charged with organizing the Mau Mau Uprising. Christenson 1991, 236.

<sup>42</sup> Meredith 2011, 84–85.

human and civil rights took second place to security and development. Corruption and corrupt practices dating back to colonial times intensified.<sup>43</sup> As early as 1967, the book *“Not Yet Uhuru”* of the former Vice-President Oginga Odinga, foretold darkening clouds for the future.<sup>44</sup>

Kenyatta’s ruling elite seized power by all means. The opposition was repressed, restricted, arrested, and imprisoned.<sup>45</sup> Kenyan journalist Pio Gama Pinto, one of the main supporters of Vice-President Oginga Odinga, was assassinated on 24 February 1965. On 5 July 1969, the same tragedy befell a young opposition politician, Tom Mboya<sup>46</sup>. Six years later, Kenyan socialist Josiah Mwangi Kariuki was murdered on March 2, 1975. He had challenged Kenyatta by speaking on behalf of the impoverished Kikuyu – those who had not accumulated wealth as had the Kikuyu elite. Many Kenyans blamed the Kenyatta administration for these political murders and were unable to forgive their President.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the dark side of the Kenyatta era, he was valued by many Kenyans as the father of the country. His sudden death of 22 August 1978 touched the whole nation. The official mourning period lasted a month. Many left their last farewells beside his coffin. All the Churches in Kenya prayed for peace.<sup>48</sup> This was true of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya as well.<sup>49</sup> Under Kenyatta, the Christian Churches were largely free to operate as long as they did not criticize the ruler. As a result, apart from the Anglican Church, they did not make political statements. Naturally, everyone wanted to enjoy the benefits of those in power. For this reason, corruption was intense among the Churches and affected society as a whole.<sup>50</sup>

In Kenya, as in many other African countries, liberation from colonial powers meant killings, prison, and concentration camps. This created deep wounds in African society. The first president of independent Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, also maintained his power through violence, creating bitterness in his opponents. Although the country was united, true national unity was overshadowed by political and ethnic differences. Kenyatta’s attitude to shared “suffering without

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<sup>43</sup> Maxon 2013, 1–37.

<sup>44</sup> Odinga O. 1967. For Odinga, see Meredith 2011, 266–268.

<sup>45</sup> “Throughout the period 1966–1969, the KANU government used all means at its disposal to intimidate, harass and silence the KPU (Kenya People’s Union) leaders and members – verbally, through false allegations of subversion, with violence, and ultimately through the use of detention without trial.” Odinga R. 2015, 46.

<sup>46</sup> “It was widely believed that the assassination was the work of interests determined to prevent Mboya’s possible succession to the presidency on Kenyatta’s death.” Odinga R. 2015, 48.

<sup>47</sup> Branch 2012, 44–47, 61–65, 75–81, 110–120, Ochieng’ 2013, 60–65.

<sup>48</sup> “We all adored the Father-Founder-President of our Nation, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta. He was a caring father to us.” Daily Nation 5555/1978 and 5556/1978. “This very day our maid Rose Kerubo came crying to work.” MA, interview of Marjatta Arkkila 20.11.2018.

<sup>49</sup> See chapter “Moi Arouses Fear”.

<sup>50</sup> Branch 2012, 103–105.

bitterness”<sup>51</sup> gave the Kenyan people the possibility for a new start, however. One had to look ahead towards a common future. In addition, Kenyatta had a forgiving heart towards the white man.

### 1.4.3 Christian Mission Activity

Christian influence on the Kenyan coast began in 1498 with Vasco da Gama, who in Malindi baptized a group of women who were then abandoned by their husbands. These converts became the first Kenyan Christians. Between 1593–1595, the Fort Jesus was built in present-day Mombasa. The Chapel inside the walls was one of the first Christian churches in the whole area. The Portuguese failed to establish strong congregations and lost control of the area in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Christianity disappeared with the settlers.<sup>52</sup>

Ludwig Krapf (1810–1881) established the first Protestant mission in East Africa, Mombasa in 1844. This is widely regarded as the beginning of modern mission work in East Africa.<sup>53</sup> David Livingstone (1813–1873) came to Africa through Cape Town, South Africa, in 1840. His dream was to see the Gospel spread to southern and eastern Africa. He was also interested in finding the “source of Nile”. At Lake Tanganyika, the American explorer Henry Stanley (1841–1904) met Livingstone and after his death continued to explore Africa alone. Although Stanley was not exactly a missionary, he brought the Gospel to Buganda, located north of Lake Victoria. This news was enthusiastically received in Britain. Many missionaries were sent to the area. At the turn of the 1870s, the rulers of the area began fighting against Christians. King Kabaka Mwanga II (reign 1884–1897) expelled the missionaries, insisting Christian converts abandon their faith on pain of torture or death. Many people were killed. These “Uganda martyrs” became the seed of a great revival that eventually led to the founding of the Church of Uganda in 1897.<sup>54</sup>

The establishment of the British East Africa Protectorate in 1895<sup>55</sup> and the construction of the “Ugandan Railway” (Mombasa in 1895, reaching Nairobi in 1899 and Kisumu 1901) provided an impetus for many missions enter the Kenya highlands and the Nyanza area. The missionaries came along with the British settlers. They concentrated in two areas: Western Kenya around Kisumu and central Kenya around Nairobi. Between these areas was the Rift Valley occupied by the Maasai and Kalenjin, who showed open hostility towards foreigners. The Luo and Luhya in the West were more open to Christianity. A total of twelve missions came in eleven years, three Catholic and nine

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<sup>51</sup> *Suffering without Bitterness* was the name of Kenyatta’s biography. Kenyatta 1968.

<sup>52</sup> Barrett 1973, 29, Baur 1994, 86–91. For Fort Jesus, see Kirkman 1974.

<sup>53</sup> See chapter “Influence of Lutheranism”.

<sup>54</sup> Baur 1994, 233–242, Hildebrandt 1996, 111–119, 128–131, 187–190.

<sup>55</sup> Unlike the French, Portuguese, and Belgians, the British did not favor only their national Church with special subsidies for schools and other work. Instead, they gave financial assistance and advice to other missions too. For example, the Roman Catholic Church in British Africa received the same assistance as did the Protestants. Hildebrandt 1996, 227.

Protestant. In 1924, the Kenya Missionary Council (Christian Council of Kenya, 1944) was established to represent the Protestant missions.<sup>56</sup> Throughout its colonial history, Kenya appeared to be a strong Protestant country.

At the time of independence, Kenya's most influential mission society was the Anglican Church Mission Society. As the other Churches mostly remained silent, her leaders set out to address maladministration. The Presbyterian Church of Scotland Mission gained popularity jointly with the political activity of the Kikuyu and President Jomo Kenyatta, who became one of her most famous converts. Methodists were the third traditional body from England, working especially among the Merus. The other six early mission societies came from America. The Africa Inland Mission was the basis out of which grew the Africa Inland Church – the spiritual home of President Daniel arap Moi – and the Gospel Mission Society. The remaining four societies concentrated on Western Kenya: The Church of God Mission, the Quaker Friends<sup>57</sup>, the Seventh Day Adventists (SDA)<sup>58</sup> and the Canadian Pentecostals.<sup>59</sup> The mission efforts were largely successful, gaining widespread support among Kenyans. However, issues of Kenyan culture and power struggles caused some complications. For example, among Kikuyus, the emergence of independent Churches withdrawn from the missions was fueled by the controversy over circumcision in the 1930s. There was also great concern over power issues. Along with the nationalism of African governments, the Churches strived for independence by opposing the colonialist aspirations of Western missionaries and missions.<sup>60</sup>

The revival, called the East African Revival, affected several East African countries, first Rwanda in 1928, then Uganda, Tanzania, and finally Kenya in 1937. In Tanzania, it had a strong influence on Lutherans. In Kenya, it became particularly strong among Anglicans of the Western region and Presbyterian and Anglican Kikuyus. Catholics rejected the revival because it was a Protestant movement that emphasized a personal form of salvation. The confession of sins and the purifying power of Jesus' blood were at the heart of its proclamation. Lay people became particularly active in evangelism. The revival primarily

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<sup>56</sup> Hildebrandt 1996, 229–231.

<sup>57</sup> On 23 April 1902, three Quaker friends sailed from New York to Mombasa. They moved by rail to Kisumu and then by foot to Kaimosi and set up a mission there in August. From that small beginning, Quakerism grew and spread throughout Kenya during the twentieth century, although it is still concentrated in the Western area. "Quakers and Peace in Africa" – Wikipedia. Accessed 05.04.2020.

<sup>58</sup> In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, between 1903 and 1905, the General Conference of the Seventh Day Adventists decided to send some missionaries to East Africa. They set foot in Mombasa, which was occupied by Muslims, moved to Nairobi by train, and proceeded to Kisumu. At Gendia, they built a church and an office and started to learn the native language, Dholuo. The first baptism of seventeen people happened in 1911. In 1912, a mission station was opened at Nyanchwa in Kisii. [kenyacurrent.com/history-sda-church-kenya](http://kenyacurrent.com/history-sda-church-kenya). Accessed 03.02.2020.

<sup>59</sup> Baur 1994, 254–259.

<sup>60</sup> Anderson 1977, 105 ff. Nationalism was the fundamental force behind the drive for independence in Africa. Were and Amutabi 2000, 1–17.



remained within the traditional Churches, although this was not always successful.<sup>61</sup>

From a Christian point of view, the period 1945–1960 in East Africa, could be considered as very bright. Hildebrandt mentions only two major times when the Gospel was strongly hindered during these years, namely the Mau Mau in Kenya (1952–1960) and the Arab-Muslim persecution in southern Sudan (1960–1970). Before 1960, many Churches were ruled by foreign mission societies, but after 1960 the major responsibility was upon the autonomous Churches to complete the task of evangelization. The first years of political independence, 1960–1975, were a time of Church growth and maturity, though challenged by severe persecution in some areas.<sup>62</sup> At the 1974 Lausanne Conference on Evangelism in Switzerland, Africa was considered a continent where Christianity “grew faster than anywhere else in the world”.<sup>63</sup>

#### 1.4.4 Influence of Lutheranism

The early work of the Protestant mission in East Africa began with the Lutheran pastor Johann Ludwig Krapf (1810–1881) from Germany. After working among the Oromo<sup>64</sup> people in Ethiopia from 1837 to 1842 under the Anglican Church Mission Society (CMS), Krapf moved to Kenya in 1844 to start a mission in Mombasa. After his first wife and daughter died from malaria, he proceeded to the higher grounds of Rabai<sup>65</sup> on the coastal hills. Here he wrote the first dictionary and grammar of the Kiswahili language. He also began studying other African languages, compiling dictionaries, and translating parts of the Bible. He went on to translate the whole New Testament, as well as the *Book of Common Prayer* in Kiswahili. In 1846, he was joined by another German Lutheran, Johannes Rebmann (1820–1876). Later, Krapf and Rebmann set out to explore the interior of East Africa and they were the first Europeans to see the snow-capped mountains of Kilimanjaro and Mount Kenya.<sup>66</sup>

European researchers did not appreciate Krapf. Apart from his translation work, he did not leave significant results behind: his Oromo mission failed, he did not achieve a large number of converts or other visible success. Instead, he

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<sup>61</sup> Baur 1994, 385–386, Hildebrandt 1996, 233–234. This revival also affected the LCK. Arkkila 2004, 23–27.

<sup>62</sup> Angola, Chad, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda (Idi Amin), Zaire. Hildebrandt 1987, 243.

<sup>63</sup> Baur 1994, 314–315, Hildebrandt 1996, 236–246.

<sup>64</sup> The Oromos are native to Ethiopia and Kenya. They speak the Oromo language, which is part of the Cushitic branch of the Afroasiatic language family. In Ethiopia, they are the largest ethnic group representing 34.5 % of its population. Oromos also have a notable presence in northern Kenya in the Marsabit, Isiolo, and Tana Counties. The sub-ethnic groups are Borana, Gabra, Orma, Sakuye, and Waata. Category: Ethnic groups in Kenya – Wikipedia. Accessed 10.08.2020.

<sup>65</sup> His house at Rabai is now part of Rabai Museum, one of the National Museums of Kenya. The building of the German Embassy at Nairobi is called "Ludwig-Krapf-House". Johann Ludwig Krapf – Wikipedia. Accessed 05.04.2020.

<sup>66</sup> Sundkler and Steed 2000, 510–518, Imberg 2008, 32–39.

was a pioneer with a special missionary view, and others followed him. As one indication of this, the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (SEM) began its work among the Ethiopian Oromo people in 1865. The Swedish Lutheran Mission (SLM), detached from the SEM, continued the Oromo work from 1911 onwards.<sup>67</sup> In addition to the Lutherans, Rune Imberg sees Krapf's influence as being connected to many different denominations in East Africa: the Anglicans<sup>68</sup>, the Methodists<sup>69</sup>, and even the Roman Catholics.<sup>70</sup> Imberg shows that Krapf had a significant influence on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya through the Swedish Lutheran Mission.

Between 1878 and 1900, colonial powers conquered almost the entire African continent. After the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, East Africa was divided between the British (Kenya, Uganda, and Sudan), the Germans (Tanganyika), and the Italians (Eritrea and Somalia). In some cases, colonial governments tried to hinder missionary evangelism, but in most cases, people were free to preach the Gospel.<sup>71</sup> This was particularly the case in the British and German-dominated areas. The positive atmosphere for Christianity led to the arrival of many mission societies. Several Lutheran mission societies entered East Africa, especially from Germany. For example, the Leipzig Mission<sup>72</sup> was engaged with the Kambas<sup>73</sup> and the North coast of Kenya since the late 1880s.<sup>74</sup> When World War II broke out, German Protestant missionaries in East Africa were interned and their communities were left without missionary help. Following that, Danish, Swedish and American<sup>75</sup> Lutherans entered the field.<sup>76</sup>

The Italian invasion in 1935 forced the Swedish Lutheran Mission to leave Ethiopia and they were now looking for an alternative mission field. Director Axel B. Svensson and Mr. Anton Jönsson arrived in Kenya on 4.2.1939. In

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<sup>67</sup> In 1898, the SEM started working in Jubaland, which at that time belonged to Kenya. At Marsabit, they were met by Wajir and Moyale soldiers of different ethnic groups. One of the Luo-soldiers, namely Gideon Magak, later became a Senior Chief in South Nyanza living in Oyugis. Magak advised the British District Commissioner to welcome the SLM to Kisii land. Imberg 2008, 43–46.

<sup>68</sup> The Anglican Church of Kenya counts Krapf as her founding father. For details, see Rabai to Mumias 1994.

<sup>69</sup> Methodists first came to Kenya in 1862 invited by Krapf. Hildebrandt 1987, 127.

<sup>70</sup> Imberg 2008, 20–23, 32–50.

<sup>71</sup> Hildebrandt 1987, 136–146.

<sup>72</sup> This mission differed from other German 19<sup>th</sup>-century mission organizations in three main ways. First, it had an Orthodox Lutheran theology. Second, it sent out well-trained missionaries, mostly theologians, and third, its goal was to create independent Churches of indigenous people (*Volkskirchen*). Groop 2006, 32.

<sup>73</sup> The Kamba people are Bantus who predominantly live in the area of Kenya stretching from Nairobi to Tsavo and north to Embu. This land is called *Ukambani*. They form the second largest ethnic group in 8 counties including Nairobi and Mombasa. They speak the Kikamba language. Category: Ethnic groups in Kenya – Wikipedia. Accessed 10.08.2020.

<sup>74</sup> Groop 2006, 39–40, Richter 1922, 612–615.

<sup>75</sup> After World War II, Lutheran Churches in America faced a reorientation in world missions. Nelson 1980, 492–494.

<sup>76</sup> Anderson 1977, 143.

Nairobi, the leaders of the Anglican Church and the African Inland Mission advised them to go to the Lake area among the Abagusii (Kisii) where no Protestant mission work yet existed. Only Roman Catholics and Seventh Day Adventists had been there since the turn of the century. In Kisii, the delegates met the chiefs from three areas: Wanjare, Kitutu, and Nyaribari. The outcome of these meetings was favorable, and the Swedish missionaries were welcomed to all three locations. The most welcoming response came from Wanjare, where even a plot for the mission work was immediately offered. Matters developed rapidly. The title deed for this plot was signed on 28 February 1939. Already in April 1939, the Swedish Lutheran Mission decided to start work in Kenya. However, because of the Second World War, these plans did not come to fruition until January 1948 when the first SLM missionaries, Martin and Gunborg Lundström, moved to Kenya.<sup>77</sup>

Martin Lundström held his first Kiswahili sermon at Wanjare marketplace on 25 July 1948. He preached on Revelation 3:20, about Jesus standing at the door, knocking.<sup>78</sup> Today, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya considers this date as her birthday.

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<sup>77</sup> Imberg 2008, 52–77.

<sup>78</sup> BVMT 130/1948.

# I. Kenyan or Western Church? 1968–1980

## 2. Inspired by National Self-Esteem

Central to Kenya's independence process – inspired by nationalism – was the desire to secede from former rulers. The Kenyans wanted to take care of their own affairs. They were ready to fight for it. Uhuru was achieved through suffering. The process of the independence of the Lutheran Church of Kenya closely followed the aspirations for freedom of the Kenyan nation, to the extent that both achieved independence in the same year, in 1963. Nor did the freedom of the Church happen without pain.

### 2.1 A Kenyan-Led Church

#### 2.1.1 The Leadership before 1968

The first Swedish Lutheran missionaries Martin and Gunborg Lundström arrived in Kenya on 14 January 1948, moving first to Kisii-town, then proceeding to Itierio. Already on 25 July 1948, Martin Lundström preached in Kiswahili at the Suneka market, just a few hundred meters from the mission compound. The sermon was translated into Ekegusii by his close colleague, Clement Nyandara. Ever after, he preached at this market every Sunday. There were a lot of people there because Seventh Day Adventists, predominant in the area, had introduced Sundays as market days among the Kisii<sup>79</sup>, considering Saturdays as holy days. Lundströms were followed by Enok and Magda Salomonsson in August 1948, Anna-Brita Albertson in 1950, K.G. Ohlsson and Kerstin Eriksson (Andersson) in 1954, Valborg Peterson (Löfgren) and Irene Rinkelo (Ohlsson) in 1956.<sup>80</sup>

Mission work in Itierio progressed rapidly. The first school was started in 1949. The small clinic opened in 1951. The first public baptism of 17 men and one woman, who was confirmed, took place on 23 December 1951. Itierio

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<sup>79</sup> The Abagusii are an ethnic group that traditionally inhabits the Kisii and Nyamira counties of western Kenya. They speak Ekegusii. According to the 1979 census, Kisii District had a population of 588,000 increasing to 2.2 million in the Census of 2009. The Abagusii are regarded as one of the most economically active communities in Kenya, with tea estates, coffee, and banana groves. Kisii district is one of the most densely populated areas in Kenya after Nairobi and Mombasa and the most densely populated rural area. It has some of the highest fertility and population growth rates in Kenya and is among the highest in the entire world. As a result of this, they can be found virtually in any part of Kenya and beyond. In Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, Eldoret, Kisumu, and many other towns in Kenya they run many businesses, like “matatu [minibus]”-business. Category: Ethnic groups in Kenya – Wikipedia. Accessed 10.05.2020.

<sup>80</sup> Imberg 2008, 75–77. See Annex 1.

gradually grew into a mission station. The Church Head Office was now located there. Mission activities expanded to Matongo, where a new mission station was built in 1953. The number of Christians increased rapidly. In 1954 there were 289 Lutherans, then in 1958 1200. The Swedish missionaries were impressed by the personality and ability of James Otete Nchogu, who was among the first baptized. He was sent to the Makumira College in Tanganyika (Tanzania) for theological training and was ordained as the first Kenyan pastor of the LCK in November 1958. In the early 1960s, it became apparent that Kenya was moving toward independence, and the pressure to Africanize Churches increased. As a result of this process, the Lutheran Church of Kenya also became an independent body with a new Constitution in August 1963. Martin Lundström was elected President of the Church for four years and James Otete Vice-President for one year.<sup>81</sup>

The declaration of independence was followed by a serious leadership dispute. At the Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 29 February 1964, the Church Treasurer, K.G. Ohlsson, was emphatically charged with mistreating Kenyan Christians. He was accused of “breaking the Constitution, despising Kenyans, and behaving more like a government servant than like a Missionary in his work, no co-operation with Kenyan Christians since he came to Africa.” Following discussion, Ohlsson was ordered to resign.<sup>82</sup> The SLM Board considered the AGM decision to be unconstitutional. The Board was not even pleased that President Lundström had not protested but quietly let things happen. Both the Lundström and the Ohlsson families were now ordered to return to Sweden as soon as possible.<sup>83</sup> The Kenyan Christians mostly viewed these problems as due to the interdependence of Lundström and Ohlsson, who fought over power. “The Church was Lundström. He did not theorize but acted.” He built schools and clinics. Ohlsson, as the custodian of funds, was considered an obstacle to this development.<sup>84</sup> Ohlsson's role as the “cash flow controller” was one of the major reasons for his lack of popularity in the Church.

The Swedish Lutheran Mission Board accused Martin Lundström of causing the problems: “He has behaved in such a way that is not worthy of a Christian and for several years his activities have especially been directed against Rev. K.G. Ohlsson.” In addition, Lundström had not obeyed his superiors and had repeatedly broken his promises.<sup>85</sup> James Otete also had an accusing tone in his letter. He blamed the Western mission:

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<sup>81</sup> Imberg lists the first baptized. Imberg 2008, 70–91, 101–120, 166.

<sup>82</sup> IA, I: 1, AGM Min. 29.2.1964.

<sup>83</sup> Imberg 2008, 126–132.

<sup>84</sup> MA, interview of William Obaga 17.3.2020. “Ohlsson refused to pay money to people who had been promised employment by Lundström. Lundström was loved for his promises. Ohlsson was kicked out of Kenya because he, in the proper Lutheran way, was true to his call. A treasurer should be strict on money matters.” MA, Email from Rune Imberg 17.6.2020.

<sup>85</sup> IA, E II: 1, Axel B. Svensson and Sigurd Stark to LCK 23.4.1964.

In your letter, you promised not to interfere with the internal affairs of this Church. Have you done it really, or burned the fire and stand aside? Are you looking for peace in this Church or for something else? Now it is not a time of this Church to try to compete with the Mission Board in Stockholm, but to try to clean the Church here in Africa – passing in every possible way. We have marked that you are on the same line although you are grown-up parents.<sup>86</sup>

The atmosphere was extremely inflamed. Linnéa Klemets (SLEAF) wrote about it:

The situation within the Lutheran Church was chaotic when we landed in Kenya in June 1964 [...] It seemed so inflamed and chaotic that no human ability could cope with it. Our only hope was in the Lord. We had no other refuge. With our Swedish friends and co-workers, we joined in prayers for peace.<sup>87</sup>

After visiting Kenya and hearing about the events LWF Africa Secretary Manfred Lundgren wrote to Director of SLEAF A.G. Stjernberg: “It is most regrettable that personal differences should become such a big issue and almost spoil what has been accomplished over the years [...] If the LCK and the missions fail to cooperate, this may mean the end of the Lutheran work in Kenya.”<sup>88</sup>

Events developed rapidly and already on September 26 a follower to Lundström was elected. Surprisingly, a new missionary from Finland, Gustaf Norrback, was chosen to be the next President. The election was clear: Gustaf Norrback received 34 votes, James Otete received six, and Jeftha Michoro three votes.<sup>89</sup> Despite the challenges, Gustaf Norrback managed to lead the Church during a difficult transition period.<sup>90</sup> He thought that the previous crisis was due not only to black and white divisions but also to problems between Church leadership and local congregations. The congregations were not cared for properly. There were simply too few resources. The “healing process” affected everyone. It was spiritual in nature: “It was clear to us that the Church would primarily be cautious with further expansion purely geographically, but instead go for more profound and in-depth knowledge of Christian faith and doctrine.” According to Norrback the Church was unanimous at this point.<sup>91</sup>

A strong search for national identity created a gap between Kenyan leaders and missionaries. The question at stake was: who was responsible for the Church, Western missionaries, or the Kenyans themselves? The situation was exacerbated by President Martin Lundström and Treasurer K.G. Ohlsson who were not able to cooperate due to their different ways of working. The

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<sup>86</sup> IA, E II: 1, James Otete to Sigurd Stark 5.5.1964.

<sup>87</sup> Translation by author. MA, Klemets L. 2009, 3.

<sup>88</sup> SLEAFA, LWF / DWM, Manfred Lundgren to A.G. Stjernberg 15.6.1964.

<sup>89</sup> Imberg 2008, 133–134.

<sup>90</sup> Imberg 2008, 133–135, 139.

<sup>91</sup> Translation by author. Norrback 1998, 132–133.

atmosphere was extremely inflamed. At this point, the Kenyans were not ready to take full responsibility for leadership. Looks like they did not even want that yet. The missionaries first had to clear up the mess they had caused themselves, as James Otete pointed out. Gustaf Norrback faced a huge challenge to find peace between the groups and heal the heated atmosphere. When Norrback handed over the leadership to James Otete in 1968, the most difficult period seemed to have leveled off. Below the surface, however, not all was calm. This was evident in future confrontations.

### 2.1.2 Constitutional Foundation

The Lutheran Church Bibletrue Friends in Kenya received her first Constitution in 1959. This small Constitution was practically a copy of the Constitution of the Ethiopian Mekane Yesus Church.<sup>92</sup> When entering the sixth decade there was a special need to rewrite the Constitution to meet the challenges of a growing Church. The Swedish Lutheran Mission sent two of its leaders to participate in the rewriting process, namely Folke Elowsson and Gunnar Nilsson. The new Constitution was ready when the Church registered herself as an independent Church body in 1963. The Church was renamed the Lutheran Church of Kenya, the LCK.<sup>93</sup>

The previous Constitution had only had a short statement concerning the Lutheran doctrine, mentioning only the three Ecumenical Creeds, *Augsburg Confession* of 1530 as well as Luther's *Large and Small Catechisms*. Now the Church recognized the entire *Book of Concord*:

This Church professes the Christian doctrine and belief that is founded on the Holy Scriptures, which belief is expressed in each and all of the ecumenical creeds, the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed, and is also expressed in the unaltered *Augsburg Confession* of 1530 as well as in Martin Luther's *Large and Small Catechisms*, and other symbolical books of the Lutheran Church.<sup>94</sup>

This insertion had far-reaching consequences. The Lutheran Church of Kenya from now on wanted to base her existence on confessional Lutheranism following the example of the Lutheran Churches of Sweden and Finland where the Book of Concord was fully recognized, unlike in Norway and Denmark, where it had no official Church law status. This constitutional difference of the

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<sup>92</sup> The constitution of the Church of Mekane Yesus had a presbytery structure, characterized by the rule of presbyterial or elders meetings. For this, see Sæverås 1974.

<sup>93</sup> Imberg gives more detailed information on this process. Imberg 2008, 90–104, 112–117. According to James Otete the Constitution of 1959 “had many shortcomings and wasn’t adequate for all the requirements of leading a Church. Many concerns or rules concerning the daily work were not included [...] Therefore, there was a great need to make a new strong constitution.” *ELCK 1963–1988*, 18.

<sup>94</sup> IA, BI: 1, LCK Constitution of 1963, Imberg 2008, 116–117.

Nordic countries also had an impact on their liturgical practices.<sup>95</sup> According to Richard Olak, the constitutional change became visible in the worship practices of the Lutheran Church of Kenya. With previous divine services following a low-Church style without systematic liturgical elements and thus following the example of the Swedish Lutheran Mission, the new Constitution instead linked these practices more closely to the entire Book of Concord. This was reflected in the emphasis on a pastor's office and a fixed liturgy.<sup>96</sup> The representatives of the Swedish Lutheran Mission hardly realized that they had contributed to this type of development. The future would demonstrate how this development would be received by the Church's forthcoming stakeholders.

Second, many changes in the new Constitution concentrated on the administrative structure of the Church. The leader of the Church was now termed "President" and was assisted by a senior pastor. The administration consisted of the following bodies: The Annual General Meeting, the Executive Committee, the District Committees, the Parish Committees, the Congregational Committees, the Pastors' Meetings, the Evangelists' Meetings. The leader of a congregation was a pastor. He had to possess the "knowledge necessary" and be ordained. He had to be faithful in both words and deeds in accord with the Holy Scriptures and the Creeds. Finally, he had to be "born again and continually experience the work of the word of God and the Holy Spirit in his heart for 'daily repentance and remission of sins' in the name of Christ."<sup>97</sup> It is noteworthy that parish leaders were now seen as ordained pastors instead of laymen. The mentioned qualifications of a pastor were typical of the Scandinavian Lutheran revivalism represented by the Swedish Lutheran Mission.

Third, the Constitution clarified the interdependencies between the Church and her mission societies. The aim was to guard this relationship and to avoid conflicts: "The work of the Mission is part of the work of the Church." The mission representatives had the right to attend the Executive Committee meetings but not to vote. According to James Otete these regulations created "mutual trust and reliance" and a "brotherly spirit" among the groups. He further viewed the constitution in the following words:

The main purpose of this Church is to teach and preach the Word of God, the Law, and the Gospel, to all people; agreeing with the command of our Lord Jesus in Matthew 28:18–20. This is the aim of the entire constitution. There is no council, office or department in which this aim is not evident [...] we are

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<sup>95</sup> While comparing the Scandinavian Lutheran ordination formulas, Knuutila shows how – for historical reasons – Denmark, Iceland, and Norway belong to their ecclesiastical liturgical group, and Sweden and Finland belong to their own. Knuutila 2006, 82–90.

<sup>96</sup> Olak 1988, 26–28. Imberg argues that the wording "other symbolical books" could be understood in the same way as in Norway and Denmark so that the whole *Book of Concord* would not receive full recognition in the constitution. When Imberg presented this view at the ELCK History seminar of March 2007, Reijo Arkkila, Joseph Ochola and Osmo Harjula stood up to oppose it. Imberg 2008, 116.

<sup>97</sup> IA, BI: 1, LCK Constitution of 1963, Otete 1988, 20, Imberg 2008, 116–117.



not only Lutherans, but we are Evangelical. It is because we are holding to evangelical teaching, especially salvation by faith alone and by the grace of God.<sup>98</sup>

Richard Olak saw the new constitution mean that the missions had to submit their statements of faith to the Executive Committee for approval: "Since this is an Evangelical Lutheran Church, it is proper that all partners unite in practicing Lutheran doctrine."<sup>99</sup>

The leadership of the Lutheran Church of Kenya had a special need for reminding the missions of their proper position in relation to the Church, as the new constitution would determine their future cooperation. Both the Church and her mission partners would appeal to it to resolve their mutual conflicts. Therefore, it was more than important to know who had the power to make decisions in various situations. The mission societies were not supposed to control the independent Church any longer. Instead, the Church herself now had supreme decision-making power. The new situation would be challenging for both sides. Finally, – but not least – the Constitution emphasized the foundation of the Word of God in accordance with the Book of Concord. This was not a theoretical statement, but a practice. Subsequent future discussions on the nature of Lutheranism, Church leadership, and liturgy would bear witness to that. The purpose of the new Constitution was indeed fundamental.

### 2.1.3 Kenyans Take the Lead

**James Otete Nchogu** was born in 1932 to a non-religious family at Itierio. He entered an Adventist school. In 1951, he attended the Lutheran school of Itierio and was baptized together with 16 other students and one woman, who was confirmed, on 23 December 1951 by Enok Salomonsson. This was the first public baptism in the Church. He studied until 1954, and was valued by the Swedish missionaries, was sent to the Makumira College in 1955 for theological studies. He was ordained as the first Kenyan pastor of the Church in November 1958 by Rev. K.G. Ohlsson assisted by ELCT pastors Kristian Mushumbuzi and Gunnar Ljungman. His wedding with Milka Osebe shortly before the ordination seemed to be the first Lutheran wedding among Kenyans.<sup>100</sup>

After receiving a Lutheran World Federation (LWF) scholarship, Otete studied in India at the Gurukulu Theological College 1965–1966 and the Research Institute in Madras. He held the position of Vice-President of the Lutheran Church of Kenya from 1959 to 1965 and was elected as the first Kenyan President of the Church, the "*Mkuu wa Kanisa*" in 1968<sup>101</sup>. As President, he enjoyed broad popularity, overwhelming his opponents in the 1972 election with 47 votes, while Nyamwaro received 10 and Mogeni 10 votes. The same

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<sup>98</sup> Otete 1988, 18–23.

<sup>99</sup> Olak 1988, 26.

<sup>100</sup> Otete's ordination is described in detail in BVMT 2–3/1959, Imberg 2008, 77, 90–91.

<sup>101</sup> Otete 34, Nyamwaro 25 and Michoro 8.

happened in 1976: Otete received 78 votes, Nyamwaro 28, and Ekström 2. His term ended in 1980, when Momanyi beat him by three votes.<sup>102</sup>

The Church's struggle for independence culminated in the era of James Otete. Under his leadership, the Lutheran Church of Kenya had to meet the challenges of the future: the new Constitution, new mission societies, the birth of Matongo Lutheran Theological College, membership in the Lutheran World Federation. As the first Kenyan leader, James Otete had much to watch over, while behaving as a role model for others. People's eyes were turned to him asking for directions. His personal history was the history of the Church. As he stepped down in 1980, he did so peacefully with a humble heart<sup>103</sup>. "Otete did, what he promised. He came down if somebody misbehaved and clarified the matter," Aristarko Ongoro recalls.<sup>104</sup> During Otete's leadership, strength and humility were combined.

**Nemwel Omae** was ordained as the second Kenyan pastor in 1961. His theological training was limited, and he did not hold key positions in the Church. Instead, he actively assisted missionaries in their work. He was the first preacher sent by Martin Lundström to new preaching places outside of Itierio. In connection with his ordination, he was confirmed and had a Christian wedding to Trusilla Ariga. He served as a pastor in the Kisii area and actively opened new congregations and places of preaching.<sup>105</sup>

**Francis Nyamwaro Onderi** was among the first to join the Lutheran mission. He was baptized along with James Otete and 15 other Itierio students in 1951. Following that, Nyamwaro belonged to the inner circle of the mission and later the Church. In 1960 he began his studies at Makumira, and together with Jeftha Michoro he was ordained in 1964 by Gustaf Norrback. In 1965, he was chosen to be the Vice-President of the Church, serving in this position for four years. In 1971, he began as the first Parish Leader of the South Kisii District. Nyamwaro had a humble character appreciated by the Kenyan people.<sup>106</sup>

**Jeftha Michoro**, born in 1921, was baptized in 1938 in Kericho by the Africa Inland Mission. In 1941 he was a soldier in the British army, serving mainly in Egypt but also Libya. During his military service, he was influenced by Anglican chaplains who were working within the military. He was married to Anna Kwambuka in 1948 and received twelve children. In 1953 he met Martin Lundström and was introduced to Lutheranism. Together with Handson

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<sup>102</sup> MA, interview of James Otete 1.6.2016, Imberg 2008, 154–155.

<sup>103</sup> See chapter "The Humane Chairman".

<sup>104</sup> MA, interview of Aristarko Ongoro 7.10.2018.

<sup>105</sup> Imberg 2008, 102–103, Michoro worked among the Luo (1957–1960) in Mititi, Oriang'i, Nyagoo and Angino. MA, *Copy of Historia ya maisha yangu mimi Jeftha Michoro*.

<sup>106</sup> MA, interview of Francis Nyamwaro 9.7.2016, Imberg 2008, 81–82, 154–155. See chapter "Autocratic Head Office".

Nyambache<sup>107</sup>, he assisted Lundström in starting the work at Matongo. Michoro served as an evangelist among Luo in the beginning of the 1960s and was trusted by them. He completed distance learning via the Mwika Bible School from 1962 to 1963 and received a certificate. After working as an evangelist in various locations for about ten years, he was ordained on 29 March 1964 and became the Matongo Parish leader. In 1968, he taught at Matongo Lutheran Theological College. He was elected Vice-President of the Church for two years in 1969<sup>108</sup>. After this term, he served as treasurer of the North Kisii district. Young people in particular like him, because he stood up for them. He was a strong supporter of Nyamwaro.<sup>109</sup> He also acted as a bridge-builder between different ethnic groups.<sup>110</sup>

Michoro was raised by Swedish missionaries and was therefore close to them. As Otete tightened his grip towards the Mission societies as President of the Church, Michoro tried to strike a balance between the two fires. This is evident from some of Sigurd Stark's letters. Strong distrust towards Otete is clear, while Michoro is praised.<sup>111</sup> However, Otete did not allow his deputy to take solos. After writing a letter overstepping his official mandate, Michoro was disciplined: "The Vice-President shall assist the President and act on his behalf in such matters as he may request. So, you are warned to learn to know your role of play as the Vice-President in this Church not to interfere with the constitution of the Church."<sup>112</sup> Most likely because of this confrontation, Jeftha Michoro was not elected to a second term as Vice-President. He was not even a candidate for the position!<sup>113</sup>

Among the first four Kenyan pastors, Jeftha Michoro had a special commission in pioneering work. As a link between the former and the new Church leadership, he had an important role to play. Because the Luos trusted him, he also acted as a buffer between them and the Kisiis. However, other pastors overshadowed him because of his lower degree of education. Nonetheless, he received unqualified support from the growing generation because of his caring nature.

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<sup>107</sup> Nyambache, born 1924, was and remained an SDA member, but he was happy to receive Lutherans to Matongo. He wanted all the Christians to work together. "Lundström wanted to build on the hill, but I showed the present place." He was given 100 shillings per month, while assisting Lundström. MA, interview of Handson Nyambache 29.9.2018.

<sup>108</sup> Michoro 54, Nyamwaro 14, Olak 11. Imberg 2008, 84, 132, 154–155.

<sup>109</sup> MA, interview of Richard Ondicho 18.11.2018.

<sup>110</sup> MA, Email from Ingrid Holmqvist 9.1.2019.

<sup>111</sup> "The Vice-President is more straightforward and clear-thinking than the president." Translation by author. SLEAFA, BV BREV, Sigurd Stark to Yngve Bäck and Helge Hildén 11.7.1969 and Helge Hildén 22.7.1969

<sup>112</sup> IA, EXI: 2, Correspondence Treasurer 68–70, James Otete to Jeftha Michoro 23.7.1969. In his letter, Michoro reminded that there "should be full agreement between the Mission board and the Lutheran Church of Kenya concerning the calling of new missionaries to enter Kenya," Jeftha Michoro to WMPL General Secretary 15.7.1969.

<sup>113</sup> Imberg 2008, 155.

**Nicholas Oenga Arosi** was born in 1938 at Gethare, where the Lutheran mission work started in 1959 under the initiative of evangelist Andrea Seremani. James Otete baptized Oenga the following year. He then attended Matongo Bible School and served as an evangelist at Itierio for a year in 1962. He studied at Makumira College from 1962–1966 and was ordained at Matongo on 15 January 1966 by Gustaf Norrback and James Otete. At that time, he was the fifth LCK Kenyan pastor serving in the Parish of Bobembe. In 1969 he studied youth work in Zambia. In 1971 he was appointed the principal of the Matongo Bible School following Josef Imberg, who had to leave because of health issues. In 1973, he was elected General Secretary but served only for a year before moving to Kisumu. There he worked as a family counselor in the National Christian Council. In 1978, he returned to the Church, teaching at the MLTC. He was appointed Vice-Chairman in 1979 and served in that capacity for four years. At the same time, he cared for the Matongo congregation. Because of the expanding work, he considered the post of General Secretary to be the heaviest. According to him the transition to Kenyan leadership was largely successful.<sup>114</sup>

Nicholas and his wife Jemimah Moraa lived close to Matongo church. They had five children, four boys, and a girl. Missionaries often visited their home, a few of whom became their close friends. Jemimah was active in women's work and was a talented speaker. She had a gift of joy with ringing laughter. She shared her joy in her surroundings.<sup>115</sup> Jemimah was also responsible for women, youth, and the Sunday School Committee in the 1970s.<sup>116</sup> Nicholas and Jemimah were among the driving forces of the Church in the early stages of development.

**Samwel Mogeni Gitenyi**, born in Matongo in 1938, started his schooling at Matongo Primary and continued at Itierio Secondary. He was baptized in 1958 by K.G. Ohlsson. He joined Makumira College in 1963 along with Richard Olak and Daniel Ogetii, and was ordained in January 1968. He served as a parish pastor in the North Kisii District. He also taught part-time at the MLTC, especially due to his interest in Church history. He was a teacher at the Ogango Lutheran Deaconess Center in 1995. In 1973, he was elected Vice-President of the Church, defeating Olak by four votes<sup>117</sup>. He served in this position six years and continued for another 6 years when Nyamwaro became chairman in 1988. Mogeni was married to Marita Nyarinda and they had six girls and a son. Marita was among the leaders of the women groups.<sup>118</sup>

Mogeni was a profound theologian respected by his people. He was considered reliable and sympathetic. Towards the missionaries, he was reserved, wanting to know what was on their agenda: Christ or simply their

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<sup>114</sup> MA, interview of Nicholas Oenga 8.6.2016, ss 9.8.1979.

<sup>115</sup> MA, interview of Reijo and Marjatta Arkkila 20.11.2018.

<sup>116</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 210, Report on the Department of the Sunday School 1978.

<sup>117</sup> Mogeni 31 votes, Olak 27, Edström 2. Imberg 2008, 155.

<sup>118</sup> MA, interview of Samwel Mogeni 23.5.2016.

cause. When Kenyans were mistreated, he was brave and intervened without fear. When needed, he addressed the grievances and spoke openly.<sup>119</sup> In the eyes of the missionaries, he did not profile himself as a leader but was instead a reliable background influencer. However, he did not easily let them near.<sup>120</sup> Mogeni was by far the longest-serving Vice-President of the Church. His influence on the development of the Church administration was significant. He was especially appreciated for his contribution to the national identity of the Church.

**Richard Otieno Olak** was born in 1937 and baptized by John-Erik Ekström (SLM). After studying at the Matongo Bible School he was sent to Makumira College along with Samwel Mogeni and Daniel Ogetii. Through these studies, he found the Gospel. Olak graduated in 1967, was ordained as the first LCK Luo pastor in January 1968, and became parish pastor in Nyagowa. He then became Vice-President of the Church from 1971 to 1973, enrolled at Makumira College for further studies, and was elected General Secretary in 1979. He served in this position until 1996. He represented Luos and emphasized Lutheran doctrine.<sup>121</sup> Olak was the longest-serving General Secretary to this day.

**Daniel Ogetii** was ordained with Samwel Mogeni and Richard Olak in 1968 and was appointed the first General Secretary in 1969. In this capacity, he sought fairness and problem-solving. A year later, he resigned due to marital problems. He was closely associated with Anna-Brita Albertson (SLM) and was thus aware of Church matters. He was succeeded by Gustaf Norrback 1970–1973, Nicholas Oenga 1973–1974, John Momanyi 1974–1975, and Boris Sandberg 1975–1979 as General Secretaries.<sup>122</sup>

**John Momanyi Kururia** enrolled at Itierio Secondary School in 1963, was baptized, and became a member of the Lutheran Church of Kenya. He was sent to Makumira College for pastoral studies, graduating in 1972. Then he taught at Matongo Bible School and served as its principal from 1973–1975. He was ordained in 1973 and became General Secretary in 1974 for two years.<sup>123</sup> Momanyi had a gift for pastoral care and for maintaining mutual connections.<sup>124</sup>

The transition from Western leadership to Kenyan leadership was a great leap towards the true independence of the Church. James Otete, Nemwel Omae, Francis Nyamwaro, Jeftha Michoro, Nicholas Oenga, Samwel Mogeni, Richard Olak, Daniel Ogetii, and John Momanyi, assisted by many evangelists and assistants<sup>125</sup> worked successfully in their challenging mission to lead the

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<sup>119</sup> One time a missionary had beaten a boy for asking for money. Another time, a missionary had not given water to drink when requested. Mogeni intervened and addressed these missionaries. MA, interview of Richard Ondicho 18.11.2018.

<sup>120</sup> MA, interviews of Olli Kukkonen 1.7.2018, "Mogeni also had reservations towards me until he visited our summer cottage in Mouhijärvi," and Reijo Arkkila 20.11.2018.

<sup>121</sup> MA, interview of Richard Olak 2.6.2016. See chapter "Theological Trendsetter."

<sup>122</sup> MA, interview of James Otete 1.6.2016, Imberg 2008, 154.

<sup>123</sup> MA, interview of John Momanyi 19.5.2016.

<sup>124</sup> See chapter "The Humane Chairman".

<sup>125</sup> Imberg lists the evangelists of the early 1970s. Imberg 2008, 160.

Church into a new era. Each of them built a common goal with their expertise: Omae actively opened new congregations, Nyamwaro appreciated for his humble behavior, Michoro as a link between past and present leadership – not to mention Kisiis and Luos, Oenga with his constructive relationships with missionaries, Mogeni encouraging the young generation, Olak emphasizing Lutheran teaching, Ogetii with his good knowledge of ecclesiastical affairs and Kururia with a gift for maintaining connections. These completed Otete's bold performance as President. Based on the previous presentation, it is proper to state that the Kenyans had purposefully taken the care of the Church into their own hands. They wanted to build their Church instead of a Western mission. The beginning looked promising.

#### 2.1.4 Administrative Structure

With the completion of the new Constitution, the Church registered herself as an independent body in 1963 and received her new name, the Lutheran Church of Kenya. She was led by a President assisted by a Vice-President. The Annual General Meeting was now the supreme decision-making body and the Executive Committee functioned as an administrative body. This structure operated for more than 30 years, although it was gradually modified. In 1969, for example, the post of General Secretary was introduced. For legal reasons, the title of President was abolished in 1978, as it was then reserved for the President of the Republic. Instead, the Church's leading officials were now called Chairman and Vice-Chairman. The same year the Lutheran Church of Kenya changed her name to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, ELCK.<sup>126</sup>

Martin Lundström conducted his first worship service under a tree at Suneka market and then continued in the new school building at Itierio. Since then, the Church had grown rapidly. New places of worship were established, forming into congregations and parishes. At the time of independence in 1963, there were 55 congregations with about 5,000 Christians. By 1968, the same numbers had risen to 65 and 8,000; at the end of the 1970s, the figures were 130 and 20 000.<sup>127</sup> Church membership continued increasing by about 8% per year. This is faster than the overall 4% rate of growth of Christian Churches in Kenya.<sup>128</sup> In less than twenty years, the population of the Church quadrupled.

Hand in hand with the growth, the administrative structure was also developed. In 1963, the congregations were divided into eight parishes:

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<sup>126</sup> Imberg 2008, 76–83, 96–100, 154–155, Gustafsson ed. 1998, 14,

<sup>127</sup> Imberg 2008, 166–167. See Annex 2.

<sup>128</sup> The comparison is based on Imberg's statistics. Imberg 2008, 166–168.

Bobembe<sup>129</sup>, Matongo<sup>130</sup>, Itierio<sup>131</sup>, Gotchaki<sup>132</sup>, Kiomoso<sup>133</sup>, Nyagowa<sup>134</sup>, Othoro<sup>135</sup> and Nairobi<sup>136</sup>. To ease the demands of administration, four Districts were established in 1972: North Kisii<sup>137</sup>, South Kisii<sup>138</sup>, Nyanza<sup>139</sup> and Nairobi<sup>140</sup>. The District Committee represented the districts for the Executive Committee.<sup>141</sup> James Otete explained their responsibilities:

The main responsibility of the districts is to shoulder the spiritual matters and to build up the Christians in the faith by Word and Sacrament, preaching the pure Gospel and teaching the holy law in its completeness in the congregations and to all people. Furthermore, the District committee represents the whole district to the Executive Committee in many matters.<sup>142</sup>

Eventually, the District organization became impossible to control. When the number of Districts in the mid-1990s exceeded 20, and all were to be represented in the Executive Committee, this became increasingly elusive. After the episcopacy, Deaneries were established as precursors to Dioceses, which were expected to be relatively self-governing.<sup>143</sup>

James Otete's leadership was appreciated for following the constitution closely. During his time, the Church administration operated well, even financially. Otete was courageous in his actions defending the welfare of the Kenyans. Therefore, he was widely supported across ethnic boundaries.<sup>144</sup> Under James Otete, the Church grew steadily. The administration closely followed the growth in creating new forms of governance. At this stage, also the missions invested in administrative procedures, thus contributing to success. However, the larger the Church grew, the harder it was to relate to constitutional demands. This becomes apparent when looking at future events.

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<sup>129</sup> Led by Rev. Nemwel Omae. Bobembe, Eronge, Gesure, Kiabiraa, Kiareni, Nyagonyi, Nyaigesa, Nyamwetuereko, Ramba, Timaru.

<sup>130</sup> Led by John-Erik Ekström. Matongo, Bondeka, Erandi, Gesigoro, Gesura, Kenyoro, Magwagwa, Matorora, Ng'oina Nyangokiani, Nyairang'a, Sigowet.

<sup>131</sup> Led by Rev. K.G. Ohlsson. Itierio, Bogitaa, Botoro, Itibo, Kisii town, Motonto, Nyamerako.

<sup>132</sup> Led by Ev. Zedekiah Onger. Gotchaki, Ikonge, Kerina, Monianku, Mwata, Nyachenge, Nyagesa, Riyabu.

<sup>133</sup> Led by Ev. Aristarko Ongoro. Kiomoso, Boruma, Kineni, Manga, Nyamuya.

<sup>134</sup> Led by Ev. Samwel Omosa. Nyagowa, Andiwo, God Agulu, Kanyango, Kochia, Mititi, Samanga.

<sup>135</sup> Led by Ev. Meshack Waga. Othoro, Anding'o, Angeno, Atemo, Harambee, Kandegwa, Lwanda.

<sup>136</sup> Led by Ev. Francis Matwere. Uhuru Highway, Banana Hill, Kibera.

<sup>137</sup> Led by Rev. Samwel Mogeni. Matongo and Bobembe.

<sup>138</sup> Led by Rev. Francis Nyamwaro. Itierio, Gotchaki and Kiomoso.

<sup>139</sup> Led by Rev. Richard Olak. Nyagowa, Othoro and Kisumu.

<sup>140</sup> Led by Rev. Paul Edström.

<sup>141</sup> The information is collected from *Lutheran Church Work in Kenya 1948–1973*.

<sup>142</sup> Otete 1988, 20.

<sup>143</sup> Imberg 2008, 166–167, Gustafsson ed. 1998, 15.

<sup>144</sup> MA, interviews of Japhet Dachi 10.12.2016, Richard Olak 7.6.2016 and Thomas Asiago 3.10.2016.

### 2.1.5 Financial Dependence

During her first years of operation, the development in the Church was favorable in many ways. The number of Christians and preaching points grew rapidly. The medical work was successful and growing. The number of mission schools and students in them increased significantly. Itierio and Matongo became important mission centers. The Bible School at Matongo influenced the positive theological development in the Church. All of this development also meant that economic issues became increasingly important.

Martin Lundström, the pioneer missionary and the first President of the Church, had a peculiar attitude towards offerings which created a distorted foundation for the entire economy. He did not encourage Kenyans to participate in financial responsibility. According to him, it was the duty of the Mission to offer everything. It appears that only a few other missionaries shared this similar attitude, but despite that, the Swedish Lutheran Mission failed to create a solid financial basis for the Church. "The local Christian never understood that the Church needed their support," Accountant John Michoro explained about this situation.<sup>145</sup> The task of missionaries in charge of finances was most unrewarding. They had to control a distorted situation. Thus, they were stamped as uncaring towards the Kenyans – even without reason.

The economic situation was already a concern in the 1970s. It was regularly discussed at Church meetings, in the Executive Committee, and in missionary consultations. The missionaries reminded the people of their responsibility in the form of offerings, while the Kenyans pointed out that it was the missions' responsibility to take care of their children. The hopes and aspirations of the two parties did not find a common tune.<sup>146</sup> LEAF missionary Antti Kuokkanen explained the current situation in 1981:

The Church herself is not the only culprit. The structure of the Church is such that it requires a lot of money to maintain it. It has been easier to get money for something 'special' and who would have refused to accept this money? Living faith is requested and as proof of it more thanksgiving. However, there has been a lack of the proper teaching of the Word, through which a living faith is born. Local Christians are accused of not understanding the importance of sacrifice. How could they when they are not taught!<sup>147</sup>

The Head office also experienced pressure from Church employees for well-being. Towards the end of the 1970s, this problem came to a head. The

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<sup>145</sup> Written statement by John Michoro in the ELCK History Seminar of March 2007: "The local Christian used to know that the mission societies were the ones obligated to give the funds for the running of the Church activities. It is memorable to quote a case at Kakamega where still surviving people were asked by a missionary not to trouble themselves with offering since the funds would come from abroad [...] this situation has lingered in the local people's minds for many years." Imberg 2008, 86–87.

<sup>146</sup> Kuokkanen 2009, 45–45.

<sup>147</sup> Translation by author. AKA, Antti Kuokkanen to Reijo Arkkila 28.7.1981.



employees felt that the missions did not treat them well because their salaries were very low. Kenyan leaders wanted to increase wages but received no response to these wishes. The missions that donated these funds wanted to allocate them for a pre-targeted purpose (they were ear-marked). And then these same missions now introduced self-sustainability. These words resounded on deaf ears. From the Kenyan people's perspective, it sounded like the missions did not want to support them. Some even felt that the missionaries should leave the country because of this kind of attitude.<sup>148</sup> The 1979 Report prepared by General Secretary Richard Olak describes these feelings: "From the beginning of the fifties up to the end of the sixties our Church was taken care of as a last-born or as a grandchild. This hospitality has been transformed and now it resembles a cub that is being kicked as it has finished being a suckling."<sup>149</sup>

Another hot topic was properties. Some members of the Executive Committee wanted the SLM to hand over not only the responsibilities for the work but also the properties. The mission was unwilling at first because it did not consider the Church mature enough. Finally, the SLM gave up due to intensive pressure. SLEAF followed this practice. Other Missions followed a variety of practices.<sup>150</sup> At the 1974 meeting of pastors and evangelists, Otete described the situation as follows: "The whites, of course, have been granted the sole right to live in those big fine houses at the station. If an African pastor would need a residence at a station, he should not bother, even though they are vacant and belong to the Church. Only whites were allowed to live there."<sup>151</sup>

The leadership of the Church was in the hands of the Kenyans, but the money came mainly from abroad and was controlled by the missions. It was natural that the Kenyan leaders wanted to have their opinions heard concerning financial and property issues. By owning the properties, they wanted to access the sources of income. The missions, for their part, did not want to transfer control of the resources they had donated. They recalled the proper use of the money, but these instructions went unheeded. Instead, the whites, who did not give enough, were labeled as unloving.<sup>152</sup> In the Church's independence process, disagreements over the use of money were often the most visible signs of ineffective cooperation between the Kenyans and missionaries. The Kenyans' desire for sovereignty seemed to be one of the driving forces behind the events. Dependence on foreign financial support in the Lutheran Church of Kenya was a reality and it continued despite all attempts to the contrary.

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<sup>148</sup> Already in the 1970s, the salaries of dispensary workers were higher than those of parish workers. MA, interviews of James Otete 1.6.2016 and John Momanyi 19.5.2016.

<sup>149</sup> RIA, AGM Report of the General Secretary 6-7.3.1979.

<sup>150</sup> Imberg 2008, 118-120.

<sup>151</sup> Translation by author. RA, BVA, E1 e: 35, Hans Hugo Nilsson to Gunnar Nilsson 14.10.1974.

<sup>152</sup> Look chapter "Do not steal".

## 2.2 “Not Yet Uhuru”

### 2.2.1 Kenyatta Heightens Anxiety

President Jomo Kenyatta became sick, suffering a serious stroke in May 1968. His condition was critical for several weeks, but another image was broadcast to the public. The general population knew nothing about his failing health. However, it was a matter of great concern to his allies, foreign investors, and the Kenyan elite, all of whom shared a belief that Kenyatta was the best guarantor of stability in the country. KANU, the ruling party, tightened its grip on the power. Although Kenyatta overcame his stroke and lived for yet another decade, the struggle to succeed him had already started. Two competing candidates emerged in the arena very quickly: Daniel arap Moi and Tom Mboya.<sup>153</sup>

The country's uncertain situation was reflected in the attitudes towards the whites. According to Gustaf Norrback (SLEAF) “a wild hunt against whites” prevailed in the country's atmosphere. “Kanu persecuted white missionaries.” The escalating situation was also addressed at the Annual General Meeting of 1968.<sup>154</sup> The immigration laws were tightened in 1968. Foreigners could only be employed if none of the Kenyans had the required experience for the job. Including Nairobi, many cities and towns were demanded a ban on non-Kenyans in the ownership of shops and other businesses. Some Asian merchants had already fled to Britain.<sup>155</sup> On the first of June 1969 Kenyatta spoke on Madaraka Day [Independence Day]. The tone of the speech was remarkable. “This might be my last speech on this day as President,” he announced. Nobody really knew what it was about. The speech caused both uncertainty and an accelerating power struggle.<sup>156</sup> The President referred to either his fading health or to the ongoing political leadership struggle in the nation. In either case, the leadership in the future was at stake. Leadership was indeed a matter of national identity, a matter which culminated in Kenya's independence.

Kenyatta privately hoped Daniel arap Moi would succeed him. Moi was a Kalenjin, but since the Kikuyu lacked a credible candidate of their own, and because they knew that a non-Kikuyu candidate would be more acceptable to an unpopular Kikuyu-ruled Kenya, Moi was the perfect candidate for the presidency. In 1961, he became Minister of Education and in 1967 Kenyatta's Vice-President. Through him, the Kikuyus would remain in power. However, Tom Mboya, the other potential candidate, enjoyed widespread popularity

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<sup>153</sup> Branch 2012, 67–69

<sup>154</sup> Translation by author. SLEAFA, FLM BREV 1966–1970, Gustaf Norrback to Home Board 8.1.1968 and 18.1.1968.

<sup>155</sup> News.bbc.co.uk. Accessed 05.06.2020.

<sup>156</sup> Translation by author. SLEAFA, FLM BREV 1966–1970, Sven Klemets to Helge Hildén 14.7.1969.

being a charismatic speaker and was thus a serious contender against Moi. He was from the Suba ethnic group. Therefore, Kenyatta's elite began political action against him, which eventually led to his assassination on 5 July 1969.<sup>157</sup> According to Sven Klemets, everybody in the Luo area knew that the murderer was a Kikuyu or somebody paid by them. Then, the ethnic conflicts flared up. The Kikuyu who had lived together with the Luo had to escape. In the city of Kisii alone, 200 Kikuyus fled for their lives. Many were murdered during the unrest. The police and soldiers from the Kenyan army were on the move. The radio and the press were quiet to prevent the masses from becoming angry. The mission and missionaries were yet able to continue with their work.<sup>158</sup>

Tom Mboya's assassination created turmoil across Kenyan society. Particularly in areas of the Rift Valley, where some Kikuyus had been settled after independence, ethnic intolerance increased. The Luos, on the other hand, were now united in an unprecedented way. For them, Mboya became a martyr and an "ethnic hero". Kenyatta and his government were criticized in violent rallies. The military troops responded with violence. The President was determined to rebuild his authority. The opposition leader Oginga Odinga was arrested and his party was banned. The elections held at the end of the year were restricted to KANU candidates. Peace returned to the country, but the citizens were frightened and bewildered. Despite the apparent peace, Kenya seemed to be falling apart.<sup>159</sup>

Ethnicity had its roots before the colonial period, but distinct ethnic identities or groups had been necessary building blocks particularly for colonialism. The imperial policy of "divide and conquer" had empowered them. Kenya was not able to break away from this development. After Tom Mboya's death, the focus of the Kenyatta regime shifted from building up the country to maintaining its power by following the power structures of colonialism.<sup>160</sup> Ethnicity was a key characteristic of the political scenario of independent Kenya. And thus, together with this political activism, ethnic intolerance towards whites increased. This also affected the Lutheran Church of Kenya and her missionary partners.

### 2.2.2 Are We Slaves?

Creating peace and unity in the Church was not easy for the new Church President James Otete. The precarious political situation in Kenya had already made it difficult. In addition, the Church faced problems, arising from her leadership crisis of 1964. At least from the missionaries' point of view, this continued to cause underlying pain. The 1969 memorandum of cooperation

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<sup>157</sup> Branch 2012, 69–81.

<sup>158</sup> SLEAFA, FLM BREV 1966–1970, Sven Klemets to Helge Hildén 14.7.1969.

<sup>159</sup> Branch 2012, 75–88, Ochieng' 2013, 84–86.

<sup>160</sup> Maxon 2013, 9–20. According to Mati, the search for ethnic identity has been a key factor in Kenya's political life since colonialism. Mati 2019, 1–17.

written by Sigurd Stark testified to this: "Some Church members are still suffering from unrest in their souls through the events in 1964 [...] and those events also prevent the Lord's blessing from coming to the LCK and her work." Some Executive Committee and General Assembly members should admit their mistakes and apologize. According to Stark, this was the way forward.<sup>161</sup> The message was clear: The fault lay with the Kenyans!

Distrust between the Lutheran Church of Kenya and the Swedish Lutheran Mission had not been eased and it continued to be tense until the 1970s. This is evident from the correspondence between the missionaries and their home Boards. President Gustaf Norrback wrote to leaders of both SLEAF and SLM in 1967. The "hunt" for missionaries was increasing in the Church. A common opinion among the Kenyans was that "the whites should not possess important positions". He wondered: "Are the missionaries allowed to stay at all?"<sup>162</sup> Josef Imberg wrote to Sweden about having the same feelings. Questions raised by Church officials were revealing: "Are we slaves? Don't we understand anything? Don't we have any power in our own Church?"<sup>163</sup> At the AGM of 1970, from the perspective of Kenyans, Otete shed light on the inflamed situation:

We all know that the Church has got freedom, but the Mission has tried very hard to press the Church by interfering in her internal matters. This sort of affair brings darkness into the Church and thoughts that this young Church has no freedom or voice at all, concerning her internal matters. We think that the Church should have freedom, or else it was better if the Mission took back the leadership. These difficulties between the Church and the Mission have been an obstacle to the prosperity of the Church.<sup>164</sup>

A consultation between the Church leadership and Director Sigurd Stark on 14.3.1970 revealed how deep the tensions were. Richard Olak pointed out that there was no freedom, "Uhuru", in the Church. Kenyans and missionaries were not treated equally. Why could a Kenyan Christian be cautioned, but not a missionary? There should be no differences between people of different groups. There was a feeling of mutual misunderstanding. There was no democracy.

We cannot come to the standard, where the Board is. You cannot compare Daniel Ogetii and Sigurd Stark. The President of the Board and the President of the Church are not the same. We do not try to be lazy or careless. We are trying hard to catch up with the standard. We shall forgive each other.

Nicholas Oenga used more revealing words: "How can we live in a society where we are divided according to race?" The relations between blacks and whites were the problem. We should be servants of all, as Luther put it. Elijah Shevei reminded people that both sides should seek "togetherness": "We are

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<sup>161</sup> SLEAFA, BV BREV, *Memorandum* by Sigurd Stark 8.4.1969.

<sup>162</sup> Translation by author. RA, BVA, E6 Vol 1 1963–1988, Gustaf Norrback to A.G. Stjernberg and Sigurd Stark 9.1.1967 and 5.8.1967.

<sup>163</sup> Translation by author. RA, BVA, E1 e: 24, Josef Imberg to Sigurd Stark 23.9.1969.

<sup>164</sup> AKA, *Report from the President of LCK* at the AGM 25.–26.2.1970.

your children. If a child asks for forgiveness, we give it. If we have asked for forgiveness, forgive us.” Stark and John-Erik Ekström continued yet in a strained tone. Stark considered true freedom to be something other than what was at stake. Some people thought freedom was “for me to do what I like and to hinder others to do what they like”. Instead, true freedom was freedom from sin. “Jesus bought us free.” According to Ekström, slaves could not make agreements like the LCK. “You are not free to break them,” he stated.<sup>165</sup>

The bad atmosphere affected the whole Church. Not only the relationship between blacks and whites was poor, but so was the case between other parties. This is reflected in Josef Imberg's letter to Sigurd Stark. President Norrback and Principal Imberg had a strong disagreement over the Bible school certificates. At the Executive Committee, Imberg was accused of misusing money to print his books. Otete ruled like a dictator. The protocol was not followed. “We have no cooperation in the Church,” Imberg wrote in frustration.<sup>166</sup> At the same time, SLEAF and the SLM strongly disagreed with Luo work. “The Finns have succeeded in dividing the LCK,” John-Erik Ekström wrote to Sweden.<sup>167</sup> When it came to the new site of the Matongo Bible School, everybody – missionaries, Church leadership, secondary school teachers, and Kenyan people – seemed to have quarreled with others.<sup>168</sup> It was not until 1971, Gustaf Norrback noticed that the pressure had eased up. According to him, “Africanization” had a positive effect on the atmosphere.<sup>169</sup> John-Erik Ekström recognized the same change in 1973. “The AGM was good! Olak and Otete were different than before.”<sup>170</sup>

The winds of freedom had begun to blow but the changes were painfully slow. Kenyans felt that they were not respected in their Church. The more they talked about it, the more strained the atmosphere became. At the same time, it was difficult for whites to relinquish their power. In the consultation, both parties called for mutual respect. For the Kenyan Christians, that meant empowering them in their Church. They complained about the arrogant treatment they had received. Westerners, for their part, expected the Kenyan leadership to comply with common rules in the constitution. They reminded the Kenyans about the correct procedures to follow as outlined in mutual agreements. Neither party was willing to give up their claims, which resulted in an antagonistic attitude towards each other. Nor did Sigurd Stark's reminder of the freedom in Jesus bring about relief at this point. Gradually, with the advent of Africanization, the atmosphere began to be liberated, and the Kenyan dream of Uhuru was closer than before.

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<sup>165</sup> RA, BVA, E1 e: 26 1970, Minutes of the meeting held at Matongo 14 March 1970.

<sup>166</sup> Translation by author. RA, BVA, E1 e: 26 1970, Josef Imberg to Sigurd Stark 14.5.1970.

<sup>167</sup> Translation by author. RA, BVA E 6 vol 1, Helge Hildén to Sigurd Stark 17.7.1969, J-E Ekström to Sigurd Stark 27.6.1969.

<sup>168</sup> RA, BVA, E 1 e: 26 1970, Josef Imberg to Sigurd Stark 15.5.1970.

<sup>169</sup> RA, BVA, E6 Vol 1 1963–1988, Gustaf Norrback to A.G. Stjernberg and Sigurd Stark 16.2.1971.

<sup>170</sup> Translation by author. RA, BVA, E 1 e: 31, J-E Ekström to Gunnar Nilsson 13.10.1973.

As Sigurd Stark pointed out, the situation in the Church resembled the events of 1964. Could it be that no one had truly forgiven the others for what had happened in the past? If so, the current events were, in fact, a manifestation of the past. These bygone destructive memories would even continue in the future if they were not overcome through forgiveness for each other.

### 2.2.3 Signs of Colonialism

The events at Itierio Secondary school had attracted the attention of the Swedish Lutheran Mission. According to the Executive Committee minutes, there had been some “difficulties” between the leadership of the Headmaster and the Church. The SLM missionary Per-Ebbe Ingvert had been involved in the quarrel and he informed his home board about the matter. As a result, the Executive Committee issued a warning to all the missionaries about the way this case was handled.<sup>171</sup> Otete was not happy, because the missionaries were eagerly reporting to their home boards instead of to the Church. Sigurd Starks’ letters contained personal reports which did not come through the Church. They denigrated the Executive Committee and the authority of the Head Office. Without fear Otete announced:

Matters regarding internal affairs or problems of their Church must be given enough time for discussion and decisions by their Church before the matters are sent or reported outside. No one is allowed to go in this way [...] This policy is strictly demanded by the Executive Committee to be followed by both missionaries and all the Christians of this Church [...] This way will not be allowed to continue in this Church!<sup>172</sup>

Both the SLM and SLEAF reacted very negatively against this Executive Committee decision. The decision was contrary to the constitution, they claimed. Missionaries should be allowed to inform their supervisors abroad.<sup>173</sup> Otete made it clear that he wanted to keep the reins in his hands. On 16 December 1968, he informed them that SLEAF and the SLM should have a joint overseas secretary to whom all correspondence could go. He did not accept SLEAF’s decision to have Majgret Stjernberg as its representative, because the matter had not been agreed upon in advance.<sup>174</sup> The SLM Board reacted to the inflamed situation: Per-Ebbe Ingvert was moved to Ethiopia.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> IA, EV: 2, Corr. missions 1966–1979, Ex.com 28.8.1968.

<sup>172</sup> There were disagreements concerning dancing on the compound and boarding facilities which were rented for outside functions. SLEAFA, LCK BREV 1963–1974, James Otete to BV and SLEAF 16.8.1968.

<sup>173</sup> SLEAFA, BREV to ELCK, Helge Hildén to James Nchogu 10.9.1968, Sigurd Stark to James Nchogu 24.10.1968, and 22.7.1969.

<sup>174</sup> RA, BVA, E 6 vol 1, James Otete to SLEAF and BV 16.12.1968

<sup>175</sup> “You have not given Mr. Ingvert the support necessary in his important work at the Itierio Secondary School.” IA, EV: 3, Corr. missions SLM 1964–1974, Sigurd Stark to ELCK 11.10.1969.

The next confrontation affected the relationships among the missions. This matter concerned the work of SLEAF. On 28 August 1968, the Executive Committee reached a decision appointing SLEAF as responsible for the Luo- and Maragoli-work since the beginning of 1969.<sup>176</sup> In connection with this decision, a Memorandum was presented to the LEAF representatives on 11.4.1969 introducing the concept of a "mission field". Each mission society would be appointed a mission field or fields according to their wishes. However, no one would be forced to do anything. There was freedom of choice.<sup>177</sup> The missionaries of the Swedish Lutheran Mission were very disappointed with the Executive Committee's decision. Josef Imberg accused it of belonging to an "outdated system" which had to be regarded as colonialism and even unconstitutional. He feared it would lead to a situation where one mission organization would control one part of the Church.<sup>178</sup> According to Josef Imberg, the SLEAF missionaries had an attitude problem [BV-komplex] with the SLM, and "Norrback was to be blamed for the situation". He feared that the division of the Church would lead to free Churches.<sup>179</sup> "There is something crazy about all this," John-Erik Ekström explained his feelings, continuing: "The money of the friends of the mission is used to fool around [*leka med*] with the missionary Christian Church. Luo Ex.com, Kisii Ex.com, regular Ex.com, and the pope above all."<sup>180</sup>

Ingrid Nilsson and John-Erik Ekström wrote a joint letter requesting the Executive Committee to revoke the "unlimited freedom of choice" offered to the Finnish mission. They explained how it was impossible to have "mission fields" because it was unconstitutional. Otherwise, the Church would cease to be a Church. The Church herself had to take full responsibility for the work. All assistance given, either in money or in labor had to be given to the Lutheran Church of Kenya.<sup>181</sup> The Church's response came quickly: the Executive Committee issued a formal warning to these two missionaries for intervening in her work.<sup>182</sup> Finally, General Secretary Daniel Ogetii intervened and tried to create peace between the parties: "If the word 'mission field' is bringing confusion to our mission societies, the Executive Committee suggests now to use the word 'district'."<sup>183</sup> This was an admirably practical solution to a theoretical problem!

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<sup>176</sup> IA, EV: 2, Minutes of Ex.com 28 August 1968.

<sup>177</sup> IA, EV: 1, Corr. missions 1961–1979, *The memorandum of LCK* to LEAF 11.4.1969.

<sup>178</sup> Translation by author. SLEAFA, BV BREV, Yngve Bäck and Helge Hildén to Sigurd Stark 23.4.1969.

<sup>179</sup> Translation by author. RA, BVA, E1 e: 26, Josef Imberg to Sigurd Stark 31.7.1969.

<sup>180</sup> Translation by author. RA, BVA, E1 e: 24, John-Erik Ekström to Sigurd Stark 27.6.1969.

<sup>181</sup> SLEAFA, BV BREV, Ingrid Nilsson and John-Erik Ekström to Ex.com 10.5.1969.

<sup>182</sup> IA, EV: 2, Minutes of Ex.com 13 May 1969. The SLM was very angry at this. Finally, the Executive Committee revoked the warning though it added: "Ordinary Christian members have the freedom to write to the Committee but not to intervene with the work of the Executive Committee!" SLEAFA, BV BREV, Secretary to the BV Mission Board 9.2.1970.

<sup>183</sup> SLEAFA, ELCK BREV 1963–1974, Daniel Ogetii to SLEAF and LEAF 11.7.1969.

Correspondence was also held elsewhere. SLEAF Director Helge Hildén and the Board Chairman Yngve Bäck did not have the least understanding of Josef Imberg's opinion. They wrote to Sigurd Stark: "How can colonialism be brought into contact with a modest missionary effort made in Kenya by a small organization from distant Finland, which has never been a colonial power but to a greater extent during its history had to try to obey others?" Hildén and Bäck felt that Imberg was fighting against SLEAF and wanted to know if that was the case.<sup>184</sup> Stark answered by explaining that the discussions had been too narrow. He felt that the expression "mission field" was not the best in this context. The whole event could have been avoided if SLEAF had informed the SLM in advance of its plans.<sup>185</sup> Stark was increasingly concerned about the situation, having heard rumors that Luos were striving for independence. This kind of endeavor was a serious threat to the Lutheran Church of Kenya and the Church's overall cooperation. The SLEAF work had to take place in a "unified Church!" James Otete's "authoritative and self-directed actions" were at the root of the conflict. There was a danger that this would lead to a battle between the missions.<sup>186</sup> Stark wrote in the following letter: "We must avoid fragmentation! Everything should be done to preserve the LCK as a Church."<sup>187</sup> This issue continued to be discussed. It now concerned not only the work of SLEAF but also the NLM at Pokot and the WMPL at Samburu. The Planning Committee witnessed jealousy and the increasing power of money to be great dangers in the Church. The missions should be careful not to "kill the spirit of Harambee" with their financial policy.<sup>188</sup>

Both missionaries and Church officials were genuinely concerned about the future of the Lutheran Church of Kenya. The Swedish Lutheran Mission looked at things from the perspective of the overall Church and so was worried about her unity. The SLM missionaries' reaction was related to the "areas of concentration" development, which they considered to disrupt the Church unity because of the financial and tribal implications associated with it. The Swedish Lutheran Association of Finland, in turn, was looking for a clear future responsibility and way forward. It could not see the signs of danger in these hopes. Further, human jealousy and the lack of information created a situation where these societies fought against each other. Meanwhile, Church leadership recalled that they had the supreme decision-making power. No one wanted to let others dominate them. From the perspective of time, it can be noted that the features of colonialism were obvious but not in the sense the Swedish missionaries understood. Instead, it was reflected in the way the missions tried to influence Church decisions. Finally, James Otete's leadership-related distrust

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<sup>184</sup> Translation by author. SLEAFA, BV BREV, Yngve Bäck and Helge Hildén to Sigurd Stark 23.4.1969.

<sup>185</sup> SLEAFA, BV BREV, Sigurd Stark to Yngve Bäck and Helge Hildén 19.5.1969.

<sup>186</sup> Translation by author. SLEAFA, BV BREV, Sigurd Stark to Helge Hildén 2.7.1969.

<sup>187</sup> Translation by author. SLEAFA, BV BREV, Sigurd Stark to Helge Hildén 22.7.1969.

<sup>188</sup> IA, F IV: 18, Stations minutes other committees, *Tume ya Upangaji* 14.12.1983.



reflected typical Western attitudes. This did not help to resolve mutual issues. In the end, all parties lacked respect for others. At times, the President's behavior was also overwhelming. From a human point of view, the Church had an insurmountably difficult task to find unity and peace.

#### 2.2.4 Paternalistic Guidance

The atmosphere of the Lutheran Church of Kenya was influenced by many factors. The Church was living through a period of strong self-empowerment. Kenyan leaders longed for independence and no longer wanted to submit to Western rule. This led to opposition from those who previously had authority in the Church. The relationship between missions and missionaries was tested. Naturally, many other human factors contributed to the overall work environment. Each side reviewed the situation in its way and blamed the other parties for escalating disagreements. How then did these situations appear from the outside?

As she approached the 1970s, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) emphasized on the official recognition of mission work. From 1969, both the Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland and the Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland were considered official mission organizations of the Church of Finland. This brought with it an interest in overseeing mission work abroad. The Bishop of the Diocese of Lapua, Eero Lehtinen, visited Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Kenya at the end of 1974 with the recently elected ELCF Mission Secretary, Seppo Syrjänen. Their goal was to visit those areas where Finnish missions worked to negotiate with Church leaders and participate in the Lutheran World Federation Conference in Nairobi.<sup>189</sup>

The Nairobi meeting discussed the statement of the Ethiopian Church Mekane Yesus, which strongly criticized the missionary and developmental nature of Western Churches.<sup>190</sup> Most donations from Western organizations did not support evangelization or the construction of Church buildings. However, because Africans view life as a whole, they did not understand the Western distinction of separating development projects from evangelism. Representatives of East Africa asked: Do Western Churches no longer consider proclaiming the Gospel to be the first and foremost task of mission work? Bishop Lehtinen was not pleased with the answers of the Western representatives. Rather, he felt connected to the Africans: "We Nordic participants felt we were in the same position as the East Africans. We rejoiced in their bold warning of awakening and joined it in our hearts."<sup>191</sup>

Lehtinen and Syrjänen traveled from Nairobi first to Tanzania, then to Ethiopia, and finally to Kenya. In Kenya, they spent seven days visiting Nairobi,

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<sup>189</sup> Arkkila M. 2008, 201, Liivola 2001, 104.

<sup>190</sup> The letter shook the Lutheran world. It influenced the LWF to invite all the Lutheran Churches to a so-called Identity-project, 1973–1977. Ahonen 2000, 267–269.

<sup>191</sup> Translation by author. *Kirkkomme Lähetys* 1/1975, Arkkila M. 2008, 202.

Kisumu, Atemo, Itierio, and Matongo. At Matongo, Lehtinen officially opened new maternity and blessed it. According to the report, Lehtinen and Syrjänen rejoiced in the interest of Africans. The African Church leaders seemed to appreciate negotiations between official Churches. After all, the mission was a matter of the Church. Many of these leaders were skilled and enthusiastic. The young people were commendably represented. Musical talents were praised. The economic dependence of the Churches on foreign donors was perceived as negative, especially in Ethiopia and Kenya. Finally, the criticism against the Swedish Lutheran Mission was surprisingly strong. It was evaluated as "paternalistic, ultra-conservative and fundamentalist". It looked down on the pastors. "The paternalism, of which Western mission societies were often accused, dominates the LCK as if we were living in the 19th century."<sup>192</sup>

In Finland, the report raised concerns in the Church Missionary Advisory Council (KLN). At its meeting on 16.12.1974, it was decided to send letters to both the LEAF and SLEAF Boards informing, that "the abnormal state in the LCK required special attention". The letters were signed by Chairman Bishop Aimo T. Nikolainen and Secretary Seppo Syrjänen.<sup>193</sup> LEAF admitted that there was a reason for criticism, but LEAF tried to play a positive role in the future.<sup>194</sup> On the contrary, SLEAF considered the report unreliable. The situation in the Lutheran Church of Kenya was perceived as improper. Misleading information had been conveyed. A short visit could not have drawn such far-reaching evaluations.<sup>195</sup> Gustaf Norrback's letter to the SLEAF Kenyan missionaries reveals that SLEAF felt as if its work had been criticized. "The report was a slap in the face of SLEAF", he claimed. He also saw the report as a blow to the SLM's biblical policy.<sup>196</sup> The same tone emerges in the letter of SLEAF Mission Secretary Sirkku Hildén. She wondered why Seppo Syrjänen's presentation in Finland involved even the Pentecostal mission, but Atemo received little or almost no attention at all!<sup>197</sup>

SLEAF was correct to argue that on a basis of a short visit it was impossible to give such a pointed evaluation unless it involved more than just one's

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<sup>192</sup> Translation by author. KHA, KLKA, KLN ptk. 16.12.1974, §4, app. no. 3.

<sup>193</sup> Translation by author. KHA, KLKA, KLN ptk. 16.12.1974, 4, SLEAFA, FLM BREV 1974–1977, Aimo T. Nikolainen and Seppo Syrjänen to SLEAF 20.1.1975.

<sup>194</sup> KHA, KLKA, Lauri Koskenniemi and Paavo Savolainen to KLN 3.4.1975. LEAF Director, Toivo Rapeli, had already in 1969 noticed paternalism in the Church: Sigurd Stark used too much "the voice of a master". Translation by author. Rapeli 1971, 109–114, 296–298.

<sup>195</sup> SLEAFA, FLM BREV 1974–1977, Håkan Bäck and Helge Hildén to KLN 1975.

<sup>196</sup> Translation by author. SLEAFA, FLM BREV 1974–1977, Gustaf Norrback to Kenya 23.1.1975. Bishop of Borgå [Swedish-speaking Finns in Finland] John Vikström visited Kenya in 1979. His reviews on SLEAF's work were positive: "I think that it is meaningful to continue this work because it is obviously successful." Sb 2/1979. In this manner, SLEAF gained the recognition it yearned for throughout the Borgå Diocese. Jern 2019, 196. In 1993, Bishop of Oslo, Andreas Aarflot, visited Kenya together with the Norwegian ambassador to see the Norwegian congregation in Nairobi and the NLM Pokot-work. NLMA, Dbb 0128, Johannes Selstø to Tor Arne Haavet 20.09.1993.

<sup>197</sup> SLEAFA, FLM BREV 1974–1977, Sirkku Hildén to missionaries 5.3.1975.

observations. Discussions with current missionaries who were reporting to the Home boards and knowledge of the missionary situation within the Church of Sweden contributed to the evaluation. Perhaps even personal injury added color to the assessment. The SLM's low-Church missionaries had strongly criticized the bishop's visit in a very negative tone.<sup>198</sup> SLEAF's strong reaction was related to theological differences. The words "ultra-conservative" and "fundamentalist" were offensive in a theological sense. In liberal theology, they were often used as weapons in the fight against conservative values. SLEAF now viewed itself as the target of these words. Therefore, it felt injured and took a defensive position.<sup>199</sup> It was natural that the criticism caused others to defend themselves. SLEAF felt humiliated theologically and defended both itself and its longtime mission partner in the face of these allegations. Since LEAF as a newer entrant onto the mission field did not profile itself as a close supporter of the SLM, it could see the situation from another perspective.

The events described above lead to the conclusion that there was something in the present missionary style of working that annoyed certain parties, especially the Kenyans seeking independence. The Swedish Lutheran Mission was led by Sigurd Stark, who represented the older generation vis-à-vis the Kenyan leadership. The Kenyans probably now found the current methods old-fashioned and restrictive. The word "paternalistic" continues to lead us to think of growing pains, the process of independence from parental control. Parents are sometimes considered annoying whenever offspring seek direction in their own lives. This was about growing up, not about being right or wrong. When the offspring left the care of their guardians, they also fell into excess, as happened in this case. At any rate, the Finnish ambassadors felt that it was high time for the Lutheran Church of Kenya to break free from this paternalistic guidance. The Kenyans themselves experienced the same.

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<sup>198</sup> Arkkila R. 2010, 266.

<sup>199</sup> It should be noted that Bishop Lehtinen belonged to the conservative wing of the Finnish Bishops of the day. He did share the basic theology of the Finnish revival movements without denying his affiliation to the Lutheran Evangelical revival movement. However, in his strong emphasis on ecclesial unity, he was not always understood by SLEAF and LEAF. For this, see Arkkila M. 2008. It seems that the report was prepared by Syrjänen. Its emphases fit well with his theological views. Arkkila R. 2010, 266-267.

### 3. A Church with Lutheran Roots

The Swedish Lutheran Mission and all other mission societies that subsequently joined the Lutheran Church in Kenya represented a similar branch of Christianity, namely Scandinavian Lutheran revivalism. In the Church, this was reflected in an emphasis on confessional Lutheran teaching as well as active evangelism to reach new people through the Gospel. Caution was exercised in ecumenical contexts. The investment in Matongo Lutheran Theological College contributed to this development.

#### 3.1 Lutheran Mission as a Vision

##### 3.1.1 Open Doors for Gospel

The Lutheran Church of Kenya originated from the work of the Swedish Lutheran Mission. The SLM's original plan was to work among the Kisii. Within a few years, however, the mission expanded rapidly. In the early 1960s, Christians began to realize that the resources of the mother organization were limited. Therefore, help and support were sought from many different sources. President Martin Lundström and Vice-President James Otete thought the same way.<sup>200</sup> In a letter to both the Swedish and Finnish Home boards, Lundström wrote:

“The request and demand for more missionaries and Christian work are rapidly increasing among the people, which is why the LCK has got a heavy task and burden together with enormous possibilities and wide-open doors everywhere [...] Something must be done.”<sup>201</sup>

The board of the Swedish Lutheran Association of Finland received an invitation to Kenya from Martin Lundström in December 1962. Attached was a letter from the Maragoli region welcoming SLEAF missionaries to its territory. When Mission Director Anders-Gustaf Stjernberg visited Kenya in January 1963, the SLEAF annual meeting made a formal decision to open a new mission field. As early as October, the first missionaries Gustaf and Märta Norrback arrived in Kenya, the following year Sven and Linnéa Klemets.<sup>202</sup> Lundström also invited the Breklum Society from Germany to work in Kenya, but this attempt did not progress further.<sup>203</sup>

The next target was the Norwegian Santal Mission. James Otete explained why they needed help from other countries: “The LCK as a young Church of 16 years only has done very little. As its income is very low and it has very few servants this cannot spread enough in this country.” He went on to describe

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<sup>200</sup> Imberg 2008, 110–111.

<sup>201</sup> Translation by author. IA, E II: 1, Martin Lundström to Sigurd Stark and A.G. Stjernberg 7.1.1964.

<sup>202</sup> Lounela 2007, 50.

<sup>203</sup> IA, E II: 1, Martin Lundström to an unnamed German missionary 20.12.1963.

which areas the Church wanted to receive help from the Norwegians: education and health care, children, young people, and orphans. Nairobi, Mombasa, and the Luos were also priorities.<sup>204</sup> The letter from the Mission was read at the Annual General Meeting in February 1965. Norwegians were not willing to start working in Kenya. They did not consider the relationship between the Church and the mission “satisfactory”. They also expressed concern that the Lutheran Church of Kenya is expanding too much without heed to the cost. Rather, they felt the Church should strengthen the already existing life and focus on developing her structure.<sup>205</sup>

As Vice-President, Otete had a dual vision on the expansion of the Church in mind. One option could be that the Lutheran Church of Kenya became a kind of Kenyan diocese in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. The second would be for the new mission societies to join the work of Kenya. When he became President, he seemed to have lost the desire to join the ELCT, but then he worked hard to develop a strategy to reach new people and areas through several mission societies:<sup>206</sup>

We praise God very much for how He has opened for us the doors of the Gospel in Kenya. The Kenya Government has allowed freedom of worship in its constitution. The Lutheran work seems to be welcomed wholeheartedly at every place in the country. Many of Kenya’s tribes stay without the Gospel even today. They look to the Church to give them the word of the Gospel [...] Because of this blessing the Church felt a need to invite more mission societies to the country.<sup>207</sup>

From the beginning, the Lutheran Church of Kenya had a clear missionary vision of expanding the work to new areas. This task required external help, both financial and manpower. As Vice-President, James Otete worked with determination to find new missionary partners for the accomplishment of this task. Outsiders recognized his great desire to expand. The Santal Mission was afraid that the LCK stood in danger of losing sight of her original goals. Otete, however, was not concerned about this. At this juncture, new missionaries were viewed purely as a blessing to the Church. “Missionaries and Africans must be heart and soul in a work to spread the Gospel in this country,” Otete informed the participants in one of his first Executive Committee meetings as President.<sup>208</sup>

### 3.1.2 New Mission Societies

While looking for new partners, Otete faced another type of problem. Current partners were not entirely pleased with the President’s plans for expansion.

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<sup>204</sup> IA, E II: 1, *The Santal Mission memo*. Imberg explains this interaction. Imberg 2008, 136–137.

<sup>205</sup> IA, A I: 1, AGM minutes 27.2.1965, IA, E II: 1, Sigurd Stark to LCK 8.6.1966.

<sup>206</sup> Imberg 2008, 146

<sup>207</sup> SLEAFA, BV BREV, *Memorandum* given to Sigurd Stark 4.2.1969.

<sup>208</sup> IA, A II: 3, Minutes Ex.com 1968–1971, Ex.com minutes 2.7.1968, *President’s address*.

Sigurd Stark, the Director of the Swedish Lutheran Mission, took a very strict approach to the procedures and reminded everyone of the common rules of the Constitution. He was annoyed with the Church leadership having discussions with the Santal Mission from Norway, the Missouri Synod, and the World Mission Prayer League both from America, before discussing the matter with him. The frequency of correspondence shows how Stark was extremely dissatisfied with the situation.<sup>209</sup> The SLM even threatened to end financial assistance “if the LCK continues negotiating with other Churches”.<sup>210</sup>

According to Stark the Santal Mission was not Lutheran<sup>211</sup>, the Missouri Synod was having internal problems that could lead to liberal theology<sup>212</sup>, and the World Mission Prayer League was not even a mission society but rather a “missionary fellowship”<sup>213</sup>. LEAF and the Wisconsin Synod were both proposed and supported.<sup>214</sup> LEAF and SLEAF favored the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod. They had reservations about the Santal Mission.<sup>215</sup> The WMPL had good connections especially with the Santal Mission. The Missouri Synod was possible, but the Wisconsin Synod was not. Since the Missouri Synod had a struggle going on “between the conservative and the not so conservative elements in the clergy”, Director Paul Lindell advised the Church to approach the Santal Mission first.”<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> SLEAFA, LCK BREV 1963–1974, Sigurd Stark to Helge Hildén 30.4.1969 and 22.7.1969, Sigurd Stark to James Otete 10.9.1968, 18.5.1972, 21.12.1972, 6.6.1969, 9.3.1972, and 21.12.1972, Sigurd Stark to Edgar Hoenecke 17.9.1971 and 6.3.1972.

<sup>210</sup> IA, A II: 3, Ex.com 1968–1970, Ex.com minutes 13.3.1969.

<sup>211</sup> “The Santal Mission is not standing firmly on the only true foundation of the Holy Scriptures.” SLEAFA, LCK BREV 1963–1974 Sigurd Stark to Edgar Hoenecke 6.3.1972. “The Santal Mission does not wholly accept the doctrine of the Bible as the infallible Word of God.” Sigurd Stark to James Otete 21.12.1972. “A cooperation with a mission, whose rules disagree with the constitution of the Church, is impossible. So, the Santal Mission is not recommended.” Helge Hildén to Ex.com 18.5.1972.

<sup>212</sup> “When the outcome of the present struggle is known the matter might be reconsidered.” SLEAFA, LCK BREV 1963–1974, Sigurd Stark to LCK 9.3.1972, “Missouri is conceivable. We think, however, that the Missouri Synod is obviously at a crossroads in their theology and message and it’s, therefore, better to wait, maintaining contacts until it’s clear whether those who are working on the basis of an old Lutheran Confession are able to hold the management of the Synod,” Helge Hildén to Ex.com 18.5.1972.

<sup>213</sup> SLEAFA, BV BREV, Sigurd Stark to James Otete 8.4.1969, “Otete has been willingly negotiating with the WMPL – the matter has not been discussed in Ex.com but once.” Translation by author. Sigurd Stark to Helge Hildén 30.4.1969, “You need to enlarge the work of the LCK. However, the enlargement must not happen too quickly. It’s necessary to retain a common, firm confession,” Helge Hildén to Ex.com 18.5.1972, “It was very much regretted that the LCK had negotiated with the WMPL without close contact with the sponsoring Missions,” Sigurd Stark to LCK 6.6.1969.

<sup>214</sup> SLEAFA, LCK BREV 1963–1974, “We recommend heartily the Wisconsin, as we know it to be a Synod of good reputation and firm belief founded on the Holy Scriptures. We also recommend LEAF,” Sigurd Stark to James Otete 8.4.1969, Sigurd Stark to LCK 9.3.1972.

<sup>215</sup> “We do not know the Santal mission.” SLEAFA, LCK BREV 1963–1974, Toivo Rapeli to ELCK 22.4.1972, Helge Hildén to Ex.com 18.5.1972

<sup>216</sup> IA, E II: 11, Corr. Gen. sec. 1964–1972, Paul Lindell to General Secretary Gustaf Norrback 8.7.1971.

If Stark behaved vigorously so did Otete. He wrote:

We are surprised to see that Rev. Stark can write such a letter and use such words in the letter without the knowledge of the Board or the other Missions supporting the LCK. May we be told whether Stark is working as the liaison secretary for the rest [of the] Mission Societies? If the WMPL is put in as an "awkward position" not to join us, that is you who is trying to do so [...] Tell us frankly if your intention is to try to regain the former constitution and leadership in this Church.<sup>217</sup>

General Secretary Daniel Ogetii tried to be more subtle. The Church was confused concerning the SLM's attitude, especially towards the WMPL. They had read the "Statement of Faith" which explained the WMPL's understanding of Lutheranism and were pleased with it. Ogetii now asked: "Why the LCK cannot join hands with the WMPL to spread the Gospel?" The question was addressed to the SLM, SLEAF, and LEAF. The LCK had already sent an invitation to the WMPL but was willing to withdraw it under the special conditions proposed by the missions.<sup>218</sup> Things developed rapidly. SLEAF and LEAF had no objections, and even Sigurd Stark was happy about the Statement of Faith. The World Mission Prayer League joined in the work of the LCK at the end of 1969.<sup>219</sup>

In September 1968, Helge Hildén, Director of SLEAF informed the LEAF Mission committee that the Lutheran Church of Kenya was seeking new mission partners. The Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland (LEAF) had followed its sister organization in successfully entering Kenya and was also willing to work in Africa. LEAF was the larger of the two, representing the Finnish-speaking majority in Finland. Together, these two had been working in Japan since 1900. In April 1969, LEAF representatives, Director Toivo Rapeli and Chairman Jouko Vuorinen visited Kenya. The Church leadership welcomed the Finns and informed them that they were especially needed for health care and education. The Church did not want anything to jeopardize possible future connections. This is evident from a report Otete presented to the LEAF representatives: "You are free to serve the LCK in any way you think will suit and please you. The Church is ready to give you any of the work already in operation, or a particular mission field in the LCK if you like [...] You are absolutely free in this matter." In 1970, LEAF joined in the work of the Lutheran Church of Kenya. Health care and education became its early priorities, as the Church herself had wished.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> IA, EV: 3, Corr. SLM 1964–1969, James Otete to SLM Mission Board 25.7.1969.

<sup>218</sup> SLEAFA, BV BREV, Daniel Ogetii to BV, SLEAF and LEAF.

<sup>219</sup> "We have now also received the 'Statement of Faith' – and there is nothing but good to say about it." Translation by author. SLEAFA, BV BREV, Sigurd Stark to Helge Hildén 22.7.1969.

<sup>220</sup> Lounela 2007, 47–49, 58, 64–66, IA, EV: 1, Corr. missions 1961–1979, *The memorandum of LCK to LEAF* 11.4.1969. Arkkila describes the LEAF representatives' visit to Kenya. Arkkila 2010, 227–231.

The Evangelical Lutheran Mission (ELM) from Denmark joined the LCK through the Swedish Lutheran Mission in 1974. It had no official status in the Church because it worked under the SLM. The first Danish missionaries were Lars and Britt-Marie Brixen (1974–1980), followed by eight others. In Kenya, they concentrated on the Kipsigis region, educational challenges, and women's work. The ELM had prior mission experience, working in Ethiopia since 1914.<sup>221</sup>

In 1976, Matti Peltola, Secretary of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM), visited Kenya seeking a partnership. Erling Hansson (SLM) reported to his superior about this visit. Uncertainty about who had issued this call to Peltola created gloomy clouds right from the beginning, with doubts increasing when he was questioned. President James Otete, Vice-President Samwel Mogeni, Boris Sandberg (SLEAF), and Erling Hansson (SLM) met him in Nairobi. Boris Sandberg asked whether FELM shared the same Lutheran understanding with the Church. According to Sandberg, Peltola replied annoyed: "If you don't need our help, we shall not come at all. We are not going to change our teaching!" Otete acted calmly and stated briefly that the report would be handled in the Executive Committee.<sup>222</sup> Both LEAF and SLEAF were suspicious about this visit.<sup>223</sup> In the end, it did not lead to cooperation.<sup>224</sup> It is quite clear that the existing mission societies' reluctant attitudes had influenced this decision.

The Norwegian Lutheran Mission (NLM) had been founded already in 1891 and worked in China until 1949. It was a large low-Church mission organization with extensive experience in several mission fields around the world, Africa, Asia, and South America. It had been looking for a new mission field since the mid-1970s.<sup>225</sup> While searching for a new field in Kenya, National Christian

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<sup>221</sup> The first Danish missionary Edith Korholm served in Ethiopia from 1914 to 1956. Several other ELM missionaries followed her. Kenyan missionaries after the Brixens were Hans Benny and Jytte Jacobsen-Rom (1981–1987), Alf Bach and Margit Kofoed (1983–1987), Per and Signe Kofoed Munch (1985–1992), Dorrit Bakkegård Pedersen (1987–1995) and Gunner Jensen (1993–1994). An additional eight short-term missionaries taught the Danish missionary children. MA, Email from Lars Brixen 6.5.2020.

<sup>222</sup> Translation by author. RA, BVA, E 1e: 38, Erling Hansson to Gunnar Nilsson 17.3.1976. Boris Sandberg wrote to Finland explaining that Tuula Sääksi was supporting Peltola's views. Sandberg saw cooperation with this Mission Society as being impossible because of the liberal theology it represented. BSA, Boris Sandberg to Sirkku Hildén 16.3.1976 and 12.4.1976.

<sup>223</sup> SLEAFA, FLM BREV 1974–1981, Gustaf Norrback to Alpo Hukka 4.5.1976, Arkkila 2010, 318. Finnish mission societies were surprisingly interested in Kenya! In 1985, one of them, the Finnish Lutheran Overseas Missions (FLOM, *Kylväjä*), planned to send their missionary to Kenya as an NLM trainee: "FLOM's profile in Finland regarding Kenya should be extremely low." NLMA, Da-002003, Urpo Kyyhkynen to Einar Eng 18.3.1985. FLOM had its reasons for caution. In the statement of 1976 concerning the NLM's entry into Kenya, LEAF had insisted that other mission societies from Finland should not come to Kenya through the NLM. Arkkila 2010, 280.

<sup>224</sup> Peltola highlights tensions in Nairobi between the Kenya Synod and the LCK. He considers them "unnatural". The report does not take any position on whether to start work in Kenya or not. MA, Peltola 1976.

<sup>225</sup> For the NLM, see Uglem 1979, 154–184 and Franzen 1986, 117–119.



Council in Kenya advised them to consider the unreached “cattle tribes” of Northern and Eastern Kenya. They turned to the LCK, and James Otete welcomed them hoping to gain some contribution in theological training too.<sup>226</sup> Before the conclusion of the agreement, other missions were consulted. There was some hesitation, but no one disagreed. This agreement was reached in 1977.<sup>227</sup> The following year, a small Icelandic Lutheran Mission (SIK) joined the work of the Church through the NLM, its sister organization in Iceland. Like the ELM, it had no official mission status in the Church. Its first missionaries were Skuli Svavarsson and Kjellrun Langdal. The SIK was responsible for the Chepareria and Kongolai stations in the upper Pokot region.<sup>228</sup>

Although the Kenyan leadership was not able to meet Western expectations in terms of policy, James Otete’s active role as President was significant. In less than a decade, he managed to bring several mission societies to Kenya. His vision to create unity in the Church was already being challenged by these different societies. The mission societies differed in their historical backgrounds, administrative structures, past experiences, and even in certain theological issues. It would be extremely difficult to reconcile Kenyan and Western lifestyles. Despite all their differentiating factors, the Lutheran Church of Kenya and her mission partners tried to find a common way forward, better or the worse. President James Otete played a significant role in this. He reminded everyone that the mission societies were needed but the Lutheran Church of Kenya set the pace, that is, exercised the decisive power over matters.<sup>229</sup> As the shepherd of the flock, Otete dared to put into words what was needed in a difficult situation. Respect and stability followed his programmatic statements as shown by favorable future development.

### 3.1.3 Debate on Justification

As the Church selected new mission societies, their stand on both the Bible and the doctrine of justification was observed. Concerning the entry of the Norwegian Lutheran Mission, these discussions surfaced. On April 1, 1976, a report on the discussion between the Church and the Norwegian Lutheran Mission was read in the Executive Committee. It was decided to ask the NLM for a copy of their Constitution and Statements of Faith, especially regarding their

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<sup>226</sup> Lundeby 2018, 1. The NLM missionaries had come to Voi in 1971 and concentrated on literature and radio work. This project organized itself as a “Scripture Mission” and functioned independently. Lundeby 1984, 102–103.

<sup>227</sup> Arkkila 2010, 279–281.

<sup>228</sup> MA, Email from Skuli Svavarsson 16.10.2018. SIK’s mission activity had its roots in the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) in Iceland. For this, see Franzen 1986, 378 and Gíslason 1982, 303–313.

<sup>229</sup> Imberg 2008, 146–147. “Pastor Otete Nchogu was a natural leader for the Church accepted by all the missions and by his fellow pastors. He was the Mzee who was well respected. He worked hard in his position and was ready to listen to missionary concerns as well. I don’t recall any personal difficulties with his leadership.” MA, Email of Mike Koski 30.11.2018.

understanding of the doctrine of justification. Additionally, other missions were asked for their opinions about the NLM.<sup>230</sup>

Boris Sandberg (SLEAF) wrote to his superior after the meeting. He related that the SLM's missionaries had presented there a paper containing facts about the NLM. One point particularly raised questions – justification!

They (NLM) say: "Christ was declared righteousness, but the world was not righteous through this [*Kristus förklarades rättfärdig, men världen var därigenom inte rättfärdig*]." Nonetheless, they state that Christ's Atonement applies to the whole of the human race but man becomes righteous when he believes [*Kristi försoning gäller hela människosläktet, men rättfärdig blir man då man tror*]. In their view, the difference is only in the usage of terms, be that as it may. But it should be possible to clarify how things truly are through a joint discussion. According to BV's report, "they always consider the Word to be true as it is written and kneel in front of it." [...] If they do not accept objective justification as anchored biblically, I think they can keep their work separate from the LCK, for the reason "that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough". (1 Corinthians 5: 6,7 and Galatians 5: 9) Of course, this means that we will have another Lutheran Church in Kenya. May God give us wisdom.<sup>231</sup>

Mission Director Helge Hildén answered him. He was not happy with the Swedish Lutheran Mission, which "blindly" supported the NLM and did not take the matter as seriously as SLEAF:

You go into that very matter, which, both regarding Nordic co-operation and the mission down there, has roused my greatest concern: The NLM denies objective justification! This may well have its historical connections and possibly be explained by the fact that for them it is only a matter of terminology. That's probably not true in all cases. Why are you afraid of something that for us in the Evangelical movement is a matter of the heart [*hjärtpunkt*]. Is this not because the term itself has become difficult to digest, giving room for other kinds of teaching which become possible only by denying objective justification? But then I asked myself why BV seems to have fallen into their embrace.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> The BV's report is not included in the minutes. From the SLM, present were John-Erik Ekström as the acting Secretary and Erling Hansson as the mission representative. AKA, Minutes of Ex.com 1.4.1976.

<sup>231</sup> Translation by author. SLEAFA, FLM BREV 1974–1977, Boris Sandberg to DYM/Sirkku Hildén 3.4.1976. "The NLM seems to have a different view of the Sacraments than we do, close to the Calvinist. If so, it is better that they register themselves as an association in Kenya, because then there is very little Lutheranism left." Translation by author. Boris Sandberg to Helge Hildén 13.4.1976.

<sup>232</sup> Translation by author. SLEAFA, FLM BREV 1974–1977, Helge Hildén to Boris Sandberg 8.4.1976. The SLM strongly supported the NLM's entry. In the consultation with other missions in Helsinki, the SLM informed the group that in Ethiopia their relationship with the NLM was the best compared to other missions. SLEAFA, FLM BREV 1974–1977, Report of Helsinki Consultation 2.3.1976.

John-Erik Ekström (SLM) was also concerned about the NLM's understanding of justification. He wrote to Mission secretary Gunnar Nilsson: "It is very important that we are fully aware where new missions stand when it comes to the Bible and the doctrine of justification." Surprisingly, he was now worried about the opposite to Sandberg and Hildén. He didn't want anyone to sing as "LEAF people" were singing: "The world in Jesus has become righteous [världen i Jesus rättfärdig är vorden]."<sup>233</sup> Ekström quoted a song that was a very famous song within the Lutheran Evangelical revival movement in Finland, represented by both SLEAF and LEAF. It strongly focused on the doctrine of Objective justification.<sup>234</sup> The same song can be found in the *Bibeltrogn Vänners Sångbok* [SLM's Songbook] of 1937. Its origin comes from the Moravian songbook, *Sions Nya Sånger* [Sion's New Songs].<sup>235</sup> The SLM missionary John-Erik Ekström was worried about the exact opposite to SLEAF representatives Helge Hildén and Boris Sandberg. According to Ekström, the whole world could not have been declared righteous. It also seems that the NLM was thinking in the same manner. On the other hand, both Hildén and Sandberg considered that "the world in Jesus has become righteous".

The Church received an answer from the Norwegian Lutheran Mission:

We do teach about justification as stated in Augustana art. 4. We do believe that Christ [...] had been declared the all-sufficient divine Redeemer and righteousness for God. Christ is our righteousness, and He alone. (Objective justification for all by His life, death, and resurrection.) Rom. 4:25, 5:9, 18. We also believe that all who penitently accept Christ as the one and only Saviour in sincere faith are justified in the sight of God and made heirs of salvation. Rom. 3:26, 4:5, Luk 18:14.<sup>236</sup>

General Secretary Boris Sandberg answered: "We are thankful for your declaration concerning objective justification because without it there cannot be any subjective justification, either." In the following letter, the Norwegian

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<sup>233</sup> Translation by author. RA, BVA, E1 e: 35, J-E Ekström to Gunnar Nilsson 24.11.1975. The song Ekström referred to had already been the subject of controversy in the early days of the SLM. Svensson 1961, 90–91.

<sup>234</sup> "On the cross, the world was made righteous, He has died for all. Then blessedness/salvation has already been brought to you, the sacrifice of Calvary is unlimited. Our blood debt has been paid off, the sign of the cross has already been made over it. The Judge himself has suffered, the convicted have already been reconciled." Translation by author. *Siionin Kannel* (1961) 204, 2 and *Sionsharpan* 233, 2.

<sup>235</sup> In the EFS's songbook, *Sionstoner*, "righteous" is replaced by "reconciled [*försonad*]!" Söderlund 2010, 155. A parallel change has been made in the Methodist and Baptist songbooks. Söderlund 1979, 118.

<sup>236</sup> Underlining and parentheses are included. IA, E II: 3, Corr. Gen. Sec. 1973–1979, Gudmund Vinskei to Gen. Sec. Boris Sandberg. 6.5.1976.

Lutheran Mission was invited to join the Lutheran Church of Kenya, since none of the other mission societies opposed it.<sup>237</sup>

Boris Sandberg, Helge Hildén and John-Erik Ekström touched on the theological controversy that characterized the birth history of their revival movements. Discussions on this topic had sometimes been more than hot in their homelands.<sup>238</sup> Since justification was the main doctrine of the Bible according to the Book of Concord, it was no wonder it evoked strong emotions. Kenyans probably considered this controversy as “Western made” because it originated from the historical roots of Western revival movements. It appears that sufficient consensus was finally reached. It remains to be seen whether this will lay the foundations for good future cooperation between the parties.

### 3.1.4 United by Lutheran Revivalism

All the mission societies affiliated with the Lutheran Church in Kenya represented Scandinavian Lutheran revivalism. This had a powerful effect on the development of the Church both theologically and practically. The basic features of that Lutheran revivalism relevant to these mission societies are therefore outlined below.

#### **Rosenius Movement**

Carl Olof Rosenius (1816–1868) was an influential lay preacher in Sweden in the 19th century. Born into a pastor’s family on 3 Feb. 1816, he grew up amid the Norrland “reader”- movement with its village prayer houses and lay preachers. His father, pastor Anders Rosenius, had experienced a gospel-centered religious revival in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, influenced by Martin Luther’s writings and the Moravians (Herrnhutism).<sup>239</sup> The Moravian emphasis on “come as you are”, as the core of the Gospel, became dear to him and others of his peers. The theological development of the son followed in his father’s footsteps. Besides Pietism, Martin Luther, and the Moravians, Carl Olof Rosenius was particularly influenced by the Methodist preacher George Scott.

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<sup>237</sup> IA, E II: 3, Corr. Gen. Sec. 1973–1979, Boris Sandberg to Gundmund Vinskei 19.5.1976 and 26.6.1976. The SLEAF Home Board was content with the NLM’s response. It now saw a consensus on the doctrine of justification but also on biblical authority and baptism. LEAF, on the other hand, still had its doubts. Arkkila 2010, 280–281.

<sup>238</sup> See chapter “Rosenius Movement”. The history of the controversy is illustrated by Lodin 1956, 251–253, 314–319, Koskeniemi 1985, 31–53, Rønne 1993, 1–6 and Söderlund 2010, 151–159. For the latest research, see Arkkila 2021.

<sup>239</sup> The Moravian Brethren is one of the most significant communities of the Pietist era in the German-speaking world. Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700–1760) was one of its main leaders. Active mission work and ecumenism were characteristic of this movement which strongly influenced the Nordic and Baltic countries. After its early stages, it detached itself from Pietism, moving towards Orthodox Lutheranism. Luther’s doctrine of justification and the theology of the cross with its emphasis on Jesus’ atoning blood became central. Wallmann 1997, 170–191.

He was also influenced by Rev. Fredrik Gabriel Hedberg<sup>240</sup>, the father of the Lutheran Evangelical revival movement in Finland. Gradually, Carl Olof Rosenius became one of the main forces in a religious revival of the "New Evangelical" -movement, which spread to much of Sweden and even to other Nordic countries over the following decades. The Evangeliska fosterlandsstiftelsen, the Swedish Evangelical Mission (EFS/SEM), from which the Swedish Lutheran Mission originated, was formed in 1856 with Rosenius as one of its founders.<sup>241</sup>

Rosenius' activities as a leading figure in the New Evangelical movement were followed by a strong literary activity, an emphasis on pastoral care, and a grace-centered proclamation. Following Pietism, he further emphasized the importance of sanctification as a true sign of rebirth.<sup>242</sup> His Moravian origin, "come as you are" -teaching, appealed to people. The songs he wrote conveyed the same comforting message: "Wake up from your slumber, O fearful heart. Don't completely forget what you own. In the moment of the densest fog, the sun is hidden, but it is still the same."<sup>243</sup> Rosenius' ideas spread widely through the magazine "*Pietisten*", which he co-founded with George Scott in 1842. It was read throughout Sweden in all social classes. At its best, its subscription volume reached 10,000 copies, which even exceeded the volume of the most popular Swedish daily newspaper of the time. Many of the writings were later published as books; The commentary on Romans and the daily devotional book were the most famous ones. The Rosenius' writings have been translated into many different languages and spread widely around the world, even to Africa.<sup>244</sup>

After the unexpected death of Rosenius in 1868, the theological controversy caused fragmentation in the New Evangelical movement. The first of these concerned the doctrine of reconciliation. In *Pietisten*, P. P. Waldenström denied the basic Lutheran doctrine, the substitute suffering of Jesus (*satisfactio vicaria*). Then the Holy Communion was disputed. Was the Holy supper table closed or open to everybody? This was related to the question of the pastoral office. Who is called to administer the sacraments? Yet, another controversy concerned the Bible and its historical-critical interpretation. These battles caused both separatism and secession from the Swedish Church. Some chose to establish their own Churches with Reformed features, while some decided to

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<sup>240</sup> Rosenius' experience of awakening resembles that of Hedberg. Saarisalo 1973, 23–29.

<sup>241</sup> Imberg and Nilsson 2011, 23–42, Nygren 2014, 4–6.

<sup>242</sup> Here, Rosenius and Hedberg differed most clearly. Rosenius argued that Hedberg did not understand rebirth as a real transformation of man and sanctification as a sign of this. Mäkelä 2011, 93. Hedberg considered the claim of sanctification as a sign of rebirth misleading. A true Christian remained a sinner until his death. The sign of salvation was solely in Jesus' atoning blood through the Word and the Sacraments. For differences between Rosenius and Hedberg, see Schmidt 1951, 140–159, Schmidt 1959, 26–40 and Lodin 1956, 143–145.

<sup>243</sup> Translation by author. Hedberg often quoted this very song in his letters. Both Rosenius and Hedberg embraced the Moravian "come as you are" -emphasis. Linge 1956, 54–55.

<sup>244</sup> Andersson 2008, 77–87, 98–105.

stay within the national Church.<sup>245</sup> The controversy over the Bible eventually divided the remaining Rosenius movement into two parts in an internal crisis. The minority could not accept the historical-critical interpretation of the Bible but instead wanted to follow what they understood as a more orthodox view in which the Bible was considered the infallible Word of God. This group founded the *Missionssällskapet Bibeltrogna Vänner*, the Swedish Lutheran Mission (BV/SLM) in 1911. From the very beginning, it functioned as a mission society, since several SEM missionaries decided to join it. The new organization profiled itself as a continuation of Rosenius' work. In particular, the question of biblical authority and doctrine of justification was considered fundamental.<sup>246</sup>

According to Docent Rune Söderlund, the young Rosenius supported the Objective justification and agreed that the whole world was made righteous in the crucifixion of Jesus. Elder Rosenius in the 1860s, criticized this teaching. In *Pietisten*, he now condemned those people, who believed the world to be "righteous and holy" naming them "the lost [*förvillade*]", arguing that only believers could be called righteous.<sup>247</sup> Researchers' opinions are divided on this. Some scholars consider that Rosenius did not teach Objective justification at any stage of his life.<sup>248</sup> In any case, Rosenius played an important role in the religious revival of the SLM's founder lay preacher, Axel B. Svensson. With his help, Svensson embraced the teaching of Objective justification.<sup>249</sup> "The whole world is cleansed and redeemed from all sins and consequently also released from death and all evil," Svensson now taught about justification.<sup>250</sup> Those who remained in the mother organization *Evangeliska fosterlandsstiftelsen* generally took a different stance: reconciliation [*försoning*] was prepared for the whole world, but only believers could be called righteous.<sup>251</sup> The Evangelical Lutheran

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<sup>245</sup> Imberg and Nilsson 2011, 39–43, Imberg 2011, 44–49. Schmidt sees these divisions as a result of Rosenius' theology in which both Lutheran and Methodist emphasis were intermingled. Schmidt 1959, 40.

<sup>246</sup> Imberg and Nilsson 2011, 50–73. For BV, see also Karlsson 2001.

<sup>247</sup> Söderlund 2010, 152–153. Discussions on this topic had sometimes been overly heated in Denmark, Finland, and Sweden, this being characteristic of Lutheran revivalism. See chapter "Debate on Justification".

<sup>248</sup> For this, see Pedersen [Rønne] 1990 and Lodin 1956. "Throughout his active period, Rosenius basically takes a distance from objective justification." Translation by author. Pedersen [Rønne] 2006, 46. Hedberg considered that Rosenius' conception of justification varied over the years. Schmidt 1951, 134–143, 173–181.

<sup>249</sup> Söderlund 2010, 152–153. Especially the following teaching of Rosenius had touched Svensson: "This forgiveness, this redemption, which is now mentioned, it belongs to every man, pious or not, believer or unbeliever. You can be as you are, nonetheless, your sins are taken away, wiped out, forgiven, thrown into the depths of the sea – this happened at the time of Jesus' death." Translation by author. *Pietisten* 31.3.1847.

<sup>250</sup> Axel B. Svensson served as a Board Member, the General Secretary, and from 1930 the Chair of the BV up to his death in 1967. Gunhild Andersson translated his book on justification (*Om rättfärdiggörelsen inför Gud* [On Justification before God]) into English. Svensson 1978. This booklet was distributed in the LCK and also translated into Kiswahili. Andersson further translated several other writings of Rosenius. MA, interview of Reijo Arkkila 20.11.2018.

<sup>251</sup> Söderlund 2010, 151–153.

Mission (ELM) of Denmark followed the stance of the Swedish Lutheran Mission. Objective justification was central to its birth history.<sup>252</sup>

The Norwegian Lutheran Mission had been strongly influenced by the Rosenius movement.<sup>253</sup> The same is true of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission.<sup>254</sup> Both the Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland and the Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland were influenced by this movement, although to a degree further than Rosenius, they profiled themselves as strictly followers of Martin Luther.<sup>255</sup> Even the World Mission Prayer League had connections to this revival.<sup>256</sup> Surprisingly, all the mission societies working with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya were more or less connected to the same Lutheran revival movement! Whether this was a unifying factor in the Church's mission activities, remains to be seen. In any case, it clearly shows the strength of Lutheran revivalism throughout the world.

### **Lutheran Evangelical Revival Movement**

Both the Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland and the Swedish Lutheran Association of Finland, which had separated in 1922 for linguistic reasons, arose from the same revival background, the Lutheran Evangelical revival movement in Finland. The founder of this movement was not a layman but a clergyman, the Rev. Fredrik Gabriel Hedberg, 15 July 1811–19 Aug. 1893. Traditional piety was characteristic of his home, as both his parents were from pastor families. Hedberg started his schooling at his grandfather's (Gabriel Borg) vicarage in Vihanti and already at the age of 15, he received the baccalaureate degree. Then he completed the Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy at the Royal Academy of Turku. In 1832 he entered into the study of theology. He completed his studies in a year and a half and was ordained in 1833.<sup>257</sup>

Before this, at the age of 14, Hedberg experienced a personal revival. The fear of God's judgment drove him to concentrate on the Bible. While reading

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<sup>252</sup> Jensen 2011, 234–235, Rønne 2018, 205–223. After his Free-Church period, H.C. Møller (1834–1907) became acquainted with the writings of Rosenius, adopted a Lutheran conviction, and returned to the State Church. He founded the Evangelical Lutheran Mission. The revival with lay preachers and prayer houses spread throughout Denmark. Møller strongly emphasized Objective justification. Söderlund 2010, 153, Koskeniemi 1978, 223–234.

<sup>253</sup> "The NLM has got many roots, one of the most important being the Rosenius revival in Sweden." Imberg 1995, 45. Mäkelä also describes the NLM as part of this movement. Mäkelä 2011, 94. According to Lodin, Rosenius gave birth to a spiritual movement in Denmark, but particularly in Norway. Lodin 1956, 324–326. For the significance of Rosenius in Norway, see UT 2/1981.

<sup>254</sup> Jensen describes the ELM as belonging to the Danish Rosenius movement. Jensen 2011, 234–235.

<sup>255</sup> Schmidt 1959, 26–40. Lodin describes Rosenius' connections in Finland. Lodin 1956, 326.

<sup>256</sup> Tengbom 2019, 21. "I am happy to learn that your heritage is from the Rosenius revival. My heritage and roots come out of that same spiritual Pietistic movement. I am from the former Swedish Augustana Synod in America!" RA, E 6, Correspondence with WMPL 1977–1987, Jonathan Lindell to Mission directors of SLM, SLEAF, LEAF, and NLM 18.10.1985.

<sup>257</sup> Suokunnas 2011, 15–21, Schmidt 1951, 16–19, 26–32.

about Jesus' suffering and death, he noted that all this happened for his sake. The Holy Spirit enlightened him, assuring him that he could possess grace. His fear towards God was replaced by a joyful and living assurance of the remission of sins. However, this did not last long. Satan caused him to doubt his faith as mere imagination. The spiritual books he read reinforced his despair, for – as he later realized – they made salvation dependent on human deeds. This drove him to pray for hours in loneliness and to examine his life to the point of despair. This anguish would not leave him alone, until 1842, when as an already ordained pastor, he found lasting comfort:

The Word of God made it clear that Christ had already fully prepared salvation for me, and that I only needed to believe the word of the Gospel which preached mercy and righteousness. I started to comfort myself through this Word, and thus to reject all the objections of unbelief and of the devil, and the demands of the law.<sup>258</sup>

This was the starting point of the Lutheran Evangelical revival movement in Finland.<sup>259</sup> After finding peace through the Gospel, Hedberg began preaching and writing about his discovery. Hedberg's book *Uskonoppi autuuteen* [The doctrine of faith unto Salvation 1998] was first released in 1844. It was a strong statement against the Pietist interpretation of Christianity, thereby creating a final division between the Finnish Pietist revival movement (Paavo Ruotsalainen) and the new revival movement associated with Hedberg himself. In this book, he explained his new views which became recognizable features throughout the entire movement. Based on the "righteousness of the entire world", personal salvation was received through the Word and the Sacraments, without any preparatory deeds or emotional states coming from the human side. There was the certainty of salvation in the blood of Jesus. The Holy Spirit created this trusting faith through the Means of Grace.<sup>260</sup>

Hedberg's main theological work, which was published in 1855, focused on defending the doctrine of Holy Baptism, *Baptismens vederläggning och det heliga dopets försvar* [The Abolition of Baptist teaching and the Defense of Holy Baptism]. "So, I had to, after being in a fierce battle with Gospel counterfeits, now stand up to fight against the Baptists, for Holy Baptism. The second battle is as important as the other," Hedberg explained his motives. Not only for Baptism, but Hedberg also elaborated on the doctrine of Holy Communion and the bodily-sacramental relationship between Christ and the Christian. Following Martin Luther, Hedberg powerfully taught that regeneration occurred in Baptism: "When all else seems to be a betrayal, the strongest

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<sup>258</sup> Translation by author. Santakari 1961, 28–29, Schmidt 1951, 19–25, 91–105, Suokunnas 2011, 16–18, 33–41.

<sup>259</sup> Koskenniemi 1973 depicts the religious views of this movement.

<sup>260</sup> Salo 2018, 3–4, 21–18, Schmidt 1951, 134–139. In his emphasis on the saving power of the blood of Jesus, Hedberg was close to the Moravians. According to Newman, Hedberg is even a more typical representative of the Moravian tradition than Rosenius. Newman 1932, 133–134



buttress for the faith under temptation is that God, already in our childhood, before we realized or asked for it, had afforded us Baptism and in it His only begotten Son and the entire Kingdom of heaven.”<sup>261</sup>

Hedberg did not focus his writings on missionary issues. However, while serving in the pastoral office for nearly sixty years, he was among the pioneers in raising mission funds in Finland. With C.O. Rosenius, Hedberg shared a common argument and motivation for missionary work: It was based on the command of Jesus and was performed for the salvation of men. In addition, both believed that mission work can best be accomplished through Christian societies. In this context, Hedberg considered it very important that these mission societies had close ties with existing Churches so that it would not develop into the alliance- and tolerance-oriented directions of his era. Instead, he emphasized confessional Lutheran connections in Germany. So, Hedberg viewed pure Lutheran teaching and the struggle for correct doctrine as integral parts of the mission. In this manner, a mission would remain biblical and Christocentric. Influenced by George Scott, Rosenius, however, was attracted to a different direction. Scott stressed the importance of finding connections between believers coming from different groups. Instead of doctrinal differences, his emphasis was on the personal recognition of the Savior Jesus Christ. In such thinking, small communities of believers were valued as the initiators of the mission.<sup>262</sup>

The Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland (LEAF) was founded on 13 November 1873 with Fredrik Gabriel Hedberg as one of its founding members. The original aim of the new association was to distribute Martin Luther’s books. It was only later profiled as a mission society.<sup>263</sup> The Lutheran Evangelical revival movement was thus closely linked to Martin Luther and his teachings.

### **Haugean Pietism**

Pietism as a religious reform movement in the Lutheran Church began with *Pia desideria*, published in 1675 by a Lutheran theologian from Germany, Philipp Jakob Spener. Spener’s goal was to revitalize Lutheran Church life, emphasizing spiritual rebirth and renewal, individual devotion, and piety. Since its beginning, the hallmarks of this movement became both devotional meetings in homes and the teaching of chiliasm – the hope of better times on earth before Christ’s return. Pietism Spener represented was strongly ecclesiastical but after him, it developed both theologically and sociologically in different directions. While Pietism expanded and evolved also in a more radical direction, it became increasingly criticized by the Lutheran clergy as being too focused on the

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<sup>261</sup> Translation by author. Hedberg 1855, 8, 262, Schmidt 1951, 211–218. Erikson describes Hedberg’s concept of baptism. Erikson 2011, 185–193.

<sup>262</sup> Dahlbacka 1993, 9–11, 25–29, 42–43, Hedberg raised funds especially for the German Leipzig Mission, a confessional Lutheran mission society. Takala 1990, 98–112.

<sup>263</sup> Initially, LEAF channeled its mission activity through the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM). Koskeniemi 1967, 36–43.

Reformed type of conversion and sanctification practices at the expense of the Doctrine of justification. Particularly in Scandinavia, state Churches initially resisted Pietism because of it tended to criticize against Church hierarchy. However, this only added to the strength of the movement. Pietism spread rapidly from Germany to Switzerland and other parts of German-speaking Europe, to Scandinavia and the Baltics and the remainder of Europe. It was further taken to North America, primarily by German and Scandinavian immigrants. There, it influenced Protestants of other ethnic backgrounds contributing to the 18<sup>th</sup>-century emergence of Evangelicalism.<sup>264</sup>

Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771–1824) was a Lutheran layman born in a Norwegian peasant family in Rolvsøy, Østfold County. He grew up in a Christian home where the writings of Martin Luther, Erik Pontoppidan, and Johann Arndt writings were read. He underwent a conversion experience similar to those of Rosenius and Hedberg, but he relied mainly on Pietistic principles. He was yet also influenced by medieval mysticism<sup>265</sup>. The German mystic Johannes Tauler's experience of conversion, especially, had made a great impression on him.<sup>266</sup> After his conversion, Hauge started acting as a lay preacher, emphasizing a personal relationship with God, sobriety, and a lifestyle of hard work. Haugean Pietism indeed evolved into a personal structure, with lay piety being perhaps its most central source of inspiration. The Norwegian State Church strongly resisted Hauge's actions, which resulted in him being imprisoned several times. Despite its separatist characteristics, Haugean Pietism did not drift outside the State Church, as partially happened in Sweden. And it did not ally with the State Church, as happened in Denmark, but it retained its independence while remaining within the State Church boundaries. This spiritual movement also sparked strong missionary activity with new organizations: The Lutheran China Mission (later called the Norwegian Lutheran Mission, NLM), the Norwegian Missionary Society, the Santal Mission, the Schreuder Mission, among others. The effects of Haugean Pietism were not limited to a spiritual movement, however, but also included the reform of society in the form of a nationwide labor movement presenting workers'

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<sup>264</sup> Wallmann is a leading scholar on Pietism, whose views on its early stages have gained widespread acceptance. Wallmann 1997. See also Nordlander 1985, 3–13.

<sup>265</sup> Medieval Mysticism emphasized the sense of union and presence with God in understanding religion and religious experiences. It flourished in many parts of Europe, including Germany, Italy, the Low Countries, and England, from the middle of the thirteenth century to the middle of the fifteenth. Its greatest figures in Germany were Meister Eckhart, a Dominican friar, and his Dominican pupils Johannes Tauler and Henry Suso. Encyclopedia.com. Accessed 05.04.2020.

<sup>266</sup> Molland 1979, 52–73. Norwegian Philosopher, and Parish pastor, Olav Valen-Senstad (1904–1963), regards that in the Pontopiddan *Catechism*, Haugean and Rosenian spirituality unite. Mäkelä 2011, 28.

advocacy measures and giving genesis to factories. In all these activities, good financial management was practiced.<sup>267</sup>

The Norwegian Lutheran Mission was founded in 1891. It was a conservative, low-Church mission organization strongly emphasizing lay activity, which can be seen in the influence of Hauge and his successors, one of these being the lay preacher Ludvig Hope (1871–1954). Hope is regarded as one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's primary Norwegian representatives of the low-Church lay movement. He worked for the Lutheran China Mission and was the General Secretary of the NLM, 1931–1936.<sup>268</sup> “A believing layman has the same right and duty in the Kingdom of God as a pastor”, he announced and continued:

Not even the Apostles had any office [*embede*]. An office is available due to legal employment. The existence of the Apostles depended on their being with Jesus. Jesus did not call them to be officeholders, but instead as sovereign witnesses equipped with authority from Him. This authorization today is everywhere where Jesus is. The Church did not have an office but gifts; she did not have officials, but rather those who are gifted spiritually. This is in line with the New Testament.<sup>269</sup>

According to Hope, mission organizations should be independent of state Church structures; “In the [state] Church, but not under it.” Their membership was not to leave the state Church since she maintained Christian teaching. This teaching should only be enlivened by revival. A state Church that allowed “godly, radical and independent lay work” produced the best fruits in Norway.<sup>270</sup>

The World Mission Prayer League also had its roots in the Haugean movement, as it spread to North America. Mildred Tengbom demonstrates how Danish and Norwegian immigrants who were familiar with the Santal Mission in their homelands established an American branch in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1891. It was called the American Board of the Santal Mission and it would become a formal part of the World Mission Prayer League in 1972. Its first missionaries were sent to India already in 1904.<sup>271</sup> As shown above, both the WMPL and the NLM were also influenced by the Rosenius movement.<sup>272</sup> The Nordic mission partners further recognized American charismatic Christian

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<sup>267</sup> The Lutheran China Mission was founded in 1891 and by the following year its first missionaries were sent to China. Oftestad, Rasmussen and Schumacher 2005, 173–177, Aarflot 1971, 231–274.

<sup>268</sup> Blumhofer and Randall eds. 1993, 107.

<sup>269</sup> Translation by author. Hope 1932, 11–29

<sup>270</sup> Translation by author. Hope 1923, 1–12. Lodin describes Hope as a “typical Rosenian”. Lodin 1956, 325.

<sup>271</sup> “The Santal Mission – a direct ancestor to our own community – was created during this time of revival.” Tengbom 2019, 19–25.

<sup>272</sup> See chapter “Rosenius Movement”.

features in the WPML's activities.<sup>273</sup> The World Mission Prayer League had evolved into a distinctive mission movement.

## 3.2 Theological Education Steps

### 3.2.1 "School of Prophets"

In 1957, Martin Lundström founded the Bible School at Matongo Mission Station. The school was according to his plan and under the name "School of prophets"<sup>274</sup>. Short courses for evangelists and assistants [*wasaidizi*] were arranged. The first course had only five students, two of whom left before the course ended. Students were taught Bible, accounting, agriculture, teaching, Sunday school, and preaching. According to Aristarko Ongoro, one of the first students, Sunday school skills were especially useful. By working on the mission field through Sunday school, it was possible to reach whole families. Aristarko wrote down the names of the children and showed these lists to government officers to start schools. In this way, the work expanded rapidly. Trips were made on foot or by bicycle.<sup>275</sup>

Ingrid Nilsson (SLM) was the principal for the years 1961–1962. She taught English and basic Bible knowledge. Most of the current students did not know much English.<sup>276</sup> At this time, Richard Olak was one of the 15 students whose background was Adventist, Catholic, or Pentecostal. According to him, the discipline was strict, and the program included a lot of Bible reading. The students participated in divine services at the Matongo church. Olak remembers the sermons of the time as law-oriented, containing very little Gospel.<sup>277</sup> John-Erik Ekström was the principal for the year 1963. Each year a new evangelistic course began. In January 1964 Martin Lundström started a pastoral course of seven students. In the middle of the year, it had to be stopped, because there were not enough teachers.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> "The WMPL is not an Orthodox Lutheran movement but has been influenced by American Charismatic Christianity." NLMA, Dbb 0038, *Rapport fra konsultasjonen i Helsinki* 26.–28.9.1990. Charismatic Christianity is a form of Christianity that emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, and modern-day miracles as an everyday part of a believer's life. Moriarty 1992, 118–139.

<sup>274</sup> Lundström: "We have started a small Bible School for preachers to be. We need indigenous preachers with knowledge and understanding of the Word and the doctrine [...] Elijah the prophet visited the prophet schools in Bethel and Jericho before being taken up to heaven, and thus we are given a testimony showing how important a school for preachers can be." Imberg 1998, 60–61.

<sup>275</sup> The first students were: Peter Nyangweso, Aristarko Ongoro, Zedekiah Ongeri, Isaaka Twabe and Nehemiah. Imberg 2008, 84–85. Aristarko was born in 1937 and baptized in 1951 during the first public baptism. MA, interview of Aristarko Ongoro 7.10.2018.

<sup>276</sup> MA, Email of Ingrid Holmqvist 12.7.2019.

<sup>277</sup> Olak 2007, 52–53, KA, LEAFA II, file 33, Tuula Sääksi to Lauri Koskenniemi 27.2.1974.

<sup>278</sup> Nilsson ed. 1981, 18–19, MA, Copy of *Historia ya maisha yangu mimi Jeftha Michoro*.

Josef Imberg (SLM) developed the Bible School between 1965 and 1971. He was the first trained missionary theologian on the field. Already during the first year, all the evangelists were called for a refresher course. Pastors Nemwel Omae and Jeftha Michoro also joined. In 1970, a two-year-long evangelistic course was arranged. Imberg was also very active in publishing several Kiswahili booklets based on his lectures, some of which are still used at the MLTC. During his six years of teaching, Imberg stressed the importance of biblical and Lutheran doctrine as the Church's foundation. His influence on the theological development of the Church was significant.<sup>279</sup> During Imberg's time, Gustaf Norrback (SLEAF) also taught at the school. Like Imberg, he emphasized Lutheran doctrine. According to Richard Olak, Norrback helped his students to "understand and distinguish Lutheran doctrine from other doctrines".<sup>280</sup> About this time, Norrback wrote:

It was clear to us that the Church would be prudent with further expansion purely geographically, but instead go deeper in its knowledge of Christian faith and doctrine. The Church leadership agreed with this decision [...] one or two weeks at a time the preachers were called to courses. In this way, this deepening in faith and doctrine could be realized. For these brothers, it was of the utmost importance that they gained insight into what the Evangelical Lutheran Confession means.<sup>281</sup>

After Imberg in 1971, Nicholas Oenga was appointed the principal. The following year the school was closed because it lacked teachers. The teaching continued with John Momanyi (1973–1975), Tuula Sääksi (1975–1976), and Boaz Kiluma (1976–1977) as principals. In 1973, altogether 50 evangelists, in four groups, came to refresher courses lasting six weeks. There were six classes every day, Bible study, religion, pastoral care, Christian housekeeping, and singing. The students practiced sermons both in theory and practice through morning devotions at clinics. Together with John Momanyi, Tuula Sääksi organized these courses.<sup>282</sup> Sääksi commented:

Our school used a small, modest building: one room as a classroom, another as a student dormitory, and a third as an office. Food was prepared and meals were eaten in a small booth in another building. The lighting was poor, with one small lamp per room. How often did the teaching have to be interrupted in the afternoons during the rainy season, when the roar of rain in a tin-roofed building obscured the voices of people! The dedication to study was great and

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<sup>279</sup> Josef Imberg's books spread to many African countries. Imberg 2008, 135–136, Nilsson ed. 1981, 19.

<sup>280</sup> Olak 1988, 24.

<sup>281</sup> Translation by author. Norrback 1998, 133.

<sup>282</sup> MLTCA, 1973–1977 minutes of Matongo Bible School, Ss 13/1973 and 2/1975.

the enthusiasm was boundless. The lessons explored the Bible and the matters of our Christian faith thoroughly.<sup>283</sup>

The first full two-year course for evangelists began in 1975. Tuula Sääksi, Boris Sandberg, Samwel Mogeni and William Obaga taught this course. In March 1977, the Lutheran Church of Kenya received fifteen new evangelists. According to Olak, they were “good and clear preachers”. Shorter courses for elders, Sunday school teachers, schoolteachers, and choir leaders were also arranged.<sup>284</sup> A new evangelistic course began in September 1977 with 16 students.<sup>285</sup>

While the Bible School produced evangelists and assistants, there was a special need to train Kenyan pastors. In 1958, the first Kenyan student James Otete was sent to Makumira College in Tanzania. In the 1960s, only two students were sent there annually, and this was not enough to meet increasing needs.<sup>286</sup> There was also a growing criticism about the theology taught at Makumira. Especially Swedish missionaries expressed their fears about the increasing impact of liberal theology. Other alternatives were sought to replace the study at Makumira College, especially with the Wisconsin Seminary at Lusaka, and the Missouri Synod Seminary at St. Louis.<sup>287</sup> “If we continue to send our pastoral candidates to Makumira, liberalism will proceed at a good pace,” Gunnar Nilsson (SLM) wrote in 1971. Three years later he was even more convinced: “It looks like the Church leadership has lost its trust in Makumira. Makumira has been influenced by liberal theology from Europe and the United States.”<sup>288</sup> The SLEAF missionaries Gustaf Norrback and Boris Sandberg shared Nilsson’s views. Sandberg wrote to Finland: “It is now that we have to act and invest in theological education; otherwise, there is no human who can prevent

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<sup>283</sup> Translation by author. Sääksi 1995, 73–75. Sääksi came to Kenya to organize evangelistic training. In addition to teaching, her time was spent managing facilities, food, and finances. After Momanyi became the General Secretary in 1974, Sääksi was the only full-time teacher at the Bible School. MA, interview of Tuula Sääksi 16.6.2020.

<sup>284</sup> MLTCA, 1975–1977 minutes of Matongo Bible School, MA, interview of Richard Olak 7.6.2016.

<sup>285</sup> Arkkila 1998, 6–8.

<sup>286</sup> The students to Makumira were selected carefully. The candidates were chosen through applications and interviews. Nyang’au remembers that when he was chosen among the last ones, there were many applicants. Ten were interviewed and only three were chosen. MA, interview of John Nyang’au 25.3.2020.

<sup>287</sup> Imberg 2008, 147–148, Arkkila 1998, 6–7, Arkkila 2010, 287. “Rev. Olak conveyed greetings from Makumira. He said that the studies are hard because for him it is difficult to accept the theology that is taught at Makumira at present.” IA, A II: 4, Minutes Ex.com 1970–1975, Ex.com meeting, opening 22.8.1975.

<sup>288</sup> Translation by author. RA, BVA, E1: e1, Gunnar Nilsson to Hildén and Stark 10.5.1971 and 7.3.1974.

liberal theology from gaining a foothold in the Church.”<sup>289</sup> According to Boris Sandberg, LEAF was more permissive on this question.<sup>290</sup>

There were also other motives for realizing the plans for the College. In the Helsinki Mission Consultation of 1972, the participants recalled the importance of mission across ethnic boundaries “so that there will not be one branch of the LCK within Luos, another within Kisiis, etc.” A joint institution bringing together different ethnic groups was viewed as an opportunity to “prevent the emergence of such gaps between the tribes”.<sup>291</sup>

The idea of organizing pastoral training in the Lutheran Church of Kenya dates to 1964 when Martin Lundström tried to start this education. Considering his sending mission’s low-Church tradition, this was a startling initiative. At this stage yet it did not lead to the desired result. With the liberalization of Makumira College, the hopes for having their own theological seminary increased. All the mission societies supported this goal. In addition to securing access to confessional Lutheran education, the institution was considered from the angle of possibly alleviating ethnic conflicts. It would thus play an important role in creating unity in the Church. A common concern was the growing need for Church workers, and especially parish pastors. The planned educational institution bore high expectations on its shoulders.

### 3.2.2 Pastoral Training Starts

In the early 1970s, plans to start pastoral training intensified. The Lutheran Church of Kenya set up a working group for this purpose. Nicholas Oenga, Boris Sandberg (SLEAF), and Tuula Sääksi (LEAF) now prepared a detailed proposal for the forthcoming seminary. In Helsinki in March 1974, the Nordic missions agreed to support the plans to start pastoral training at Matongo. Hans-Hugo Nilsson (SLM) was responsible for the construction, which started in 1976<sup>292</sup>. The new seminary received LWF funding. In May 1977, the main lecture building, the first dormitory, and the kitchen were completed; the second dormitory was ready in August and the third in December. Finally, three houses for the staff were built on the lower slope of the station.<sup>293</sup> President James Otete himself was very active in the planning process. He had explained his thoughts at the Executive Committee meeting of 18 February 1975:

It was the SLM, not the LCK which started to send students to Makumira. When the LCK had plans for a theological college, the Missions did not support

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<sup>289</sup> Translation by author. SLEAFA, FLM BREV 1974–1977, Boris Sandberg to Home Board 29.4.1976.

<sup>290</sup> Sandberg had heard from Tuula Sääksi, that although LEAF was in favor of its own theological college, she considered the Makumira College a good seminary. Liberal theology could not be avoided anyway, she had stated. Sääksi had argued that LEAF shared her stand. SLEAFA, FLM BREV 1974–1977, Boris Sandberg to Sirkku Hildén 9.7.1975.

<sup>291</sup> RA, BVA, E6: v3, Helsinki Consultations 1.11.1972.

<sup>292</sup> For the construction period, see chapter “Do Not Steal”.

<sup>293</sup> Arkkila 2010, 287–288.

it enough neither financially nor with teachers. Therefore, the Church applied to the LWF for financial aid. The college is still under planning. When we start the college, we will no longer send students to the General course at Makumira. But we will still be in need of degree courses. We ask the missions to help us to find places in suitable colleges and universities where we can send our degree students. And we also ask them to send us more teachers for our college. It is important that a sound doctrinal foundation be laid in the beginning. We have declared before and do it again today that we stand on the Bible as the Word of God and on the Articles of Faith, mentioned in our Constitution.<sup>294</sup>

Reijo Arkkila (LEAF) was appointed the first principal of the seminary, arriving in Kenya in August 1977. As a Doctor of Theology, he was considered to have the necessary skills for this task. The other teachers were Boaz Kiluma, Samwel Mogeni, Richard Olak, Paavo Erelä (LEAF), Lars Brixen (WMPL) and Anja-Maija Vanhanen (LEAF). Later, Tuula Sääksi (LEAF) and Karsten Valen (NLM) also joined them. The staff planned guidelines and curriculum for the new course and selected the first pastoral students. The original idea was to start a pastoral course every second year and continue with evangelist training. For economic reasons, these plans were not realized, and the shortage of pastors continued.<sup>295</sup> The initial events also included the establishment of a library. Professor Toivo Harjunpää from America sent some basic theological literature as its basis.<sup>296</sup>

The seminary officially opened during the Annual General Meeting on March 1, 1978. "We have waited for this for 30 years!" President James Otete announced. According to him, the seminary would serve the same purpose as did the entire Church: pure and clear teaching of God's Word. The first pastoral course started at the beginning of February with eight students. In four years, they would complete a Pastoral training certificate. Already in the first staff meeting of February 7, a new name was proposed for the Bible school: **Matongo Lutheran Theological College**.<sup>297</sup> As a teacher, Arkkila was considered inspiring. In his teaching, he met the level of students, so that the message was understandable. He concentrated on the basics of Lutheranism. When he became excited, his voice could be heard everywhere.<sup>298</sup> The principal wrote in his first-year report:

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<sup>294</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 210, Ex.com meeting 18.2.1975, "MLTC was my vision." MA, interview of James Otete 1.6.2016.

<sup>295</sup> Arkkila 1998, 6–8.

<sup>296</sup> Arkkila 2010, 290.

<sup>297</sup> MLTCA, 1978 minutes of Matongo Seminary.

<sup>298</sup> MA, interviews of Walter Obare 9.10.2018, Thomas Asiago 3.10.2016, and Japhet Dachi 10.12.2016. "We continued to judge other teachers by Reijo Arkkila's standards even after he left Kenya. To this date, I remember how he made the students compete with each other. Dr. Moses Okoyo and Dr. Joseph Omolo were very good at it. I believe I was hanging on close by." MA, Email from John Halakhe 7.10.2019.



The school needs lots of prayers. The Church needs workers that are faithful in the Word and who live for the Gospel: 'Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ' (Col 4:2-3).<sup>299</sup>

Arkkila wanted to represent clear and distinct Lutheran theology. He also maintained contacts with other theological schools in Western Kenya and East Africa to maintain academic standards.<sup>300</sup> Attending a meeting in Limuru on August 1, organized by the Association of Theological Institutions in Eastern Africa, Arkkila wrote recommendations for the MLTC board: In the future 1) Matongo would award a general certificate of theology and diploma courses for two years. There would be possibilities to continue for the bachelor's degree at Makumira College, St. Paul's, or the Ethiopian Mekane Yesus Seminary, 2) the library should be expanded, 3) more African teachers should be taken on, 4) the school should aim at self-support, 5) visiting lecturers should be invited and 6) a long-term curriculum should be prepared. Not yet aware that among the first pastoral students were the future teachers and leaders of the Church, he concluded: "We have to already start to plan the possibility of training one or two of the students to be able to take on the responsibility for our school in the future. This entails further studies in other institutions."<sup>301</sup>

In the fall of 1979, Karsten Valen (NLM) took over as Principal. He was dedicated to the same Lutheran emphases as Arkkila. He wrote to his former colleague in Finland:

Our main concern is that our people could come to personal faith in Jesus. Here is the salvation, but also the power. That is the real need for any Church. Otherwise, the teaching and the organization will be empty forms only. I am glad that you also have this same concern and remember the MLTC and the LCK in your prayers.<sup>302</sup>

Valen writes in his 1980 report: "There is a great need for theological training in Africa today [...] Our prayer is that Luke 24:32 would be true also for the MLTC: 'Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked to us and opened the Scriptures to us!?'"<sup>303</sup>

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya had finally acquired her own pastoral seminary. The first step towards self-educated pastors seemed promising and the Church rejoiced at the long-awaited and planned institution. As principals, Reijo Arkkila and Karsten Valen were particularly concerned about the content of the teaching to keep it focused on the Bible and its Gospel proclamation. In this way, it could serve Africa on an even broader basis. The

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<sup>299</sup> MLTCA, Reports 1977-1985, *Ripoti ya Shule ya Biblia* 1977.

<sup>300</sup> Arkkila 2010, 289.

<sup>301</sup> MLTCA, Private letters 1977-1988, Recommendations to develop Matongo Lutheran Theological College.

<sup>302</sup> MA, Karsten Valen to Reijo Arkkila 24.10.1979.

<sup>303</sup> AKA, *MLTC Report of 1980* by Karsten Valen.

small Bible School had now been transformed into a Lutheran Theological College, and it shouldered the spiritual future of the Church.

### 3.3 Ecumenical Efforts in Nairobi

#### 3.3.1 Together or Separately?

Within the East African Community, people were able to move from one country to another easily. Kenya's favorable economic development had attracted immigrants from neighboring countries, especially Tanzania. Thousands of Tanzanian immigrants were Lutherans who also longed for Lutheran Church services in Kenya. Occasional Lutheran services took place in Mombasa and Nairobi by visiting Tanzanian pastors and German missionaries, but many still lacked permanent fellowship. Regular Lutheran worship services in Nairobi started in November 1963 and were held by President Martin Lundström and Evangelist Francis Matwere. With the help of the Lutheran World Federation, Lundström was able to purchase a small Church at Uhuru Highway where the first English services started. There were also services in German. Kiswahili services later became more popular, especially attracting the ELCT Lutherans. Following that, the LCK and the ELCT looked for ways to cooperate.<sup>304</sup> The acquisition of the Uhuru-Church had far-reaching consequences and can be considered one of Martin Lundström's major achievements. Situated in a prime location in Nairobi, the Church would be the most visible external sign of the Lutheran Church of Kenya in this city of enormous potential.

In 1965, the two Lutheran Churches decided to join their efforts. Together with the Lutheran World Federation, they agreed on the terms of cooperation: The Lutheran Church of Kenya was responsible for the work under a Board of Directors. The LWF would pay the salaries and other working expenses of two ELCT pastors and two LCK evangelists. However, the plans did not progress as expected. Rev. Jesse Angowi was not pleased with the way he was taken care of in Nairobi and, in frustration, turned to the ELCT General Secretary Joel Maeda. Angowi was now advised to register a new Church body, the Kenya Synod of the ELCT. Around the same time, the ELCT leaders had contacts with Elam Musinde from Maragoli, who was under LCK Church discipline. When the leaders of the Lutheran Church of Kenya heard about this, they became angry and decided to stop working with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.<sup>305</sup> President Gustaf Norrback and Vice-President Francis Nyamwaro wrote to Maeda:

We think that you know, that Mr. Elam Musinde is neither an ordained pastor, nor a bishop, and still you are negotiating with him as a Lutheran bishop! [...]

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<sup>304</sup> Atunga 1999, 9–12.

<sup>305</sup> Atunga 1999, 13–19. For Musinde, see chapter "Reaching Luhya and Iteso".

According to our unanimous decision we must inform you that our partnership in the joint work we have shared with you cannot continue.<sup>306</sup>

President of the Kenya Synod N.E. Pazia viewed the contacts with Musinde as the main reason for the breakup, but according to him the behavior of the Lutheran Church of Kenya had also something to do with this. President Gustaf Norrback was informed about the visit in advance, and it was the Kenya Synod's "pastoral duty" to help Musinde. So, instead of becoming angry, "The LCK should have rejoiced that a door had been opened for conversation with Musinde".<sup>307</sup> The anger of the Lutheran Church of Kenya was understandable. Musinde, who had been put under LCK discipline, sought out official contacts with another Church! The behavior of the Kenya Synod, on the other hand, was thoughtless and could not be explained away suitably.

The Lutheran World Federation made several attempts to solve the problems and organized meetings in Nairobi, July 1967 and April 1970, in Arusha, January 1968 and December 1968, and in Kisii, February 1970 – all these in vain. The LCK Head office felt that the Lutheran World Federation was biased in supporting the new Church body, the ELCT Kenya Synod, even from her early steps, despite its official efforts to join them together. They also felt, that, behind their backs, Angowi and Maeda had another goal.<sup>308</sup> In the meeting at Kisii, both parties tried to forget the past and recognize each other as legitimate Lutheran Church bodies in Kenya. The future would demonstrate whether the union would ever be possible.<sup>309</sup> In Nairobi, the situation did not change in either direction.<sup>310</sup> Eventually, the leaders of both the LCK and the ELCT sent a letter to Geneva requesting to continue as independent Churches.<sup>311</sup> The unification efforts were closely monitored abroad: in Germany<sup>312</sup>, Sweden<sup>313</sup>, Switzerland<sup>314</sup> and Tanzania<sup>315</sup>.

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<sup>306</sup> MLTCA, Letters sent –1986, Gustaf Norrback and Francis Nyamwaro to Mr. Maeda 25.7.1966.

<sup>307</sup> IA, E V, Corr. missions 1966–1979, N.E. Pazia to Rev. Oscar Relander 10.6.1970.

<sup>308</sup> Atunga 1999, 13–16, 21–24.

<sup>309</sup> "I cannot but thank God for all the hours we spent together, and I hope that our forthcoming meeting will [...] strive for unity, which we so happily felt to be among us at Itierio." IA EII: 2, Corr. Gen. Sec. 1964–1979, Gunther Schulze to ELCK 10.3.1970, Minutes of Joint Committee, LCK and ELCT 23.2.1970 at Itierio.

<sup>310</sup> IA, EII: 2, Corr. Gen. Sec. 1964–1979, *Memorandum* at Nairobi 25.4.1970.

<sup>311</sup> IA EII: 2, Corr. Gen. Sec. 1964–1979, LCK and ELCT leaders to General Secretary of LWF in Geneva.

<sup>312</sup> "May we make a few remarks with regard to the draft constitution." IA, EV, Corr. Missions 66–79, K. Kremkau to Gustaf Norrback 19.1.1967.

<sup>313</sup> LWF had sent a letter to the Board of Directors stating that there was a dispute between the Nairobi parish and the Swedish Mission. Stark commented: "We do not know anything about that. If so, it must be a one-sided dispute." IA, E II: 1, Sigurd Stark to LCK 18.3.1966.

<sup>314</sup> "The Church of Christ should not entangle herself in unbrotherly disputes which do not further anything but just harm the work in the Kingdom of God." IA, E II: 1, Albert Schwarz to Gustaf Norrback 1.2.1967.

<sup>315</sup> "Already in our Church council meeting December 1968, the Kenya Synod was given authority to undertake negotiations." IA EII: 2, Corr. Gen. Sec. 1964–1979, Bishop Stefano Moshi to Rev. Schulze in Geneva 17.1.1970.

The idea of possible unification remained in people's minds, coming back to life in the late 1980s. The mission newspapers, *Sanansaattaja* and *Sändebudet*, announced a possible merger of these two Churches in 1988.<sup>316</sup> In the early 1990s, issued was again discussed. The SLM Mission secretary Per-Ebbe Ingvert was skeptical about it:

We very much fear that this merger may lead to the increased influence of the LWF and liberal theology, for opening the doors of the ELCK for the social gospel, modernism, and what is called liberation theology. Real social concern has always been a sign of true Christianity, but these modern varieties of theology seem to be such new and different gospels as those for which Paul is warning the Galatians. We hope that these dangers are seriously considered by the Church. We would appreciate further information about the talks that are taking place between the ELCK and the Synod.<sup>317</sup>

Despite years of negotiations – or perhaps because of them – nothing concrete was achieved. International connections did not help either. On the contrary, each party involved pursued its own interests. Selfish motives were obvious. There were also theological differences. The LCK wanted to retain both her decision-making power and a clear Lutheran identity. By remaining independent, this would be possible. The merger would have jeopardized these objectives. On this basis, it was simply impossible to find a mutually satisfactory result.

### 3.3.2 International Congregation

When cooperation with the ELCT Kenya Synod did not progress as expected, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya invested in Nairobi. The first missionaries of the World Mission Prayer League, Paul and Ruth Edström, served in this metropolis from 1969 to 1982. Paul Edström served as pastor of the Uhuru Highway congregation and District Leader, and his wife, along with Margaret Wall (WMPL), led work among women and Sunday school. Besides Uhuru, there were services and other activities at Kibera (1969), Banana Hills, and later also at Kawangware (1977). There were about 50 participants weekly at Uhuru. Edström was assisted by evangelists Samson Onditi, Thomas Osindi, and Lawrence Olietch. Francis Nyamwaro and Francis Matwere helped them from 1974–1975. Women, hospital patients, youth, and children received special attention. Edström considered home visitations important and a blessing: “If we visit people's homes, they will understand that we are interested in them. We also visit homes where the Gospel is not yet known, as

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<sup>316</sup> Ss 45/1988, Sb 18/1988.

<sup>317</sup> IA, E II: 26, Gen. Sec. corr. 1989–1992, Per-Ebbe Ingvert to the Chair/Gen. Sec. ELCK 22.5.1991.

well as homes of other denominations.” In this way, the work expanded steadily.<sup>318</sup>

The Uhuru Highway church was reconstructed under the leadership of Robert Ward (WMPL). It was completed in 1980. Despite the difficulties in the construction work, parish life moved forward:

The spiritual life of the congregation was not in decline during our upset of building. There were evidences those days of the working of the Holy Spirit in conversion, renewal and empowering. One example of this was when God called a Korean lady to give her heart to Him [...] Our ministry in the Nairobi Hospital had also been effective [...] The stewardship level of giving among congregational members rose significantly and continued to keep in step with our increasing expenses and constantly growing building budget.<sup>319</sup>

According to Mission secretary Gunnar Nilsson, many parties were interested in joining Nairobi's work. In his letter to the SLM Kenyan missionaries, he informed how the Lutheran World Federation, the World Council of Churches<sup>320</sup>, the All Africa Conference of Churches<sup>321</sup>, and even the Church of Sweden was willing to support the church building project. The Church of Sweden was even prepared to send one of her pastors to serve at Uhuru, but Nilsson was worried about this initiative. According to him, the Church of Sweden would have had many suitable candidates, but with international concepts far from a confessional Lutheran position. He did not want to hand over this work to international power brokers. Instead, he planned to send one SLM missionary to Nairobi to monitor the development:

That Lutherans of different nationalities can be gathered for worship is only good, as long as the congregation and preaching is still really Lutheran. The danger, of course, is that modern international 'Lutheran' (many times non-Lutheran) teachings are brought in. And in this manner, they could dominate the whole ELCK.<sup>322</sup>

Nairobi, as the capital of Kenya, had an international flavor that was distinctive from all other areas. Nairobi provided the best opportunities for international relations. The possibilities for expanding Church work there were

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<sup>318</sup> The WMPL missionaries in Nairobi were Paul and Ruth Edström, Margaret Wall, Alpha Jaques, Janice Larsen, Mike and Gail Koski, Robert and Jeanne Ward. KIA, reports, *Report of Nairobi work 1973* by Paul Edström, ELCK 1963–1988, 40.

<sup>319</sup> Ward 1999, 258–272.

<sup>320</sup> The WCC is a worldwide Christian inter-Church organization founded in 1948. The WCC describes itself as "a worldwide fellowship of 349 global, regional and sub-regional, national and local churches seeking unity, a common witness and Christian service." Member list – World Council of Churches – Wikipedia. Accessed 10.07.2020.

<sup>321</sup> The AACC is an ecumenical fellowship that represents more than 120 million African Christians in 173 national Churches and regional Christian councils. AACC's head office is in Nairobi. All Africa Conference of Churches – Wikipedia. Accessed 10.07.2020.

<sup>322</sup> Translation by author. Parentheses are included. RA, BVA, E 1 e, Missionärsbrev vol 40, Gunnar Nilsson to Erling Hansson, Ingemar Helgesson, Hans-Hugo Nilsson and Harald Waldemarsson 15.19.1979.

limitless. The fast-growing slum areas of the metropolis at Kibera and Kawangware were good examples of this. All the missions emphasized the importance of Nairobi. However, Mission Secretary Gunnar Nilsson noticed that there was a risk of this work falling into the hands of strangers. He was concerned about the theological line of the Church. With the help of the Church of Sweden in particular, this approach would have been jeopardized.

## 4. Gospel-Oriented Outreach

The general development of the Church followed the guidelines of the Swedish Lutheran Mission and the other subsequent mission societies. A strong vision of reaching people through the Gospel was characteristic in all their activities. New areas and ethnic groups were reached, which was reflected in strong Church growth. Particularly, under the control of the mission societies, schoolwork, healthcare, the mass media, and work among children developed into separate forms of work. Through the financial and operational support provided by the missions, these sectors functioned and developed in the desired direction. As the Western support gradually declined, the integration of these operations under Kenyan responsibility became a key issue.

### 4.1 Rapid Church Growth

#### 4.1.1 Roots of the Growth

President Martin Lundström's method of doing mission work contributed to rapid Church growth. He was active in reaching out to new people, meeting them collectively in their habitats. He talked to them in a way that they could understand. Many suspicions diminished, people felt respected, and their communal policies were taken seriously. He was taken as an example by Kenyan workers. Nemwel Omae, for example, was very effective in establishing new congregations. In the villages, this method was appreciated. If the chiefs and elders converted to Christianity, so did the villagers, for they were accustomed to following their example. Sometimes women were the first converts from the family, men following. Sometimes children set an example.<sup>323</sup>

Local Kenyan people were the key to a community's readiness to welcome newcomers. In Matongo, Lundström introduced Lutheranism with Jeftha Michoro and Handson Nyambache. Michoro had been influenced by the Anglicans and Nyambache belonged to the Seventh Day Adventist Church, but that did not prevent them from cooperating. In this manner, the work had a good start in the spirit of Harambee.<sup>324</sup> In Bogitaa, Lundström approached people through the school. First, a teacher's house was built and then through him, a good relationship was established with the people around him. Nemwel Omae visited the school regularly and then introduced the Lutheran Church

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<sup>323</sup> MA, interviews of James Otete 1.6.2016, "Lundström worked constantly and people liked him. He baptized me along with 59 people," James Osindi 12.10 2018, William Obaga 17.3.2020. Lundström's memoirs convey an image of an enthusiastic missionary who had exceptional gifts to evangelize. However, his powerful actions also caused controversy. Lundström 1978 and 1982.

<sup>324</sup> MA, interview of Handson Nyabache 29.9.2018. Early influencers in Matongo also included Isaka Twabe, Matongo's first Primary graduate, and Andrea Seremani, who had served as an Adventist evangelist. Seremani was influential in Kisii, Kipsigis, and even in Maasai. *Habari Njema* 8/1965.

there. The Sunday school was held by Peter Nyangweso and Teresa Mocha. William Obaga, one of the students, was baptized in 1958 at the age of six, followed by other members of his family. When his mother joined the LCK, other women followed her. Under her leadership, the women also stopped smoking pipes and using alcohol. At the age of fourteen, Obaga was trusted to lead the youth choir. This choir was then instrumental in reaching the young people. Music is indeed an essential part of Kenyans.<sup>325</sup> It is noteworthy how tobacco and alcohol use was inextricably linked to the results of missionary work. This was very typical of Pietist understanding of missionary results.<sup>326</sup>

The first LCK Luo congregation was established at Mititi in 1957. Barnabas Aundo from Bogitaa served there as the first evangelist. He knew only a little of the Luo language “but still God used him to preach God’s saving word”. A Church and school were built. Senior Chief Gideon Magak’s and Deputy Chief Zablon Kanyago’s positive example contributed to the missionary success in this region. People gladly followed these community leaders.<sup>327</sup> At Eronge, people followed the elders selected by Martin Lundström. In this manner, the Lutheran congregation was established here in the early 1960s and it grew steadily.<sup>328</sup>

Traditional African societies had specific structures and principles which committed to the welfare of the entire community. Individual and collective needs were met within a social structure comprising the institutions of family and age groups governed by a system of norms and values. Community leaders ensured that mutual guidelines were followed and respected to the best of their fellow humans. This community-based system served to sustain basic needs and security, but it was also an effective tool for adopting new ways of life.<sup>329</sup> In receiving Christianity, the communal approach, rather than Western individualism, was the key to missionary success. Understanding this, consciously or unconsciously, was instrumental in the early growth of the Lutheran Church of Kenya.

#### 4.1.2 The Church of Mercy

The positive development of the mission in the early days served as a platform for the continued growth of, the Church. By the time of the Church’s independence in 1963, the number of Christians exceeded 5,000 and there were about 55 congregations. In 1968, there were 65 congregations with 8000

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<sup>325</sup> MA, interview of William Obaga 17.3.2020.

<sup>326</sup> In the 2010s, the issue of alcohol use became a hot topic at the MLTC. For some Missouri Synod lecturers, drinking alcohol as a social drink depicted true Christian freedom, which, in their view, was threatened by Pietistic strictness on the matter. Their example had a devastating effect on the MLTC since some students were unable to control their alcohol use and sexual behavior. Cultural sensitivity was lost. MA, interviews of George Ondieki 2.5.2017 and James Mbori 9.5.2017.

<sup>327</sup> ELCK 50 Years Church work in Luo land, 1–2.

<sup>328</sup> MA, interview of John Nyang’au 25.3.2020.

<sup>329</sup> Katumanga and Omosa 2007, 59–61.



members. At the end of the 1970s, the same figures had risen to 130 and 20,000, respectively. At that time, the congregations were served by 12 Kenyan pastors, 16 missionary pastors and 78 evangelists assisted by both Kenyan and Western laypeople.<sup>330</sup> The Church grew rapidly, but there were too few Church workers for the growth. Western missionaries compensated for the shortage of employees.

The interviews of active Church members revealed several causes of the growth. Active evangelization was number one. It was carried out with a clear Gospel message, without stressing the law in the manner that many other surrounding denominations did. This was typical of the Seventh Day Adventist Church which had long dominated the Kisii area. In its law-centered proclamation, salvation depended on the man himself. The “Church of mercy” attracted people because they longed for the Gospel to release their burden of sin. The law could not do the same. Second, the Lutheran liturgical order in the services appealed to many people. This created a sense of security. Third, many valued the good examples of not drinking or smoking. This topic was also clearly taught. In the Roman Catholic Church, for example, the use of alcohol was considered a constant problem. Fourth, the youth work with choirs was instrumental in reaching especially young people. Fifth, diaconal spiritual care was active: the poor were helped; there were many home visitations. Christians voluntarily worked with the enthusiasm of the “first love”<sup>331</sup>. Church members were eager to pray, sing, help the needy and evangelize. Since there were few congregational employees, everyone did their part, with a sense of belonging together. People showed service-mindedness towards those suffering from grief, illness, and other trials of life, sharing their sorrows. The interviewees also mentioned some challenges. Members of other denominations did not favor the expansion of the new Church into their territories, this causing envy, rumors, and struggles for souls. Despite the difficulties, the evangelistic work was successful, expanding into new areas.<sup>332</sup>

Other sources indicate that the annual Synods were also instrumental in reaching new people, as were the Lutheran schools and the good quality of the Lutheran medical care. Further, through the radio work, many new people became interested in Lutheran teaching.<sup>333</sup> However, many shortcomings in congregations were also reported. This is reflected in the Evangelization and Finance Committee Report of 1973 prepared by Chair Alpha Jaques (WMPL). A burning problem was the shortage of labor. The teaching of the Word of God was at a low level, as was pastoral care, with very few attending Holy

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<sup>330</sup> Imberg 2008, 166–167, KIA, Annual reports, *Report of 1981* by Paavo Erelä. See Annex 2.

<sup>331</sup> The book of Revelation 2:14.

<sup>332</sup> MLTCA, Occasional Papers, volume 3, *History of the districts of ELCK*. Information collected by the students of Pastoral training course 2 in 1984.

<sup>333</sup> See chapters “Missionary Priorities”, “Signs of Lutheran Revival” and “Basic Channels for Gospel”.

Communion. There were no lists of parishioners and financial management was elusive. There was a lack of comprehensive plans for congregational work.<sup>334</sup>

Life in the congregations was supported by a strong missionary spirit of striving forward and working together. There was a common concern for souls. The Lutheran Church's Gospel-centered message resonated with people. The "Church of mercy" attracted them. The Church grew strongly. However, the growth also had another side. The lack of congregational workers meant that new Christians did not receive the care they needed. There was no adequate instruction, pastoral care, or Lord's Supper. The expansion policy of the early workers was both a blessing and a cause of problems. Many new congregations had been established without permanent staff, resources simply being too few. The strong growth of Christians now challenged the Church to invest in training to prepare her workers for their duties at a local level.

#### 4.1.3 Construction with a Vision

The decade of 1970s was a decade of vigorous construction period in the Lutheran Church of Kenya. A Project Committee supervised this work. The Atemo, Itierio, Matongo, Monianku, and Ogango stations, the MLTC, Uhuru Highway in Nairobi and many local congregations kept missionaries Hans-Hugo Nilsson (SLM), Ingemar Helgesson (SLM), Sven Klemets (SLEAF), and Jorma Iiskola (SLEAF) busy. For everything that was planned the money was not enough, Ingemar Helgesson informed his home board in Sweden.<sup>335</sup>

The year 1979 seemed to be the peak year. According to Helgesson's report, there were 12 Church buildings under construction,<sup>336</sup> five different projects at Itierio station (headquarters, clinic, school, water tank, and staff houses), two at Ogango (station and staff houses), one mission station (Monianku), Matongo Theological College, one project in the Kipsigis area, and two at Ngong Road (congregation hall and houses). Ten of them were partially sponsored by the SLM, eight by the LWF, three by LEAF, one by SLEAF, and one by SIDA.<sup>337</sup> At the same time several construction projects were going on in Pokot.<sup>338</sup> Sven Klemets wrote in 1979:

The construction work in and of itself is not easy [...] After you have obtained materials and the plan has been approved, it is also important to try to get stones and concrete blocks or whatever you are now building in a straight line [...] Here, compassion and patience are needed on both sides. It is just as

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<sup>334</sup> AKA, Evangelization and Christian Finances Committee report of 1973 by Alpha Jaques . Tuula Sääksi shared her view: There was not enough care for the congregations. KA, LEAFA II, file 37, Tuula Sääksi to Home Board 7.10.1974.

<sup>335</sup> RA, BVA, E1 e: 35, Ingemar Helgesson to Gunnar Nilsson 7.1.1975, Gustafsson ed. 1998, 20.

<sup>336</sup> Kenyoro, Gotchaki, Nyamuya, Kiomoso, Sigowet, Mungoye, Bogondi, Kibera, Kanyango, and Uhuru Highway. Due to lack of funding, Nyamira and Kisii town were not yet started.

<sup>337</sup> RA, BVA, E 1 e, Missionärsbrev vol 43, *Aktuella byggprojekt inom LCK* 25.8.1978 by Ingemar Helgesson.

<sup>338</sup> Lundebj 2018, 1–24.

important for us foreigners to learn to respect a culture that is different from ours, as it is for them to realize that a straight wall is stronger than a crooked one.<sup>339</sup>

However, when comparing the amount of money available, the next decade, the 1980s, was an even stronger period of construction. Swedish International Development Cooperation (SIDA), Finnish International Development Agency (FINNIDA), and Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) monies were channeled into healthcare, school buildings and school equipment, laboratories, vocational schools, special schools, preschools, orphanages, training centers for women's work, tree-planting and agricultural projects, well-drilling, water-, electricity- and archive projects as well as for personal cars and certain personnel costs. At that time, almost 90 missionaries were working in the Church.<sup>340</sup> The various foreign development aid projects were of great social benefit and helped many people in their distress. They also helped the missions and the Church to reach further with their message. However, taking care of these projects required an increasing commitment of both human and financial resources. The Church leaders were faced with an impossible task in taking care of them, not to mention the growing number of missionaries.

The 1970s building boom was closely connected to a clear vision. New premises were needed to serve the growing need for Christian teaching and leadership in the congregations. The Church was to be equipped for her spiritual mission of "saving souls". Industrious construction contributed to the rapid Church growth. As the following decade approached with huge amounts of money, the missionary vision began to blur. The time and energy of both the Kenyan workers and missionaries were spent in organizing the new projects. The focus was not on the basic mission of the Church. The situation gradually led to a spiritual crisis.

## 4.2 Missionary Priorities

### 4.2.1 Emphasis on Schoolwork

Christian Churches in Kenya made a significant contribution to the development of schoolwork. The Kenyan government followed their example. With the country's independence, it actively developed schools throughout the country. In 1968, all schools were placed under state control. However, like many other African countries, the Kenyan government did not want to create a secular school system. On the contrary, it wanted to offer Churches of different

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<sup>339</sup> Translation by author. Klemets 1979, 33–34.

<sup>340</sup> Ekström 2011, 390–396.

denominations the opportunity to continue religious education and teaching.<sup>341</sup>

In 1949, the first Lutheran elementary school was opened at Itierio. In 1950, it had 144 students in 3 classes. In addition to the missionaries Enok Salomonsson and Martin Lundström, there were four Kenyan teachers: Klement Nyandara, Joel Abuga, Andrew Bwoge and David Ongoro. In 1954, K.G. Ohlsson and Kerstin Erikson were assigned to supervise the schoolwork. Both were trained teachers. At the end of 1956, the Church had five schools, three of which were at Itierio. One of the Itierio schools was for girls only, called the Itierio Girls' Boarding School. As early as 1962, the LCK was responsible for 17 schools, five of which were located in Luo-land. John Mamboleo was one of the influential Kenyan teachers at the time. In the mid-1990s the Church-sponsored more than 100 primary schools, 12 secondary and 11 vocational schools.<sup>342</sup> The Lutheran Church of Kenya was advanced in her emphasis on girls' education!

The Education Secretary supervised the schoolwork. The first Secretary was John-Erik Ekström (SLM) in the early 1960s, followed by Lars Brixen (ELM), Mike Koski (WMPL), Alf Bach-Kofoed (ELM), and Per-Martin Hjort (ELM). SLM missionaries served in this position until the early 1990s when Kenyans took over. The Education Secretary visited the schools, organized training, and maintained contacts with the school management. They also coordinated financial support of the missions. Especially in the 1980 and 1990s, large school projects were sponsored by SIDA funds.<sup>343</sup>

In 1968, treasurer Ingrid Nilsson (SLM) informed schools that under the new Kenya Church Education Act, the sponsor had the right to be represented on School Committees, oversee religious education, provide pastoral care through general assemblies, and use school buildings outside the school hours. The Church had decided that her staff should attend each school once a week.<sup>344</sup> "To my knowledge, the LCK is perhaps the only Church which visits its schools regularly," Mike Koski informed the Planning committee in 1975.<sup>345</sup> Rev. Henry Otworu was the last joint Education Secretary of the Church. Every Deanery was supposed to have its own education secretary from 1997 onwards. By this point, the missions had already stopped assisting with schoolwork. Otworu

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<sup>341</sup> Sääksi 1977, 176–188, Nilsson ed. 1981, 38–40.

<sup>342</sup> Imberg 2008, 80–81, 140, Gustafsson ed. 1998, 53.

<sup>343</sup> Ekström 2011, 402–404. "We could teach religious education in the classroom and have also a free time in class. One big challenge was finding and recommending Lutheran headmasters and teachers. We did not have that many Lutheran-qualified teachers and the opening to recommend them was huge." MA, Email of Mike Koski 30.11.2018.

<sup>344</sup> IA, AI, CCK 1964, Ingrid Nilsson to headmasters, parish leaders, and evangelists 14.12.1968.

<sup>345</sup> IA, E II: 3, Cor. Gen. Sec. 1973–1979, Mike Koski to Planning Committee 14.4.1975.

worked for several months without pay. According to Otworì, the Church faced severe problems, even her basic mission being in danger.<sup>346</sup>

Walter Obare was appointed Matongo School Chaplain in the mid-1980s. His duties included preaching, Christian teaching, pastoral care, and assisting the Education Secretary in personnel and policy matters. Finally, he represented the Church on several regional and national committees dealing with education. According to him, the Church had excellent opportunities to evangelize through sponsored schools: "Through them, we can naturally reach thousands of students and teachers and even parents."<sup>347</sup> Samwel Michoro, Principal of the Matongo Boys Secondary, also felt that Church-sponsored schools were privileged. Along with money, they received missionaries to visit and teach. "Imagine if we could get more Christian high school teachers here! We have a crying need for science, technology, and craft teachers, and especially music teachers!" The Church also had the right to appoint principals to these schools.<sup>348</sup> From 1988 to 1993, Vuokko Peltola (LEAF) taught Christian Religious Education (CRE) and English at the Matongo Boys Secondary. The students were very eager to listen and discuss. On Sundays, they attended services at the Matongo church. The boys were eager to sing and play the guitars Peltola had received from Finland. Christian Union clubs gathered students from surrounding schools. The number of participants was often 1,000.<sup>349</sup>

Although school work was no longer centrally supported, as it had been in the mid-1990s, projects were still ongoing. All the mission societies supported schools in their special areas. For example, the NLM channeled NORAD money to thirty primary schools at Pokot. SLEAF had the Rural Education Project (REP) for the same purpose among Luos.<sup>350</sup> LEAF missionary Anja-Maija Vanhanen started an orphanage at Matongo in 1987. From this small beginning, the Child Care Program (CCP) gradually evolved to support the schooling of 500 children.<sup>351</sup> From the beginning of the 1990s, Vuokko Peltola coordinated funds from the Evangelical Teachers' Association in Finland for schoolwork. This program was called "Friendship Schools".<sup>352</sup>

The field of education was considered one of the most important in the Church. In addition to evangelism and healthcare, it was the basic mission of the

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<sup>346</sup> MA, Email from Henry Otworì 1.2.2019. In 1997, Meshack Ngare was appointed Education Secretary for the Lake Deanery, Charles Maragia for the Southwest, and Benson Mosin for the Northwest. At this point, the Central Deanery was not occupied. MA, interview of Meshack Ngare 24.3.2020.

<sup>347</sup> BVMT 12/1990.

<sup>348</sup> Samwel Michoro was also the Chairman of the ELCK School Committee. Only Gakero, Matongo, and Mititi Secondaries had Lutheran principals. BVMT 1/1990.

<sup>349</sup> "On Sundays, the boys came to pick up the guitars I kept safe under my bed. This became a routine so that after returning to Finland, I found myself waiting for these boys on Sundays." MA, interview of Vuokko Peltola 23.8.2019.

<sup>350</sup> ELCK Newsletter 1/1997.

<sup>351</sup> Saarenketo 2008, 48–56.

<sup>352</sup> MA, interview of Vuokko Peltola 23.8.2019.

Church. Well-educated children and young people were the resource of the future. From its beginning, the Church had been active in schoolwork from the beginning, as they were one of the priorities of the Swedish Lutheran Mission. Lutheran-sponsored schools were visited regularly – unlike many other Churches. Many teachers were utilized as evangelists, preaching in worship services. In this way, the connection between the Church and the schools was clear. However, according to Jacktone Bunde, the Church's impact on the students' lifestyles was limited. When the focus was passing exams, teaching the Christian way of life was less. "Our children are not living under the umbrella of Christian ethics," he noted in his theses prepared at the MLTC.<sup>353</sup> Approaching the mid-1990s, schoolwork was afforded less attention due to a lack of money and staff. Another reason was the present crisis of the Church.

#### 4.2.2 Healthcare to Rural Areas

One of Kenya's most urgent goals was to develop health services to meet the needs of the rapidly growing population. Missions and Churches played a key role in this sector. In the early part of independence, one-third of all health centers were maintained by Christian Churches. However, the organization and development of the work were carried out in collaboration with the Kenyan healthcare authorities. Thus, their activities were also part of the state's official healthcare system. For the most part, Churches concentrated on remote rural areas where the State's resources were insufficient.<sup>354</sup>

Lutheran health activities had started at Itierio, close to Kisii town. In 1950, a small clinic was built. It was the first medical institution in the whole district and became widely respected in this area. The work was started by Anna-Brita Albertson (SLM), assisted by Gunborg Lundström (SLM), both trained nurses. In 1954, Itierio developed into a maternity hospital. The Matongo Clinic was built in 1958. It had a strategic position, located within Kisiis but close to Luos and Kipsigis. It was the largest medical institution between the two hospitals in Nyabondo and Nyamira. Initially, the SLM missionaries Valborg Peterson and Brita Ekström were responsible for the work. There were five Kenyan workers in 1973: Isaac Twabe, Richard Ogwora, Bathseba Moraa, Phoebe Adero and Evans Nyamira. In 1974, Matongo clinic developed into a maternity hospital.<sup>355</sup> Work at this hospital began from zero. The nurses were high school girls who had to be taught everything from cleaning to work ethics. "The chickens don't

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<sup>353</sup> Bunde 2006, 60.

<sup>354</sup> Sääksi 1977, 164–166. The communication between the ELCK and the Kenyan Government did not always function properly. The ELCK medical coordinator Kaija Heikkinen (1987–1993) was not able to obtain copies of the District Development Plans on request. Lounela 2007, 194.

<sup>355</sup> AKA, *Healthcare report of 1973*, Sääksi 1977, 166–171, Lounela 2007, 67–70, 175–178, Imberg 2008, 78–80.

belong to the hospital,” Daktari [Doctor] Valma Mononen (LEAF) informed the staff when she found a hen hatching eggs in her office.<sup>356</sup>

At Atemo, health work started through a mobile clinic of SLEAF missionary Maj-Len Åbonde (SLEAF) in 1970. A dispensary was ready in 1971 and a maternity ward was started in 1985. In Monianku, the clinic was ready in 1977 and the maternity ward in 1981. In Nyagowa, a dispensary started in 1986. Monianku and Nyagowa were both first visited by mobile clinics. These dispensaries were built with funding from the Protestant Church Medical Association. In the late 1980s, there were five dispensaries in the Western part of the Church and two others at Pokot. Employees were first trained locally. From the early 1980s, more and more trained community nurses (KECN) were employed. Most of them were trained at the Nyabondo Catholic Hospital. Mothers were actively involved in maternal education at clinics. Through an active vaccination program sponsored by the Government, the frequency of measles declined.<sup>357</sup>

Daily devotions for patients were held in Lutheran clinics. Twice a year, the staff met for evangelism, Bible study, medical lectures, singing, etc.<sup>358</sup> Tuula Heikkilä (LEAF) writes about the life of Monianku Clinic:

The workday began with a joint prayer by the staff. Then the reception was opened. The tea break was at 10 a.m. with a morning devotion for the patients. One hour’s break due to heat. In the afternoon we cleaned up and packed medicines. A mobile clinic visited the Maasai area and hundreds of people were vaccinated.<sup>359</sup>

Church leadership was very active in asking for health care staff and support. When visiting or receiving guests, various requests were made to them: Midwives, nurses, doctors, mobile clinics, hospitals, etc. With the arrival of the 1980s, the Church’s requests for money were no longer so much focused on health care but other priorities: financial administration, education, and agricultural projects. At this time, it was debated whether the various projects would have overtaken the basic mission of the Church, the proclamation of the Word of God.<sup>360</sup>

Patient statistics from four clinics show that the number of patients increased until the early 1990s. In the 1980s, the medical department was profitable, but the situation gradually changed. Missionary staff worked in

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<sup>356</sup> “Maybe I was even overly worried about hygiene at that time. When my eyes drifted, the girls were just chatting together.” MA, interview of Valma Mononen 13.9.2019. Still, in the 1970s, many old patients only knew their tribal language. Without the local staff acting as interpreters, the work of missionaries in nursing would have been impossible. MA, interview of Marjatta Arkkila 20.11.2018.

<sup>357</sup> MA, Email of Helena Holst 28.10.2019.

<sup>358</sup> AKA, ELCK minutes 1959–1988, *Healthcare report of 1979* by Helena Holmgård.

<sup>359</sup> Translation by author. Ss 5/1981.

<sup>360</sup> At the end of the 1980s, the Kenyan Immigration Office became reluctant to issue work permits to expatriate nurses. In this way, it wanted to support Kenyans’ access to employment. Lounela 2007, 62–70, 152, 167–171.

health centers and dispensaries in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Wages and investment costs came through the mission societies and Nordic governments which supported these programs with development aid since the 1980s. When development aid ended in the late 1990s and the missions did not provide financial support for the work as before, the Church was not prepared to take over these responsibilities. It had no money to hire qualified Kenyan staff to replace “cheap”, i.e., subsidized missionaries. On the other hand, the official salaries of Kenyan medical staff also increased steadily. Without external subsidy, the Church was irresolute. Health care had become dependent on external support and was not operate alone.<sup>361</sup> After 1996, the missionaries withdrew from health care, and it was left to Kenyan workers. This was done to make the health care sector self-sustaining, which was also encouraged by the Ministry of Health. Prisca Nyambati, as the health care coordinator, was now in charge of health care along with nineteen registered nurses.<sup>362</sup>

Health care played a significant role in the Church until the late 1980s. Both missions and Kenyan leaders worked actively to strengthen this sector. People were interested in it because of its high quality. Through health care, people also learned about the Church. Thus, it contributed to the growth of the Lutheran Church of Kenya. In the 1990s, the focus began to shift to other priorities. As a result of financial difficulties and of missionaries leaving the sector, its importance in the Church gradually diminished.

#### 4.2.3 Basic Channels for Gospel

##### **Translation Work**

From her birth, the Lutheran Church of Kenya strove to reach people through the Word of God in every possible way. The Bible translation program was regarded as one of the most important.<sup>363</sup> This work was done in collaboration with the Bible Society of Kenya. The New Testament in Ekegusii had been published in 1948 by the Seventh Day Adventists, but it required refinement. Anna-Brita Albertson (SLM) accepted the challenge of making a new translation. From 1964, she worked with Rev. Josiah Ogamba from the Pentecostal Church, and in 1972, Rev. Joash Masese of the Seventh Day Adventists joined them. The review committee consisted of nine members of different denominations. The project was thus ecumenical, as the Bible translation should be. The translation of the New Testament was completed in 1972. For feedback, separate editions of some Old Testament books were taken

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<sup>361</sup> Heikkinen 1995, 81–85, Lounela 2007, 193–194, Kuokkanen 2009, 31–36.

<sup>362</sup> MA, interview of Marja Miettunen 3.1.2019, *ELCK Newsletter* 2/1996.

<sup>363</sup> Eugene W. Bunkowske, Professor Emeritus of Concordia Theological Seminary, demonstrates how Confessional Lutheranism, beginning with Martin Luther, had always been the initiating force for translating the Bible into vernacular languages. Bunkowske 1990, 72–90.



before the entire Bible of Ekegusii was completed at the end of 1988.<sup>364</sup> In an interview, Albertson describes their work:

We had difficulties translating the building of the covenant house and Solomon's temple. Then we talked to local carpenters and builders. It was also particularly hard to translate the visions of Ezekiel. We also pondered for a long time about Jesus riding a donkey to Jerusalem. People put palm branches on the road with good intentions preparing the way for the Lord. Here in Kenya green branches on the road traditionally indicate danger or accident [...] The entire Bible has been translated into 12 ethnic languages [...] There are still 24 ethnic groups in Kenya who do not have the opportunity to read any part of the Bible in their own mother tongue.<sup>365</sup>

In the early 1990s, the *Augsburg Confession*, Luther's *Catechism with Explanations*, and Luther's *Biography* were translated into Ekegusii. A translation of Luther's *Large Catechism* was underway.<sup>366</sup> The NLM was involved in translation programs of Borana and Pokot Bibles in the 1990s along with the United Bible Societies.<sup>367</sup> In 1995, the Lutheran Heritage Foundation from America started a translation project of the *Book of Concord* into Kiswahili. Anssi Simojoki (LEAF) became the head of this program.<sup>368</sup>

## Literature Work

Literature work was initiated in 1958 when Martin Lundström began writing the newsletter "*Habari Njema*", with a few issues each year.<sup>369</sup> In 1961, a hymnbook was published in Ekegusii. Material for liturgy, Sunday school, women's work, and evangelism followed. Luther's *Catechism*, Bible studies, and devotional series were published in several languages. From 1965, Josef Imberg prepared textbooks for the Matongo Bible School.<sup>370</sup> Martin Lundström was actively involved in the printing of literature from Sweden through the "Lutheran Literature Mission", which was established in 1975. Lundström chaired it.<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> Ekström 2011, 410, Nilsson ed. 1981, 22–23, Sb 16/1988.

<sup>365</sup> Translation by author. Kukkonen 1995, 121–125. Albertson lived 55 years in Kenya. She died in 2005 at the age of 83. She is buried next to the Church of Itierio. Imberg 2008, 77.

<sup>366</sup> SLEAFA, BV BREV, BV's annual report of 1992, 100–103.

<sup>367</sup> NLMA, Dc L0001, Memorandum of Pokot Bible Translation Project 19.10.1993.

<sup>368</sup> The Translation Committee consisted of Rev. Anssi Simojoki, Rev. David Chuchu, Rev. Thomas Asiago, Rev. Daniel Daudi, Rev. Reino Toikka and from the ELCT Ass. Bishop Martin Saho Moshi, Dr. Leonidas Kalugila, Bishop Amon Mwakisunga Tukuyu, Dr. Peter Kijanga Singida. KIA, Anssi Simojoki to Tuula Sääksi 16.2.1995, "I am dedicated, above all, to the translation work. I'm not a style master yet, but I can only wonder how clumsy, inaccurate, and in some places helpless is the translation of 1956 done in Tanzania." Translation by author. MA, Anssi Simojoki to Reijo Arkkila 7.10.1995. The *Book of Concord* translation was ready in 2011. Simojoki 2014, 321–331.

<sup>369</sup> Gazeti la missioni ya kilutheri. Mtengenezaji Martin Lundström. RA, BVA, E: 1, Habari Njema 1–3/1958.

<sup>370</sup> Ekström 2011, 410–411, Gustafsson ed. 1998, 23, 56.

<sup>371</sup> RA, BVA, E 1: e vol 37, Protokoll för Luthersk Litteratur Mission 2.4.1975.

Gunhild Andersson, assisted by Syliphanus Nyariki as secretary, took up the challenge of this work in the late 1980s. Contacts with the National Printing Press in Kisumu were created.<sup>372</sup> Pirkko Igendia (LEAF) and Sven Klemets (SLEAF), along with some other missionaries, joined Andersson and prepared material for Sunday school, baptism, and confirmation classes. These were translated into Ekegusii, Dholuo, and Kiswahili. MLTC students Henry Kabasa and David Chuchu assisted in Dholuo. Lessons for primary teachers were prepared. After the sudden death of Sven Klemets in 1990, this program stopped for a while.<sup>373</sup> The NLM had its radio and literature work through the Scripture Mission (SM), headquartered in Karen, Nairobi.<sup>374</sup>

## Radio Work

From 1957, Martin Lundström held Lutheran devotions on the *Voice of Kenya*<sup>375</sup>, followed by James Otete in the 1960s.<sup>376</sup> In 1969, Gustaf Norrback pondered the possibility of expanding Kenyan programs through the Ethiopian *Voice of the Gospel* and also broadcasting the Dholuo-programs.<sup>377</sup> In 1974, the Swedish Lutheran Mission started to build a radio studio at Itierio.<sup>378</sup> In 1977, the LEAF missionary Antti Kuokkanen became the head of the communication department. The members of the Radio Committee, founded in 1978, were Boaz Kiluma, Francis Nyamwaro, Johnson Oyieyo, Robert Ward, and Antti Kuokkanen. Boaz Kiluma and Joel Ogutu were sent to the Lutheran World Federation and the All Africa Conference of Churches sponsored radio course in Nairobi. Kiluma then became the first Kenyan communications director while Nelco Okinyi and Neriko Bundi acted as technicians. In 1978, *Trans World Radio* from Swaziland started broadcasting Lutheran Kiswahili programs in Kenya.<sup>379</sup>

Choirs played an important role in radio broadcasting. Andrew and William Obaga held courses for local Church choirs and music groups in the parishes. The recordings focused on the traditional Kenyan music style that inspired people. Traditional Kenyan instruments were used instead of guitars. Many

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<sup>372</sup> Ekström 2011, 410–411.

<sup>373</sup> MA, interview of Pirkko Igendia 10.11.2018. Sven Klemets died of a snake bite on 4.9.1990 in Kenya. "If it's a snake bite, I know I'm going to die. But all is well, whether I live or die because I know where I am going. I go to God who sent me to work there. Now he calls me home." Translation by author. Klemets 1994, 49–51.

<sup>374</sup> See chapter "Muslim Majority Ethnic Groups".

<sup>375</sup> *Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC)* is the state-run media organization of Kenya. It uses English, Kiswahili, and many Kenyan tribal languages. The corporation started in 1928. In 1964, its name was changed to *Voice of Kenya*. In 1989, the Kenyan parliament reverted the corporation's name to Kenya Broadcasting Corporation. The Standard – Wikipedia. Accessed 13.11.2020.

<sup>376</sup> In 1957, 30 services were broadcast. BVMT 48/1957, Nilsson ed. 1981, 24.

<sup>377</sup> SLEAFA, FLM BREV 1966–1970, Gustaf Norrback to missionaries 27.5.1969.

<sup>378</sup> "The foundation of Radio Studio is laid." IA, EV: 3, Corr. missions SLM 1964–1974, John Momanyi to Sigurd Stark 15.6.1974.

<sup>379</sup> IA, EII, Corr. Districts 1978–1985, minutes from radio work meeting 8.12.1977, MA, interviews of Antti Kuokkanen 21.10.2019 and Japhet Dachi 10.12.2016.

choirs were involved.<sup>380</sup> William Obaga was appointed the first LCK Church musician in 1976 after his studies in Tanzania.<sup>381</sup> In 1981, the studio was redeveloped to meet the demands of the new time. "This studio will be used to provide better devotional and music programs and for producing cassettes as well as for basic health education," John Momanyi explained.<sup>382</sup>

Boaz Kiluma was born into a Pentecostal family in 1947 but detached himself from Christianity in his early youth. In 1964, he joined the Lutheran Church of Kenya and was baptized. He studied first at Matongo Bible School and then at Makumira College and became the first LCK Luhya pastor in 1975. He then served as principal of the Matongo Bible School for a year before moving on to radio work. Kiluma adopted a missionary vision for radio work: "The Kenyan Church is currently growing rapidly. The growing Church is boldly searching for new ways to spread the Gospel. It is important that workers are using these new channels and receive appropriate training for their job."<sup>383</sup>

Kiluma was talented in his work. His Kiswahili Bible lessons *Sauti ya Neema* were very popular. "I have rejoiced over working with Boaz Kiluma," Kuokkanen wrote to Finland. They prepared cassettes for radio work following the 12 basic Curriculum.<sup>384</sup> Kiluma was also an inspirational preacher. Saturday, just before his sudden death, he was preaching at his home congregation Bogondi. His topic was *The Last Day*. He started from the Bible verse found in 2 Kings 7:9: "'This is the day of good news' and we are keeping it to ourselves!? If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us." He carried a newspaper clip showing how people took the authority of Christ for themselves, claiming: "Here is Christ". Kiluma continued: "You must watch what is proclaimed. The signs of the end time are the abandonment of God's Word and people placing themselves above it. The Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come."<sup>385</sup>

Boaz Kiluma died suddenly on October 14, 1986. His funeral was a memorable event, lasting all night under the full moon. The widow sat by the open coffin as people honored their last respect. Most of the Church pastors and evangelists were present since Kiluma was only the second ELCK pastor to die, Nemwel Omae being the first. Small campfires were set to create an atmosphere and to repel mosquitoes. Animals were slaughtered and roasted over these fires. As men dug the grave, the Kisumu Church Choir sang. At three in the

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<sup>380</sup> MA, interview of Antti Kuokkanen 21.10.2019.

<sup>381</sup> Obaga continued his studies in the National Academy of Music of Ghana 1977–1980 but then received no job in the LCK. Richard Olak told him that the Church could not afford to hire him. Today he has a PhD in Church music and is serving as the WMPL Regional Director for Africa located in Nairobi. MA, interview of William Obaga 17.3.2020. Sääksi considers that the Church's suspicions towards the LWF-scholarship holders contributed to the unwillingness to hire Obaga. MA, interview of Tuula Sääksi 16.6.2020.

<sup>382</sup> IA, EII: 19, Corr. Gen. Sec. 1980–1982, John Momanyi to NCCK Gen. Sec. J.C. Kamau.

<sup>383</sup> Ss 13/1979.

<sup>384</sup> Translation by author. KA, LEAFA II, file 45, Antti Kuokkanen to Reijo Arkkila 28.7.1981.

<sup>385</sup> MA, *The last sermon* by Reijo Arkkila 1986.

morning, the villagers arrived in queue singing about Kiluma's life. At the end of the night, the missionaries were given beds to sleep in, the others slept on the floor. About a thousand were present.<sup>386</sup>

Japhet Dachi succeeded Boaz Kiluma as Director of Communications. He focused on recording Lutheran teaching and worship services on radio. People were eager to give feedback and became interested in having Lutheran congregations in their habitats. In this manner, the Church expanded to new areas. Joel Ogutu and Anthony Marocha then had this position after Dachi. Ogutu was quieter in nature than Dachi, but he was considered trustworthy and motivated. His teaching was understandable to "ordinary people".<sup>387</sup> Marocha started as a studio cleaner in 1994 and became an assistant technician to Antti Saarenketo (LEAF) in 1995, after studying in Finland for two months. That year, the studio switched from analog to digital, developing into one of the best-equipped studios in Kenya. Marocha took responsibility of the communication department in 1998.<sup>388</sup>

The Church was active in her evangelistic work. Many different channels were used. The translation program, literature publications, and radio work each contributed to a common goal – to reach as many people as possible through the Gospel. For some ethnic groups, the media was almost the only way to reach them. This was especially true among the Muslim majority ethnic groups.

#### 4.2.4 Children in God's Kingdom

At the time of Kenya's independence, children accounted for about 50% of the total population. Working with children and young people was indeed a great challenge. In each worship service, about half of the participants were children. They sat, sang while clapping their hands; they listened attentively unless they fell asleep at some point. Most parishes had a Sunday school. Over the years, teaching materials had been prepared for different age groups.<sup>389</sup>

The Church formed a Youth and Sunday School Committee in 1970. Iris Sandberg (SLEAF) was responsible for the Sunday schools in the Luo area, while Gunhild Andersson (SLM) and Andrew and Lora Wendler (WMPL) took care of the Kisii region. Every congregation had Kenyan teachers who were trained

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<sup>386</sup> MA, interview of Tuuli Tamminen 16.9.2019. Even though dead, he speaks. I spent a night on the family plot of the Kilumas in 2018. Boaz's nephew Moses Kinyangi, a student at the MLTC, gave me cassettes to listen to. On my bed in the darkness accompanied by the orchestra of grasshoppers, I listened to the voice of Kiluma in a clear Kiswahili language: "*Yesu Kristo ndiye Bwana wetu!* [Jesus Christ is our Lord]" This was the true Communion of the Saints! MA.

<sup>387</sup> MA, interviews of Japhet Dachi 10.12.2016 and Antti Kuokkanen 21.10.2019.

<sup>388</sup> *ELCK Newsletter* 5/1998. LEAF financially supported the studio until the 2010s. Since then, funding became one of its largest problems. Marocha feels that "the Church doesn't understand the importance of this work." He had the vision to get every age group and each region involved in expanding this radio work through special training at the MLTC. MA, interview of Anthony Marocha 27.10.2018.

<sup>389</sup> Gustafsson ed. 1998, 55.

through short courses. Sandberg made sure that all the Sunday school children were taught to learn John 3:16 by heart: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”<sup>390</sup> Gunhild Andersson and Greta Brorsson (SLM) held Sunday school at Matongo, with the children of the missionaries joining in. This served as an effective language school: English, Finnish, Ekegusii, Norwegian, Swedish, and Kiswahili were used, the children acting as interpreters for each other.<sup>391</sup> Kyllikki TalviOja (LEAF) compiled a Sunday school songbook *Nyimbo za Watoto* in 1980. For its part, it contributed to the understanding of the significance of Sunday school work. TalviOja actively visited congregations to teach these children's songs. The feedback was very positive.<sup>392</sup>

In the early 1970s, children were given special attention in Nairobi too. Both the Uhuru Highway and the Kibera congregation organized gatherings for them. Four groups of 25–30 children participated weekly. At Kibera, all the Kenyan Church workers took turns in teaching. The children also participated in women's reading groups.<sup>393</sup> At Kibera, children were the key to reaching new people because, through Sunday school, their parents became interested in the Church.<sup>394</sup> In Kisumu, a nursery of 80–100 children was established in 1974.<sup>395</sup>

In 1987, Jemimah Oenga came to Anja-Maija Vanhanen (LEAF) to ask for help. The mother of a boy, Immanuel, had died in childbirth. This was the beginning of the Matongo Orphanage. A separate plot of land was donated from Matongo station. The first building was completed in 1988. Two baby girls, Mary and Joyce, were the first babies in this home. Four Kenyan female workers were hired to take care of the growing number of orphans.<sup>396</sup> Vanhanen wrote about these children:

George stood homeless at the gate of my home on Christmas Eve. He now volunteers and cares for the younger ones. ‘I first want to seek the Kingdom of God,’ he told a man, who asked about his schooling. Someday George would like to become an evangelist. From day to day, he serves as a big brother taking care of practical matters [...] If only you could see these children of yours. I think you will meet many of them in heaven.<sup>397</sup>

Children received special attention in the Bible: The Kingdom of God belonged to them! Following the Bible's instructions, the mission of the Church was to baptize them and take care of their spiritual life. If she did not accomplish this,

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<sup>390</sup> MA, interview of Iris Sandberg 14.10.2019

<sup>391</sup> KIA, Workreports, *Report of 1978* by Marjatta Arkkila.

<sup>392</sup> “Kyllikki was very active, talented, and appreciated by the local people.” MA, interview of Nicholas Oenga 8.6.2016.

<sup>393</sup> AKA, *Nairobi congregation report of 1973* by Paul Edström.

<sup>394</sup> MA, interview of Enos Omodhi 7.11.2018. See chapter “International Congregation”.

<sup>395</sup> See chapter “Pioneer Work of Kisumu”.

<sup>396</sup> Saarenketo A. and L. 2008, 48–51. Anja-Maija Vanhanen worked in Kenya for 30 years and “dedicated her life to helping orphans, widows and the poor as well as working as a nurse and a midwife at the ELCK clinics”. She died on 31.10.2014. *Daily Nation* 5.11.2014.

<sup>397</sup> Translation by author. Vanhanen 1995, 92–93.

no one would do it. The failure to do so carried the threat of severe punishment in the Bible. The welfare of the children was essential to making them responsible for the future of the congregations. In another sense, too, children were an asset for the future. The Church grew strongly from the inside.

## 4.3 A New “Mission Field”

### 4.3.1 Gospel to Luos

As the 1960s arrived, ethnic tensions raised their heads. Besides Kisiis, members of other ethnic groups had entered the Church. Luos<sup>398</sup> had already been reached in the 1950s. The congregations of Mititi and Kabondo were established in 1957, followed by Nyagowa (1958), Lwanda (1958), Othoro (1959), and God Agulu (1962).<sup>399</sup> Kipsigis (Kalenjin subgroup) joined the LCK in 1960 and Maragolis (Luhya subgroup) in 1961. When SLEAF entered Kenya in 1963, it was first welcomed to the Maragoli area. When the Santal Mission explored opportunities to join the work in 1964, there was a special discussion about their entry into the Luo area.<sup>400</sup> With these new areas, the Church gradually aroused to respond to ethnic tensions.

The LWF Secretary for Africa Manfred Lundgren had heard about these tensions. He wrote to SLEAF Director Stjernberg on June 15, 1964:

First, there is a great opportunity for Lutheran work today. The Christian Council of Kenya is interested in having more Lutheran missionaries come into the country and strengthen the LCK [...] It is important at this time that something be done in the Luo area. The tribal differences in the Church are partly due to the fact that no work is established in this area although many members of the Church belong to this tribe.<sup>401</sup>

Former President Martin Lundström was worried about the same matter. He wrote to James Otete: “Luos have been oppressed certainly without reason. They have been badly treated. They have been deceived [...] Refusing Luos the help and leadership, which strengthens the Church, deceiving them time after

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<sup>398</sup> The Luo are an ethnic group in Western Kenya, Northern Uganda, and in Mara Region in Northern Tanzania. In Kenya (2020) they are the third or fourth-largest ethnic group after the Kikuyus, Luyas, and Kalenjins. They speak Dholuo. The main livelihoods are fishing, farming, and pastoral herding. Outside Luoland, they comprise a significant fraction of East Africa's intellectual and skilled labor force in various professions. Ethnologue: Languages of the world – Wikipedia. Accessed 25.11.2020.

<sup>399</sup> The first baptism of 15 people was conducted in Lwanda 26.10.1958, the second for 19 people was in Mititi 7.12.1958. The Mititi congregation was started by pupils who were studying at Itierio and were baptized. One of them was Francis Ong'ou Odawo. *ELCK 50 Years Church work in Luo land*, 2.

<sup>400</sup> Norrback 1998, 64, 84, J-E Ekström was very active in reaching the Kipsigis close to Matongo. Imberg 2008, 110.

<sup>401</sup> SLEAFA, LWF, Manfred Lundgren to A.G. Stjernberg 15.6.1964.

time, this is not a Christian way but the voice of the Devil.”<sup>402</sup> Manfred Lundgren was naturally informed about the matter by someone. To speculate for a moment, now the most likely source of information was Martin Lundström, but perhaps it could also have been Richard Olak, who then studied at Makumira College. Olak would have spoken up for his fellowmen, the Luos. At any rate, Lundgren’s perception of the situation was exaggerated. Lundström’s view did not either correspond with the whole picture. For example, Jeftha Michoro worked specifically with Luo people in the early 1960s and was respected by them. He was assisted by several Luo evangelists who even then took care of the existing congregations.<sup>403</sup>

The special status of the Kisiis in the Lutheran Church of Kenya had historical roots and was not due to the belittling of other ethnic groups. The Swedish mission started its work in this area, to which no other Protestant organization had found its way.<sup>404</sup> Jaakko Lounela (LEAF) suspects that one of the reasons why the Protestant missions had not previously entered the area was female genital mutilation, which caused great confusion in Kenya as early as 1929<sup>405</sup>. So, the Swedes looking for a new mission field were directed to this “no one’s” territory.<sup>406</sup> The Anglicans were concentrated in Luos. Due to the Anglican Church’s leadership disputes, deriving from the effects of the East African Revival movement and resulting in the Luos feeling discriminated against, many Luos gradually turned to the Lutheran Church.<sup>407</sup> These experiences, not to mention their opposition position in Kenya’s political life, apparently increased the Luos’ strong need for attention in the Church!

The demands of the Luos were heard. In January 1965, John-Erik Ekström was appointed responsible for this work by the Executive Committee. The following year, SLEAF was invited to take over. This was aided by the fact that SLEAF missionary Gustaf Norrback was now President of the Church. In addition, SLEAF had left Maragoli<sup>408</sup> and was looking for another area to work in. By August 1966, the Executive Committee established a Luo Committee to plan the work among the Luos. This Committee included Chairman Gustaf

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<sup>402</sup> SLEAFA, LCK BREV 1963–1974, Martin Lundström to James Otete 15.7.1966. “All Lutheran members from any race or tribe have room and rights in the Lutheran Church of Kenya [...] Am accused for having illegally started the mission work among the Luos. That kind of talk is just silly flattering. First, will I remind everyone that the Lord does not ask BV for permission to convert a person.” SLEAFA, LCK BREV 1963–1974, Martin Lundström to Barnaba Owaga 24.5.1966.

<sup>403</sup> Already at this time, there were many Luo evangelists, teachers, and assistants: Barnabas Aundo, Gideon Magak (Senior chief), Zablon Kanyago (Assistant Chief), Barnabas Owage Osewe (teacher), Ondigo Abednego Ponde, Meschak Waga Bunde (Itierio Parish Council), Dickson Abuor Opiyo, Samson Onditi Moseti, Phesto Mbare Ageke, etc. *ELCK 50 Years Church work in Luo land*, 1–6.

<sup>404</sup> Imberg 2008, 60.

<sup>405</sup> See chapter “Gender-Related Behaviors”.

<sup>406</sup> MA, interview of Jaakko Lounela 9.9.2014

<sup>407</sup> MA, interview of Richard Olak 2.6.2016.

<sup>408</sup> See chapter “Reaching Luhya and Iteso”.

Norrback, Secretary Richard Olak, members Sven Klemets and Jefftha Michoro. To date, there were already ten congregations in Nyanza: Mititi, Oriang, Othoro, Nyagowa, Angino, Andiwo, Atemo, God Agulu, Samanga, and God Ber Kandegwa.<sup>409</sup> Due to ambiguities and Kisii opposition, the matter was discussed in more detail in the Executive Committee of August 28, 1968.<sup>410</sup> The following year, missionaries of the Swedish Lutheran Mission began to oppose the Luo work.<sup>411</sup>

Although the plan to focus the SLEAF work on the Luo region met opposition, it progressed rapidly. Already at its first meeting on 31 August 1966, the Luo Committee discussed the construction of a mission station at Atemo. From 1968, a health center, a village polytechnic, and a church were built on it.<sup>412</sup> In 1983, Nyanza District had 5 parishes, 35 congregations, 5 Kenyan pastors, 17 evangelists, 12 helpers, 1 youth leader, 2 student pastors, 10 permanent Church buildings, and 3 pastoral residences.<sup>413</sup> That year, SLEAF had already had 18 missionaries on the field.<sup>414</sup>

Many Kisiis feared that after reaching Luos, their influence would gradually wane. Some missionaries felt the same. Lurking in the background was a question: Who held power in the Church? The power of money was involved since it was closely related to the management of power. The main concern of the Swedish Lutheran Mission was the unity of the Church. By concentrating on one ethnic group, the focus easily shifted from unity to disputing parties. The process itself had proved this. Despite conflicting attitudes, however, all the parties shared a common view: The Church was to proclaim Good News to all ethnic groups. Work habits changed over time, but the main goal remained the same. The Church succeeded in her efforts to invest in the Luo region and expand the mission work in that area.

#### 4.3.2 Atemo Mission Station

The Luos were eager to receive missionaries into their territory as they expected schools and dispensaries to follow. In the beginning, there were three possible plots: Nyagowa, God Agulu, and Atemo. Each of these had a small

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<sup>409</sup> Norrback 1998, 141–159. “It was decided that our Association is prepared for mission work among the Luos.” IA, E II: 1, ELCKA, A.G. Stjernberg to LCK Ex.com 4.7.1966.

<sup>410</sup> IA, A II: 3, Ex.com 1968–1971, minutes of Ex.com 28.8.1968. “In every AGM there has developed a tendency of harsh questions and comments on the subject by representatives from other districts, especially from Kisii, which no satisfactory answer has been given by ELCK officers.” SLEAFA, BREV to and from ELCK 1989, *ELCK Luo Pastors’ memorandum* 25.7.1994.

<sup>411</sup> See chapter “Signs of Colonialism”.

<sup>412</sup> Norrback 1998, 141–159.

<sup>413</sup> SLEAFA, BREV to and from ELCK 1989, *Luo pastors’ memorandum* 13.11.1983.

<sup>414</sup> Norrback Gustaf and Märta, Klemets Sven and Linnéa, Stjernberg/Lillsjö Majgret, Iiskola Jorma and Brita, Sandberg Boris and Iris, Holmgård/Holst Helena, Söderbacka Bernhard and Lisen, Bergman Tom and Siv, Wallin Alf and Mona, Nynäs Birgitta, Wistbacka Katarina. MA, Email from Brita Jern 15.4.2020.



congregation that would have welcomed missionaries. Finally, Atemo was chosen as the most suitable plot. The congregation was also larger than the others, which is a factor in facing new challenges. A bridge was built across the river in early 1968, along with a school building. In the same year, the first missionary houses were constructed. The next buildings were a course center in 1969, the clinic in 1971, and the church in 1974. Sven Klemets and Jorma Liskola were responsible for the construction work. Sven and Linnéa Klemets moved to Atemo in February 1969, soon followed by the Norrback-family.<sup>415</sup>

In various offices and positions, many Kenyan people helped the station get started: Sipriano Ouko was responsible for keys, distribution of materials, and tools; Martin Oomo was the principal of the local school. Some other workers were Paul Okumu, Josua Akiri, Jeronimus Ombok, Silla Nyagowa, James Okumu, Walter Samo, Jeronimus Oduka, Henry Chuchu, and Bonifas Nyambuga.<sup>416</sup> The station officially opened on February 9, 1971. Richard Olak gave a congratulatory speech:

It is a great pleasure to celebrate this day when we have the opportunity to welcome the first Lutheran missionaries to the Luo ethnic group [...] We also do not want to forget to thank the brothers of the BV for first starting this work and for continuing to help the Church in general.<sup>417</sup>

Gustaf Norrback and Sven Klemets highlighted training activities at the Atemo course center. There were courses for parish workers, women, youth, and children. Evangelists and helpers in particular were close to their hearts.<sup>418</sup> Norrback and Klemets along with Richard Olak organized a refresher course for Luo evangelists in 1969. However, not everyone was happy with it. According to SLEAF Director Helge Hildén, the Swedish missionaries had condemned the course as “illegal and not in accordance with the Constitution”.<sup>419</sup> The negative attitude of the Swedish Lutheran Mission towards Atemo work is also well reflected in the letter that John-Erik Ekström wrote to his superior in Sweden. Ekström was sad over the Finnish attitude: The Finns were against the development of the Church. They had become stagnant in their work, he complained.<sup>420</sup>

Nurse Maj-Len Åbonde started a mobile clinic at Atemo in 1970 and treated more than a thousand patients per year. The dispensary was ready in 1971 and a maternity clinic was completed in 1985. Health care was later organized by Helen Holmgård, who served as the Medical Administrator in the early 1980s. She was responsible for all the health facilities and medical work and also served as secretary of the Medical Committee. At Atemo, women’s work was

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<sup>415</sup> Klemets 1983, 25–27.

<sup>416</sup> MA, Email from Linnéa Klemets 14.11.2019.

<sup>417</sup> MA, SLEAF’s missionärer välkomnas till Luo.

<sup>418</sup> Norrback 1998, 172–173.

<sup>419</sup> Translation by author. RA, BVA, E 6 vol 1, Helge Hildén to Sigurd Stark 17.7.1969.

<sup>420</sup> RA, BVA, E 1 e: 31, J-E Ekström to Gunnar Nilsson 6.9.1972.

introduced by Linnéa Klemets and Brita Iiskola in 1970, with 60 women joining immediately. In ten years, a network of 14 groups with over 400 members. They were led by local Kenyan leaders. Practical skills useful in homes were taught. The women also studied reading, writing, calculation, and Kiswahili. Central to these meetings was reading the Bible and singing.<sup>421</sup>

When Jorma Iiskola returned to Kenya for the second term in 1975, he was given the responsibility of founding a village polytechnic close to the Atemo station. The school had already been featured in the SLEAF newsletter *Sändebudet* as a new investment. However, not everyone was quite as enthusiastic about it. Boris Sandberg wrote to Finland: "As you know, I have never been entirely enthusiastic about having a vocational school at Atemo. I understand that it would be a mistake for our mission so that we would be dealing more with other matters than we would with the preaching of God's Word."<sup>422</sup>

Teaching at Abongo Dhoga, the Lutheran youth and training center, started on February 21, 1977, with a construction course. Students erected buildings for their school. In March 1978, two new courses were introduced. Each year, about 20 youngsters enrolled in the two-year training. The number of students gradually increased, reaching a peak of 80. The program consisted of practical training, together with teaching religion, language, math, vocation theory, and singing. During its early years, the missionaries led Abongo Dhoga. When the school began, there were only two Kenyan teachers among the staff: Joseph Odongo Ondego taught theoretical subjects and Daniel Okumu was responsible for practical subjects. School fees and other income did not cover costs, and the school required ongoing external support. Abongo Dhoga was funded by FINNIDA, but SLEAF did not find additional sponsors despite several attempts.<sup>423</sup>

From the early 1970s, the Church had a vision of her own vocational school. The Church and the missions themselves were unable to fund it, but Development Aid created this opportunity.<sup>424</sup> Despite its success, it brought along new problems: Dependence on external assistance and an immovable attachment of both human and financial resources to a particular location. For several years, the Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland focused only on Atemo and its ethnic surroundings, thereby creating envy among other ethnic group members. In this respect, the Swedish missionaries' concerns

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<sup>421</sup> Lounela 2007, 66–74, 175–178. "The need for craft education was also big. It began in June 1970 on a one-day course. The interest was very high. Luo women group leaders in the 1970s were: Pamela Ojunga, Adah Olak, Jane Oliech, Pamela Seda, Margret Were, Doris Odhiambo, Penina Odundo, Agneta Adhiambo, Mary Agosa, Caren Achieng, and Serfina Anyango." Translation by author. MA, Email from Linnéa Klemets 14.11.2019.

<sup>422</sup> Translation by author. SLEAFA, FLM BREV 1974–1977, Boris Sandberg to Helge Hildén 12.4.1976.

<sup>423</sup> IA, F III: 2, *Abongo Dhoga Annual report of 1977* by Jorma Iiskola, Iiskola 1979, 47–48, Lounela 2007, 171–175.

<sup>424</sup> Lounela 2007, 173.

were justified. Nonetheless, as a small mission society had limited resources, it had to centralize its work. SLEAF decided to concentrate on Atemo, which gradually evolved into an important educational center of the Lutheran Church of Kenya.

#### 4.3.3 Youth Work in Focus

The youth work in the Lutheran Church of Kenya was separated from the work with schools in the 1970s. SLEAF missionary Jorma Iiskola was appointed youth director, assisted by Rev. Nicholas Oenga. They worked with the youth leaders Peter Nyangweso (Kisii South), Julius Tengeya (Kisii North), and Japhet Dachi (Nyanza). In the early 1970s, there were about ten active youth groups in the Church, most in the Kisii area. "The main mission has always been in the youth work," Iiskola wrote in his report of 1974. The Youth Conference held at Atemo from 31 August to 2 September 1974 was attended by 25 young people. The following topics were taught: "The Second Coming of Jesus, Our Salvation in Jesus Christ, and Baptism of John and Jesus." Many meetings were arranged at congregations; the choirs were active – yet Iiskola was not happy with the situation. District councils were supposed to oversee this work, but they did not. "It is a high time to put the youth work in our Church complete."<sup>425</sup>

Iiskola's dream progressed slowly. In 1979, Boris Sandberg wrote that there were only four district youth leaders throughout the Church: Peter Nyangweso (Kisii South), Samwel Masaki (Kisii North), Meshack Ngare (Nyanza), and Obadiah Anzala (Kisumu). According to Sandberg, evangelists and pastors were not interested in the youth. The work would not succeed if youth leaders visited congregations only twice a year during major celebrations. The reformation was needed to prevent young people from establishing their own Churches. They needed to feel that "this is their own Church".<sup>426</sup>

SLEAF accepted the challenge, especially among the Luos. Tom and Siv Bergman came to Atemo in 1979 and were involved in the youth work first through Abongo Dhoga and later through parish work. In the 1980s, Nyanza had 40 village congregations, and each had a youth group with a Kenyan leader. The Bergmans worked with Meshack Ngare, Henry Kabasa, Andrew Guda, Samwel Odhiambo, Joseph Malo Dachi, Isaac Odero, Samwel Omondi, Patrick Arogo, Kepha Ochieng' and Matthew Muga to name a few. The courses were held at Atemo. A Bible study program was introduced to enable local congregations to teach independently. During the annual school holidays (April, August, and December), camps were held with 40–60 young people who gathered for three days. Evangelism visits were arranged to homes. Several

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<sup>425</sup> IA, A VII: 1, District minutes 1971–1980, *The Youth Department's report* 14.2.1972, *Report from the Youth department in LCK* to AGM at Matongo station on 19–20.2.1974.

<sup>426</sup> Translation by author. Sandberg 1979, 24. Ngare became the Nyanza youth leader in 1977. To strengthen evangelism, he established youth teams across parishes and congregations. MA, Email from Meshack Ngare 11.9.2020.

camps were held each year. One MLTC evangelistic course formed a choir called the "Lutheran Youth Encounter". With a van, this choir traveled around Nyanza in village congregations and marketplaces. "This program was greatly appreciated, and it gathered large crowds. It was a wonderful time!"<sup>427</sup>

Kristian Sjöbacka worked with district youth leaders Walter Okuche, James Mbori, Samuel Odhiambo, Joseph Obala and Benard Orach in the 1990s. By then, all districts and parishes had appointed youth leaders. The youth and Sunday school committees, led by district youth leaders, controlled the work. Youth camps and choir festivals were organized. Some fundraising projects, such as poultry farming, were tried but not successful. There were also other problems, mainly sexual behavior. For example, at a youth camp in Atemo in December 1993, a youth leader was accused of attempting to rape a girl.<sup>428</sup>

SLEAF's concerns about the importance of youth work were heard. From the 1970s onwards, it gradually developed into a significant area of work. It was best organized in the Luo region but positively affected the entire Church. Youth camps and other activities were arranged to strengthen Kenyan leaders and youth groups in their mission. Young people learned to consider the Church as their own, a place where Jesus Himself was working through the Word and sacraments. In the future, these young people would, in turn, be responsible for reaching new generations.

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<sup>427</sup> Translation by author. MA, Email from Tom Bergman 2.10.2019.

<sup>428</sup> MA, Email from Kristian Sjöbacka 23.9.2019.

## II. Gospel or Development Aid? 1980–1988

### 5. Focused on Spiritual Mission

The Republic of Kenya had elected a new president in 1978, Daniel arap Moi. His first years were favorable for peace and development. To secure his power in the early 1980s, however, he gradually tightened his grip, the focus of his administration evolving to maintain its power, even by violent means. This caused fearful unrest among the Kenyan people.<sup>429</sup> The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya also chose her new leader, the Reverend John Momanyi Kururia. As the Church grew rapidly, missionary activities became increasingly focused on projects and their management. The Church leadership instead wanted to focus on the spiritual mission, the proclamation of the Gospel. Thus, the question of the actual mission of the Church rose to the forefront. The Church and her mission partners again ended up on a collision course.

#### 5.1 The Humane Chairman

As mentioned above, following James Otete, the Church elected John Momanyi Kururia as the new leader in 1980. Born in 1941 at Nyamira, Momanyi was a strict Seventh Day Adventist member until 1963, when he entered the Itierio Secondary. During his studies, he was baptized, along with four other students, into the Lutheran Church of Kenya. In 1967, Momanyi was sent to Makumira College for pastoral study and graduated in 1972. He married Josephine Kwambuka and they had five children, three girls, and two sons. He became a teacher at the Matongo Bible School and was ordained in 1973. He was elected General Secretary for two years in 1974<sup>430</sup>. In 1979, Momanyi continued teaching at Matongo Lutheran Theological College and then completed a Diploma in Administration and Economics in Nairobi Polytechnic. In 1980, he became Church President, now called Chairman.<sup>431</sup>

In the election of 1980, Momanyi narrowly defeated Otete. He received 70 votes, while James Otete received 67 and Boris Sandberg 12 votes.<sup>432</sup> What led to Momanyi's election victory? According to Rev. Jared Oomo and Rev. Joseph Ataro, the Kisiis were not united. Especially two clans, the South Mugirango and the North Mugirango fought for power. Momanyi was from a remote area of South Mugirango and people from there felt that they were being overtaken in

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<sup>429</sup> See chapter "Moi Arouses Fear".

<sup>430</sup> Momanyi 30 votes, Olak 20, and Nyamwaro 8. IA, AI: 2, Minutes of AGM 1971–1977, AGM minutes 19–20.2.1974.

<sup>431</sup> MA, interview of John Momanyi 19.5.2016.

<sup>432</sup> Sb 5/1980.

decision making. That is why they wanted their own man in the office.<sup>433</sup> In addition, the younger generation appreciated Momanyi, considering that he was able to respond to their desires to be heard better than before. They also felt that he lived side by side with his parishioners without standing over them.<sup>434</sup> Momanyi was regarded for his humanity.

Under John Momanyi, the Church continued to grow. In 1980, there were 130 congregations and about 20,000 Christians, increasing in 1988 to 201 congregations along with more than 10,000 new members.<sup>435</sup> Towards the end of Momanyi's term, the Kenyoro revival began to enliven the Kisii region by intensifying ecclesial life there and beyond. Momanyi, for his part, was guiding this movement spiritually. With the support of some missionaries, he treated young people pastorally, directing them to stay in the Church.<sup>436</sup>

In 1988, Momanyi decided to go to America for graduate study and planned to return to the office. Since Momanyi did not inform others of his studies in advance, the Head Office decided that his term was over. He was considered to have acted arbitrarily in favor of himself. He was then replaced by Francis Nyamwaro.<sup>437</sup> According to Momanyi, Nyamwaro was a very good and obedient Vice-President, "but he had a will for power." People thought that Momanyi went to America to become a bishop. "My departure set the bishop's race in motion. It was like a marathon, everybody wanted to become a bishop," Momanyi explained the happenings.<sup>438</sup>

Rune Imberg attaches great importance to the stability of the Church in the 1980 elections. The senior pastor peacefully gave his seat to one of the youngest at the time! After stepping down, Otete served as the District Leader of Itierio until 1992, when he retired. "Otete's behavior by that time made a great impression on many," Imberg writes.<sup>439</sup> Leadership is fundamental to any organization. The example of leaders was followed in both good and evil. In the Church, leadership had to deviate from secular bodies. Both James Otete and John Momanyi rained power and relinquished it exemplarily by following Christian leadership guidelines: "Whoever wants to become great among you, must be your servant (Matt 20:26)." In future leadership disputes, their example was forgotten.

## 5.2 Theological Trendsetter

Richard Otieno Olak was born in 1937 at Kasipul, southern Nyanza. His father was a polygamous man and was not baptized until he died in 1955. His mother

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<sup>433</sup> MA, interviews of Jared Oomo 21.9.2018 and Joseph Ataro 23.9.2018.

<sup>434</sup> See chapter "Kisiis Face a Youth Revival".

<sup>435</sup> Imberg 2008, 166–167. See Annex 2.

<sup>436</sup> See chapter "Kisiis Face a Youth Revival".

<sup>437</sup> "Momanyi went to America for no reason." MA, interview of James Otete 1.6.2016.

<sup>438</sup> MA, interview of John Momanyi 19.5.2016.

<sup>439</sup> Imberg 2008, 144.

was baptized in 1965. Olak himself received baptism by John-Erik Ekström. Ekström had attended his school Angano and preached there. Olak was touched by the message, which was different from what he had previously heard in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church (SDA). He wanted to join the Lutheran Church and in 1962 went to Matongo Bible School. He was then sent to Makumira College for theological studies along with Samwel Mogeni and Daniel Ogetii. Here he found the Gospel. In his own opinion, Olak had been very legalistic while in the SDA.<sup>440</sup> In an interview, he talked about this time:

I well remember how my conscience was under a heavy burden. I had to realize that I could not keep God's will. I had no way to do it on my own. Then the Principal of Makumira, Elwaha Mschana (later Bishop), taught justification by faith without deeds of the law. What exactly was he talking about? He must be wrong! But I found out that this is exactly what the Bible teaches. This is what is written in Romans. Can Jesus really be so miraculous that he receives sinners? Indeed, God justifies the wicked.<sup>441</sup>

Olak graduated in 1967 and was ordained the first LCK Luo pastor in January 1968. He then served as a parish pastor in Nyagowa. He was the Vice-President of the LCK from 1971 to 1973 and then went to Makumira College (1974–1976) for further studies, completing a Bachelor's degree. In 1977, he was selected to the LWF working group to consider theological issues in an African context. He was elected General Secretary in 1979 and held this position until 1994 when Daniel Mundia took over. His wife, Adah Achola, was involved in women's work. They had seven children.<sup>442</sup> Olak had a strong motive for spiritual work: "The greatest thing in my life is that God called me to be a Christian and let me be His servant. Despite many difficulties at work, I am satisfied, for I have had a Helper who promised to be with me."<sup>443</sup> To this day, Olak is the longest-serving general secretary of the Church.

Olak also served several periods at the MLTC, first part-time, then full-time, finally as Chair of the Board. In these roles, he was much the Kenyan trendsetter, an unshakable advocate of Lutheran doctrine. He was firm during difficult discussions concerning the Lutheran Confessions<sup>444</sup>, during times of pressure

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<sup>440</sup> Ma, interview of Richard Olak 2.6.2016.

<sup>441</sup> Translation by author. In this context, Olak also mentions the importance of Gustaf Norrback and Sven Klemets in his life. Arkkila's interview in its entirety well describes Olak's personal history. Arkkila 1995, 126–137.

<sup>442</sup> "For us, theology in an African context meant something other than contextualization in Western theology. We didn't want to change the Bible to fit better in Africa. We just wanted to help with the understanding process." MA, interview of Richard Olak 2.6.2016. Adah Olak died in November 2020.

<sup>443</sup> Translation by author. Norrback 1970, 14.

<sup>444</sup> See chapter "Focus on Lutheran Confessions"

from the LWF<sup>445</sup>, and selecting qualified students for the MLTC<sup>446</sup>. At the MLTC, he primarily taught homiletics and dogmatics. He viewed the production of good, clear preachers to be the most important task for the College. "Justification through faith" was the pearl of Lutheran doctrine, and it kept the MLTC alive amid adversity. All teachers from different backgrounds agreed.<sup>447</sup>

Richard Olak was a "big man" for the Luos. He was much appreciated, and his opinions carefully listened. He could be characterized as an opposition leader in the Church occupied by Kisiis.<sup>448</sup> For other ethnic group members, he was considered somewhat reserved, not very sociable, strict, but more educated than other leaders.<sup>449</sup> He was highly respected by SLEAF missionaries; SLEAF and LEAF theologians valued him for his theological ability, especially concerning Lutheran doctrine and Confessions.<sup>450</sup> The missionaries liked him across the boundaries of their organizations. Those missionaries who worked with him appreciated his willingness to listen and help in critical situations. His opinions did not change to fit the people. He was considered a true spiritual leader. He also had practical business management skills.<sup>451</sup>

Richard Olak's road to the upper reaches of the Church was partially interrupted by ethnic conflicts. Particularly many Kisiis were against him. In addition, he did not receive unconditional support from all his ethnic brethren. Some of them wanted power for themselves. This was evident in the election of the first Bishop.<sup>452</sup> Some Luos thought that unity would be better maintained if Luos had the seat of Vice-Bishop. Therefore, Leonard Oner, pastor of Oyugis District, Jared Owino pastor of Othoro District, supported Francis Nyamwaro.<sup>453</sup> Certain features of Olak's personality also played a role. Some found him too dominant, someone who doesn't support everybody equally.<sup>454</sup> In the hearts of Kenyans, Olak was overshadowed by Nyamwaro, who was liked

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<sup>445</sup> See chapter "Apostolic Practice".

<sup>446</sup> The Executive Committee was supposed to choose the students according to their recommendations and entrance exams. According to Seppänen, the Luos usually chose the best students, but the Kisiis used other criteria. This was the reason Seppänen decided to inform the Executive Committee only about those who passed the exams. MA, interview of Arto Seppänen 1.7.2018.

<sup>447</sup> MA, interview of Richard Olak 2.6.2016.

<sup>448</sup> MA, interview of James Mbori 9.5.2017.

<sup>449</sup> MA, interview of Joseph Ole Momposhi 1.10.2018.

<sup>450</sup> MA, interviews of Reijo Arkkila 20.11.2018 and Boris Sandberg 14.10.2019.

<sup>451</sup> MA, Interviews of Olli Kukkonen 1.7.2018, Raija Leino 21.7.2018, and Solveig Nylund 20.11.2018, Olak was not "scheming or working behind the scenes. Everything was upfront, and you could trust his words". MA, Email from Erling Lundebj 20.9.2019.

<sup>452</sup> "Even Walter Obare supported Nyamwaro. Kisiis promised Ogello to support him if he worked for Nyamwaro. Luos were planning to choose Ataro as the vice." MA, interview of Richard Amayo 23.10.2018.

<sup>453</sup> "Olak was used in the election process, but he was also active behind the scenes." MA, interview of James Mbori 9.5.2017.

<sup>454</sup> "Olak had an iron fist." MA, interview of Richard Ondicho 18.11.2018.



across ethnic boundaries. Nyamwaro was considered humble, warm-hearted, forgiving, and open-minded. He treated others nicely.<sup>455</sup>

For many missionaries, Richard Olak was like the “savior” of the Church, while many Kenyans saw him in a rather different light. Could this be influenced by another approach or cultural differences? In any case, it clearly shows how many Kenyans and missionaries lived as if occupying completely different worlds. Therefore, there were grave difficulties in managing mutual affairs and sometimes even cooperation. At any rate, Richard Olak was one of the most prominent leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya. Under his leadership, the Church administration – to the satisfaction of mission partners – was able to function for about 15 years, despite many demanding situations. His theological and financial superiority were praised. Would the Church have survived better in facing future difficulties under his leadership? There is no answer to this question.

### 5.3 Moi Arouses Fear

By early August 1978, when his condition deteriorated, President Jomo Kenyatta had already surrendered all his executive power. At the time he died on August 22, Vice-President Daniel arap Moi practically held all power. The change of authority was peaceful. “I will continue with the policies formulated by the founder of the nation,” the new President announced. His famous slogan “Fuata Nyayo” [follow the footsteps] reflected the same idea.<sup>456</sup> In many respects, President Daniel arap Moi continued the policy of his predecessor for good and evil.

Christians throughout the country praised God for the early days of the Moi regime. As a result of the sudden change of power, many feared unrest – which did not happen. The discipline and order of the President also meant peace for the Churches. In his report to the 1978 Annual General Meeting, President James Otete wrote:

From 22.8 to 23.9, Kenya was saddened by the death of its first president, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta. Throughout this time, the Church in Kenya remained united in prayer. The word of God was preached on the radio from morning to night. God answered the prayers by giving peace to the whole earth. He later led us to choose a new president, Daniel arap Moi, peacefully and without struggle. This all happened because God answered the prayers of His people.<sup>457</sup>

It was only later, when Moi’s administration tightened its grip, that concerns over the freedom of Churches and their foreign workers became apparent.

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<sup>455</sup> MA, interviews of Joseph Ole Momposhi 1.10.2018, “Nyamwaro was on the side of the Luos so much that some Kisiis accused him of that,” Joseph Osumba 23.9.2018.

<sup>456</sup> Branch 2012, 135–142, 190–193, 203–207, 222–227, *Daily Nation* 28.8.1978.

<sup>457</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 210, *AGM report of 1978* by James Otete.

At the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, Kenya was facing an economic crisis. Unemployment increased to nearly 20 percent, while debt and inflation soared. Overall inflation in 1978 was 12.5 %, in 1981 15 % and in 1982 at its highest, 22.3 %. In 1980, foreign debt reached approximately 20% of Kenya's GDP. Together with mismanagement and the corruption of officials, the situation led to shortages of food and other essential items in stores. University students started rebelling. Moi responded harshly, accusing his opponents of politicizing. At the latest following the coup in 1982<sup>458</sup>, it became clear that the new President was even tougher than his predecessor. He was determined to strengthen his authority by all possible means. Over the years, his use of power evolved in a dictatorial direction. Moi ruled Kenya through fear.<sup>459</sup>

Whites were not spared from Moi's criticism, although – like his predecessor – Moi continued to maintain good relations with foreign financiers.<sup>460</sup> In the spirit of nationalism, however, he encouraged indigenous people to take the lead from whites.<sup>461</sup> In 1987, the President urged all Kenyan citizens to donate 5 shillings to an anti-apartheid campaign in South Africa and Namibia.<sup>462</sup> In 1988, daily newspapers reported that Moi attacked “unnecessary missionaries”, accusing them of politicizing under the guise of their duties. The president had become angry with Anglican Bishop Alexander Kipsang Muge from Eldoret, who had criticized the government for not addressing the ongoing starvation at Pokot. Birgitta Nynäs (SLEAF) wrote about the situation in Kenya:

The President said that there is no starvation in this country. Muge might be correct, but the mistake is that he interfered in politics! (Bishop Henry Okullu also supports Muge.) Those who may stay in the country are “nurses who are engaged in healthcare and teaching and who do not interfere in politics”.<sup>463</sup>

Daniel arap Moi's presidency began with promising first steps. His early rule created much-needed stability in the country, which was also appreciated by

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<sup>458</sup> “The first day of August remains in Nairobi's history as a Sunday when worship services were missed. Instead of Church bells, machine guns were heard. There were hundreds of dead and wounded, thousands of robbed shops and homes, restrictions on freedoms, months of litigation, the university was closed.” Translation by author. Kujanpää 1983, 136–137.

<sup>459</sup> Branch 2012, 146–151, Ochieng' 2013, 100–104. In describing Moi's closest allies in the government, Odinga seems to portray the President as weaker than what his public image suggests. Many ministers exercised their power very independently, openly attacking their critics and resorting even to political assassinations. Odinga considers Nicholas Biwott as one of the most influential ministers of the time: “Minister for Energy Nicholas Biwott was for many people the embodiment of all that was rotten in the Kenya government, though the status he enjoyed in the inner circle around Moi had so far rendered him almost immune from criticism. He wielded the kind of political power that put him in a different category from his parliamentary colleagues, and he was feared.” Odinga 2015, 154.

<sup>460</sup> Branch 2012, 142.

<sup>461</sup> “The police began to hunt down foreigners, hundreds of them were arrested, mostly unauthorized persons coming from other countries.” Translation by author. KA, SLEY II, file 41, Arto Seppänen to Reijo Arkkila 3.5.87.

<sup>462</sup> IA, EII: 19, Ed/sec. 1984–1987, Chief executive officer G.N. Konditi to all members 5.5.1987.

<sup>463</sup> Translation by author. Parentheses are included. SLEAFA, FLM BREV 1984–1989, Circular mission letter of Birgitta Nynäs to Finland 19.7.1988.

the Kenyan Churches. Gradually his grip on the country tightened – which was increasingly criticized. This was also reflected in his desire to persuade even the Churches to serve his purposes. Like many other Churches, except the Anglican Church, members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya did not dare to criticize the president, who was even known to be behind the assassinations.<sup>464</sup> The atmosphere of fear affected the whole country.

## 5.4 Missionary Status

The relationship between the Church and the missionaries continued to be challenging. The constant increase in the number of missionaries naturally contributed to this. At the time Momanyi led the Church, it grew by 40, reaching its peak in 1989 with 94 missionaries.<sup>465</sup> According to her bylaws, the Church remained in contact with the missionary Boards through representative missionaries working in Kenya. They are entitled to attend Executive Committee meetings but not to vote. Home boards abroad were obliged to inform these representatives of co-operation decisions. Naturally, these contacts were also used in reverse. However, the annual conferences and other missionary organs had no official status in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, although they played an important role in the organization of the missions. Such an arrangement caused a lot of confusion from time to time.<sup>466</sup>

Under James Otete, the Church wanted to keep the reins in her own hands.<sup>467</sup> If different parties disagreed, the voice of the Church was decisive.<sup>468</sup> At the 1977 Annual General Meeting, Otete stated:

All servants of the Church are servants of the whole Church [...] the Executive Committee has power over all of them to staff everyone in the place where he is needed. The power of the Missions and District Committees in this respect should necessarily be looked into and their claims be brought to an end.<sup>469</sup>

Under John Momanyi, Church leaders were not yet ready to recognize authority of the missionary bodies. Instead, they wanted to control the flow of information so that missionaries could not directly communicate to their home country over and around the Church's decision-making channels. At the second

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<sup>464</sup> See chapter "Church and Society".

<sup>465</sup> Imberg 2008, 167. The total number of Western workers in 1989 was 135 (NLM 54, LEAF 41, SLM 22, SLEAF 12, WMPL 6). This number includes all the missionaries at Nairobi Scripture Mission (NLM) and the so-called short-term missionaries. MA, Information received from the missions.

<sup>466</sup> Lounela 2007, 149.

<sup>467</sup> Otete was annoyed with the SLM, which brought missionaries into the country without consulting the Church: "It is better for the Church to be first to say that she needs a missionary, not the Mission Board!" IA, AII: 4, Minutes Ex.com 1970–1975, Ex.com meeting 9.4.1974.

<sup>468</sup> "Since the Missions do not agree on this matter, the question of calling new missions be in the hands of the Church." IA, AII: 4, Minutes Ex.com 1970–1975, Ex.com meeting 18.4.1972.

<sup>469</sup> IA, AI: 2, Minutes AGM 1971–1977, *Report by the Chairman to AGM Iterio 1–2.3.1977*.

consultation between the Church and supporting missions in September 1986, this message was clear: "Although missionaries may express their views and opinions on the common work during their retreats, all plans should proceed to the Church and the mission boards through the Church committees and not through missionary-conferences." All the missionaries had to be reminded of the Constitution. The mission boards were allowed to handle urgent matters for missionaries but otherwise things should be dealt with at the grass-root level. The following year, it was again emphasized that general planning should remain under the control of the Church.<sup>470</sup>

As the Church leaders emphasized their authority, the missions felt that their voices should also be heard in decision-making processes. Especially, for this reason, missions began to enhance interpersonal management. From the 1970s onwards, Church representatives were frequently invited to tour the Nordic countries. During these visits, consultations were held, sometimes these were arranged in Kenya. In the 1980s, with the increase in development aid projects, the need for similar meetings became apparent. Concerned about the smooth running of the projects, these informal meetings provided an opportunity for information sharing. However, in the Constitution, missionaries were considered only as individual employees with different roles. Despite their influence, they had no official power in the Church.<sup>471</sup>

John Momanyi had noticed that many disagreements were due to misunderstandings. "One should be very careful how to communicate with each other," he noted. It was not just a matter of conveying information, but also a matter of adapting to the new environment. Some missionaries took a wrong attitude towards Kenyan culture and had not received training in how to relate to the Kenyan environment and people. The Church had no official channels to influence the acculturation of missionaries received to the field. Momanyi felt that a special training program was needed. He had spoken with Principal Erling Lundebry to arrange special orientation courses for this purpose. Church history, geography, Kenyan culture, and ethnic languages would be introduced. Personal responsibilities would be stressed. Missionaries should also be reminded right from the beginning that the Church had the ultimate operational and economical decision-making power, rather than the mission societies. Even the properties belonged to the Church.<sup>472</sup> Momanyi was not alone in these thoughts. As shown above, Church leaders were unanimous in these opinions. Richard Olak wrote to Mission Secretary Per Ebbe Ingvert in 1986: "We should like to remind you that a smooth, peaceful and mature communication is very

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<sup>470</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 208, Consultation between ELCK and the supporting missions 10-12.9.1986 and 15.9.1987.

<sup>471</sup> Lounela 2007, 155-158.

<sup>472</sup> MA, interview of John Momanyi 19.5.2016, KA, LEAFA II, file 45, Erling Lundebry to Reijo Arkkila 21.3.1981.

necessary for our co-work. Paternalism kind of business should stop.”<sup>473</sup> Sources do not reveal whether Momanyi’s plans have come true.

The missionaries – who were mostly laypeople – were not to lead the Church. The Church counseled them to be servants instead of bosses. This was a strong message from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya to her Western workers. Sometimes this was hard to remember. However, it was not always a question of reluctance but also of incomprehension. Different cultures encountered dissimilar ways of communication and behavior. From time to time, both parties had difficulties understanding each other. In crises, respect for each other was tested. Kenyan communality was a type of supporting force holding things together during these information breakdowns. Despite the difficulties, the willingness to work together indicated the way forward.

## 5.5 Projects or Evangelism?

The United Nations declared 1961–1970 a Decade of Development, followed by the Second and Third Decades. Development aid was now a new attempt to increase the wealth in countries outside of Europe and North America. The Nordic Governments followed this development in the 1960s, Finland being the last to board in the 1970s. The Lutheran Church of Kenya was very fertile soil in this respect. The Kenyan leadership actively requested support for social work, health, and education projects. The missions, for their part, were very eager to receive support from development funds since they were unable to meet all the requests. This soon led to a situation where the Church was full of various development projects managed by the mission societies.<sup>474</sup>

Development aid also had political implications. The Western governments wanted to have oversight on how their money was used. In 1981, the Swedish Prime Minister Thorbjörn Fälldin<sup>475</sup> flew to Kenya in connection with the UN-Energy Summit. Kenya’s leading newspaper, the Daily Nation, praised Sweden for pursuing the Third World. Fälldin also visited the ELCK headquarters at Itierio, which had been constructed with SIDA funds. The Prime Minister was pleased that the Church had good relations with the Kenyan state:

I did not get my first contact with the Third World from school, magazines, or radio, but from Sunday school. Letters written by missionaries were often read there and they were the subject of discussion between the teacher and

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<sup>473</sup> IA, EII: 22, Corr. G/sec., Letters to mission boards 1985–1989, Richard Olak to Per-Ebbe Ingvert 12.3.1986.

<sup>474</sup> Lounela 2007, 11, 60–74.

<sup>475</sup> Nils Olof Thorbjörn Fälldin (April 24, 1926–July 23, 2016) was a Swedish politician from the Center Party. He served as Prime Minister of three Governments from 1976 to 1982 and as the Chair of his party from 1971–1985. When Fälldin began as Prime Minister in 1976, he was the first non-Social Democratic prime minister in Sweden in forty years. Wilsford 1995, 132–139.

the Sunday school students. We Sunday school children learned that we must give of our abundance to the Third World people.<sup>476</sup>

It is noteworthy that the Swedish Prime Minister viewed Development aid as the fruit of Christianity! In Kenya, this news was received with gratitude. In his home country, he would probably have faced criticism over his statements. In addition to Sweden, the governments of other countries were also interested in what their money was used for. In 1986, Finnish Foreign Minister Paavo Väyrynen visited Kisumu to inspect the School for the Mentally Handicapped, which was built with FINNIDA funds. He was accompanied by the Embassy of Finland in Nairobi.<sup>477</sup>

Later, many missionaries were involved in development aid projects. In the early 1980s, for example, the SLEAF missionaries were all busy with these projects.<sup>478</sup> According to LEAF missionary Antti Kuokkanen, development funds evoked two kinds of emotions. It was good to receive government money to allocate missionary funds to the basic work of the congregations. On the other hand, however, in this manner, the Church was led into a distorted institution-centered direction.<sup>479</sup> After visiting Kenya in 1983, Jorma Iiskola (SLEAF) reported that the development projects had distorted Church life. The “social gospel” had superseded the congregational work. The money had attracted the missions to concentrate on these projects instead of other things. In addition to the Finnish, the Swedish mission also was behaving in the same manner.<sup>480</sup>

Initially, the Church leadership was very eager to start new projects insofar as they were supported by the missions. Gradually, however, they were concerned about how the Church could fund them if handed over to herself. Therefore, the Church leadership started to demand that these projects should be self-sufficient before they were handed over. As the situation worsened, Chairman John Momanyi proposed a Nordic meeting where all the missions would meet to discuss the matter. This meeting was held in February 1985 at Itierio. Three main questions were discussed: What is the right place for development projects? How could projects be prevented from becoming a financial and administrative burden? Do current investments precedence over evangelistic work? In the discussions, the Church leadership was concerned about the shift in focus from evangelism to projects. The projects controlled by the missions had received all the attention. Resentment was generated by the awareness that many Church workers were not paid because her operating budget was much smaller than the amount of money spent on projects. The Church herself had to be able to decide on the use of cash flow.<sup>481</sup>

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<sup>476</sup> Ss 36/1981, AKA, *Report of Fälldin's visit to Itierio* 13.8.1981.

<sup>477</sup> See chapter “Pioneer Work of Kisumu”.

<sup>478</sup> Lounela 2007, 150.

<sup>479</sup> AKA, Antti Kuokkanen's report of 1981.

<sup>480</sup> SLEAFA, DYM 1981–1989, *Jorma Iiskola's report* to DYM 3.8.1983.

<sup>481</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 210, Special consultation between ELCK and the five supporting missions 7–8–2–1985, Lounela 2007, 167–171.

The following year, in September 1986, a similar consultation took place in Stockholm. There, both the Church and the mission societies emphasized the priority of evangelism. Only those projects that would support the spiritual work of the Church were recommended. Secondary school teachers, theologians, youth leaders, pastors, and parish workers were needed. Richard Olak mentioned only two projects in a positive sense: The Teachers' Training College and the agricultural project, neither of which had yet begun.<sup>482</sup>

The Church needed new staff, especially in the Head office, as the projects created a heavy administrative burden. The number of Church employees elsewhere also increased, and the Church needed money to pay the salaries. This was a burning topic. Kenyan workers felt that they were neglected: The missions were not interested in them but rather in the projects.<sup>483</sup> The missions, for their part, were not able to channel project money in other directions because the money was controlled by the Nordic governments. The missions were also afraid the money would disappear in the wrong direction, as had happened in the past.<sup>484</sup> In any case, the vision of economic development in the Church led to different types of projects becoming increasingly important. The focus had shifted from the proclamation of the Gospel to other priorities.

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<sup>482</sup> The Church had planned the TTC for a long time, but in the long run, the missions were not eager to fund it. The agriculture project was included in LEAF's plans among the Maasais. KIA, LEAF, *ELCK-yhteisneuvottelut* 1981–, Consultation between ELCK and her supporting missions Stockholm 10–12.9.1986.

<sup>483</sup> MA, interviews of John Momanyi 19.5.2016 and James Otete 1.6.2016.

<sup>484</sup> Kuokkanen 2009, 92–94.

## 6. A Biblical or Human-Led Church?

All the mission societies working within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya emphasized biblical authority in their activities. This was reflected in the confessional emphasis regarding both doctrinal and ethical questions, which were eagerly discussed at pastoral conferences. Together with her mission partners, the Church followed a confessional Lutheran policy. Their unified stand was tested in some individual issues such as the Office of the Word and family planning.

### 6.1 Church Leadership in Reflection

#### 6.1.1 Aimed at Pastoral Leadership

In November 1958, the first Kenyan Lutheran pastor, James Otete, was ordained in a worship service led by the only currently ordained pastor of the Mission, Rev. K. G. Olsson. He was assisted by two pastors from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, Kristian Mushumbuzi and Gunnar Ljungman. Nemwel Omae was ordained as the second Kenyan pastor in April 1961. Jeftha Michoro and Francis Nyamwaro were ordained in 1964, Nicholas Oenga in 1966, Samwel Mogeni and Richard Olak in 1968, and John Momanyi in 1973.<sup>485</sup> For the first half of the 1970s, there were only eight Kenyan pastors in the Lutheran Church of Kenya!

During the transition period, when pastors were few, lay missionaries John-Erik Ekström (SLM) and Sven Klemets (SLEAF) served as parish leaders, baptizing and leading Holy Communion services. In doing so, the Church followed the Swedish Lutheran Mission's regulations: "While serving abroad, male missionaries could baptize children and adults and serve at the Holy Communion, something which they normally didn't do at home in Sweden."<sup>486</sup> This practice disappeared in 1970<sup>487</sup> but returned in the 1980s, when some designated male missionaries, now mostly from the NLM, were allowed to administer the Sacraments.<sup>488</sup> There was also a plan in the early 1970s to ordain some laymen to relieve the shortage of pastors.<sup>489</sup>

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<sup>485</sup> Otete: "In the beginning, a lot of things were copied from the Northwestern Diocese of the ELCT." Imberg 2008, 90–92, 102–103, 132, *Lutheran Church work in Kenya 1948–1973*.

<sup>486</sup> Imberg 2008, 92, 132–133. Martin Lundström also practiced these regulations before he was ordained in 1962. Later Roland Gustafsson (SLM, Per Munch (ELM) from Denmark, and some NLM male missionaries were allowed to follow this policy. Imberg 2010, 30–37.

<sup>487</sup> "As a means of temporary solution with a regard to the lack of pastors within LCK, the Boards have previously agreed that unordained male missionaries might be entrusted with the administering of sacraments. But as the Church has now a good number of pastors the Board does not any longer consider it a matter of necessity." IA, EV: 3, Corr. SLM 1970–1972, Sigurd Stark and Gunnar Nilsson to Executive Committee 6.10.1970, The Executive Committee agreed on this. James Otete to BV 28.11.1970.

<sup>488</sup> See chapter "Pastors or Laymen?"

<sup>489</sup> IA, AII: 4, Minutes Ex.com 1970–1975, Ex.com Meeting 12.11.1970.



Until 1963, Church services were informal low-Church-type meetings led by male missionaries. Kenyan teachers or lay preachers followed the SLM tradition. Female missionaries could give testimonies, including Bible references, but they were not to preach or lead meetings. The services consisted of four elements: Bible reading, sermon, songs, and prayers. The first missionary theologian of the LCK, Josef Imberg (SLM), came to Kenya in 1965. He wrote brief instructions on the liturgy and prayer practice for divine services. Out of this, a liturgical development towards a full Lutheran worship style started. President Gustaf Norrback supported Imberg's vision as did the Kenyan Church leaders.<sup>490</sup> Imberg and Norrback introduced the songbook *Nyimbo za Kikristo*, used by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. Norrback also organized short liturgical courses for preachers at the parish level.<sup>491</sup> The Ekegusii liturgy was prepared in the early 1960s, but the first Dholuo liturgy was not completed until 1973.<sup>492</sup> The early Church growth was partly due to people's satisfaction with Lutheran teaching and liturgical order in services. "The Church began to take on the form of a Church," Richard Olak explained the development.<sup>493</sup>

When the Bible School started in 1957, it offered only short courses for evangelists and assistants. In the first year, there were only five students, but the number of students increased steadily so that all the congregations were served by trained evangelists by 1973. Resources were not yet sufficient to train pastors to care for congregations and administer the sacraments. For this reason, the first pastoral students were sent to the Makumira College in Tanzania. However, the dream of one's own pastoral seminary continued to strengthen from the 1960s onwards.<sup>494</sup> For the first time in the Church's history, a group of eight pastoral students graduated from Matongo Lutheran Theological College on March 28, 1982. They had studied for four years and received Certificates in Theology. The ceremony was led by Chairman John Momanyi, who addressed the crowd by praising God for this special day: "For the first time our college provides pastoral workers in the Lord's field!" LEAF Director Reijo Arkkila, had traveled from Finland for the graduation and reminded the Christians of the priesthood of all believers: "Every Christian has a duty to spread and testify of Christ."<sup>495</sup>

Investing in theological education had far-reaching consequences. The congregations got the evangelists and pastors they needed, to guard the flock.

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<sup>490</sup> Martin Lundström was a construction worker and Gustaf Norrback was a trained teacher. Imberg 2008, 92, 104, Norrback 1998, 133.

<sup>491</sup> Olak 2010, 254.

<sup>492</sup> "Norrback just came and asked me to write a liturgy in Luo!" The booklet "Liturgia" followed Finnish Church liturgy. MA, interview of Iris Sandberg 14.10.2019.

<sup>493</sup> Olak 1988, 24.

<sup>494</sup> See chapter "School of Prophets".

<sup>495</sup> The first students were: Peter Abuga (Kisii North), Thomas Asiago (Kisii South), Robert Muhando (Kisumu), Walter Obare (Nyanza), Jacob Odhiambo (Nairobi), Joseph Oichoe (Kisii South), Henry Otworu (Kisii South), Japheth Rabach (Nyanza). *Habari Njema* 1/1982.

The Bible message was well received and it brought life. People were pleased with the Lutheran teaching and the liturgical structure of services. The Lutheran Church of Kenya was evolving from a laymen-led structure into a pastor-led Church. All these developments played an important role in the search for Church identity.

### 6.1.2 Pastors or Laymen?

According to the cooperation agreement between the Lutheran Church of Kenya and the Norwegian Lutheran Mission, NLM male missionaries were allowed to perform pastoral duties on the field, although they were not ordained as pastors. This included the administration of the two sacraments [*sakramentsforvaltning*].<sup>496</sup> In doing so, the NLM represented the “functional” position of the pastor’s office: The priesthood of all believers belongs to all those baptized. The “regularly called” [rite vocatus] in the Augsburg Confession means a person called by God (inner call) and the Church (public call). No separate pastor’s office or ordination of bishops is required. This view claims to be as genuinely Lutheran as the “constitutional” position, in which the pastor’s office is regarded as the ordinance of God in harmony with the Book of Concord.<sup>497</sup> No wonder such different perceptions caused controversy in the mission field!

Despite different theological positions, the Lutheran Church of Kenya hoped that the sacraments would always be administered using pastoral clothing. In a letter to his superior, Karsten Valen (NLM) wondered about this demand:

We are out here under the title of pastors, and we should continue to have the understanding that we are just as much ordained as those who have a bishop's hand placed over them [...] Personally, I think it would be fine without these clothes, but I don't see it as being so important that I would insist on having the right to administer sacraments without vestments.<sup>498</sup>

Mission Secretary Gudmund Vinskei understood his stand: He didn’t want missionaries to wear any pastoral clothing because, according to him, no one became a pastor through it, but through a call and a gift of grace.<sup>499</sup> In his next letter, Vinskei was puzzled by the question of how to make “the dynamic power of the lay movement” successful on the mission field. In practice, it did not often materialize. The “tent-making ministry” had to be rooted in the LCK. “Rituals” [liturgical practice] were not contrary to the Bible and Confessions. Moreover,

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<sup>496</sup> Imberg 210, 35. The issue of ordination and the blessing of missionaries in the Nordic Churches is dealt with by Iversen ed. 2006.

<sup>497</sup> For this, see Wisløff 1985, Sannes 1996 and Pohjola 2014. Birgersson sheds light on how the NLM view of the pastor’s office was first formulated. It happened in a situation where three bishops of the Church of Norway refused to ordain NLM missionaries as pastors in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This led to the adoption of the NLM’s low-Church practice and the search for the rationale for it. Birgersson 2011, 51–56.

<sup>498</sup> Translation by author. NLMA, Da-0001002, Karsten Valen to Birger Breivik 13.3.1978.

<sup>499</sup> NLMA, Da-0001002, Gudmund Vinskei to Karsten Valen 6.4.1978.

they did not necessarily refer to the high-Church tradition. Pastoral clothing and Church organizations rather reflected it. Over time, a common practice had to be found.<sup>500</sup>

The situation was discussed at several meetings. The Church reminded people that all activities had to serve the whole Church and take place “upon the doctrinal basis and with the same purpose and aim as laid down in the Constitution of LCK”.<sup>501</sup> It appears that this goal was achieved. At the end of 1982, Oddmund Gravdahl (NLM) wrote: “I think we have a good collaboration with the Lutheran Church. We have our freedom to go wherever we think the need is the greatest.” The challenges of the future were on the administrative side, since Pokot, where the Norwegians were located, was a remote area, far from the Church’s central administration.<sup>502</sup>

The NLM's method of working in Pokot was pioneering work since there was no previous ecclesiastical order, and everything had to start from zero. The focus was on reaching the Kenyan people. This was not done through liturgical forms, but by focusing on people in their living environments. Worship services emphasized the testimonies of the Kenyan people. In this way, others could easily identify them since they understood the language and the message. In this manner, they became interested in Christianity. Missionary work progressed efficiently and quickly.<sup>503</sup> Kjell Strømme explains:

The congregational fellowship was not dependent upon an ordained person being present [...] This was founded upon the understanding of Church eventually not being a certain capacity, but instead a fellowship of all who believed in Christ as He was present where ‘two or three gather in his Name’.

He further remembers that the Church leadership did not restrict them much, but instead some missionary colleagues raised concerns over them for “not being Lutheran enough”.<sup>504</sup> Erling Lundeby also recalls that the Church officials were mostly satisfied with their actions, Samwel Mogeni, Ncholas Oenga, and Robert Muhando being among them. They were amazed that there were still such areas in Kenya that had not yet been greatly influenced by the outside world. Although the style of worship was initially free, it gradually evolved in the direction of the Church guidelines.<sup>505</sup>

The Norwegian Lutheran Mission emphasized laymen instead of pastors. In the Church, which was evolving in another direction, this created contradictions. By the 1990s, the issue escalated into liturgical controversy. There were heated discussions about theological differences at Matongo Lutheran Theological College. Differences in opinion especially between the

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<sup>500</sup> Translation by author. NLMA, Da-0001002, Gudmund Vinskei to Karsten Valen 15.5.1979.

<sup>501</sup> NLMA, Da-0001002, Karsten Valen to Gudmund Vinskei 20.11.1979.

<sup>502</sup> Translation by author. NLMA, Da-0001006, Oddmund Gravdahl to John Kvalbein 17.11.1982.

<sup>503</sup> The new roads at Pokot sponsored by NORAD were another factor that contributed to the missionary success in this area. MA, interview of Tor Arne Haavet 27.1.2020.

<sup>504</sup> MA, Email from Kjell Strømme 10.3.2020.

<sup>505</sup> MA, Email from Erling Lundeby 20.3.2020.

Finns and the Norwegians surfaced, igniting the general atmosphere of the Church. In these discussions, Richard Olak strongly defended the line chosen by the Church.<sup>506</sup> Olak reminded that although the Church had eventually relinquished her demand to wear pastoral clothing without exception, everyone still had to follow common rules. Following its own practices, the NLM did not act correctly. According to Tor Arne Haavet (NLM), Olak now accused the Norwegians of “sabotaging” the unity of the Church: “We have defined our liturgy. Now we expect that the missionaries use it!”<sup>507</sup>

The Church leadership had a full-time job guiding itself amid various theological perspectives. Each mission and missionary represented their position, which they saw as representing biblical and true Lutheranism. The low-Church missionary lay movement challenged the high-Church more liturgically oriented supporters over a dialogue of reaching people for Christ through a particular style of mission without uniformity of all practices. The other party emphasized the practices of the Book of Concord and in particular the importance of the pastor’s office as an ordinance of God. In terms of the theological understanding of this office, both parties followed their path. However, many theological discussions testified to a desire to find a common way forward.

### 6.1.3 Lay Education Challenges

The Theological Education by Extension (TEE) program in the Lutheran Church of Kenya was introduced by Mike Koski (WMPL) in 1978. Its goal was to provide laypeople with basic teaching on the Bible, congregational work, and health issues. Teaching began in October in seven local congregations (Kisii, Luo, and Maragoli). It was to consist of ten terms (10 weeks) divided into three and a half years. Once a year, students would arrive at Matongo Lutheran Theological College for an intensive period. The first group of 30 students had three teachers, two Kenyan pastors, and one missionary. Since everything happened voluntarily without any promises of future employment, students had to participate in the exercises faithfully simply for their benefit.<sup>508</sup>

The program did not work as Koski had hoped. After the first course, Principal Jaakko Lounela witnessed that only five TEE students had completed it and they were now expecting to be employed. According to him, the program could not replace classroom teaching but could only complement it. It was also much more expensive than imagined due to the high driving costs of the corresponding missionary.<sup>509</sup> The content of the program also raised doubts among some missionaries. Reijo Arkkila (LEAF) criticized the Baptist material

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<sup>506</sup> See chapter “Are We Lutherans?”

<sup>507</sup> Translation by author. NLMA, Dbh 0037, Tor Arne Haavet to Kjell Strømme 23.10.1990.

<sup>508</sup> MLTCA, Matongo 1975 –, *TEE within the ELCK* by Mike Koski 14.10.1980.

<sup>509</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 45, Jaakko Lounela to Reijo Arkkila 23.12.1981.

in it. Gustaf Norrback, accompanied by Richard Olak, raised the same concern.<sup>510</sup> Ingemar Helgesson (SLM) shared their view:

TEE is not Lutheran, but not liberal theology, in some ways faithful to the Bible, but it contains elements of synergism. Partially, it is inspired by Billy Graham. Gustaf, Sven, and Arkkila have the same stand. Valen is not as strong on this issue as Arkkila is. Koski is American, not from the same Pietist heritage as we are. He wants to give laymen better and further knowledge of the Word of God. We have no pastor here! We cannot influence theology!<sup>511</sup>

However, the program had its advocates. Karsten Valen (NLM) wanted to intensify it. He saw it as an opportunity to reach leaders who would be trusted in society and would be willing to serve. The goal was to build a “fit and strong Church in an African context”.<sup>512</sup>

The Planning Committee, named “*Tume ya Upangaji*”<sup>513</sup> in Kiswahili, advanced several suggestions. First, those who were already evangelists could be trained as pastors through the TEE program. Second, districts pastors should participate in the training of unpaid elders who could replace these evangelists. This would benefit the financial situation of the Church as the position of evangelists would gradually be phased out. Third, although not ordained as pastors, evangelists could be given broader responsibilities, such as allowing them to administer the Sacraments. In addition, pastors were encouraged to undergo further training. There was a particular need for Kenyan workers: “The Church should be careful not to call missionaries for positions which can be filled by qualified Africans. Rather, we should begin now to train local people to do the work.” The following year, the same Committee reminded that the evangelists were needed to reach out and establish new congregations. Thus, it was not possible to eliminate this position as planned earlier.<sup>514</sup> The Planning Committee consisted of Kenyan Church leaders and missionaries, so its views reflected the current state of the Church. Emphasizing the responsibilities of Kenyan workers was crucial for the future. Surprisingly, the original idea of the TEE program was reversed: It was considered a tool for strengthening the clerical order in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya!

The following year, 1983, the TEE program was taken over by Roland Gustafsson (SLM) and Johannes Selstø (NLM). They noted that 21 students had already completed their studies, and currently 130 students were involved. Thirteen Kenyan pastors and six missionaries taught at 19 centers. However, the evangelists feared losing their status. Pastors also asked for employment.

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<sup>510</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 47, Reijo Arkkila to Mauri Lehtimäki 19.12.1979.

<sup>511</sup> Translation by author. RA, BVA, E 1 e, Missionärsbrev 43, Ingemar Helgesson to Gunnar Nilsson 2.1.1980.

<sup>512</sup> MLTCA, 1981–1985, *Ideas about theological education within ELCK* by Karsten Valen 20.3.1981.

<sup>513</sup> John Momanyi, Richard Olak, Nicholas Arosi, Francis Nyamwaro, Samwel Mogeni, Ingegerd Johansson, Michael Christensen, Paavo Erelä and Roland Gustafsson.

<sup>514</sup> IA, EII 27, Corr. Gen. Sec. 1982–1985, ELCK Planning Committee 25.8.1982 and 15.6.1983.

Contrary to the previous plans of the Planning Committee, the TEE was now imaged as a tool for building the “universal priesthood” of all believers instead of pastors.<sup>515</sup> This was its original goal.

In 1984, Jaakko Lounela introduced the possibility of combining TEE education with the Certificate in Religious Studies (CRS) in Nairobi, which upgraded teachers in Christian education. There were already TEE programs for CRS and textbooks used in other Churches.<sup>516</sup> Two years later, Erling Lundeby mentioned that these discussions continued, but nothing had happened. It would all depend on the teaching resources of the MLTC. The future of the TEE did not look bright, he stated.<sup>517</sup> Gradually, the power struggle between TEE-trained men and previously trained evangelists contributed to reducing the program in its original areas of operation.<sup>518</sup> Instead, the program continued to spread to other areas. At Sekerr, this began in 1983. The challenge here was to find those teachers and students who could read. The following year, the first TEE course started at Kapenguria. Around the same time, it also began at Chesinende.<sup>519</sup> Mike Koski further introduced the program in Nairobi in the early 1990s.<sup>520</sup>

The advocates of the TEE program valued it highly as an opportunity for strengthening the laity in the Church. It was advanced and ahead of its time in Kenya, with a goal of distance learning. It was flexible given its small resources and poor facilities. Opponents pointed out that it could not replace basic theological education. By creating unrealistic employment aspirations, also provoked resentment at the local level. The diversity of plans and procedures indicate that the program did not find a fully satisfactory position in the Church’s teaching strategy. However, the process itself revealed much about the theological atmosphere within the Church. A dialogue frequently took place on the connection between pastors and laypeople. From time to time, opposing views escalated, creating dissatisfaction between the various parties.

#### 6.1.4 The Role of Women

LEAF theologian Tuula Sääksi became a teacher at the Matongo Bible School in 1973 together with Boris Sandberg (SLEAF), whose main responsibility was parish work in Nyagowa. Sääksi was appreciated as a teacher and two years later she was appointed principal, following John Momanyi, who was then

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<sup>515</sup> IA; E II 27, Corr. Gen. Sec. 1982–1985, *TEE-strategy* by Ronald Gustafsson and Johannes Selstø 12.10.1983.

<sup>516</sup> IA E II 27, Corr. Gen. Sec. 1982–1985, Kamati ya Chuo Minutes 20.7.198.

<sup>517</sup> IA E II 22, Corr. Gen. Sec. 1985–1989, letter to mission boards, Erling Lundeby to Johan Naustvik 26.11.1986.

<sup>518</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 213, Consultation at Matongo 29.9–1.10.1992.

<sup>519</sup> NLMA, Dc. L0002, *Dagbok for Sekerr* by Kjell Strømme 1983.

<sup>520</sup> IA, E III: 7, Education Secretary, Mike Koski to Richard Olak 29.4.1991.

elected General Secretary.<sup>521</sup> Discussions soon took place on the status of women in the Church.

Nurse Alpha Jacques (WMPL) had preached in some worship services during her congregational visits. Otete called her for counseling to Itierio on January 30, 1975. The following month the Executive Committee decided that “Miss Jacques should cease working with stewardship and instead be working as a nurse in one of the LCK health centers.”<sup>522</sup> Tuula Sääksi was also active in parish work, holding Bible lessons and teaching. After preaching in Kisumu in May 1974, a group of Kisii pastors complained about it.<sup>523</sup> Some missionaries were also dissatisfied with her active role in the congregations, especially Boris Sandberg along with some Norwegian missionaries. The issue was discussed at various levels. Church leadership requested Sääksi to stop preaching, but – according to Sandberg – she defended herself strongly.<sup>524</sup> At this point, the conversation did not expand. In the 1976 Pastoral Synod, it was agreed that female pastors were not accepted, but otherwise women served in other ways, including teaching.<sup>525</sup>

When Sääksi returned to Kenya for her second term in 1978, the debate escalated. The Norwegians considered that women could not teach in a pastoral seminary. Boris Sandberg was not happy with her congregational visits: “You have been acting as a teacher for congregations, which according to the Church’s understanding of the Bible is not correct.”<sup>526</sup> This time, the debate expanded, and a common position was sought. The issue was discussed at the Pastoral Synod in January 1980. Opinions were divided: Most Kenyans were willing to let women teach in seminary, but the aforementioned missionaries opposed it.<sup>527</sup> The missions took the matter up in the Nordic consultation meeting in Oslo on 9 September 1980. No consensus was reached. The Swedes and Norwegians stated that since the pastoral office was given only to men, only men needed to teach theological subjects in seminaries. Both Finnish organizations agreed on the main issue but were willing to let women teach in

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<sup>521</sup> Arkkila 2010, 268–269, Sääksi 1995, 73–75.

<sup>522</sup> IA, AII: 4, Minutes Ex.com 1970–1975, Minutes Ex.com 5.2.1975, KA, LEAFA II, file 33, Tuula Sääksi to Lauri Koskenniemi 7.10.1974,

<sup>523</sup> Sääksi was very depressed by the situation: “I am now prohibited from preaching.” KA, LEAFA II, file 33, Tuula Sääksi to Lauri Koskenniemi 29.5.1974. “Mogeni only stated: The Bible says a woman must not preach,” Tuula Sääksi to Lauri Koskenniemi 6.6.1974. Translations by author.

<sup>524</sup> SLEAFA, FLM BREV 1974–1977, Boris Sandberg to Helge Hildén 27.7.1974. Sandberg recalls that during Sääksi’s time as the principal, a female Bible teacher associated with the LWF visited the College and spoke in favor of women’s ministry. Therefore, Sandberg felt that he had to address the situation. MA, Email from Boris Sandberg 22.8.2020.

<sup>525</sup> *Huduma ya wanawake* [women’s service] was thoroughly discussed. Presentations by James Otete, Richard Olak, Nicholas Oenga, Boaz Kiluma and missionaries Reijo Arkkila, Jaakko Lounela, Boris Sandberg, Torleiv Vegge. IA, FIII: 5, Education inf. material 1968–1976, Pastor’s Conference Matongo 9.1.1976, Arkkila 2010, 281–184.

<sup>526</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 35, copy of Boris Sandberg to Tuula Sääksi 18.4.1978.

<sup>527</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 47, Jaakko Lounela to Reijo Arkkila 26.1.1980. Otete and Olak supported women to be teachers at the MLTC, Jaakko Lounela to Reijo Arkkila 28.1.1980.

seminaries and congregations. Finally, Tuula Sääksi moved to Nairobi at the end of 1979.<sup>528</sup> This was a practical solution to the theological problem.

As the Deputy Mission Director of LEAF, Sääksi intervened. Some LEAF missionaries had asked for guidance about women in the Church, and Sääksi turned to Principal Jaakko Lounela. According to Lounela, nothing had changed: "The fact that the matter is unresolved is likely to show that the Church does not currently deny adherence to the old practice." After the 1983 Pastoral Synod, he wrote again: "On the women's front, there is peace or at least a ceasefire. LEAF female missionaries do not lead the liturgy or preach in worship. No other restrictions are currently being discussed."<sup>529</sup> To Reijo Arkkila he explained more: At the Synod, Olak, Otete and Oenga had prepared their presentations. Olak referred to Nils Johansson's book *Women and the Church's Ministry*. According to Lounela, he shared the SLM's position. Otete was close to the LEAF's position.<sup>530</sup> Roland Gustafsson (SLM) and Torleiv Vegge (NLM) emphasized the importance of the Bible and the doctrinal foundation of the Church, stating that "what the Holy Scriptures taught on this matter was clear".<sup>531</sup>

The discussions were sometimes difficult and intense. They were mainly supported by the missionaries. Kenyans looked upon these talks as "foreign-made".<sup>532</sup> Richard Olak explained this in his letter to Gunnar Nilsson:

So far it has been a tradition in this Church that women can teach at the MLTC. For instance, during 1962 it was Ingrid Nilsson, who was the principal and teacher of the evangelistic course, later came Miss Tuula Sääksi. Their services have proved to be of much blessing in this Church just as the men teachers.<sup>533</sup>

In the late 1980s, the same questioning continued and was expanded to cover the future direction of the Church and Lutheranism in general.<sup>534</sup> Tuula Sääksi planned to return to Matongo Lutheran College in 1989 welcomed by the Church leadership. However, according to Sääksi, SLEAF and SLM managed to torpedo this plan. The SLM even threatened to "pull all support away if Tuula

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<sup>528</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 36, NM minutes 9.9.1980. The following year, Roland Gustafsson raised the same matter concerning Annikki Erelä (LEAF), who was teaching Church History. NLMA, Dc 0003, Roland Gustafsson to Johannes Selstø 10.10.1981 and 27.10.1981.

<sup>529</sup> Translation by author. KA, LEAFA II, file 45, Jaakko Lounela to Tuula Sääksi 7.8.1983 and 7.12.1983.

<sup>530</sup> "There was a consensus on what was disagreed on." Translation by author. KA, LEAFA II, file 45, Jaakko Lounela to Reijo Arkkila 3.9.1983, "Doors are not closed for women, not at all. But when we interfere in God's order of creation, we will sooner or later face problems," Roland Gustafsson to Reijo Arkkila 10.2.1990.

<sup>531</sup> MLTCA, Volume 7, Men and women in their relationship to God, their spiritual gifts, and their order in the Church.

<sup>532</sup> "Missionaries started to ask whether women could teach at MLTC. To us Africans, this was not our problem but missionaries' problem." MA, Interview of Richard Olak 2.6.2016.

<sup>533</sup> RA, BVA, E1: e 1, Richard Olak to Gunnar Nilsson 8.9.1981.

<sup>534</sup> See chapter "Focus on Lutheran Confessions"



comes”.<sup>535</sup> The 1992 International Lutheran Confessional Conference once again discussed women’s ministry. The Bishop of Oulu from Finland, Olavi Rimpiläinen, took this matter up in his presentation. In Finland, he had profiled himself precisely as an opponent of this practice.<sup>536</sup> According to LEAF missionary Pirkko Igendia, not everyone was happy with her teaching at Matongo Lutheran Theological College in the mid-1990s. This time, she was only allowed to teach history and practical subjects of the Church, but not Dogmatics.<sup>537</sup>

As for the Office of the Word, the Nordic theologians advised the Church in a similar direction. Although there were differences in opinion on the Church’s teaching assignment, they agreed on the main point: the pastor’s office belonged only to men. For the Norwegian Lutheran Mission and the Swedish Lutheran Mission, this also meant that women were not allowed to teach theological subjects at seminaries or preach in congregations. For Finnish women theologians, it was difficult to adapt to this because they had become acquainted with a different practice, the so-called “female lecturers” in the Church. Their stand was influenced by Western Churches which strongly encouraged women to take responsibility for all congregational work including pastoral duties. Despite this, the position of the Church’s leadership was clear: Women could teach at Matongo Lutheran Theological College, but they could not serve as pastors.

#### 6.1.5 Apostolic Practice

The Lutheran Church of Kenya had had connections with the Lutheran World Federation since the 1960s. In 1963, Martin Lundström turned to the Federation for a loan to buy the Uhuru Highway Church in Nairobi. While discussing the unification of the ELCT Kenya Synod and the Lutheran Church of Kenya, the LWF was again very much involved. When the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania joined the Lutheran World Federation in 1964, the Lutheran Church of Kenya would probably have followed it, except for something disturbing happening: Martin Lundström had to leave his post as President and return to Sweden. The new president Gustaf Norrback shared a reserved attitude towards the Lutheran World Federation.<sup>538</sup>

Sigurd Stark and Gustaf Norrback opposed the Lutheran Church of Kenya joining the Lutheran World Federation because they saw theological dangers lurking. Otete and the other Kenyan leaders, for their part, felt the Church could not isolate herself from other Lutherans but should join under the global

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<sup>535</sup> MA, interview of Tuula Sääksi 16.6.2020. For this, see Arkkila 2012, 300. “At our last Executive Committee, it was resolved that Miss Sääksi be invited to come and teach at Matongo Lutheran Theological College.” KA, LEAFA II, file 45, Richard Olak to Reijo Arkkila 22.9.1989.

<sup>536</sup> Rimpiläinen 1993, 33–88.

<sup>537</sup> MA, interview of Pirkko Igendia 10.11.2018.

<sup>538</sup> Imberg 2008, 124–140.

umbrella. When Otete became president in 1968, and while the new mission partners, namely the WMPL and LEAF, were open-minded about the Lutheran World Federation, the Church decided to apply for membership in 1970.<sup>539</sup> Sigurd Stark saw the situation as alarming. The Swedish Lutheran Mission was not able to prevent it. He understood that the Lutheran Church of Kenya was attracted by the opportunity of belonging to a large universal community and visiting different countries. It could now receive substantial economic assistance. The Lutheran World Federation desired unity and peace between the LCK and the ELCT Kenya Synod, but according to Stark, the reason behind was simply that “the big Tanzanian Church just wanted to swallow the little LCK”.<sup>540</sup>

It seems that the Lutheran World Federation had its own goals, as Sigurd Stark pointed out. One of them was female ministry.<sup>541</sup> In the 1980s, this topic surfaced. Chairman John Momanyi faced this pressure at a meeting in Arusha. Momanyi was to hold a service with the Swedish female pastor but instead, Momanyi boycotted it with his fellow countrymen. At the 1983 African National Congress Women’s Section General Meeting in Lusaka, the same issue was disputed. This time, only a few African Churches opposed this practice. At the 1984 Assembly of Budapest, only three people resisted it, Momanyi and his wife, along with one Japanese Bishop. “We wanted to stay with the Bible,” Momanyi explained.<sup>542</sup> In 1984, Gunhild Andersson informed the Head Office that the Lutheran World Federation planned to hold a meeting “Women in the Church” the next year. The agenda included the topics “female pastors” and “the feminization of the Church”. The LWF proposed a preparatory meeting. The Church leaders wanted to support the Women’s Department in withdrawing from such a “controversial meeting”.<sup>543</sup>

The Helsinki Consultation in 1990 discussed the theology of the Lutheran World Federation. The mission partners shared the same opinion: The LWF

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<sup>539</sup> MA, interview of James Otete 1.6.2016, AGA 25.2.1970, min. 12/70. Both LEAF and SLEAF officially encouraged the LCK to join the LWF. Arkkila 2010, 229.

<sup>540</sup> SLEAFA, BV BREV, Sigurd Stark to Edgar Hoenecke 6.3.1972.

<sup>541</sup> Since 1984, this goal was pursued transparently: “The VII Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation resolved: To urge the LWF member Churches that do not ordain women to take specific steps toward an affirmative action; to urge the LWF member Churches that do ordain women to develop policies that ensure equality in service opportunities and benefits.” The Participation of Women in the Ordained Ministry and Leadership in LWF Member Churches 2016, 47. “LWF assemblies and council meetings, which are the main decision-making bodies, officially and transparently decided that the gift of women in the ordained ministry is a distinctive value to be pursued in the global communion. Since the Seventh Assembly in 1984, in Budapest, the following five LWF assemblies have each clearly affirmed women in the ordained ministry.” Women on the Move 2018, 10.

<sup>542</sup> MA, interview of John Momanyi 19.5.2016. In the mid-1980s, women’s ministry had the greatest support in the European Lutheran Churches having the largest population. The majority of the African Lutheran Churches rejected it. So did more than half of the Lutheran Churches in the world. Of the Churches born of missionary work, only a minority practiced women’s ministry. Talonen 1986, 14–17.

<sup>543</sup> IA, EII: 27, Corr. Gen. Sec. 1980–1989, *Report of the ELCK Head Office* 7.8.1984.

wanted all member Churches to accept women's ministry. This happened in Cameroon in 1989, where the LWF promised considerable support (40%) for activities promoting this practice. However, all the mission societies working with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya took the opposite view.<sup>544</sup> According to Reijo Arkkila, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya played a key role in Africa, as Nairobi was an important center throughout East Africa. He thought this was the reason why the LWF worked hard to defeat the Kenyan Church. At the 1993 and 1994 pastoral conferences, it was agreed that the Church should remain firm on her confessional basis. Reijo Arkkila expressed this in words: "The religious time of Jesus knew well women ministers of pagan religions. The Apostolic Church did not follow the practice of the time, but she followed the revealed will of God. Our way should be the way of the Apostles."<sup>545</sup>

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya wanted to be part of the worldwide Lutheran family despite warnings from some of her mission partners. However, she did not want to embrace the new theology through membership. With the power of money, the Lutheran World Federation tried to take control of the ELCK and persuade her to accept women's ministry, but it failed. Instead, the Church wanted to follow the example of her Nordic mission partners, considering it to be biblical, Apostolic, and confessionally Lutheran.

## 6.2 Christianity Challenges Tradition

### 6.2.1 Unknown vs Revealed God

In the original culture of Kenya, people relied on two forces: good forces and evil forces. Good forces led everyday life within the family and ethnic group, giving rain, providing pastures, hunting and fishing, that is, everything that belongs to their daily needs. All evil came from the evil forces: diseases, misfortunes, accidents, and adversity. At funerals, evil spirits and the spirits of the deceased were encountered and feared. It was everyone's responsibility to protect themselves from these spirits. This was done by sacrificing animals and using traditional medicine.<sup>546</sup> A Christian Luo man explained:

Our ancestors vaguely knew that God existed. They did not know that he had revealed himself, nor that Jesus had come into the world. They were guided to approach god in the way they knew. To appease god, whom they did not know, they sacrificed animals [...] Then came Christian missionaries. They

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<sup>544</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 213, ELCK Consultations in Helsinki 26–28.9.1990.

<sup>545</sup> MLTCA, Volume 11, *Some notes on the question of women's ministry* 20–24.9.1993 by Reijo Arkkila, Ordination of Women 29.–31.8.1994 by Thomas Asiago. Simojoki considers that the LWF activity was associated not only with the women's ministry but also with the opening of the mission in Sudan and the growth of the ELCK pioneer work that came about through the Uhuru Highway Church. MA, Email from Anssi Simojoki 4.7.2020.

<sup>546</sup> Norrback 1973, 48–51, Mbiti 1991 provides an overview of native religion in Africa, Ochola 2008 considers Kisii, Luhya, and Luo customs concerning the Christian faith.

brought the book about God, how He had been revealed from the beginning and how He had sent His Son as the final sacrifice, and how people no longer have to sacrifice to God [...] Jesus has restored the right relationship between God and man.<sup>547</sup>

With the spread of Christianity in Kenya, old beliefs gradually dwindled, but they remained influential in the background, strongly affecting people's minds.<sup>548</sup> Especially at funerals, they often came to the forefront.<sup>549</sup> In Monianku, for example, after a Christian ceremony, certain rituals had to be carried out before the tomb was covered. Among others, these rituals included removing the fetus from a dead pregnant woman and placing it buried next to her.<sup>550</sup> Old customs were strong even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In Shivagala in the Kakamega region, a chicken was slaughtered by the grave at a Christian funeral. The young people no longer knew to associate it with the pagan tradition, considering it merely an "old custom". The elderly knew its original purpose for appeasing the unknown god and evil spirits.<sup>551</sup>

The practice of traditional medicine [*Uganga wa kienyeji*] was strictly forbidden in the Lutheran Church of Kenya. The reason was while some who wanted to help with these practices were also able to curse you. Nonetheless, these practices did occur from time to time, but Church workers who were engaged in them were dismissed from their duties.<sup>552</sup> There were many traditional beliefs about health issues that were not directly connected to

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<sup>547</sup> Translation by author. Norrback 1973, 48–49. In the 1970s, the supremacy of Western culture began to be questioned. The concept of contextuality, the interaction between faith and culture, came to the fore. The question of biblical revelation became intertwined with this discussion. Was the God of Christianity different from the gods of pagan religions? Ahonen 2000, 179–184. Some scholars now suggested that Christ could also be found in the traditional religions of Africa. John S. Mbiti, the Kenyan-born Professor at the University of Bern, joined in with these ideas in his presentation in Nairobi, April 1988. He asked: If even the four Gospels in the Bible described Jesus in different ways, could He not also be described in the African religions? Arto Seppänen discussed Mbiti's lecture at the MLTC adhering to the traditional Christian interpretation: "The original knowledge of God has, because of the Fall, been changed in the pagan religions to serve the idol (Rom. 1: 19–22)." Seppänen 1990, 40–43. According to Mbiti, European Christianity "hardly touched African people". The freed slaves succeeded in spreading the Gospel better than the white missionaries! Mbiti 1969, 302.

<sup>548</sup> According to Paul G. Hiebert, achieving an effective biblical mission requires an understanding of the "worldview"-concept. Acknowledging the reality of good and evil spiritual forces – which is not always the case in the Western worldview – is necessary to challenge non-Christian beliefs and practices. For this see Hiebert 2008.

<sup>549</sup> Norrback 1973, 52–54. Ochola 2008 sees in the background of many African customs the need for man to find peace with his Creator.

<sup>550</sup> MA, Email from Reija Toikka 20.10.2019. The spirits of the deceased were feared to cause problems for the family if they were not treated well following tradition. MA, Kebabe Wilfred 2016: *Custom Associated with Death*.

<sup>551</sup> After experiencing this, I often preached about Jesus' blood: "When you die, you tell your relatives, that you don't need animal blood on your grave anymore. Jesus' blood is enough!" MA. Animal sacrifice at funerals is a very common practice in Kenya. "From the Biblical point of view, this tradition resembles the one in the OT when Christ Jesus had not yet been revealed." MA, Nyamweno Haron 2016: *Appeasement of evil spirit when a person dies*.

<sup>552</sup> IA, AII: 4, Min. Ex.com 1970–1975, Ex.com 12.11.1970 and 23.2.1971.

witchcraft but were due to a lack of education. In the countryside, it was common for mothers to tie a string around their baby's stomachs to prevent diarrhea. Likewise, digging babies' tooth sprouts to prevent diarrhea was practiced. The missionaries did not necessarily hear about all non-Christian traditions, because many Kenyans fell silent about them, not only because some of these practices were taboo, but also because they knew the missionaries opposed them.<sup>553</sup> At Atemo, Sven Klemets had noticed that many Christians followed the old ways: "Here at Atemo, witchdoctors are trusted by most of the Church members [...] I do not need to go into the impact of these doctors on congregational life, but I see it as our duty to provide health care for bodies where we can."<sup>554</sup>

All mission societies working with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya represented the conservative branch of Christianity. For them, the Bible was the highest standard of living. Kenyans adopted the same position, although it was extremely difficult to break old beliefs and customs. The reliance on the old customs emerged in many practical situations, especially at funerals. In all ethical matters, however, the Lutheran Church of Kenya considered the Bible to be the supreme guideline. She, therefore, encouraged her members to follow its instructions.

### 6.2.2 "Do Not Steal"

Stealing was considered very bad in Kenyan culture, as throughout Africa. Local ethnic communities kept it under control. With the coming of the whites during colonialism, this problem expanded onto a different level. Many Kenyans believed that whites were all rich and therefore they were not treated as equal people. Often this was a learned behavior, which the whites themselves had fostered. Whereas the missionaries seemed to have a lot of money, the Kenyans felt that it was their duty to help others.<sup>555</sup> Extreme poverty also drove people to find help in all possible ways.<sup>556</sup>

From a Western perspective, the seventh commandment was not respected in Kenya. The state of the situation is well illustrated by Hans-Hugo Nilsson's report on the Matongo Bible School building project in 1976. Materials and tools disappeared from the very beginning. Guards were employed to prevent the same from happening again. The stealing continued, however, and all workers were warned and given new instructions. The bad practice continued again, and the watchmen were interrogated without result. Next, the contractor was charged with transporting the paint home. He was found guilty in a local court and imprisoned. All workers were again cautioned. One worker then stole a

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<sup>553</sup> MA, Email from Reija Toikka 20.10.2019.

<sup>554</sup> Translation by author. SLEAFA, FLM BREV 1966–1970, Sven Klemets to Gustaf Norrback 7.1.1970.

<sup>555</sup> MA, interview of Jared Oomo 21.9.2018.

<sup>556</sup> MA, interview of Marlene Klemets 14.10.2019.

*panga* [machete] and was ordered to pay for a new one. The tables and stools disappeared, but no evidence was found. One worker took some cement and was taken to the police:

At this time, I had a thorough discussion with the Station Manager Mr. Ombeta, and we tried to find out what to do since the thefts seemed to continue despite all our efforts to stop them. We agreed it might be a bad way to always act as very severe *askaris* [guards] and put a lot of people in prison [...] We agreed to have a meeting where we would preach the Word of God and stress the importance of honesty [...] I felt that a good spirit had entered among the workers, and I hoped that the problems involving theft were over. It was with joy I participated in the work during the following days. The joy lasted only nine days.<sup>557</sup>

Most of the missionaries had domestic servants who were working in their backyard or kitchen. This was to support the Kenyans in their livelihood. With these workers, it was often necessary to recall the seventh commandment.<sup>558</sup> The same was the case at dispensaries<sup>559</sup> and congregations<sup>560</sup>. The missions felt that the money they donated had to be used for the correct purposes. Many Kenyans on the other hand, considered that they should be able to control the use of money. At times, this meant that the money disappeared somewhere without anyone knowing where.<sup>561</sup>

In principle, both Kenyan and Western Christians acknowledged the binding nature of the seventh commandment, but the concept of stealing was regarded differently. In Western thought, dishonesty and theft were viewed individually as absolute case-independent quantities. From the perspective of African communality, they were seen as conditional on a case-by-case basis.<sup>562</sup> When it came to the money of the “white rich people”, it was available to everyone. The missionary family Auramo was robbed with weapons while having a picnic at the Ngong Hills. “We are Christians. Why do you treat us this way?” they asked the robbers. “So are we!” they answered. After taking the money and valuables the robbers left the car untouched.<sup>563</sup>

Both Kenyans and Western missionaries witnessed the devastating effect of money. The more money was pumped through the missions, the more dissent and trouble arose. This was evident in all the Church activities. It had a paralyzing effect on fundraising, interactions between the Church and the missions, not to mention all interpersonal relationships, the basic functions of

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<sup>557</sup> MLTCA, *New Bible School Building Project report* by Hans-Hugo Nilsson 16.11.1976.

<sup>558</sup> MA, interviews of Iris Sandberg 14.10.2019, Marlene Klemets 14.10.2019 and Elvi Lounela 9.9.2014.

<sup>559</sup> MA, Email from Helena Holst 28.10.2019.

<sup>560</sup> “Some offering money just disappeared.” MA, interview of Antti Kuokkanen 21.10.2019.

<sup>561</sup> MA, interview of Eero Kemiläinen 21.10.2019.

<sup>562</sup> Kuokkanen 2009, 108.

<sup>563</sup> MA, interview of Matti Auramo 28.12.2019.

the Church, and ultimately the entire Church as a spiritual community.<sup>564</sup> There was a special reason, why the Bible warned about stealing but also about trusting money: “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1 Tim 6:10).

### 6.2.3 Gender-Related Behaviors

#### **Monogamy vs Polygyny**

Among the Logoli and other Abaluhya sub-ethnic groups, the practice of taking additional wives, polygyny, was regarded as one of the fundamental indicators of a successfully established man. Large families enhanced the prestige of these men. Some wives who were unable to have children found fulfillment in the children and families of additional wives. Some men indicated that they were pressured by their parents to marry another wife, who could contribute additional income to the family. This practice enjoys de facto and de jure legality in Kenya. The Kenyan constitution states that a man may marry more than one wife.<sup>565</sup>

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya adopted a clear stance on polygyny. At the Pastoral Conference of Matongo on December 27–30 in 1976, this position was recorded in the minutes. A man with several wives was accepted into the Church through baptism. If he later took additional wives, he was subjected to Church discipline and could not attend Holy Communion. Monogamy was thus considered the foundation of Christian family life.<sup>566</sup> The commonness of polygyny is illustrated by the fact that the Church had several related problems with her employees. The Executive Committee minutes occasionally referred to disciplinary actions on this matter. Even the highest Church officials were not spared with impunity. A Church official, a parish leader, an evangelist, a health center employee was each given a penalty of dismissal.<sup>567</sup> However, the line between culture and infidelity was blurred<sup>568</sup> and some cases were ignored.<sup>569</sup>

The SLM missionary Gunhild Andersson received feedback on her writing in the Christmas Calendar. The Home Board members had discussed the matter.

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<sup>564</sup> See chapter “Financial Crisis”.

<sup>565</sup> Polygyny is the most common and accepted form of polygamy, entailing the marriage of a man with several women. Most countries that permit polygyny are Muslim-majority countries. Zeitzen 2008, 9. In March 2014, Kenya’s Parliament passed a bill allowing men to marry multiple wives. *The Guardian* 21.11.2014.

<sup>566</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 35, Valma Mononen to Lauri Koskenniemi 11.3.1977

<sup>567</sup> IA, A II: 4, Ex.com minutes 1970–1975, Ex.com 30.11.1971, Ex.com 23.2.1972, Ex.com 18.2.1975.

<sup>568</sup> In Kenyan society, infidelity was sometimes given names like “secret polygyny”, “ghost marriage” and “casual polygyny”. Kuya 2013, 1–2, 35–37.

<sup>569</sup> Depending on the person, the Church did not address all the grievances. MA, Email from Rune Imberg 19.11.2018.

Gunnar Nilsson explained that her article was otherwise excellent, but her description of polygyny could be misleading. Polygyny should not be accepted as part of the social system, as could be understood through her article. This policy despised women! They were only used as cheap labor. In this sense, the work of women in the Church was especially important. Monogamy was according to the Word of God.<sup>570</sup>

Polygyny was very common in Kenya, even legally accepted. This practice had both pros and cons in Kenyan society. Contrary to Western thinking, it protected the position of unmarried women in communities, acting as a social refuge for them and their children. From a Western point of view, on the other hand, the practice limited women's decision-making power over their own lives, forcing them to marry men they did not necessarily love and respect. Among the Luos, for example, widows were forced to marry their brothers-in-law, most of whom were already married.<sup>571</sup> Christian Churches worldwide have traditionally regarded monogamy as a form of God's creation, viewing the Bible as their authority in this matter.<sup>572</sup> The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya shared this view.

### **Female Genital Mutilation**

Since 1912, missionaries of the Church of Scotland Mission had been teaching against female genital mutilation (FGM, female circumcision). The reasons given were medical, arising from the nature of and the after-effects of the operation. In 1929, there was a circumcision crisis among Kikuyus. A girl was kidnapped and circumcised by force. The matter was taken to court, but the magistrate ruled against the Christians. This event brought FGM and the teaching of Christian Churches against the practice into the awareness of the entire country. While some Kikuyus accepted the new Christian values, many rebelled, especially among women in the group. The battle resulted in many written defenses, the most famous of which was Jomo Kenyatta's "Facing Mount Kenya" in 1938. Nearly 45 years later, President Daniel arap Moi prohibited female excision in his home area in 1982. The Director of Medical Services

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<sup>570</sup> RA, BVA, E 1: e, Missionärsbrev vol 43, Gunnar Nilsson to Gunhild Andersson 18.9.1979.

<sup>571</sup> Okwaro argues that the practice is not only bad since it was accepted in the Old Testament. However, because of diseases and its connection to evil spirits, it should be stopped. MA, Okwaro Charles 2016: *Wife heritage in Luo culture*.

<sup>572</sup> Some scholars see the teaching of monogamy in an African context as a Western import: "For, studied with the mind purely of the scholar, it might have been obvious that the antagonism to polygamy, encouraged by the missionaries from the beginning to the disadvantage of the Church, ought not to have arisen; that polygamy is not a moral issue in African society, and that an African Church could have crystallized around this social institution, endearing the chiefs and aristocracy to Christianity, without necessarily doing any damage to the Christianity of the Bible and without necessarily inhibiting modernization of the institution under social and economic pressures." Ajayi and Ayandele 1969, 94.



extended the ban to the whole country.<sup>573</sup> Despite the struggle of the Christian Churches against the ritual, it was prohibited by law in Kenya only in 2002.<sup>574</sup>

In the Kisii ethnic group, female circumcision was part of the culture and thus a common practice, involving almost every Kisii girl. It was maintained especially by grandmothers who considered it to protect their offspring. There was a strong belief that a non-incised girl is promiscuous, chases after boys, and cannot have babies. Without circumcision, a girl was not valued in her community and was considered a child.<sup>575</sup> The circumcision for both girls and boys was a major event that was heard and seen in the Kisii community. The surgery would be performed during the new moon in November-December when the schools were closed. The status of “cutter” was passed down from one generation to the next, a woman for girls and a man for boys. Young people were taken home in a solemn procession. The girls and boys were kept separately in houses and fed until their wounds had healed. Finally, they returned to be among others.<sup>576</sup> The Maasai also practiced FGM, but at a later age than Kisii.<sup>577</sup>

The SLM Annual report of 1982 conveyed sad news from the Kipsigis land. Formerly faithful members of the Church were lost, and the number of worshipers declined as the traditional circumcision celebrations took place. “Maybe it became too difficult to resist the relatives and old traditions,” the report stated.<sup>578</sup> In health centers, the practice was encountered during childbirth. Childbirth could be especially difficult and even dangerous for circumcised women. Cases with complications were referred to state hospitals.<sup>579</sup> The missionaries did not participate in circumcision rituals. In this way, they wanted to demonstrate that they did not support it. Female missionaries yet were able to talk about the issue among the women.<sup>580</sup>

Officially, female genital mutilation was not openly discussed in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, except for Pokot. There, the Norwegian Lutheran Mission and the local Church took a firm stand against it, for medical and theological reasons, to varying success. The women leaders of the Anglican Church set a good example by bravely resisting the practice, followed by the Government and the secular NGOs.<sup>581</sup> In Kisii, both Kenyans and missionaries

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<sup>573</sup> Hildebrandt 1987, 231–233, Isichei 1995, 244–245.

<sup>574</sup> Yle.fi/uutiset/3–5116686. Accessed 07.09.2020.

<sup>575</sup> MA, Jackson Moriasi 2016: *FGM – Abagusii community*, interview of Joshua Nyamwaro 25.10.2018. Elvi remembers one of her co-workers at the Matongo clinic saying: “Our grandmothers insist practicing FMG. But when I become a grandmother, I shall stop it,” interview of Elvi Lounela 9.9.2014.

<sup>576</sup> Circumcision was part of the adulthood rite. For two months, sex education, respect for the elderly, childcare, and social etiquette were taught by the mentors. MA, Jackson Moriasi 2016: *FGM – Abagusii community*, interview of Salme Rintakomsi 24.8.2019.

<sup>577</sup> Groop describes this tradition among the Maasai. Groop 2006, 69–82.

<sup>578</sup> Translation by author. MA, *History of the Kipsigis work*. Information is collected from the SLM annual reports by Kerstin Nilsson.

<sup>579</sup> MA, interview of Salme Rintakomsi 24.8.2019.

<sup>580</sup> MA, Email from Reija Toikka 21.10.2019.

<sup>581</sup> MA, Email from Erling Lundebj 8.9.2019.

were mostly silent. Female circumcision was considered a fundamental ethnic marker for the Kisii identity. In addition, since the Luo did not circumcise, it was most probably considered a topic too private and delicate to bring up by the Church staff.

### Family Planning

Family planning was a hot topic nationwide in the 1980s. In 1984, the Kenyan Government introduced a four-year Development Plan in which 800 million was to be spent on family planning activities. The aim was to reduce population growth from 3.8 to 3.3% by 1988. Everyone was required to participate in these efforts. "All leaders should be involved in the program, and it would involve all institutions including the Church and schools," Vice-President Mwai Kibaki announced at the Daily Nation on October 2, 1986.<sup>582</sup>

In the Lutheran Church of Kenya, the issue had been introduced in the mid-1970s through missionary physician Valma Mononen (LEAF) who came to work at Matongo maternity hospital in 1974. She provided basic training for Kenyan workers, emphasizing preventive care along with health education that included family planning. In practice, the teaching at this stage was mostly in the form of general education about understanding the menstrual cycle. The use of an intrauterine device, the loop, was sometimes explained. Mononen does not remember having received any opposition from the Church leadership, but some Swedish missionaries expressed their indignation over the matter.<sup>583</sup> At the time, it was against the principles of the Church and particularly the Swedish Lutheran Mission stood against it:

The missionary Society *Bibeltrogn Vänner* is against any kind of family planning through which conception is prevented by medical and/or technical means. Likewise, the Society rejects the use of medical means or incisions to cause abortion when conception already has taken place.<sup>584</sup>

After Mononen, only Francis Mwabora continued this education at Monianku.<sup>585</sup> At Atemo, one nurse began teaching family planning in 1985. Conflicts occurred when some men did not like their wives taking contraceptive pills.<sup>586</sup>

At the Pastors' Conference in 1986, Roland Gustafsson (SLM) addressed the issue. He wanted the Church to abandon these practices. He reminded people about the problems caused by the sexual revolution: "In the Western world we know what outcome there has been: a complete moral dissolution."<sup>587</sup> The following year, the Church established a committee to examine the matter.

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<sup>582</sup> *Daily Nation* 1986, 3.

<sup>583</sup> MA, interview of Valma Mononen 13.9.2019.

<sup>584</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 208, *BV's stand against family planning* 24.11.1970.

<sup>585</sup> Heikkinen 1995, 82.

<sup>586</sup> MA, Email from Helena Holst 28.10.2019.

<sup>587</sup> MLTCA, Volume 11, *Family Planning* by Roland Gustafsson 13–16.10.1986.

Roland Gustafsson, who chaired the meeting, began by stating: “Whatever affects mankind cannot only be looked in the light of the secular world but also the light of the Word of God.” One problem identified was that there was no proper connection between the Church and the health department. The committee suggested that abortion-based methods should be prohibited in the Church. Otherwise, the debate would continue.<sup>588</sup>

The same year in 1986, physician Kaija Heikkinen (LEAF) presented contraceptive methods at the Pastoral Conference and received permission to teach the subject in clinics. In the early 1990s, when healthcare was marked by HIV education, the issue of contraception was taken to a whole new level. It was no longer just a matter of curbing population growth, but of protecting against HIV and of preventing its spread. HIV projects were presented and launched in collaboration with the Kenyan Ministry of Health. In November 1992, a small operating room and a hospital ward for sterilization were completed at the Itierio Health Center.<sup>589</sup>

The foreign funds supported HIV projects and new donors brought along new policies which were also recommended by the Kenyan Government. As for family planning, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya was not unanimous. Especially the Swedish Lutheran Mission strongly opposed it. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, for her part, gradually adopted the policy formulated in 1985: “The Church accepts family planning but will not accept anything that leads to abortion.”<sup>590</sup>

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<sup>588</sup> MLTCA, Misc. courses 1983 –, Minutes of the Committee on Family Planning 22.10.1987.

<sup>589</sup> Lounela 2007, 184–185, Heikkinen K. 1995, 81–83. Everything was done with the permission of the Church leadership. A surgeon from Nairobi visited Itierio twice a week. Miettunen was the last missionary as a Health Coordinator in the ELCK. MA, interview of Marja Miettunen 3.1.2019. The first HIV case in Kenya was detected in 1984. By the mid-1990s, HIV was one of the major causes of illness in the country, placing huge demands on the healthcare system as well as the economy. In 1996, 10.5% of Kenyans were living with HIV. Since then, the percentage has reduced, standing at 5.9% by 2015. UNAIDS Kenya fact sheet – Wikipedia. Accessed 06.05.2020.

<sup>590</sup> Richard Olak presented this policy to the Nordic Mission societies on 14.8.1985. MLTCA, volume 11, *Family planning* 13–16.10.1986 by Roland Gustafsson.

## 7. “People from Every Tribe”

In the Bible, Jesus exhorted his disciples to reach “people from every tribe”. In participating in this challenge, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya faced a huge task, as there are more than 50 different ethnic groups in Kenya. The Lutheran mission work had started among the Kisii. Here, the activities were the strongest, meeting a strong revival in the mid-1980s. Along with active evangelistic work, the Church spread to new areas, encountering many different ethnic groups. The focal areas of this mission are considered below.

### 7.1 Kisiis Face a Youth Revival

In the mid-1980s, the Kisiis encountered a strong revival. It started in the Kenyoro parish of the North Kisii District. In May 1985, at the Erandi congregation, a youth group of seven youths wanted to gather to pray and become strengthened in their faith. They were worried about other young people who were struggling with alcoholism and reckless sexual behavior. One of the youths, Henry Segera, had a good house for accommodating the others for a spiritual meeting. As they prayed and sang, Sammy Aranda began to pray in a loud voice:

I fell and prayed with a loud voice. I prayed, prayed and the voice said: “I have called you.” First time in my life I felt I was a sinner. I cried. I had been 13 years in the Church but didn’t know how to confess sins. I started singing: “*Damu ya Yesu usafisha kabisa*” [Jesus’ blood cleanses you completely]. The next day, Samwel Momanyi and John Kui felt the same Spirit: “*Hallelujah Bwana Asifiwe!*” [Hallelujah Praise the Lord]. “Are we saved?” we asked each other.<sup>591</sup>

This lasted for two hours and at midnight they went home. The following day was Sunday and the same happened again. Gradually, they were overwhelmed by a strong sense of sin. The evangelist Peterson Kamanda was not able to control the loud praying in the divine services and was worried. This made even Parish pastor Peter Abuga worried when this news reached his office.<sup>592</sup>

The youths were active in evangelistic outreach. They went to marketplaces and preached there. People witnessed miracles. Some young people were observed predicting the future, seeing hidden things, and publicly revealing secrets, such as hidden amulets used in magic. They corrected people’s bad behavior. Some Pentecostals and members of the East African Revival movement persuaded the youths to join them if their Church rejected them. Baptismal classes were held on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sunday afternoons. This

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<sup>591</sup> “Finally, we were 24 active members and even Peter Abuga knelt and prayed with us.” MA, interviews of Sammy Aranda 12.10.2018 and John Kui 29.10.2018.

<sup>592</sup> “The Church didn’t handle us well. We needed to understand ‘I am a sinner’.” MA, interview of Zedekiah Nyokwoyo 26.2.2018. Lundebj explains the events closely. Lundebj 1998, 46–59.

was reported to have affected more than 200 young people. Many were baptized, some confirmed, many were seen to have made a complete turnabout in their lives.<sup>593</sup>

The Sunday services continued with a strong sense of God's presence. The attendance doubled and the income through offerings increased. The disorder of the first period gave way to orderly worship. Rev. Peter Abuga, the evangelists and elders of the area met several times to discuss the situation. The youths were counseled and advised to be very careful with their "gifts of grace" and not to reveal secrets publicly so that people would not be angry at them. Although the local Church leaders were suspicious of the revival, the area chief openly supported them. Many congregants were also happy and invited them to their homes. Through these events, the youth group grew, and the revival spread to other congregations: Kenyoro, Nyagokiani, Ekerenyo, and Nyairang'a. Congregations were born as far away as in Bondeka Parish and Ngege, Nyacheki, and some in the South Kisii District.<sup>594</sup>

While the awakening was growing and becoming more visible, the leadership of the Church became uneasy. General Secretary Richard Olak and Vice-President Samwel Mogeni were not happy, claiming that the youths were influenced by Pentecostal teaching. President John Momanyi and Rev. Jeftha Michoro were more accepting and encouraged the youth. Some of the missionaries from the LEAF, NLM, and SLM supported them. The students and teachers of Matongo Lutheran Theological College closely followed the situation. When Reijo Arkkila (LEAF) visited Kenyoro Synod with some of his students from the MLTC, he advised the congregation to wait five years – to see "whether there are fruits or not".<sup>595</sup>

The revival was also discussed both at the regional level and in the Pastoral Conferences. In 1984, MLTC teacher Johannes Selstø (NLM) argued that according to the Bible and the *Book of Concord*, revival and renewal were needed in the Church. In 1985, Chairman John Momanyi stressed the priesthood of all believers. The ministry belonged to all the believers, not only to the few.<sup>596</sup> In the Pastoral Conference of 1986, Reijo Arkkila (LEAF) from the MLTC taught about "the Holy Spirit and revival". He reminded that the Holy Spirit and the Word and sacraments always belonged together. At the same meeting, Joel Mose from Nyacheki spoke about the active youth revival of his congregation stating: "The revival must start from within ourselves, otherwise we become obstacles to it."<sup>597</sup> Some Church members were positively inclined, some negatively, demanding the young people be excommunicated from the Church

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<sup>593</sup> MA, interviews of Zedekiah Nyokwoyo 26.2.2018 and James Tengecha 9.11.2018, Lundebý 1998, 48–56.

<sup>594</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>595</sup> MA, interview of Sammy Aranda 12.10. 2018.

<sup>596</sup> Lundebý 1998, 55.

<sup>597</sup> Nyacheki became the second center of the revival. MA, *Youth revival in Kenya* by Reijo Arkkila 1986, Arkkila 1987, 92–104.

because of their wrong teachings. In these meetings, Chairman Momanyi tried hard to create a common way forward reminding people that the Church belonged to everyone. “We need you”, he exclaimed.<sup>598</sup>

In the following years, the revival was maintained by the “Erandi Evangelistic mission group” with almost thirty active members. They reached new areas with a strong missionary vision: Mombasa, Nairobi, Maasai, Nakuru, Kitui<sup>599</sup>, Meru<sup>600</sup>, Kericho, Eldoret, Samburu, Teso.<sup>601</sup> Some of the group members were ordained as pastors, some served as evangelists, music leaders, and youth leaders, one of them became Secretary of the Central Diocese and one the Bishop of Nyamira Diocese.<sup>602</sup> The Kenyoro revival was not unique in its Kenyan context. Similar events were documented elsewhere, especially among Pentecostalism and the East African revival movement.<sup>603</sup> It is noteworthy, how this revival was firmly integrated into the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya through active teaching, pastoral care, and reflection in the Church meetings.

The outcome of the events was favorable. The youths who had been touched by the revival stayed inside the Church as her future workers and leaders. In this manner, the revival bore fruit throughout the Church. The then-current Chairman John Momanyi, assisted by several missionaries, worked in this exact direction. The Nordic missionaries supported the revival because they had witnessed revivals in their home countries, knowing their significance as an enthusiasm for a common cause. Most likely the SLEAF’s missionaries’ silence on the matter was simply because this revival occurred among the Kisiis and not the Luos, with whom they were working and whose leader, General Secretary Richard Olak, was reluctant about it. Probably, the doctrinal aspects

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<sup>598</sup> Momanyi came to us for two days and taught us: “If all small trees would be put together, it would become a big tree. Be strong in Christ.” MA, interviews of John Kui 29.10.2018, Anja-Maija Vanhanen were their special supporter from the beginning. They also received support from Revs. Reijo Arkkila, Roland Gustafsson, Erling Lundebj, Francis Nyamwaro, Walter Obare, Anssi Simojoki, Reino Toikka. Later Mogeni and Nyang’au also realized that “it was work of God”, Zedekiah Nyokwoyo 26.2.2018, and Sammy Aranda 12.10.2018.

<sup>599</sup> Simojoki visited Kitui among Kambas in 1992. Chief Mambo welcomed them. His son Simba Mambo became an ELCK pastor. A congregation was established at Utawala. Gradually six other congregations were formed, which were led by evangelists. Rev. James Tengecha from the Erandi evangelistic mission group served here 2005–2011. MA, interview of Anssi Simojoki 18.9.2019.

<sup>600</sup> The Church work started among the Merus in 1992 by Isaiah Meme, who was able to establish the first congregation in the area. It failed but the work continued. Members of the Erandi evangelistic mission group served there, Richard Masogo from 1994, followed by Zedekiah Nyokwoyo. MA, interview of Andrew Mutuma 6.9.2018.

<sup>601</sup> Arkkila 2004, 27–31.

<sup>602</sup> Group officials were Chair Sammy Aranda, Secretary Ronald Kegwaro, and Treasure John Kegwaro. Other members were: James Tengecha, John Kui, Samwel Momanyi, Lawrence Maiko, Charles Araka, James Nyangaye, Richard Angriko, Julius Nyonga, Wilson Onserio, Wilfred Auta, Ronald Kegwaro, Joseph Mose, Japhet Nyanyu, Zedekiah Nyokwoyo, John Seger, Henry Seger, Samson Moturi, David Nyakwaba, Dickson Nyauma, James Omwansa, Charles Nyaberi, Jones Araka, Ronald Ondieki. MA, interview of Sammy Aranda 12.10.2018.

<sup>603</sup> Anderson 1977, for example, document similar revivals elsewhere in Kenya.

also had an impact on this. Nonetheless, the Kisii revival brought the Church and many of her missionaries closer together. Their common goal was to reach new people for Christ “so that no one would perish”.

## 7.2 Reaching Luhya and Iteso

### Luhya

The first LCK Luhya<sup>604</sup> congregation was established at Wasundi in 1961 on the initiative of Martin Lundström and Jeftha Michoro. People gathered at Solomon Chadeny’s house. Lundström administered the first baptism of 12 adults in 1963. At the end of 1963, the Wasundi Parish was served by five preachers: Salomon Kinambedi, Zabulon Besa, Joram Kabagi, Habil Boliva, and Elam Musinde. They were assisted by Salomon Uolemi (Jeriko), Zablon Lunasi, Andrea Ndeda, Stephan Omutabenga, Jafet Njeremani, Samweli Gwehona, Hezron Konzoro, Filimora Amwayi and Tivias Otware.<sup>605</sup> Additional new congregations were established: Elukari (1962), Mugangu (1962), Esinutsa (1963), Mbale (1963), Wanivala (1963), Lugare (1963).<sup>606</sup>

When it arrived in Kenya, SLEAF was invited to work in this area of Maragoli<sup>607</sup>. As early as April 1964 Gustaf and Märta Norrback moved to Wasundi, followed by Sven and Linnea Klemets in June. At that time, the Wasundi congregation had only about 10–15 members. Very quickly, however, it became clear that work could not continue here. The congregation was led by Elam Musinde and there were many disputes and much confusion between him and the parishioners. After a few weeks, the Church leaders counseled the missionaries to leave the place. The Klemets moved to Itierio in July and the Norrbacks to Matongo in August. After that, Gustaf Norrback took care of Wasundi only by visiting there.<sup>608</sup>

Rune Imberg demonstrates how the failure at Wasundi was the sum of many factors. According to him, the fundamental problem was related to the “areas of concentration”<sup>609</sup> -strategy favored by SLEAF, which in turn was opposed by the SLM. It was considered to disrupt the unity of the Church because of the financial and tribal implications associated with it. Further, the actual mapping out of the situation and the area had not been made and therefore the Church

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<sup>604</sup> The Luhya (also known as *Abaluyia* or Luyia) are a group of 19 distinct Bantu tribes in Kenya that lack a common origin and were politically united in the mid 20th century. They make up about 14 % of Kenya’s total population and are the second-largest ethnic group in Kenya. Category: Ethnic groups in Kenya – Wikipedia. Accessed 07.02.2020.

<sup>605</sup> Norrback 1998, 88.

<sup>606</sup> MA, Luvisha 2019, 4, *ELCK Jubilee 1948–1998*, 2–3.

<sup>607</sup> The Maragoli are the second-largest ethnic group of the Luhyas of Kenya, numbering around 15% of the Luhya people. Category: Ethnic groups in Kenya – Wikipedia. Accessed 07.02.2020.

<sup>608</sup> Norrback 1995, 49–53, Norrback 1998, 97–121. The situation remained tense until 1994! Only then, did the Church officially take possession of the Wasundi plot. Lundebly 2006, 33.

<sup>609</sup> See chapter “Signs of Colonialism”.

was not ready to start the work. Martin Lundström had made connections there, but he had not discussed the matter at all with his Home board in Sweden, which inflamed their already dysfunctional relationship. Furthermore, the relations to the Wasundi congregation depended on Lundström's contacts. He was very impressed by Elam Musinde and could not perceive that Musinde planned to establish his own Church which Musinde was not even inclined to have united with the Lutheran Church. Previous contacts, planning, and agreements had been channeled exclusively through Musinde. The title Musinde later assumed for himself revealed something about his autocratic character: "Patriarch, Bishop, Rabbi".<sup>610</sup> Gustaf Norrback assesses the situation in the same light. He also considered his mission as having made several beginner mistakes.<sup>611</sup> Vice-President James Otete had written a letter to Elija Shevei, the treasurer of the Wasundi congregation, on November 15, 1963. It reveals that the problems indeed culminated in Musinde's personality:

Read Acts 20:28-31<sup>612</sup>. I will warn you and the other leaders involved. We African brothers in our Church, we knew from the beginning what was the purpose and meaning of this man when he joined our Church. Not that he organized the Lutheran Church in Maragoli. We warned the leaders of our Church, then still under the leadership of the mission, but no one listened to our talk. Now the fruits have matured. I warn the new mission from Finland and the missionaries and Pastor Gustaf Norrback: Be very careful with Elam Musinde.<sup>613</sup>

This SLEAF enterprise was doomed from its birth. The mission's first steps on a new mission field had failed. This certainly felt discouraging. All the other parties were also disappointed. Vice-President James Otete felt that his warnings had not been heeded. The leaders of the SLM considered that President Martin Lundström had acted arbitrarily. Elam Musinde most likely also felt betrayed, not to mention the local congregation. The events harmed the Church's ecumenical efforts in Nairobi.<sup>614</sup> In the end, one can argue that the difficult situation was largely due to the incompetent behavior of the

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<sup>610</sup> Imberg 2008, 110–111, 120–123, 146. Events are also described by Norrback 1998, 108–109, Lounela 2007, 50–51, and Arkkila 2010, 180–181.

<sup>611</sup> "SLEAF lacked the experience of working in Africa and was therefore unable to make the preparations you would expect. The situation out there in Kenya was very difficult to grasp at the time. Both within the Church and Maragoli there were strong forces in motion. National independence was a cause. In terms of culture and language, East Africa and Kenya were completely foreign to SLEAF. We just have to remember that, concerning many things in African society, we remain strangers." Translation by author. Norrback 1998, 103–121.

<sup>612</sup> "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the Church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears." Acts 20:28–31 (NIV).

<sup>613</sup> Norrback cites the letter. Norrback 1998, 108–109.

<sup>614</sup> See chapter "Together or Separately?"



missionaries. Both President Martin Lundstöm and the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Association of Finland had made far-reaching misjudgments. Had they heeded the voices of the Church's Kenyan leadership, this mistake could have been avoided.

Despite all these problems, information about Lutheranism spread to the surrounding areas from Wasundi. James Mwigale was drawn to the LCK through his friend Boaz Kiluma, whose father brought Lutheranism from Wasundi to Mugangu in the early 1960s. Mwigale recalls:

Boaz was my best friend and he asked me to help him with the liturgy. Before I was drinking and smoking but after the baptism I was born again. Four of us started a congregation under a tree at Kiluma's. Others laughed. Other denominations wanted only money, but we stuck to Gospel.

Many people were baptized, sometimes up to a hundred at a time. Sunday school work was successful. The adults followed their children. New congregations were soon established: Bogondi, Sarde, Virjaro, Kapkerer, Mutiva, Tigoi, and Gahumba.<sup>615</sup> Festus Asuga, Henry Luyai, Robert Muhando, Richard Otieno, Boaz Kiluma, Zablon Luhyasi were sent to the Matongo Bible School for evangelistic training.<sup>616</sup>

In the 1970s, Tapio Laitinen (LEAF) made evangelistic trips, especially among Luhya and Maragoli ethnic groups. Together with Boaz Kiluma and Robert Muhando they organized baptismal courses, particularly at Bogondi (1970), Kisa, Mugangu, and Mahanga. The work progressed rapidly, and many new members joined the Church.<sup>617</sup> New congregations were established: Bushangala (1977)<sup>618</sup>, Mungoye (1979)<sup>619</sup>, Shambere (1979), Emuraka (1979), Chavakali (1980), Ebusiratsi (1980). Bogondi became the center of Church activities until the Kakamega congregations started in 1979. From Kakamega, the Church also expanded to Kitale (1987) and Eldoret (1988). Before receiving pastors, many lay preachers and evangelists organized worship services. Over time, Luhya pastors were ordained: Boaz Kiluma, Robert Muhando, Henry Luyai, David Chore, James Mwigale, Obadiah Anzala, John Luvishia, Adonijah Luvishia, David Juma, and James Mwigale. General Secretary Daniel Mundia also belonged to the Luhyas.<sup>620</sup> The LEAF missionaries resided at Kakamega from 1986 to 1993. Their focus was on supporting Kenyan workers and congregations in organizing women groups, Sunday school, and Bible

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<sup>615</sup> Mwigale studied at the MLTC to become first an evangelist (ETC 12 1977–1979) and then a pastor (SOC I 1990–1992) through a special ordination course. MA, interview of James Mwigale 14.10.2018. "Mwigale is conscientious in his work. The offerings are regular." Translation by author. KA, LEAFA II, file 47, Paavo Erelä to Reijo Arkkila 12.12.1979.

<sup>616</sup> MA, Luvisha 2019, 4–5.

<sup>617</sup> Laitinen 1995, 72.

<sup>618</sup> Led by Chief Caleb Shihemi, the father of MLTC teacher Hamilton Shihemi.

<sup>619</sup> Blasio Odindo belonged to the Anglican Church. After listening to *Sauti ya Neema*, he became interested in Lutheran teaching. Together with his family, he joined the ELCK, and the Mungoye congregation was started. His son George later studied in Finland. Sääksi 1977, 196.

<sup>620</sup> MA, Luvisha 2019, 7–8.

gatherings. Raija Partanen remembers that although it was good to live here, the events in Wasundi influenced the background, arousing suspicion and creating a lack of unity.<sup>621</sup>

The sad events at Wasundi were not easily forgotten, negatively affecting the atmosphere throughout the area. At the same time yet the Wasundi parish played an important role in reaching the Luhyas. From there, the people from the surrounding areas received their first contact with Lutheran teaching. Especially the 1970s and 1980s were a time of rapid Lutheran expansion in this region. Many congregations were established, with Kakamega becoming a center of the work. From Kakamega, Lutheranism continued to spread to other cities and areas.

### Iteso

Work among the Itesos<sup>622</sup>, neighboring the Luhyas, began in early 1995 when Sakari Nurmesviita (LEAF) and evangelist Enos Omodhi visited the area. They found a congregation at Morgamusi without a pastor. It had been rejected by the Roman Catholics. The people were now willing to invite Lutherans because they wanted their children to be taught, baptized, and confirmed similarly as the Roman Catholics had done. Nurmesviita visited the area on Sundays. Services were held in a grass-roofed mud church full of wild dancing and singing. People were many.<sup>623</sup> After Nurmesviita, Reijo Arkkila and James Mwigale as the “Iteso representative”, continued this mission and expanded it to the Ugandan side, where two congregations wanted to join the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya. Mwigale visited them teaching the *Catechism*.<sup>624</sup>

The first Lutheran church building at Teso was constructed in Osiete village in 1996. Sand and stones came from the local Kenyans; LEAF sponsored the rest. One of the first Lutherans here was Eliza Amuruon Orone, born in 1956. Her granddaughter was very sick, and nobody could help her. Finally, she was healed through the prayers of the Lutheran Church. This made Eliza and her family interested in this Church. In the beginning, they had prayer meetings, a women’s group, a Sunday school, and a nursery.<sup>625</sup> From Osiete, the Church

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<sup>621</sup> LEAF missionaries, who lived in Kakamega: Salme Rintakomsi, Tuuli Tamminen, Antti and Liisa Saarenketo, Seppo and Tarja Piisola, Raija Partanen. Partanen served here for the longest time and left the town last at the beginning of 1993. LEAF Annual Reports of 1985–1994, MA, interview of Raija Partanen 5.10.2015.

<sup>622</sup> The Itesos are an ethnic group in eastern Uganda and Western Kenya. Teso refers to the traditional homeland of the Iteso, and Ateso is their language. Itesos are believed to have migrated from Abyssinia (Ethiopia). Category: Ethnic groups in Kenya – Wikipedia. Accessed 24.08.2020.

<sup>623</sup> There had been a Roman Catholic priest who got married and was dismissed from his duties. One Sunday Nurmesviita was alone. The people had gone to a Pentecostal Church to see some American visitors. They were promised 20 Kenyan shillings each. MA, interview of Sakari Nurmesviita 20.9.2019.

<sup>624</sup> According to Arkkila, LEAF was not willing to expand to Uganda. Arkkila 2011, 342–343.

<sup>625</sup> First, there were only seven members soon growing to 72. MA, interview of Eliza Orone 28.10.2018.

grew first to Akobwait, then Okisimo, Akudiet, and finally to Amukura.<sup>626</sup> The key to a successful mission in this area was the Lutheran teaching, appreciated by the Kenyans.<sup>627</sup>

### 7.3 Evangelizing “Cattle-Tribes”

#### Maasai

President James Otete had introduced a plan to reach the Maasai<sup>628</sup> at the Annual General Meeting in 1970. He planned to set up a mission station at Ang’ata, close to the Tanzanian border, to reach the Maasais living there. In 1975, when the Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland started a mission center at Monianku, 60 kilometers from Ang’ata, it was now used as a door to enter this mission.<sup>629</sup> In the beginning, Church President James Otete, Nemwel Omae, Francis Matwere, James Oletu, and James Miruka visited different locations, together with choirs from Monianku and Itierio. People gathered under the trees. The interpretation was via Ekegusii into Maa. In 1977, congregations were established at Empurkel, Ang’ata and Endonyo-Ereko followed by Olomisimis two years later.<sup>630</sup> Philip Kuya, one of the Sunday school children at Olomisimis of that time, remembers the Bible stories, hymns – especially “*Rock of ages*” – and the good order of services, which made people interested in Lutheranism.<sup>631</sup>

Samuel Ole Makau, born in 1959, was one of the first baptized Lutheran Maasais of the area. He attended baptismal classes for two months and was baptized in 1974. Makau often acted as an interpreter in evangelistic events, for he also spoke Ekegusii. He studied at the second pastoral course of the MLTC (PTC II 1980–1985) and became the first ordained ELCK Maasai pastor, followed by Simeon Ketere and Joseph Ole Momposhi in the late 1990s. The first trained evangelists were Jonathan Ole Mponin and Daniel Ole Kalasinga. According to Makau, many Maasai men were reluctant to turn to Christianity because of the teaching of monogamy. Among them, polygyny was widely practiced. Maasais were used to being free. Therefore, they did not like the law and they didn’t let other people control them. Yet, the Gospel attracted them. For this reason, the Lutheran Church of Kenya was appreciated. The Gospel-centered message resonated with people. First, women and children came and

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<sup>626</sup> Omuse 2005, 49–51.

<sup>627</sup> Papai was the “*Mzee wa kanisa*” [Church elder] of Akudiet. MA, interview of Leonard Papai 28.10.2018.

<sup>628</sup> The Maasais belong to the Nilotic ethnic group inhabiting northern, central, and southern Kenya and northern Tanzania. They are among the best-known local populations internationally due to their residence near game parks and their distinctive customs and dresses. Giles 1997, 70–75.

<sup>629</sup> Lounela 2007, 189–190. See chapter “Mission Stations as Models.”

<sup>630</sup> MA, interview of Samuel Ole Makau 15.9.2018.

<sup>631</sup> MA, interview of Philip Kuya 15.9.2018.

were baptized, followed by men. This was typical for the Maasai culture of the area.<sup>632</sup>

In 1985, LEAF began to plan an agricultural project among the Maasais. At first, all the parties both in Kenya and in Finland favored the idea which included governmental authorities. A model farm and a training center were planned. FINNIDA was positive about the funding. Suitable plots were sought, Monianku and Olosentu being two of the planned locations. Despite many attempts to get this project going, however, it never materialized. In 1989, the Kenyan authorities indicated that they did not support the project anymore. Behind the scenes, land ownership disputes had their effect on this. Matti Auramo, who was the last missionary responsible for the project, believes that one of the reasons for the failure was that the missionaries did not consent to bribery.<sup>633</sup>

In the early 1990s, there was a revival among the Maasai people, who were opening to Christianity. Among other Churches, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya also tried to meet the needs. Short courses were arranged at Monianku, Chesinende, Narok, and Nairobi. Large baptisms were held. Reino Toikka (LEAF) remembers a baptism of more than a hundred people. He conducted a baptism of 67 adults and their children. Even some "*oloiboni*", Maasai diviners, converted to Christianity. Toikka recalls: "At Entasata, two witchdoctors burned their magic charms in the fire and knelt in front of us. Afterward these proselytes joined the baptismal school. The incident was followed by a crowd of about 400 people. A small group of about 20 people was very angry about this." There were also some other similar events elsewhere.<sup>634</sup>

The Maasais were also reached through Kajiado, LEAF missionary Anssi Simojoki being proactive in this opening. In 1993, Anssi Simojoki, the elders Matthew Ole Esho and Simion Ole Sakana visited the area. They chose Stefano Ole Kaikoni as the elder to organize the Church work, which started at Lenkishon. It expanded soon to Kumpa, Namanga and Oloirimirimi. On 10 September 1995, the first baptism of 200 people was conducted by Revs. Samuel Ole Makau, Joseph Osoro and Peter Ndung'u.<sup>635</sup> In the first half of the 1990s, SLEAF had only two missionaries working specifically with the Maasai.

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<sup>632</sup> MA, interview of Samuel Ole Makau 15.9.2018.

<sup>633</sup> MA, interview of Matti Auramo 28.12.2019. Eeva Kröger, Antti Kuokkanen, and Matti Auramo each in turn were responsible for initiating the agricultural project. Lounela sees two main reasons for the failure: poor preparation (the missionaries and Olosentu people did not know each other in advance) and lack of previous experience. Lounela 2007, 204–206. Toikka remembers that politics was also involved. The politicians wanted to get the fertile land for themselves by all means possible. MA, interview of Reino Toikka 28.8.2019.

<sup>634</sup> MA, interview of Reino Toikka 28.8.2019. In 1991, Joseph Ole Momposhi was baptized at the Synod of Mapashi. When he entered the MLTC in 1993, his family and people around him became angry, his house was burned, and a cow was stolen. Not until graduation was his father reconciled. Finally, both his parents were baptized. MA, interview of Joseph Ole Momposhi 1.10.2018.

<sup>635</sup> Kaikoni 2013, 1–7, Senet 2013, 1–2.

Reino Toikka was responsible for the Transmara subcounty, while Seppo Piisola worked in Kajiado and its environs.<sup>636</sup>

In the mid-1990s, Kajiado had one parish with three congregations. Narok also had a parish with three congregations and Transmara consisted of two parishes with fourteen congregations. This time, Samuel Ole Makau was still serving as the only ELCK Maasai-pastor together with 13 assistants in several congregations.<sup>637</sup> In the 1990s, the ELCK Maasai mission began to progress rapidly. Employee resources, instead, did not increase at the same pace.

### **Samburu**

In the late 1970s, the World Mission Prayer League began its search for “unreached people” to work with. Eventually, they settled on the Samburu<sup>638</sup> area. With the help of the Africa Inland Mission, they selected Arsim in northern Samburu as one of the stations, Ngilai in southern Samburu being another. The first missionaries at Arsim were Robert Ward and his wife Jeanne (1981–1993). At Ngilai, the work was started by Mike and Gail Koski, with their three children (1982–1986). The Wards adopted a mission station -method, while the Koskis concentrated on evangelization in the nearby areas. At Arsim, the work developed in many directions: there was a dispensary and mobile clinic, primary schools, bush nurseries, watering, and gardening projects.<sup>639</sup> Robert Ward writes:

Jackson Ntokodie was a good and faithful worker. His mother was Samburu, and his father was Turkana. Despite not being pure Samburu, the people seemed to accept Jackson and his ministry among them quite well [...] I used our five mules to make many of these safaris [...] We made tape recordings of our services and sent these out to the out district evangelistic point to be used by the Christian fellowship leaders who manually operated tape playback machines. I showed evangelistic films using our mobile facilities at least once a quarter, and they were always very well attended in the open air after darkness set in.<sup>640</sup>

At Ngilai, one of the first baptized was the village elder Kilaikon Lenaseiyan. Many others followed his example, including his family, as was customary in Kenyan communality. In receiving Christianity, the communal approach, rather than Western individualism, was the key to missionary success.<sup>641</sup>

The long journeys involved made it difficult to organize the mission work and to communicate with the Church Head Office. The Samburu Committee had

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<sup>636</sup> MA, interview of Reino Toikka 28.8.2019.

<sup>637</sup> ELCK Newsletter 5/1998.

<sup>638</sup> Category: Ethnic groups in Kenya – Wikipedia. Accessed 08.06.2020.

<sup>639</sup> Ward 1999, 387–440, Apel 2009, 2–3.

<sup>640</sup> Ward 1999, 387–388.

<sup>641</sup> Kelvin’s mother Margaret Rehema Lenaseiyan was also baptized. At the time of the interview, Kelvin was studying at the MLTC to become a pastor. MA, interview of Kelvin Lenaseiyan 17.3.2020

trouble meeting regularly. There were also some “differences to be resolved” among the missionaries. The situation continued to be difficult throughout the 1980s. WMPL Director Bob Andrews wrote to General Secretary Richard Olak in 1987 informing him about his visit to Kenya: “I would like to understand the work among the Samburu people, not only from the point of view of American missionaries but also from the point of view of the ELCK.” In 1988, there was frustration in the air and Andrews requested Olak “to do all that you can to encourage the Committee to meet”.<sup>642</sup>

According to Mirja-Leena Pattison (LEAF), Arsim had grown into a congregation of 50 members in 1993. There was a small clinic at the station. Mobile clinics were arranged in remote villages. The kindergarten and an elementary school had been operating for several years. A garden project encouraged Samburus to grow vegetables. Traditionally they ate only milk, meat, and blood. In 1993, the first two Samburus from Arsim, Peter Lasangurikuri, and Jacob Lesumpat, began their studies at Matongo Lutheran Theological College for becoming evangelists.<sup>643</sup>

Gloria Sauck (WMPL) entered Arsim in 1993 and developed the medical work together with the United Nations and the Christian Blind Mission. Sauck emphasized “outreach clinics” with the help of Kenyan workers Lesumpat and Lasangurikuri. During clinical work, they had Bible teachings and devotional gatherings in the bush. “My prayer is that the medical work done in Jesus’ name will be a physical way to touch the souls of people to lead them to become disciples of Christ in their cultural setting.” These gatherings were always led by elders because the Samburu were taught to follow their leaders. The Samburu were bordered by the Masai, Rendille, and Turkana ethnic groups, of which the Turkana were the most isolated.<sup>644</sup> By the mid-1990s, 14 WMPL missionaries had worked among the Samburus.<sup>645</sup> In 1996 it was estimated that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya had about 500 baptized members among them.<sup>646</sup>

SLEAF and the Wycliffe Bible Translators joined forces in the New Testament translation project in 2002. The completion of the New Testament in the Samburu language was celebrated on 14 December 2019 at Maralal. Mission Director Brita Jern writes: “People arrived on foot, by motorcycle, bike, car, bus or by helicopter – as did Kenya’s Vice-President. Through his presence and speech at the party, Vice-President William Ruto stressed the importance of the

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<sup>642</sup> IA, A VI; 12, Minutes other committees, *Report of the ELCK Head Office* 10.5.1983, IA, F VI: 18, Stations minutes other committees, Bob Andrews to Richard Olak 17.12.1987 and 17.5.1988.

<sup>643</sup> Ss 40/1993. Mirja-Leena Tanttu married a Canadian WMPL missionary, Terry Pattison. The Canadians were also involved in the ELCK mission work!

<sup>644</sup> MA, Interview of Gloria Sauck 5.1.2018, *ELCK Newsletter* 2/1996.

<sup>645</sup> Robert and Jeanne Ward, Mike and Gail Koski, Bruce and Sue Kemp, Jeff Stoores, Alpha Jacques, Janice Larsen, Dean Apel, Terry Pattison, Gloria Sauck, Steve and Wendy Wagner. Apel 2009, 9.

<sup>646</sup> ELCK Newsletter 2/1996.

New Testament and its message to the people assembled.”<sup>6471</sup> The ELCK Samburu work had received high national recognition.

## **Pokot**

When the Norwegian Lutheran Mission joined the Lutheran Church of Kenya in 1977, it had already decided to start working among the Pokot<sup>648</sup>, another unreached ethnic group in Northwest Kenya. In 1978, two families moved to Liter, Bjarne and Magni Taranger, Erling and Kirsten Lundeby. Asbjørn and Bjørg Vegge moved to Kitale at the same time. The Kitale congregation was founded on 12 November 1979 with 8 members.<sup>649</sup>

At Liter, some young people started a Christian fellowship. Lois Cheruto and Alfred Kamokol acted as evangelists, assisted by Daniel Lopuriang. Monica Marwa, Jennifer Kapello, Paulina Chemoria and Christine Kamanga were of great help mentoring young people. Cheruto started a congregation at Chemloktyo, together with Alfred Kamokol and Philip Lodwar. The growth there was rapid. In June 1980 Bjarne Taranger baptized 78 people. The enthusiasm expanded to Anet, Sororo, and Solion – and continued to other villages. Lundeby wrote: “Earlier, Pokot was known for being strongly resistant to the Gospel. Now it turned out that many people were eager to receive. God was moving – especially in Sigor Division.” There was enthusiasm in Kara-Pokot too. At the beginning of the 1980s, up to 400 people at 10 different locations were waiting to hear the Christian message. In Kongelai, in March 1981, Asbjørn Vegge baptized 23 adults, 53 children, and 21 joined the Church from other denominations. Emmanuel Lokwangiro and Joel Lowuyan were the first assistants there. Ragnar Gunnarsson wrote: “We have enjoyed our stay in Kongolai [...] But frequent sickness, poor food, intense heat, and general insecurity because of cattle raiding are some of the reasons one may lack the strength to reach out in evangelism.”<sup>650</sup>

Within a month, a place was discovered for the mission station at Chesta. Missionary houses, a school, and a clinic were built. Sunday services, youth and women’s meetings, songs, and Bible stories were taught. The work went ahead well but also met opposition from “traditional believers”. Some were openly

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<sup>647</sup> Jern 2020, 141–159.

<sup>648</sup> Based on areal and cultural differences, the Pokot people can be divided into two groups. The Hill Pokot live in the rainy highlands and are both farmers and pastoralists. The Plains Pokot live in the dry and infertile plains, herding cows, goats, and sheep. They speak Nilotic Pökoot language. The majority of Pokots follow their traditional religion. Some of them are Christians but the majority are traditionalists. Even among Christians, the traditional religious worldview is dominant. Kalenjin, Pokot in Kenya/Joshua Project – Wikipedia. Accessed 16.08.2020.

<sup>649</sup> AKA, *AGM Pokot report of 1980* by Torleif Vegge.

<sup>650</sup> NLMA, Dc-0002, *Report of expeditions to Kara-Pokot 1981–1982* by Skuli Svavarsson, Leif Thingbø, Kjartan Jónsson. For development in Chesta Parish, see Pulongar 2013.

hostile. The first baptism of 15 adults<sup>651</sup> was conducted on 10 June 1979. The Chesta Girls' Primary was opened. From Chesta, the mission spread into many other areas, and yet four further mission centers were soon built: Sekerr<sup>652</sup>, Chepareria<sup>653</sup>, Kongolai and Kapenguria. "To the clinic, people often come from far away, from cities where they do not have heard of Jesus [...] their first encounter with God's Word was devotion during the clinic day," Kjell Strømme wrote from Sekerr.<sup>654</sup> Kapenguria was built as a Bible center in 1983. Daniel Lopuriang was one of those influentially involved in the early evangelism work. Alfred Kamokol became the first ordained Pokot pastor there followed by Samson Lokipuna.<sup>655</sup>

In 1990, the Pokot Development Program was launched with the help of Leif Thingbø as its first coordinator. This program was mainly financed by the Norwegian government (NORAD 80%). It concentrated on four areas: healthcare, school, agricultural, and women's work. The main focus of the program was to train community members to enable them to improve their lives and to secure their environment.<sup>656</sup> According to Erling Lundeby this program "made possible to serve both spiritual and physical needs in the community – like Jesus who both preached good news of salvation as well as healed sickness and fed hungry people."<sup>657</sup> By the mid-1990s, the Pokot mission had already expanded considerably. Arve Myra wrote in 1997 that six thousand people had been baptized. However, there were only nine congregations. In their place, there were almost one hundred locations where preaching was

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<sup>651</sup> The baptized were Margaret Loikwasia, Veronica Paryemut, Monica Loriteluk, Elisabeth Chepolet, Paulina Kalapata, Margaret Lokornyang, Amina Siompogh, Salina Lokalipa, Monica Loiwalan, Alfred Lokal, Emmanuel Minase, Petro Kalinyongar, Abraham Kachundokitai, Musa Kirew, Jackson Palekem. The names indicate a Western influence!

<sup>652</sup> At Sekerr, a health center, a church, a primary and a secondary school were built.

<sup>653</sup> Chepareria was started by Skuli Svavarsson and Kjellrun Langdal through the Icelandic mission. Skuli also served as the Headmaster of Kapenguria. MA, Email from Skuli Svavarsson 16.6.2019.

<sup>654</sup> Translation by author. NLMA, Dc. L0002, *Dagbok for Sekerr* by Kjell Strømme 1983.

<sup>655</sup> Lokipuna became the first Bishop of the Northwest Diocese. *Utsyn* 33/1992. Lundeby has listed all the ELCK pastors, evangelists, and deaconesses working at Pokot. Lundeby 2018, 11–24.

<sup>656</sup> Vaagen 1996, 76–79.

<sup>657</sup> Lundeby 2018, 20.



carried out.<sup>658</sup> By 1996, 43 NLM missionaries had worked among the Pokot.<sup>659</sup> The Icelandic Lutheran Mission had an additional eight missionaries.<sup>660</sup>

The Lutheran work at Pokot can be compared to the area of Kisii, where the Lutheran Church had spread widely. At the end of 2018, there were 42 parishes with 256 congregations, 29 trained pastors, 92 evangelists, and 22 deaconesses. At this point, all the NLM Pokot missionaries had already left the area. There were about 14,000 Christians, plus children. There were five mission centers (Chesta, Kornis, Propoi, Kapenguria Bible Center, Kongolai), two health centers (Chesta, Kornis), one dispensary (Korokow), a children's rescue center (Udom Chepareria), 120 primary schools, 27 secondary schools, one vocational training center (Tamkal) and a Teacher's Training College (Chesta).<sup>661</sup> Church growth was incredibly robust among the Pokot.

## **Turkana**

After he arrived in Samburu in 1981, Robert Ward (WMPL) had connections with the Turkana<sup>662</sup> people, who were neighboring the Samburu. Assistant Chiefs Robat Ngirtia and Korie Epodo requested him to start working among them. Ward writes:

People in this area had heard of what the Lutherans had done during the famine in Samburu, and what they were now doing in providing mobile medical service, particularly for children. It was their hope that we should institute something like this in their area. They said there was no other Church or evangelistic work being done at Kawap.

The hopes of the Assistant Chiefs did not materialize as the World Mission Prayer League did not have adequate resources to broaden its work in this direction.<sup>663</sup>

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<sup>658</sup> ELCK Newsletter 1/1997.

<sup>659</sup> Aardal Jon and Arnhild, Egeland Morten and Monica, Espeland Knut and Turid, Granli Kay and Aud, Hinderaker Bjørn and Yvonne, Holmedahl Jostein and Gerd, Korsvik Morten and Inger, Loland Gustav and Bjørg, Lundebj Erling and Kirsten, Myra Arve and Ingrid, Næss Ingrid, Pedersen Anita, Qvalben Tone, Selstø Johannes and Klara, Strømme Arthur and Aud, Strømme Kjell and Eldbjørg, Sukka Anna, Svalland Grethe, Taranger Bjarne and Magni, Thingbø Leif and Marit, Vegge Asbjørn and Bjørg, Vegge Torleiv and Marie, Vespestad Jan and Guri, Vågen Tore and Marit. MA, Email from Ragnhild Myren, the administrative advisor of the NLM International 28.2.2020.

<sup>660</sup> Svavarsson Skuli, Kjellrun Langdal, Magnusdóttir Valdis, Kjartan Jónsson, Sigurdardóttir Hrönn Sigríður, Gunnarsson Ragnar, Sigurdsson Leifur, Gardarsdóttir Huld Salome. MA, Email from Skuli Svavarsson 29.2.2020.

<sup>661</sup> Lundebj 2018, 25–30.

<sup>662</sup> The Turkana belong to the Nilotic people in Turkana County in northwest Kenya. This is a semi-arid climate region bordering Lake Turkana in the east, Pokot, Rendille, and Samburu people to the south, Uganda to the west, and South- Sudan and Ethiopia to the north. They refer to their land as Turkan. The Turkana are noted for raising camels and weaving baskets. Category: Ethnic groups in Kenya – Wikipedia. Accessed 03.12.2020.

<sup>663</sup> Ward 1999, 416–424.

The Norwegian Lutheran Mission was invited to Turkana by a Kenyan Christian, Peter Lotwai. Just a few missionaries visited this area due to the heat and harsh living conditions. Arve Myra (NLN) and Leifur Sigurdsson (SIK) succeeded in spending more time there. In Lokichar and Lokori, congregations were established. Drought and ethnic unrest brought some Turkana refugees to Kapenguria. Through teaching and worship services they were introduced to Christianity. When they returned to their homes, they served as congregational workers. Erling Lundeby writes: "But with the distance and poor and costly communications, it has been a constant challenge to maintain contacts with the congregations. Progress has been slow and erratic with many setbacks."<sup>664</sup> The ELCK Turkana mission remained small in its visible impact.

## 7.4 Muslim Majority Ethnic Groups

### **Digo**

Since 1971, the Norwegian Lutheran Mission had worked at Voi on the south coast of Mombasa. In the beginning, this work was not linked to the Lutheran Church of Kenya but instead managed independently, registered as Scripture Mission (SM). As the Norwegian Lutheran Mission joined the Church, Einar and Anne Sofie Eng started working among Digos<sup>665</sup> in 1978, followed by Jon and Marianne Østby. Erling Lundeby replaced Einar Eng in 1983. Films and other activities were arranged at the Diani and Msambweni (1982) centers. Through the radio and literature work of Voi and Wundanyi, Christian knowledge reached even the most remote areas. Christian literature was sold in the Msambweni bookstore and through a mobile bookshop traveling around the

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<sup>664</sup> Lundeby 2018, 19. NORAD had focused on helping Turkanas since the early 1970s. Harden, however, is very critical of this Western support. According to him, the schools and roads which did help Western civilization enter Turkana brought about the destruction of the traditional culture. New generations no longer learned the means necessary to survive in this drought-stricken area. "White-collar education" had nothing to do with raising livestock. "Ninety-nine percent of those Turkana who have gone to school can only survive now in town." Harden 1993, 177–216.

<sup>665</sup> The Digos are an ethnic and linguistic group based near the Indian Ocean coast between Mombasa in Southern Kenya and Tanga in Northern Tanzania. In 1994, the Digo population was estimated to total 305,000, with 217,000 living in Kenya and 88,000 in Tanzania. Digo people speak the Digo language, which is Bantu. The Digos belong to the Mijikenda ethnic group with nine other smaller groups. Category: Ethnic groups in Kenya – Wikipedia. Accessed 23.05.2020.

area. The missionaries taught at Voi and Wusi Secondary Schools.<sup>666</sup> Between 1977 and 1996, a total of 40 NLM missionaries worked in this area.<sup>667</sup>

"The Digo people, one of the world's unreached peoples, were 99.9% Muslims," Jon and Marianne Østby wrote in the mission newspaper *Utsyn*. They told about Hassan, who got to know Jesus through a film at the age of 15. At that time, he was the only Christian in his village. "Sometimes I was hungry because my parents didn't want to see me any longer. I looked for my food, I slept on a bench, and I got a little support from my brother," Hassan related about his life.<sup>668</sup> In 1984, the first baptisms of Digos took place. Two young men, Abbas and Hassan, were baptized. In 1988, Abbas Rashid joined the MLTC course for evangelists.<sup>669</sup> Bakari Kea was also one of the first Digo converts. His mother was a Taifa and his father a Digo, the Chief of Likoni, the family was Muslim. After his baptism in 1979, Bakari started working with Einar Eng (NLM). He first served as an evangelist on the coast, then he studied in Kapenguria to become a pastor. Eventually, he was elected Bishop of the Central Diocese.<sup>670</sup>

By the 1990s, Digos gradually began to open up to Christianity.<sup>671</sup> On the initiative of Erling Lundeby, the Church sent John Kui to work on the coast in 1991. The NLM missionaries ordered Kui to Lunga-Lunga<sup>672</sup>, a rural town 100 km from the city. According to Kui, this place was "the hardest place ever lacking water and vegetables with lots of mosquitos". They showed Jesus films with the permission of the area Chief. In between the films, they would have prayers at the Mosque.<sup>673</sup> Kui was followed by Zedekiah Nyokwoyo in 1993 and James Tengecha in 1996. They all belonged to the Erandi evangelistic mission group and were supported by LEAF. Assisted by Abbas Rashid, Joseph Osoro and Anssi Simojoki, the Erandi mission was able to establish three congregations in Mombasa.<sup>674</sup> In practice, LEAF supported the work outside the Digo-area.

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<sup>666</sup> Lundeby 1984, 100–103.

<sup>667</sup> Ameyia Turid, Eftestøl Even and Åse, Eggebø Kjellfrid, Eng Einar and Anne, Gravdal Oddmund, Helland Edvard and Margunn, Holmedahl Jostein and Gerd, Jøssang Jon and Kjellaug, Jåtun Tone and Eivind, Lundeby Erling and Kirsten, Moldsvor Aasta, Mæstad Bjørg and Åshild, Overå Anne, Refvem Britt, Røyland Arnfinn and Helga, Slettmoen Cato and Grethe, Stige Asbjørn and Turid, Strømme Arthur and Aud, Svanholm Lars and Målfrid, Trodahl Jakob and Edit, Vegge Torleiv and Marie, Vittersø Tjóstolf and Ingeborg, Østby Jon and Marianne. MA, Email from Ragnhild Myren, the administrative advisor of the NLM International 28.2.2020.

<sup>668</sup> Translation by author. *Utsyn* 33/1982.

<sup>669</sup> *Utsyn* 30/1984 and 23/1990. Abbas Rashid was considered a devoted Muslim. He saw a movie about Jesus, and it made a great impression on him. He started reading the Bible and wanted to become a Christian. He was then slandered, harassed, and pressured for that. *Ut* 3/1991.

<sup>670</sup> MA, Email from Erling Lundeby 20.9.2019.

<sup>671</sup> *Utsyn* 20–12/1991 and 30/1991.

<sup>672</sup> Lunga Lunga is in extreme South-Eastern Kenya, at the international border of Tanzania. It lies approximately 102 kilometers from Mombasa. Google Maps – Wikipedia. Accessed 12.04.2020.

<sup>673</sup> MA, interview of John Kui 29.10.2018.

<sup>674</sup> MA, interview of John Kui 29.10.2018. These congregations were established with the help of Kisii immigrants and were not among Digos. MA, interview of Anssi Simojoki 18.9.2019.

Francis Nyamwaro, Richard Olak, and Anssi Simojoki visited the area in November 1991. They witnessed Sunday services were going on at Chaani Primary. A group of ELCK members from Kisii had started them. The ELCK delegates proceeded to Msambweni, where Kui visited twice a month. At Wema, Edvard Helland (NLM) welcomed the group and explained why there was no Digo congregation yet: The Norwegian Lutheran Mission was “still experiencing a time of transition”. Nyamwaro and Olak were happy about Kui’s progress and suggested, that “LEAF will start working officially on the coast as soon as possible”. A missionary team should be set up, a center build, and the coastal work be placed under the control of the Nairobi District.<sup>675</sup> Nairobi District leader Anssi Simojoki instead was not happy, since there was no strategy and no active evangelism. After many years of working, there was not even a single congregation among the Digos, he complained. He now suggested that the ELCK Muslim-work would be divided into two: the Digo-work and the Muslim-mission under the Nairobi District.<sup>676</sup>

The Norwegian missionaries were not pleased with LEAF’s active involvement in the area which they considered their own. Erling Lundeby had written to Anssi Simojoki in May 1991 wondering why a LEAF-sponsored evangelistic group led by Anja-Maija Vanhanen had visited the area without prior information, presenting specific plans about the coastal work. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya and the Norwegian Lutheran Mission had an agreement on the Digo-work, and it should have been honored: “It goes without saying that any activity whatsoever should be cleared with the relevant authorities of the ELCK/SM before using their respective names or facilities.”<sup>677</sup> Edvard Helland wondered whether these visitors would refer to the already existing Digo work or just go ahead with their own plans after a “clearance over the telephone [telefonisk klarering] with the Church leadership?”<sup>678</sup> Finally, Kjell Strømme approached Chairman Nyamwaro, accusing LEAF of having forgotten the policy of maintaining “areas of concentration”. He then wanted to know what kind of plans there were concerning the coastal work.<sup>679</sup> In the middle of the 1990s, at the NLM’s request and after Simojoki moved to other tasks, the Muslim work on the coast was transferred under Norwegian supervision.<sup>680</sup>

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<sup>675</sup> IA, EIII: 7, Memorandum concerning pioneering work on the Kenyan coast 21.11.1991. “They were so happy about my work that they wanted to send me to MLTC to become a pastor.” MA, interview of John Kui 29.10.2018.

<sup>676</sup> IA, EII: 25, Corr. Gen. Sec. 1992–1994, Anssi Simojoki to Richard Olak 27.10.1992.

<sup>677</sup> NLMA, Dc 0003, Erling Lundeby to Anssi Simojoki 13.5.1991. Lundeby evaluates the LEAF involvement as a “hostile takeover”, which failed. MA, Email from Erling Lundeby 9.8.2020.

<sup>678</sup> Translation by author. NLMA, Dc 0003, Edvard Helland to Head Office 7.11.1991.

<sup>679</sup> NLMA, Dc 0002, Kjell Strømme to Chairman ELCK 14.12.1991. The NLM missionaries “understood the purpose of the visit so that their work needs to be complemented by true Lutheranism.” SLEAFA, FLM BREV 1990–1993, Report of the meeting in Stockholm, May 1992.

<sup>680</sup> Simojoki 2014, 322.

Both the Norwegian Lutheran Mission and the Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland felt empowered by the Church. The NLM was, of course, in the leading position here since it had begun working in the area by the early 1970s. In the missionary world, Muslim work was fashionable, and LEAF was also interested in expanding in this direction. Its motives were good, but it was inept when entering foreign territory. In addition, it did not have any prior experience with Muslims. No wonder the host was angry. Further, defending one's territory against others was typical human behavior. Uncertainty arose because of poor communication. Theological, practical, and even personal disagreements played a role in the background. For these reasons, the two mission societies were not able to work side by side in peace.

### **Borana**

While mapping a new mission area of Northern Kenya in 1978, Haraldur Olafsson and Jostein Berg met an old man who welcomed the mission to the area with the following words: "First God created a Borana, then as number two God created a white man. For that reason, we feel like we are a real family. That is why you must bring an eye ointment when you come here. We are tribal friends."<sup>681</sup> The kind words of the old man reflect the typically open and friendly attitude of the Kenyans towards white men. Compared to general Western reserved behavior towards foreigners, such an attitude is noteworthy.

The Norwegian Lutheran Mission had had previous experience with Boranas<sup>682</sup> while working in Ethiopia. The Boranas belonged to the Nomads<sup>683</sup> moving back and forth from Ethiopia to Kenya depending on weather and grazing conditions. Because of their Nomadic way of life, they were very difficult to reach. They were mostly either Muslims or "traditionalists".<sup>684</sup> In 1979, the Church set up a Committee to plan the work among them.<sup>685</sup> The following year, the NLM missionaries Oddvar and Berit Vold and Tore and Marit Vågen moved to Marsabit. Gustav and Bjørg Loland helped them build a station there.<sup>686</sup> Tore Vågen writes about the challenges of the beginning:

So far, we have used tents. But when the temperature in the afternoon creeps over 40 degrees in the shade and the desert wind rotates in hot whirls, it could be exhausting to endure in tents for more than a few days at a time. And

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<sup>681</sup> Translation by author. Ut 1/1978.

<sup>682</sup> The Borana, Gabbra, and Sakuye peoples are sub-ethnic groups within the Oromos and share language and culture. Some groups of the Oromos from southern Ethiopia entered northern Kenya during the 16th century. They then differentiated into cattle-keeping Boranas, while Gabbra and Sakuyes specialized in camel-keeping. As competition for grazing lands and resources increased, conflicts emerged. Fratkin and Roth 2005, 38–39.

<sup>683</sup> The Nomads are people without fixed habitation, who regularly move to and from the same areas. There are hunter-gatherers, pastoral nomads (owning livestock), and trader nomads. In 1995, there were an estimated 30–40 million Nomads in the world. Giles 1997, 88–91.

<sup>684</sup> Lundebý 1984, 100, Lundebý 2002, 202–203.

<sup>685</sup> IA, EXI: 5, Treasures 1977–1980, Committee report 10.10.1979.

<sup>686</sup> Lundebý 1984, 100, Lundebý 2002, 202–203.

if we reach the people, we must be able to be among them periodically and preferably a week or two at a time [...] Help us build such a mobile mission station so we can reach the Nomads. They have been waiting for the Gospel for a long time!<sup>687</sup>

In 1981, twenty Boranas were baptized at Marsabit and a new baptismal course started.<sup>688</sup> The work progressed slowly. It focused on three locations: Marsabit, Chalbi-Huri, and Sololo-Uran. There was also a plan to start working at Anona near the Ethiopian border. At Marsabit, a Church could not be built in the city because the authorities did not allow that. "A nursery in connection with the Church would look better in the eyes of people and authorities," Oddvar Vold wrote in his report of 1982.<sup>689</sup>

In 1989, Johannes Selstø requested for a Kenyan worker to enter the area and Henry Otworu was chosen to be the first ELCK Kenyan pastor among the Boranas. He worked there 1989–1991. In 1992, Abdub Godana, who had been actively assisting the missionaries, graduated from the MLTC and was ordained to be the pastor of Marsabit.<sup>690</sup> The year 1995 was a turning point for the mission. For the first time in history, the entire Bible was translated into the mother tongue of the Borana. The NLM had been involved in the work.<sup>691</sup> By 1996, 16 NLM missionaries had worked in this area.<sup>692</sup> Under difficult circumstances, and without much visible success, the mission left the area in January 1997.<sup>693</sup>

The sown seed germinated. Here in this area, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya faced thousands of refugees coming across from Ethiopia. One of them was Andrea Halakhe Barako, a lay preacher trained in Ethiopia by Norwegian missionaries. He continued to serve as one of the first evangelists in Marsabit. His son John Halakhe, born in 1974, was ordained as a pastor on 22 November 1998 by Bishop Francis Nyamwaro. He was appointed the General Secretary in August 2002.<sup>694</sup> The Gabra and Burji ethnic groups also had their representatives on the Church's staff. Rev. Abdub Godana represented the Gabras, while Rev. Kora Woche and Rev. Lole Said were Burjis.<sup>695</sup> Jesus invited members from all the ethnic groups into His fellowship. For her part, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya was accomplishing this vision.

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<sup>687</sup> Translation by author. NLMA, Da 002002, *Mobilt misjonsarbeid for å nå Nãmadene i Nord-Kenya* by Tore Vågen 1985.

<sup>688</sup> *Utsyn* 15/1981.

<sup>689</sup> NLMA, Dc-0002, Sketching and Planning for Marsabit and Borana 1982 by Oddvar Vold.

<sup>690</sup> MA, Email from Henry Otworu 13.2.2019.

<sup>691</sup> *Utsyn* 18/1995.

<sup>692</sup> Gard Eilef and Ellen, Korsvik Morten and Inger, Selstø Johannes and Klara, Strømme Arthur and Aud, Stige Solveig, Vold Oddvar and Berit, Vågen Tore and Marit, Wilhelmsen Bjørg, Østertun Knut and Elisabeth. MA, Email from Ragnhild Myren, the administrative advisor of the NLM International 28.2.2020.

<sup>693</sup> Lundebø 2002, 204.

<sup>694</sup> MA, Email from John Halakhe 7.10.2019. Andrea Halakhe is mentioned in Imberg 2008, 47.

<sup>695</sup> MA, interview of Kora Woche 6.9.2018.

## Somali

In the mid-1990s, Anssi Simojoki (LEAF) encountered Somalis<sup>696</sup> at Meru Market. There he met the Somali Pastor Ismael Shaffi, who introduced him to other Somalis. Shaffi later also visited him in Nairobi. Swedish Lutherans had been working in Somalia and therefore many Somalis remembered Lutheranism. This was the reason they were seeking out Lutheran teaching. Simojoki began teaching the *Catechism* and conducted baptisms for them. Karen Lutheran Center became a place where they gathered. Mohamed Abdi Gurhan, a Lutheran Somali, assisted Simojoki serving as interpreter, a reader of Somali texts, and a teacher of the *Catechism*. In 2000, a classroom was renovated into a chapel and the ELCK Archbishop, Walter Obare, blessed it for the Somali work. In 2009 this work ended when Simojoki returned to Finland.<sup>697</sup>

Several Somali Christians were assisted in moving abroad. Reino Toikka (LEAF), who worked closely with Anssi Simojoki, remembers a Somali girl who had been promised marriage by her parents. She attended Lutheran divine services at Karen Lutheran Center and was baptized. Then she was kidnapped and taken to a refugee camp, awaiting a transfer to Somalia. The *Koran* was read to her, stones were put into her mouth, and she was beaten. Somehow, she managed to escape and return to Karen Center, where she was hidden for two years. During this time, a man who was to become her future husband also became a Christian and was baptized. Finally, they were able to flee abroad and had a Christian wedding.<sup>698</sup> The Somalis who converted to Christianity faced persecution and danger. With their lives, they testified to their new Master.

## 7.5 Pioneer Work of Kisumu

Already in the early 1960s, there were plans to start Lutheran mission work in Kisumu, a city mainly populated by the Luos. At that time, it was a city of about 20,000 people but growing rapidly. By the early 1970s, the population had increased by 50%. By 1980, it had already risen to 156,000. Kisumu was the main city in Nyanza, lying on the northeastern shore of Lake Victoria.<sup>699</sup> In 1973, Evangelist Richard Ongeru managed to start a small congregation of 6 members here. He was assisted by Evangelist Simon Onseti and Rev. Nicholas Oenga, both

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<sup>696</sup> The Somalis in Kenya (240 000 in 1997) are Kenyan citizens and residents. They have historically inhabited the Northeastern Province, which was carved out of the Jubaland region during the colonial period. Political turbulence in the 1980s and 1990s caused thousands of Somalis to seek refuge in neighboring countries including Kenya. Giles 1997, 94–97.

<sup>697</sup> At the beginning of 1996, Simojoki was appointed Vice-President for Africa by the Lutheran Heritage Foundation (LHF). He supervised translations of Confessional Lutheran literature into African languages. Karen Lutheran Center became the headquarters of the LHF in Nairobi. MA, interview of Anssi Simojoki 18.9.2019. Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese of Finland, Risto Soramies, ordained Mohamed Gurhan in Addis Ababa in December 2016. *Pyhäkön Lamppu* 6/2016.

<sup>698</sup> MA, interview of Reino Toikka 28.8.2019.

<sup>699</sup> Kisumu, Kenya Metro Area Population 1950–2020 / Macrotrends.net. Accessed 06.05.2020.

employed by the National Christian Council of Kenya in Kisumu. The first Lutheran baptism was conducted on 24 June 1973 by Rev. Samwel Mogeni. Since then, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya was looking for a plot for a Church center.<sup>700</sup>

The Executive Committee had requested a missionary for Kisumu, and LEAF answered by sending the Tapio and Elsi Laitinen family to Kenya in August 1973. A house for the LEAF mission along Ojijo Oteko Drive was bought. At this compound, a nursery (80–100 children)<sup>701</sup>, a women's group (8–10)<sup>702</sup> and divine services were started. Worship services were also arranged at the city center. When Kisumu became a District in 1976 with two parishes, Tapio Laitinen was chosen as District Leader. At the end of the same year, he managed to register a plot for a parish center, where then the Sunday services, the nursery, and the women's group continued.<sup>703</sup>

Deaconess Salme Rintakomsi (LEAF) came to Kisumu at the end of the 1970s. During her home visitations, she encountered a wide range of disabled children who had no access to school. She began to plan education and activities for them. The Church leadership supported her, but there was resistance from some other workers. Wiliam Akandi collected the children in a *matatu* [minibus]. In 1980, they participated in the Paralympics for the disabled at Nakuru. The awareness of the event was spread via the radio. Indians, who were primarily Hindus, financially supported this event. Some of their children, as well as Muslim children, attended the school. The Government demanded registration for the school and gradually the Kisumu School for the Mentally Handicapped was officially established. "The school for the mentally handicapped breaks down the boundaries between different religions and cultures", Rintakomsi wrote in a Finnish mission magazine.<sup>704</sup>

Deacon Tuuli Tamminen (LEAF) succeeded Rintakomsi. She was in charge when a full boarding school was arranged with 60 disabled children in 1985. Tamminen visited the homes of many of these children, together with Rev. Robert Muhando. She also had a Sunday school in the Nyalenda slum area for about 30 children. After her, Joshua Odhiambo became the first Kenyan principal of the school followed by Edward Kochung. In 1992, a sheltered

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<sup>700</sup> ELCK Jubilee 1948–1998, 3.

<sup>701</sup> The Kenyan teachers were Margaret Odongo, Roselyn Naliaka, Hellen Kephass, Jane Aluodo.

<sup>702</sup> Led by Dinah Awiti.

<sup>703</sup> Laitinen 1995, 65–72, Laitinen 2002, 248–251. Paavo and Annikki Erelä's family (LEAF) followed the Laitinens in 1977. In the 1980s, LEAF invested in Kisumu by sending several congregational workers including teachers for the Finnish school: Salme Rintakomsi, Tuuli Tamminen, Aatos and Aino Vesämäki, Pasi and Sirkka-Liisa Suvanto, Raija Partanen, Timo and Varpu Viitala, Markus and Ruut Andersson, Pauli and Kaija Heikkinen, Eeva Kokkonen, Ritva Vuorimäki, Tuija Lamminmäki, Sylvi Pulkkinen. LEAF Annual Reports of 1977–1990.

<sup>704</sup> Translation by author. *Kirkkomme Lähetys* 2/1995.



workshop was established.<sup>705</sup> Anna Adiema was appointed Principal in 1993. She belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. Her motto was: "Only the interests of the children are pursued here!" During her time, the interests of the Church and the school collided. The Church leadership was not pleased with the school's independent development, but instead wanted the facilities for other uses like serving as a guest house. However, the school continued to operate under the Government of Kenya. Deaconess Tuula Leppänen (LEAF) wrote to Finland with concern: "With the new Headmaster, the school has achieved uncompromising integrity. I am very glad about that. Unfortunately, not everybody is excited."<sup>706</sup>

The Kisumu School for the Mentally Handicapped was used as an official training school. The school received Government aid from Finland and was also sponsored by the German Christoffel-Blindenmission. The activities were further supported by the LEAF sponsorship program, which began in 1984. The Spouse of the President of Finland, Tellervo Koivisto visited the site, November 1985, followed by the Foreign Minister Paavo Väyrynen, January 1986. Both of them were accompanied by representatives from the Embassy of Finland, Nairobi.<sup>707</sup> In Finland, the school strengthened LEAF's mission activity. It spoke to the hearts of people. It even gained visibility on television.<sup>708</sup> Kenya's president, Daniel arap Moi, had designated 1980 as the Year of the Disabled, as they were a widely neglected and discriminated against group in the country. Kisumu School for the Mentally Handicapped was helping to change those attitudes.<sup>709</sup> The school was one of the first institutions of its type in Kenya and it received widespread attention in both Kenya and Finland.

Kisumu, as one of the biggest cities in Kenya, gradually developed into a center of Church activities within the Nyanza area. At the same time, it was a gateway to other areas and towns in Kenya as well as to Uganda and Tanzania. Previously, the Church had worked in rural areas, apart from Nairobi. Now, she wanted to focus her efforts more on urban ministry.

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<sup>705</sup> There were three sick children in one home. The home was extremely poor. The children lay together in a corner. Their eyes were blinded. They could barely walk. The family was amazed, that somebody wanted to see them. MA, interview of Tuuli Tamminen 16.9.2019.

<sup>706</sup> Translation by author. KIA, Kummikirjeenvaihto 1991–2005, Circular mission letter of Tuula Leppänen 18.4.1993. The LEAF missionaries who succeeded Tamminen, were Tuula Heikkilä, Sylvi Pulkkinen and Tuula Leppänen. Principal Anna Adiema was finally forced to leave in 2004. Leppänen supported Adiema and was put under Church discipline by the Bishops Walter Obare and Richard Amayo. Today the school receives its teachers from the Government and runs well. MA, interview of Tuula Leppänen 6.10.2015.

<sup>707</sup> Ss 13/1985, 45/1985 and 47/1985, "Väyrynen's visit was especially fun. He was very interested in the work." MA, interview of Tuuli Tamminen 16.9.2019, ELCK Jubilee 1948–1998, 12–13. At the beginning of 1980, there were only four schools for disabled children in Kenya. *Ketju* 4/1982, Paasonen 2001, 112.

<sup>708</sup> Paasonen 2001, 112, 116.

<sup>709</sup> "The school for the disabled is changing attitudes in Kenya." Translation by author. Ss 42/1984.

## 7.6 Urban Ministry in Nairobi

At the beginning of the 1980s, the population of Nairobi was 862,000. By the end of the decade, its population had already grown to more than 1,300,000 and continued to grow by a million per decade.<sup>710</sup> People from all the different ethnic groups in Kenya arrived in the city. As more and more people moved there, many were forced to live in slums. The Kibera and Kawangware slum areas were growing rapidly, challenging the Christian Churches to meet the increasing need for assistance. The ELCK also tried to meet this challenge. Nicholas Oenga was chosen as the pastor of the Uhuru congregation at the beginning of the 1980s. The World Mission Prayer League missionaries continued their work here; Janice Larsen (WMPL) replaced Margaret Wall (WMPL) in 1981.<sup>711</sup> In the 1980s, also LEAF invested in Nairobi by sending missionaries, Tuula Sääksi being the first one. Their focus was on basic parish and diaconal work, especially in the Kibera and Kawangware slums.<sup>712</sup>

The evangelists Enos Omodhi and Joseph Khembo came to Nairobi in 1981. Bible studies, women's groups, and house-to-house visitation were part of Omodhi's daily routines. In the slums, children were the key to reaching new people. Through Sunday school, even the parents were touched. Some men were hostile, but the women were more tolerant. Already in 1977, a Church building had been built in Kibera. In 1986, the Kibera center (WMPL-LWF) with a nursery was dedicated for service by Francis Nyamwaro.<sup>713</sup> At Kibera, Sirkka Kuula (LEAF) experienced several successes despite many difficulties. She remembers a traditional medicine man who became a Christian and also Julian, who had been forced into prostitution by her father. She was then trained as a talented dressmaker. "With the aid of her sewing machine, she trained her children!" Kuula rejoiced.<sup>714</sup> Deaconess Mary Eliaika also worked with the women:

The work is hard because many women expect to get help from the Church: food, money, clothes, school fees, etc. When they don't get this, they don't want to cooperate. I mean, they don't attend women's gatherings on a regular basis. They say Jesus also taught and fed people when he found out they were hungry.<sup>715</sup>

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<sup>710</sup> Nairobi, Kenya Metro Area Population 1950–2020 / Macrotrends.net. Accessed 06.05.2020.

<sup>711</sup> Ward 1999, 258–272. See chapter "International Congregation".

<sup>712</sup> Sääksi was the LEAF representative at the time. Developing the work and starting a new one in Nairobi were challenging and time-consuming tasks. In addition to the Uhuru Highway congregation, Sääksi worked in the slums. Cooperation with the Nairobi Finns was active. MA, interview of Tuula Sääksi 16.6.2020. LEAF Nairobi missionaries in the 1980s: Tuula Sääksi, Sirkka Kuula, Antti and Heli Kujanpää, Sakari and Pirjo Nurmesviita, Outi Vainio, Mirja-Leena Tanttu/Pattison, Seppo and Tarja Piisola, Maarit Ruuhela/Otto, Tuuli Tamminen, Paavo and Annikki Erelä. LEAF Annual reports of 1980–1990.

<sup>713</sup> MA, interview of Enos Omodhi 7.11.2018, Ss 10/1977.

<sup>714</sup> MA, interview of Sirkka Kuula 22.8.2016.

<sup>715</sup> Translation by author. Piisola 1995: 138–139.

The Kawangware Church center (LEAF–FINNIDA) was constructed and then consecrated in 1987. The same year at Kiambu, a new congregation with 50 members joined the Church. Sakari Nurmesviita (LEAF) took care of Namibian refugees, along with his other duties. In addition to successes, he reported many difficulties. The construction of Kawangware Church had been stalled for some time because of money problems; the Kibera pastor was arrested; the parish money and goods were stolen; fake receipts and vouchers were found. “Even by Nairobi’s standards, the situation can be said to have escalated,” Nurmesviita informed his Home Board in 1987.<sup>716</sup> During the years 1987–1995, Mike Koski (WMPL) worked with Samburu and Maasai men who had come to work in Nairobi, mostly watchmen. They were homesick and needed counseling. Koski opened “rooms of refuge” for them in Kibera, Kawangware, Kangemi, Kachie, and some other locations. These groups met weekly with Kenyan Church workers. Worship services were arranged in both the Maa and Samburu languages.<sup>717</sup>

Peter Ndung’u was born in Kibera. His father had come to Nairobi at the age of fifteen looking for a job. He had seven children and there was no money to educate all of them. World Vision International, working at the ELCK compound, assisted Peter in his schooling. He also did cleaning jobs and sold *mandazi* [donuts] and vegetables by the roadside. He managed to complete high school and started working at a clothing factory. He left there after being shouted at by an Indian director as “a freaking African, who never learns anything”. After experiencing the slum nightlife, he made a complete turnaround in his life and decided to go to the MLTC to become a pastor. He studied there 1988–1992 and was ordained at Uhuru Highway on 22 Dec. 1992 as the first ELCK Kikuyu pastor. He served at Kibera with his wife Eddah, who had a catering business for the Kibera school children. In all his activities, Peter was motivated by the Lutheran message: “Nairobi has hundreds of denominations, sects and all sorts of religious groups. Here every Christian must know what he believes and why. The word of God is the norm for everything. In the Word and sacraments, we have everything we need for living as Christians.”<sup>718</sup> In 1993, there were several Kenyan workers in Nairobi: the parish pastors Joseph Osoro (Uhuru) and Peter Ndung’u (Kibera), evangelists Samwel Atunga (Kiambu), Enos Omodhi (Kawangware), Silvester Opiyo (Dandora), and Francis Mboche (Kibera), deaconesses Mary Khainga and Mary Eliaika.<sup>719</sup>

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<sup>716</sup> Translation by author. Antti Kujanpää (LEAF) had been active in finding the Kawangware plot. KIA, activity reports, Report of Sakari Nurmesviita 1987.

<sup>717</sup> “Only in my ministry in Nairobi did I sense any type of tribalism. I worked with urban Samburus and Maais. I invited national workers to participate in the weekly sessions – especially remembering one MLTC student who was to observe this work and help. He did not last long – maybe because he was Kisii.” MA, Email from Mike Koski 30.11.2018.

<sup>718</sup> Translation by author. Peltola 1995, 146–152.

<sup>719</sup> IA, EII: 25, Corr. Gen. Sec. 1992–1994, Nairobi District 1993 report – ELCK 30 years in Nairobi.

In October 1990, the Uhuru Highway Congregation made the headlines in both the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*. New Park Towers planned to set up a car park on the Church grounds. The matter had already been discussed at ELCK headquarters. Parishioners, under the leadership of Anssi Simojoki, strongly opposed the matter, accusing the Church leadership of shoving them into rebellion. A group of 30 elders, led by the Council Chairperson Mrs. Jedidah Akpoko, stated that there had been no prior consultation on the matter. Contrary to the car park, a nursery and a leather workshop for women were planned. "We want to help children and women to earn a living here, since our work is, first and foremost, spiritual service to the people, rather than have machines polluting this place. Cars are not part of the flock," Akpoko told the reporters.<sup>720</sup> Despite the opposition, the leased parking lots were built on the site as a source of income for the Church.<sup>721</sup>

General Secretary Richard Olak reminded the mission societies that the Church was responsible for the people moving to Nairobi. In the early 1990s, 200 to 300 people moved there every day. The challenges were huge:

The population grows rapidly, resulting in numerous problems, for example, lack of housing, school facilities, and healthcare, unemployment, etc. People face social problems, broken families, crimes, alcoholism, drugs, etc. The Churches face endless challenges all over the city.<sup>722</sup>

Together with her mission partners, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya took urban ministry in Nairobi seriously. This milieu posed different challenges to parish work than the countryside. The flock was enormous, not to mention the cars. Especially the slum areas at Kibera and Kawangware were invested in and paid special attention to. Along with the Uhuru Highway congregation, they became the focus areas of the ELCK work in Nairobi.

## 7.7 Mission Stations as Models

The Swedish Lutheran Mission had started its mission work in Kenya by building a mission station at Itierio in 1948. Another mission station was built at Matongo in 1953. In the early 1980s, the SLM built yet another station, Chesinende. Atemo station had been built in 1968 on the initiative of the Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland. The subsequent mission societies each built their stations: Monianku (LEAF), Kapenguria (NLM), and Rukongo (SLEAF), which are presented below together with Chesinende. The smaller stations, Arsim (WMPL), Chesta (NLM) Sekerr (NLM), Chepareria (NLM), Kongolai (NLM), and Marsabit (NLM) are dealt with separately, along

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<sup>720</sup> *The Standard* 8.10.1990, *Daily Nation* 9.10.1990.

<sup>721</sup> Parking lots were also planned in Kisumu, but there, too, they were opposed. This time the opposition won. Instead, a new Church building was constructed. MA, interview of Pauli Heikkinen 6.5.2020.

<sup>722</sup> NLMA, Dbb 0038, Meeting on Thursday 20.6.1991 with Richard Olak and the NLM administration.

with the mission activities related to these areas. The same applies to the coastal stations, Diani (NLM) and Msambweni (NLM).<sup>723</sup>

Based on the number of the mission stations alone, one could argue that the Missions themselves saw these stations as important in reaching new areas and ethnic groups. Through the stations, mission activities indeed were better rooted in their respected areas. However, in terms of the overall Church, they also contributed to the undesirable development of the Church's dependence on Western funding. In addition, the missionaries living in high-quality houses – compared to local housing – increased the feeling of inequality from the perspective of both the Church officials and the parishioners.<sup>724</sup> The mission stations had both positive and negative effects on the overall Church.

### **Monianku**

At Monianku, a remote village on a boundary of the Kisii and Maasai people, the Church founded a congregation and started a primary school in 1957. Martin Lundström, evangelists Daniel Ogetii and Aristarko Ongoro were influencers here. Then, Rev. Jeftha Michoro started conducting baptismal classes and worship services; the first baptism of 12 people was on December 13, 1959. After the initial enthusiasm, the congregation disintegrated when opposed by local SDA members. This time, David Amenity was the only one who remained in the Church. Gradually work resumed. At the beginning of the 1970s, the members of the Monianku congregation begun to build a dispensary, but it remained unfinished.<sup>725</sup>

At the Annual General Meeting of 1974, missionary nurse Alpha Jaques (WMPL) brought greetings from Monianku. She suggested that the medical staff would visit there monthly with a mobile clinic. The LEAF missionaries Tuula Heikkilä and Elma Lappeteläinen took up the challenge and made these visitations regularly, starting from April 1975. At first, they slept in tents, arranging mobile clinics also among the Maasai. In 1976, they received a vehicle suitable for rough roads.<sup>726</sup> Lappeteläinen wrote about the life at Monianku:

Cow theft has increased. Last night we heard screams and warnings as the Kisiis searched for their lost cows. Afterwards at the clinic, we tried to repair wounds caused by arrows and bows. Especially the Maasai women are now afraid to enter the Kisii area. Another topic of sorrow is the drinking of “*Pombe*” [alcohol]. Even Christians use it to some extent and then children in homes are exposed to it.<sup>727</sup>

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<sup>723</sup> See chapters “Evangelizing Cattle-Tribes and Muslim Majority Ethnic Groups”.

<sup>724</sup> See chapter “Financial Dependence”.

<sup>725</sup> MLTCA, Matongo occasional papers, volume 3, Historical documents, *History of the districts of ELCK*. David Amenity’s interview by Frederick Ochoki, MA, interview of Naphtali Igendia 10.11.2018.

<sup>726</sup> Lounela 2007, 189–190.

<sup>727</sup> Translation by author. KIA, Work reports, Report of Elma Lappeteläinen 28.1.1978.

Pirkko Möttönen (LEAF) moved to Monianku in 1978 and taught at the Middle School. In 1982, she married a local primary school teacher, Naphtali Igendia. Together they served Monianku and the entire Church in various positions until the mid-2010s.<sup>728</sup> At Monianku, the Kenyans had started to build a *Harambee*<sup>729</sup> secondary school in 1976. After that, staff houses and a dispensary (1977), a Church building (1978), and a health center (1981) were built. An ambulance was bought, and the availability of both water and electricity was ensured. Money was channeled through FINNIDA. In 1987, a new Church building was constructed under the leadership of Aatos Vesamäki (LEAF). Even the school of Finnish children operated here from 1984 to 1988.<sup>730</sup> Gradually, Monianku became the center of LEAF activities in Kenya. In total, 22 of its missionaries worked there until the early 1990s. Pirkko Igendia was the last missionary to leave Monianku in early 1992.<sup>731</sup>

From Monianku, the work expanded among both the Maasai and the Kuria<sup>732</sup>. New congregations were born in the surrounding areas: Emburkel, Mapashi, Siteti, Otendo, Ndonyo, Ibencho, Mengineyo. Several evangelists worked here: David Amenity, Daniel Ayiema, Joshua Mekenye, Joseck Mogoi, Frederick Ochoki, Lameck Okeyo, Julius Ondieki, Jason Oyondi; Sophia Wankio became the deaconess of Monianku. She was a graduate of the first MLTC diaconal course. Joseph Emburkel from Mapashi was influential among the Maasais.<sup>733</sup> President James Otete had introduced a plan for a Maasai mission when LEAF was entering Kenya. He had a special vision for this work: "We need a worker who lives among the Maasais and travels with them." Otete was hoping to open a mission station in Ang'ata, close to the Tanzanian border, to reach the Maasais living there.<sup>734</sup> Monianku, 60 km from Ang'ata, instead, was now used as the door to enter this mission.

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<sup>728</sup> Pirkko retired in 2013. Naphtali joined the Lutheran Heritage Foundation in 2009, overseeing translation projects of Lutheran literature into various ethnic languages. He retired in 2018. Monianku is still their home. MA, interviews of Naphtali and Pirkko Igendia 10.11.2018.

<sup>729</sup> Harambee schools were community schools where local people participated in the expenses. The government promised that if parents built a school, it would provide a teacher. Lounela 2007, 172.

<sup>730</sup> Lounela 2007, 189–192.

<sup>731</sup> LEAF missionaries at Monianku by 1992: Pirkko Möttönen/Igendia, Elma Lappeteläinen, Leena Mannermaa, Anja-Maija Vanhanen, Tuula Heikkilä, Paavo and Hilikka Toikka, Veikko and Irja Aro-Heinilä, Anna-Liisa Kakkinen, Marjatta Kurki, Aatos and Aino Vesamäki, Ruut Andesson, Eeva Kröger, Mirja-Leena Tanttu, Matti and Meeri Auramo, Seppo and Tarja Piisola, Reino and Reija Toikka. LEAF Annual Reports of 1978–1992.

<sup>732</sup> Rev. Henry Otworu worked among the Kuria in 1982–1985. MA, Email from Henry Otworu 13.2.2019. The Kuria people are Bantus in Tanzania and Kenya bounded by Migori and Mara Rivers. The Kuria are traditionally a farming community, primarily planting maize, beans, and cassava. Cash crops include coffee and maize. The Kuria also keep cattle. They are divided into several clans. Category: Ethnic groups in Kenya – Wikipedia. Accessed 12.02.2020.

<sup>733</sup> MLTCA, Matongo occasional papers, volume 3, Historical documents, *History of the districts of ELCK*. Teacher David Amenity's interview by Frederick Ochoki, MA, interview of Matti Auramo 28.12.2019.

<sup>734</sup> Arkkila 2010, 271–273.

## Chesinende

The Lutheran mission work among the Kipsigis<sup>735</sup> started in 1961 through Sigowet.<sup>736</sup> The work progressed slowly at first because according to John-Erik Ekström (SLM), the Kisiis were not on good terms with the Kipsigis. "The Kisii people have no love towards the Kipsigis, because of old ethnic controversies. But one evangelist has asked me to go there and preach the Word of God, including our station manager here, Ombeta," Ekström wrote to Sweden.<sup>737</sup> In the 1970s, women work was strong in this area led by Barbro Nilsson (SLM).<sup>738</sup>

In 1979, the first parish was established. It included eight congregations: Saino, Sigowet, Mindililwet, Emdet, Kalyongwet, Kericho, Chesinende, and Sondu. The same year, the first permanent church building was built in Sigowet and the following year in Saino. In 1982, construction began in Chesinende and the evangelistic work reached Tenduet, Bomet, and Lugumek<sup>739</sup>. With his family, Julius Chepkony was one of the driving forces in Lugumek. The first missionaries, Hans-Benny and Jytte Jacobsen-Rom (ELM) moved to Chesinende in January 1983. The same year a new church was consecrated. In 1987, a Bible center started. "The Lord loves the Kenyan people, and so we can now rejoice that the Chesinende Bible Center is complete. Jesus' love is not just words – but action," was written in the SLM Annual report. After that, a variety of courses were held. The focal groups were Church workers, elected lay representatives, young people, Sunday school teachers, school teachers, and women. The first Kipsigis pastor, Daniel Kitur, was ordained in 1985, and the second, Joseph Kiprotich Sabulei, in 1992. Kongoi High School in Saino received the assistance of SIDA funds in 1993.<sup>740</sup> By 1996, thirteen SLM missionaries had worked in this area.<sup>741</sup> Chesinende was profiled as the Swedish Lutheran Mission Center.

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<sup>735</sup> The Kipsigis are Nilotic people. They are the most populous sub-group of the Kalenjin, who originated in the South Sudan region. The Kipsigis describe their place of origin as Lake Baringo. Fish 1995, 140.

<sup>736</sup> Ekström mentions Daniel Arap Kirui as a Kipsigis evangelist. RA, BVA, E 1 e: 33, J-E Ekström to Sigurd Stark 6.9.1972.

<sup>737</sup> Translation by author. RA, BVA, e 1 L: 1, J-E Ekström to Gunnar Nilsson 5.10.1974.

<sup>738</sup> "Women's work flourishes in Sigowet." Translation by author. RA, BVA, E 1 e Missionärsbrev 38, J-E Ekström to Gunnar Nilsson 7.10.1976.

<sup>739</sup> "The competition for souls is great here: the Africa Gospel Mission, the Anglicans had a meeting in a school and the Catholics under a tree nearby where two Americans had gathered people from three congregations [...] I probably don't understand our mission strategy when it comes to the Kipsigis work, nor even why we started to build a mission station here! near Saino with the Kisi people!" Translation by author. RA, BVA, E19: 3, Rune Karlsson to Gunnar Nilsson 18.2.1985.

<sup>740</sup> Translation by author. MA, *History of the Kipsigis work*. Information was collected from the SLM annual reports by Kerstin Nilsson.

<sup>741</sup> Hans-Benny and Jytte Jacobsen-Rom, Christer and Karin Johansson, Greta Brorsson, Dorrit Bakkegård Pedersen, Per and Signe Munch, Jesper Holm Nielsen, Helene Vester Nielsen/Kofoed-Jespersen, Stefan and Annmarie Ekström, Gunnel Gustavsson. MA, Email from Kerstin Nilsson 18.7.2020.

The mission work expanded to Kericho<sup>742</sup> and Nakuru<sup>743</sup>. The SLM Annual report stated: “The Christians in the big cities of Kericho and Nakuru are crying out for help, both financially and in terms of work. Are we as a mission willing, and do we have the courage, to go into the cities to labor?” Together with his family, Hans-Hugo Nilsson (SLM) had already stayed in Kericho at the end of the 1970s. But it was not until the 1990s, when ethnic conflicts raised their heads, that the mission work was centralized in Kericho. Per and Signe Munch with their four children (ELM) moved there in 1992. In Nakuru, the work started through evangelists Joshua Meza and Hezekiel Pete. Daudi Mundia was the first ELCK pastor serving there. In 1995, Nakuru became a parish and then a District consisting of seven parishes: Barut, Mbaruk, Mkulima, Molo, Nakuru (Pangani), Ogilgei, and Saino.<sup>744</sup> Pangani center with a church, a parish house, and a school was constructed at the turn of 1996–1997. In the new millennium, a street-children project, termed the Bethesda Children’s Ministry, began at Pangani.<sup>745</sup> Through Nakuru, many different ethnic groups were reached, including the Kikuyus<sup>746</sup>, the largest ethnic group in Kenya.

### Kapenguria

Early on, the Pokot area had no trained evangelists. Untrained workers were ministering to congregations, without an emphasis on Lutheran theology. Samson Lokipuna, who later became Bishop of this area, witnessed how people could not distinguish Lutheran worship from other services. For this reason, the construction of the Kapenguria Bible Center was very important. Theology was now taught, and the Church began to grow strongly through Church planting and active evangelism.<sup>747</sup> Erling Lundeby writes about the planning process:

Clerk to County Council, Jackson Katina, informed us that we would be given a plot of 20 acres right below the DC’s office. The council was much impressed by what we had accomplished in Chesta, Sekerr, and Chepareria, and they

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<sup>742</sup> Kericho is the biggest town in Kericho County, located in the highlands west of the Kenyan Rift Valley. Standing on the edge of the Mau Forest, Kericho has a warm and temperate climate making it an ideal location for agriculture and tea cultivation. Investing in Kericho County – Wikipedia. Accessed 03.10.2020.

<sup>743</sup> Nakuru is the fourth-largest city in Kenya after Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kisumu. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics – Wikipedia. Accessed 03.10.2020.

<sup>744</sup> Translation by author. MA, *History of the Kipsigis work*. Information was collected from the SLM Annual Reports by Kerstin Nilsson.

<sup>745</sup> Ekström 2011, 413–419. For Bethesda Children’s Ministry, see Gwako 2011.

<sup>746</sup> The Kikuyu is the largest ethnic group in Central Kenya and also found in significantly fewer numbers in Tanzania. They speak the Bantu Kikuyu language. They account for about 17% of the total population of Kenya. Giles 1997, 66–69.

<sup>747</sup> Chemwal 2009, 43. The first worship services were conducted under trees. Samburu or Kiswahili was used with no liturgical booklets because most of the people did not know how to read. “The liturgist opened by prayer, then a chorus, after that he welcomed the Christians for testimony followed by a chorus. The first and second reading, creed, chorus, the speaker of the day, closing with the Lord’s prayer. After the service, they had opportunities to meet friends and exchange the joy of the day.” Kariwonyang 2000, 65. Samson Lokipuna died on 29.5.2021.



encouraged us to develop an institution that would continue to serve the whole community. We were overwhelmed –and thankful to God! Here was an answer to prayer exceeding what we could realistically hope for!<sup>748</sup>

Kapenguria Bible School was officially opened in May 1985. Before teaching started, a staff house, a store, a classroom, an office, a dining hall, and two dormitories were built. The first Theological Education by Extension course started in April 1984; in September, a course for evangelists was arranged. This was followed by courses for Church elders, women, youth, and Sunday school teachers.<sup>749</sup> “This Bible School represents a milestone for the mission of Pokot,” the mission newspaper *Utsyn* wrote when the first course for assistants took place on 9 April 1984. In this course, the students and teachers numbered thirty.<sup>750</sup> Bjarne Taranger was responsible for Kapenguria from the beginning, followed by Kjell Strømme in 1986.<sup>751</sup>

In the early 1990s, Kapenguria was developed with determination. It became a training center for different kinds of Church workers. The first full course for ten evangelists was graduated in 1994. By that time, the school had held 16 courses in various categories: evangelists, elders, group leaders, and women.<sup>752</sup> In the 1990s, the Pokot Development Program introduced training on healthcare, school, agriculture, and women’s work.<sup>753</sup> In late 1995, Jakob Trodahl was worried about the budget, whether it would be enough for all the future construction. More teachers were also needed. “Matongo is in a great crisis, we must concentrate on Kapenguria,” Trodahl wrote with concern.<sup>754</sup> A total of fourteen NLM missionaries had resided in Kapenguria by 1996.<sup>755</sup> In the new millennium, even two pastoral courses were held there.<sup>756</sup> Kapenguria as the NLM mission center was responsible for the education challenges of the Church’s northwest region.

## Rukongo

From the early 1980s, SLEAF was looking for a new mission station. Especially Boris Sandberg and Richard Olak were inspired by this idea. The Siaya area was

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<sup>748</sup> Lundeby 2018, 15.

<sup>749</sup> Lundeby 2018, 15–17.

<sup>750</sup> Translation by author. *Utsyn* 19/1984.

<sup>751</sup> MA, Email from Kjell Strømme 10.3.2020.

<sup>752</sup> *Utsyn* 12/1994.

<sup>753</sup> Vaagen 1996, 76–79.

<sup>754</sup> Translation by author. NLMA, Dbb 0128, Jakob Trodahl to Tor Arne Haavet 7.12.1995.

<sup>755</sup> Jon and Arnhild Ingebjørg Aardal, Bjørn and Yvonne Hinderaker, Jostein and Gerd Marken Holmedahl, Morten and Inger Korsvik, Kjell Strømme, Bjarne Malvin and Magni Taranger, Asbjørn Vegge, Tore and Marit Vågen. MA, Email from Ragnhild Myren, the administrative advisor of the NLM International 28.2.2020.

<sup>756</sup> The first course with ten students was for a month in 2001, ordination by Bishop Nyamwaro. Some teachers were Skuli Svavarsson, John Nyang’au, and Erling Lundeby. The second, with thirty students, was for twenty weeks from 2008 to 2009, ordination in March 2009 by Bishop Obare. Some of the teachers were Morten Nordvarhaug (Principal), Jakob Hjalmarsson, Tom Omolo, and Moses Okoyo. MA, Email from Davidson Kae 14.1.2020.

first considered but finally Rukongo among the Subas<sup>757</sup> was chosen. The plot was bought from the side of Sumba hill in May 1986, and construction started immediately. Alf Wallin was responsible for it. At first, there was opposition from some Kenyans who did not want to give up their land. There was also a competitive situation between the two ethnic groups: The Subas wanted to receive the same benefits as the Luos. The Subas were proud of their own culture and wanted to ensure it, so that it would not disappear along with their mother tongue, which was already largely lost.<sup>758</sup>

The first Synod of the area was held in August 1986 during which 52 people were baptized and confirmed. The second baptism and confirmation of 56 people took place on 14 December of the same year. Alf and Mona Wallin moved to Rukongo in March 1988, Brita and Olof Jern in November 1990. The Youth Polytechnic started in January 1991 with 8 students. Olof Jern was its first manager, assisted by Lazaro Hayo, as the teacher. Jack Arogo joined the staff in 1992 as a teacher of the trade of masonry. Diakonia and healthcare were introduced by Mona Wallin. She also started the first preschool in the area, together with Judith Okoth and Lucia Aoko. There were 21 children in the first group.<sup>759</sup> In the second half of the 1990s, Marlene Klemets worked with the Deaconesses Caren Ochola, Risper Sabastian, and Pamela Odongo. Klemets was responsible for the financial management as were the other missionaries before her, but she felt that in this way the Kenyan parishioners did not learn how to take care of their finances.<sup>760</sup>

Rev. Johnson Ataro, evangelist James Bolo and the primary school headmaster Francis Odongo helped the congregation get its start. Meshack Ngare served here as the first residential parish pastor (1992–1999) together with Rev. Benson Otieno. The first evangelists were Kepha Ochieng', Patrick Arogo, Moses Okoyo, and Wellington Onyango. In the middle of the 1990s, there were already 28 congregations and five parishes in the area. The new Rukongo church was consecrated on 12 June 1994 by Rev. A.G. Stjernberg, the retired

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<sup>757</sup> The Suba (Abasuba) are Bantus who speak the Suba language. They migrated to Kenya from Uganda and settled on the two Lake Victoria islands of Rusinga and Mfangano and are believed to be the last ethnic groups to have settled in Kenya. Linguistically, the Subas are highly influenced by the neighboring Luo, to the point that their language has been classified as endangered. Despite this language shift, the Suba have kept a distinct ethnic identity. Category: Ethnic groups in Kenya – Wikipedia. Accessed 04.10.2020.

<sup>758</sup> MA, interview of Alf Wallin 1.4.2017.

<sup>759</sup> Already Martin Lundström had the Suba people in his heart, while meeting them at Itierio. MA, interview of Alf and Mona Wallin 1.4.2017. SLEAF missionaries at Rukongo by 1996: Alf and Mona Wallin, Sven and Linnéa Klemets, Olof and Brita Jern, Jorma and Brita Iiskola, Kristian and Camilla Sjöbacka, Ingemar and Marlene Klemets. MA, Email from Brita Jern 25.7.2020.

<sup>760</sup> MA, interview of Marlene Klemets 14.10.2019.

Director of SLEAF. He was assisted by Richard Olak, James Bolo, Johnson Ataro, Meshack Ngare, Richard Amayo, Jared Oomo and Reijo Arkkila.<sup>761</sup>

When Rukongo was built, a lot of money was coming from Finland through SLEAF and FINNIDA. The situation was quite different at Atemo. At that time, the money was very tight. Compared to Atemo, Rukongo was also much smaller. Cooperation between the missionaries and the residents was therefore intense. At Rukongo, Swedish Church services were held four times per year. The SLM missionaries joined them. Mutual relations between the missionaries were handled in this manner.<sup>762</sup> In her research, SLEAF Mission Director Brita Jern demonstrates how Rukongo inspired both the Kenyan and Finnish people as a fulfillment of their wishes. It also increased communication between the home front and the mission field. All in all, this had a positive impact on strengthening the mission identity of both the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya and the Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland.<sup>763</sup>

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<sup>761</sup> SLEAFA, FLM BREV 1994–1996, *Construction and history of the Rukongo station* by Brita Jern, November 1994, MA, interviews of Johnson Ataro 25.9.2018 and Meshack Ngare 24.3.2020, Ss 30.6.1994.

<sup>762</sup> MA, interview of Ingemar Klemets 14.10.2019

<sup>763</sup> Jern 2019, 206–210.

### III. Divine or Human Glory? 1988–1996

#### 8. The Church Existence in Danger

In the Republic of Kenya, President Daniel arap Moi preserved his administration by utilizing strict measures. He saw this necessary because many others coveted his position, which manifested itself even in a coup attempt.<sup>764</sup> In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, the Rev. Francis Nyamwaro Onderi became her new leader following a peaceful coup after his predecessor left for further studies. Although the change of power came as a surprise, it was peaceful. However, beneath the surface, all was not calm. The Church faced a serious crisis that manifested itself both in a spiritual and economic recession. The new leadership responded by strengthening and centralizing the administration. Future plans included the establishment of the office of bishop.

##### 8.1 Autocratic Head Office

Francis Nyamwaro Onderi was among the first to join the SLM mission. Together with James Otete and 16 other people, he was baptized on December 23, 1951, by Enok Salomonsson (SLM). After that, Nyamwaro belonged to the inner circle of the mission. In 1960, he started his studies at Makumira College in Tanganyika. Together with Jeftha Michoro he was ordained by Gustaf Norrback in 1964. In 1965, he was elected Vice-President of the Lutheran Church of Kenya and served in this capacity for four years. In 1971, he began to work as the first Parish Leader of the South Kisii District. In 1981, he again took over the seat of Vice-President, until was chosen Chairman in 1988. He eventually served as the first Bishop of the Church from 1996 to 2002. He was married to Sabina Kemunto and they had eight children.<sup>765</sup>

Kenyans liked Bishop Francis Nyamwaro because of his humility. He was ready to listen and forgive. He behaved politely and was not considered harsh by his fellow pastors. He treated other ethnic group members equally. He was especially appreciated by many Luo pastors because he did not treat them as

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<sup>764</sup> See chapter "Church and Society".

<sup>765</sup> MA, interview of Francis Nyamwaro 9.7.2016, Imberg 2008, 81–82, 154–155. Bishop Nyamwaro died in November 2020.

inferior. Some Kisii pastors, in turn, accused him of favoritism.<sup>766</sup> Many missionaries questioned his ability to lead following the constitution. He was considered friendly but somehow distant. He wanted to please everybody, he was considered a bit uncertain, and his opinions could change at meetings.<sup>767</sup> The leaders of the Church, however, felt that the missionaries criticized Nyamwaro too much. According to them, his main achievement was that – despite the difficulties – he largely managed to keep the Church together.<sup>768</sup>

Samwel Mogeni served as Vice-President from 1988 to 1994. His contribution to the work at the headquarters was significant because he had already served as Vice-President from 1973 to 1979 and thus had good prior experience of administration. Alongside him and Richard Olak as General Secretary, Nyamwaro managed to consolidate his position.<sup>769</sup> Luke Ogello took over Mogeni's position in 1994 and continued as Assistant Bishop from 1996 to 2000. Ogello was born in 1952, became a Lutheran through baptism in 1976, served as an evangelist, and joined the second MLTC pastoral course (PTC II 1982–1986). As a pastor, he then served at Samanga, Nyawita, Kisumu, and Rongo.<sup>770</sup> Daniel Daudi Mundia was elected General Secretary after Richard Olak in 1994. He was a Kenyan but had served in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania for several years and was therefore mostly unknown to the ELCK members. While working in Tanzania, he had learned what it was like to be a foreigner who was not supported by anyone. Because of this, he gave the impression of being a bit insecure and dependent on others.<sup>771</sup> Ogello and Mundia fit perfectly in Nyamwaro's cabinet. Ogello was a Luo, but obedient to Nyamwaro's rule. His purpose was to calm the opposition party. Mundia, in turn, was neutral, without a previous Church political burden. Being from the Luhya ethnic group, he would also act as a buffer between the two competing groups, the Kisiis and the Luos. In Ogello and Mundia, Nyamwaro received loyal allies needed while campaigning for the bishopric.

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<sup>766</sup> MA, interviews of Jared Oomo 21.9.2018, Joseph Momposhi 1.10.2018, John Momanyi 19.5.2016, Joseph Ataro 23.9.2018, and Naphtali Igendia 10.11.2018. "The way Head Office was run was considered old-fashioned and authoritarian with little participation and ownership at the local level. Some Church institutions experienced serious problems which the office was unable to deal with in a satisfactory manner. Old ethnic rivalries began to surface, especially between Kisiis and Luos." Lundebj 2008, 48.

<sup>767</sup> MA, interviews of Raija Leino 21.7.2018, Tapio and Sirkka Kuula 22.8.2016 and Alf Wallin 1.4.2017.

<sup>768</sup> MA, interviews of Walter Obare 9.10.2018, Samwel Mogeni 23.5.2016 and Richard Olak 2.6.2016.

<sup>769</sup> For Mogeni, see chapter "Kenyans Take the Lead". Samwel Mogeni died in November 2020.

<sup>770</sup> MA, interview of Luke Ogello 7.10.2018.

<sup>771</sup> Haavet was working with Mundia in the ELCT. MA, interview of Tor Arne Haavet 27.1.2020. Mundia was running for a bishop's election in the ELCT and while it was associated with a "lot of trouble", he decided to move to Kenya. SLEAFA, FLM BREV 1994–1996, Alf Wallin to Home Board 27.1.1994.

Following the Church's independence in 1963, her membership had grown by about 8% per year.<sup>772</sup> Eventually, the district organization became impossible to manage. As the number of Districts surpassed 20 in the mid-1990s, with each of them represented on the Church's Executive Committee, the situation became increasingly tricky. Jointly with the plans for the episcopacy, the administration itself was now reorganized. Deaneries were established as precursors to dioceses. They were expected to be self-governing and follow ethnic lines. The Executive Committee gradually became an internal cabinet consisting of the Church leadership and some centrally located officials, which arrangement created a distinct tension within the Church.<sup>773</sup> The Missionaries saw their influence diminishing in Nyamwaro's administration. Their critical observations were not taken seriously in the Executive Committee, but simply ignored and silenced. This was especially true in approaching the mid-1990s.<sup>774</sup> The missionaries who acted as treasurers were accused of financial mismanagement. The son of Jeftha Michoro, John Michoro, who had been the accountant since 1987, also had a strong influence at the Head Office. Especially the Luos opposed his behavior and actions.<sup>775</sup>

The Kenyans valued Francis Nyamwaro for his leadership skills in human encounters. He met his neighbors with understanding and equality. The missions, in turn, were displeased over his unconstitutional activity. For this reason, many Kenyans respected Nyamwaro, unlike the missionaries. At times, these disagreements were so great that the parties did not understand each other at all – and considered their differences to be insurmountable. In the hottest moments of the bishop's election, complete breakage was considered the only way forward. Nyamwaro's words "we want no more missionaries who do not want to work with us"<sup>776</sup> describe these moods. In the light of the sources, Nyamwaro appears to be stronger and more determined than his external character and behavior would suggest. This becomes clear as he implemented the episcopalian leadership program in the Church.

## 8.2 Program Declaration

Originally, the leader of the Church was called President – as was the usage in many other Kenyan Churches at that time. He was assisted by the Vice-President. Kenya's new President Daniel arap Moi announced in 1978 that this term could only be used by the leader of the country; Churches and secular

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<sup>772</sup> Imberg 2008, 166–167. See Annex 2.

<sup>773</sup> Gustafsson ed. 1998, 15. Together with the Deans, only two members from each deanery took part in the Executive Committee. The first deans were elected at the 1997 AGM: Luke Ogello for South West, Arve Myra (NLM) for North West, Patrick Atei for Lake, and Reino Toikka (LEAF) for Central. *ELCK Newsletter* 1/1997. Surprisingly, two of them were missionaries!

<sup>774</sup> NLMA, Dbb 0250, Arve Myra to Tor Arne Haavet 9.5.1996, MA, interview of Ingemar Klemets 14.10.2019.

<sup>775</sup> MA, interviews of Antti Kuokkanen 21.10.2019 and Eero Kemiläinen 21.10.2019.

<sup>776</sup> For this, see chapter "No More Missionaries".

organs and companies had to choose other titles for their leaders. Since 1979, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya had officially decided to call her leaders a “Chairman” and a “Vice-Chairman”.<sup>777</sup> The new title raised questions, however. It was not considered appropriate for a Church leader who also had pastoral duties. Nor was it valued in the same way as “bishop” used by many other Churches. In many secular offices, people accused the LCK members: “You are not a true Church because you don’t have a bishop!”<sup>778</sup> In Kenya, the issue of leadership was very important. This dates back to the time when the people were ruled by ethnic chiefs. At first, their power was unlimited, although it was controlled by the community. Through the leader, the entire community gained its respect in society.

The issue of episcopacy was discussed on several occasions in the 1980s. The debate was curbed by the awareness that the Church's constitution did not allow the use of this term since the constitution did not acknowledge such a position. At the same time, especially the Swedish and Norwegian missionaries opposed the idea and tried to persuade the people to at least wait before making decisions. The debate erupted when Chairman John Momanyi left for America for further studies in 1988. He was considered aspiring to the position of bishop. Francis Nyamwaro then took the lead. At the time, “everybody wanted to become a bishop”, Momanyi explained.<sup>779</sup>

At the pastoral meeting in Matongo on October 27–30, 1987 the discussion was lively. Arto Seppänen (LEAF) was advised by his missionary colleagues to be quiet because he was a newcomer to the field. But since the discussion was only about sociological issues, he also wanted to say something. According to him, the question about episcopacy was a question of the Bible and therefore be approached from a theological point of view. After his speech, the Church leadership asked him to prepare a theological paper on this issue, to be discussed at the next meeting.<sup>780</sup> Seppänen prepared a paper called “On the office of a Bishop”. It was not five pages as requested, but instead 42 pages. According to Seppänen, it was “a rough outline” on the issue. He argued that the episcopacy was of the Holy Spirit. The episcopal office was a visible sign of ecclesial unity, the unity of which should be “the most important goal” of the Christian Churches.<sup>781</sup> The Pastoral Meeting of 1988 had “a spirit of brotherhood,” Seppänen rejoiced. The Kenyan people wanted to focus on the

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<sup>777</sup> IA, AI:3, Minutes of AGM 1978–1980, 1–2.3.1978 and 6–7.3.1979.

<sup>778</sup> MA, interviews of James Otete 1.6.2016, Nicholas Oenga 8.6.2016 and Kerstin Nilsson 8.9.1918.

<sup>779</sup> MA, interview of John Momanyi 19.5.2016.

<sup>780</sup> MA, interview of Arto Seppänen 3.8.2019. “There was talk about bishop's office. No theological reason. I was asked to write about it.” Translation by author. KA, LEAFA II, file 45, Arto Seppänen to Reijo Arkkila 7.12.1987.

<sup>781</sup> KIA, LEAF 1996, On the office of a Bishop.

question “what makes a Church to be a real Church?” At the same time, the Swedish and the Norwegian missionaries strongly opposed Seppänen.<sup>782</sup>

The issue was also discussed at a missionary consultation of 1988. According to LEAF Director Reijo Arkkila, the Norwegians accused Seppänen of bringing his personal opinions to the table. They were not happy with the way he introduced the bishophood, as a necessity. None of the other participants supported the episcopacy in the current situation of the Church. Arkkila supported Seppänen saying that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya had requested the paper. Yet, he urged Seppänen to listen to his opponents:

When you wonder, how the post-Apostolic period then led to the episcopacy, the point is found here: There is nothing wrong with this line of development, but it must not be seen as binding on us; the episcopacy is not *Jure Divino*, pastoral office instead is! If the Norwegians and the Swedes reacted here, they were correct because your paper gives a different impression.<sup>783</sup>

Arkkila was concerned about relations between the missions. He hoped that this question would not exacerbate existing disagreements. “From the Norwegians and the Swedes, we have a lot to learn [...] you know how flammable this question is to our low-Church brethren,” Arkkila advised Seppänen.<sup>784</sup> It appears that among the missionaries Seppänen was the only one to campaign for the episcopacy. Others saw it as a threat to the future. The background was influenced by theological differences which reflected the genesis of the missions. High-Church versus low-Church missionary views clashed, culminating in the question of the Church leadership.

The Kenyan people did not mostly focus on theological issues when discussing the new office of bishop. Instead – from their perspective – the issue had a strong communal significance. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya felt inferior to other Churches and longed for recognition. Her members wanted to be considered equal to the others. A bishop would represent his people with dignity and help the Church to achieve her social status. Therefore, the Kenyans considered it solely as a blessing for the Church. Francis Nyamwaro –assisted by his cabinet – received widespread human support in launching the bishop’s campaign. Arto Seppänen’s presentation was a suitable addition to this effort as his programmatic announcement.

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<sup>782</sup> Translation by author. KA, LEAFA II, file 45, Arto Seppänen to Reijo Arkkila 2.7.1988. The MLTC students were also interested in this topic. In class, Seppänen wondered whether the episcopacy would be a curse or a blessing. According to him, it would be a curse, if it concerned only sociological or ethnic aspirations. MA, interview of Jared Oomo 21.9.2018.

<sup>783</sup> Translation by author. KA, LEAFA II, file 45, Reijo Arkkila to Arto Seppänen 14.4.1988. “I am very reserved to give any support going forward with the bishophood. If Olak had a chance in that election, maybe then. But all other options make me worried at this point.” Translation by author. KA, LEAFA II, file 45, Reijo Arkkila to Arto Seppänen 21.3.1988.

<sup>784</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 45, Reijo Arkkila to Arto Seppänen 12.5.1988. “Norwegians listen more openly to Lutheran theology if, on the basis of ‘the best legacy of pietism’, you emphasize the importance of personal awakening and faith.” KA, LEAFA II, file 45, Reijo Arkkila to Arto Seppänen 9.6.1989. Translations by author.



### 8.3 Increasing Western Influence

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya grew on many fronts. In the late 1960s, the number of Christians was less than 10,000, but increasing steadily so in the 1980s the membership doubled from 20,000 to 40,000; by 1996 it was already 55,000. The number of evangelists was 45 in 1968 and it reached 78 in 1980. After that, the growth declined as the Church now invested in pastoral education. During 1993–1996, the number of evangelists again strongly increased reaching 158 in 1996. The number of pastors started to grow after the first pastoral students graduated from the MLTC in 1982. At the end of the 1980s, their number exceeded thirty; in 1996, they were 57. At the same time, however, the congregations increased from 65 to 500! The number of missionaries grew steadily up to the end of the 1980s. A great boost to this number occurred in 1977 when the Norwegian Lutheran Mission entered the Church, and it had its peak in 1989 with 94 missionaries. In 1996, there were 70 missionaries.<sup>785</sup>

It is noteworthy that while the Church focused on pastoral education, what happened was that the number of evangelists increased dramatically. This was most strongly attributed to the NLM training in Kapenguria, which placed special emphasis on the training of laypeople. It was natural then that these workers had to take care of many congregations since there were pastors for only a small portion of them. As indicated above, by the mid-1990s there were 213 employees, of which only 57 pastors for the five hundred existing congregations. The congregations were hit by a shortage of workers! The situation was rectified to a certain degree by evangelists and assistants. This also had its negative consequences since they were not equipped with adequate theological training to meet people's spiritual needs.<sup>786</sup>

While the Church was undergoing a process of becoming independent concerning her missionaries, the number of these workers increased significantly. This was due to many reasons, not least the fact that the Church leadership was very active in finding new partners to obtain increasing financial support. At the same time, however, the influence of these Western workers increased. It was no wonder then that the situation got out of hand and led to an open conflict in their relationships. Money, the number of missionaries, and development aid projects did not bring about spiritual well-being. Projects that indeed helped some individuals created power struggles, corruption, envy, and a concentration on areas other than spiritual mission. All of this contributed to the Church's slipping into a tragic state as illustrated in the following chapters.

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<sup>785</sup> Imberg 2008, 158–168. See Annex 2.

<sup>786</sup> See chapters "The Power of God" and "Increasing Western influence".

## 8.4 “The First Love Is Disappearing”

Two similar academic studies on congregational life have been carried out at Matongo Lutheran Theological College. The first of these was introduced by Dr. Jaakko Lounela in 1984 and the other one by Dr. Rune Imberg in 1993. At those times, students interviewed multiple congregants. They were given specific questions to ask. These interviews were compiled at the MLTC library, and they contain important grassroots information on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya over two decades. In the study of the Church’s development, their importance is significant.

According to the interviews made in the 1980s, the main problems of the Church culminated in two larger categories: the shortages of parish workers and cases of Church discipline. There were not enough workers to “teach and preach the Word of God” and to take care of all the new congregations and the people entering the Church. For these reasons, several setbacks were reported. There were also many cases of Church discipline. Most of these concerned marriages or other behavioral problems which affected both parish workers and parishioners. Sometimes they led to reconciliation, in most cases spontaneously, but also with the assistance of the parish leaders. Despite these difficulties reported, the congregations were lively and active.<sup>787</sup>

In the 1990s study, much larger problems came forth. Many congregations were now described as dying spiritually. The situation was explained as, “the first love was disappearing.” The enthusiasm of the early days was vanishing. The pastors and evangelists received harsh criticism. Many of them were not committed. They did not take spiritual care of the people by visiting the widows, elderly and needy. Instead, they were asking for money all the time. Baptismal classes were not well prepared. The *Catechism* was forgotten. Other affairs were more important than serving the congregation. The preaching was not Gospel-centered. The sermons were too long, and there were only a few prayers. The exhortation to repentance was not heard. The youth were not considered. Evangelization had been forgotten. There was too much politics, tribalism, and egoism. The inadequate management of work, coupled with poor communication, resulted in the formerly good spirit of doing things together disappearing. Financial ignorance made many people leave the Church. The continuous transfers of pastors and evangelists were not appreciated. Africanization came at the expense of the missionaries, who were no longer valued.<sup>788</sup> Although the striking frustration of the parishioners is perhaps

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<sup>787</sup> MLTCA, Matongo occasional papers, volume 3, Historical documents, *History of the districts of ELCK*. Information was collected by the students of PTC 2 at MLTC during their practical training in 1984 supervised by Jaakko Lounela.

<sup>788</sup> MLTCA, Matongo occasional papers, volume 3, Historical documents, *Questionnaire concerning the development of ELCK in 1993 by MLTC students and some congregational workers*. Initiated by Rune Imberg.

overemphasized in these interviews, thereby overshadowing the positive matters, the image they draw of the Church, however, is alarming.

What had happened in ten short years? Looking at the development of the Church, the following causes can be ferreted out. First, the Church had grown tremendously. The number of workers had also grown but not to the level required. The lack of well-trained workers was a reality. The lay leadership in several parishes also sometimes had a detrimental effect on teaching. Second, a financial crisis affected the working morale. There was no money for salaries. At the same time, development aid projects pumped huge sums of money into the field. Many congregational workers, to a greater or lesser extent, were either attached to or empowered by the new roles afforded them through these projects. Others were busy searching for money elsewhere. For these reasons, there was no time or energy to focus on the actual mission. Third, Matongo Lutheran Theological College had not taught practical matters, especially matters related to financial management. Many employees were simply incapable of taking responsibility for the tasks they were assigned to. Caring for the Church included much more than just teaching and preaching. Fourth, although the Church leadership recognized the seriousness of the situation, it could not respond with the necessary authority and strength. The basic mission of the Church was alarmingly overshadowed by other duties. The very existence of the Church was in danger.

## 8.5 Financial Crisis

The finances and their stewardship were among the Church's biggest concerns ever since the beginning. Already in the early 1970s, there was a consensus that the dependence on mission support should be decreased gradually, and the level of local income be raised. There were two views on how this would be achieved: first, the income should be raised by the congregations, and second, monies should be received from income-generating projects. Further, there were many variations of these options discussed. However, these plans did not produce the desired effects.<sup>789</sup>

In the 1980s, the financial situation deteriorated radically. This was largely due to the challenges concerning the development aid projects favored by the Nordic countries. They required more and more staff and additional money to keep them going. In addition, the Medical Department now required external support. All this happened at the expense of other Church activities, parish work. To meet these challenges, a 10-year plan was prepared in 1984. However, the only visible benefit of this plan was the establishment of a Planning Committee (*Tume ya Upangaji*). This committee became a joint forum for Kenyan representatives and the missionaries to discuss matters of urgency.<sup>790</sup>

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<sup>789</sup> Kuokkanen 2009, 46–47.

<sup>790</sup> Kuokkanen 2009, 47–48, 66. Lounela remembers that this Committee was active and useful in the beginning. MA, interview of Jaakko Lounela 9.9.2014.

By the 1990s, the main sources of income continued to come from the mission societies. They retained the role of treasurer until the late 1990s, although they did not always have a person with the appropriate training to be appointed.<sup>791</sup> Despite the control of the missions, the financial situation deteriorated steadily, so things got worse. The Church leadership demanded that donations be prioritized to meet local needs. The Missions on the other hand wanted to decide for themselves how to allocate the donated funds and then demanded local people to raise the necessary money. In this way, they felt they encouraged self-sufficiency. The efforts of the two sides did not meet. As the situation worsened, claims increased, but neither party considered that they had been heard. In the end, the crisis was inevitable.<sup>792</sup>

Attempts were made to alleviate the situation. The Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland, for example, initiated the “Oasis Villas” project at the beginning of the 1990s. Quality rental apartments on a Church-owned site on Ngong Road were ready for rent to the American Embassy in 1991. Until 1997, the rental income went to cover the building loan and maintenance costs. From then on, the Church received the income for herself to use. This project was the largest single income-generating project within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya.<sup>793</sup> Before the onslaught of the financial crisis ahead, this project was only a minor delay.

In Stockholm 17 May 1994, the Nordic Mission societies evaluated their capacities and capabilities under a gloomy cloud. **SLEAF** itself had financial troubles and the number of missionaries had been reduced. In Finland, the charismatic movement and the ecumenical movement were challenging the youth work. The **SLM** had a decline in spiritual work. The older generation was dying off, especially in the countryside. The youth were not integrating into mission groups, as the youth lacked a point of identity with their problematic fellowships to the Swedish Church, many friends of the mission had also become alienated from this national body. There were few missionaries. The financial situation was not the best. Voluntary giving was declining, but there were several funds from last wills and testaments in their place. The **NLM** was also struggling financially. Voluntary giving was yet still growing. There were tensions concerning the place of women in Christian work. The charismatic

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<sup>791</sup> 1948 Martin Lundström, 1964 K.G. Ohlsson, 1966 Ingrid Nilsson and Sven Klemets, 1970 Erling Hansson, 1980 Ingegerd Johansson, 1984 Erling Hansson, 1985 Ingegerd Johansson, 1989 Olli Kukkonen, 1996 Eero Kemiläinen, 1997 Antti Kuokkanen. “The question has been: Do Africans know how to care for money? Are they trustworthy for caring and handling of money?” Nondi 1997, 22. George Taabu became treasurer after Kuokkanen in 1999. He was the first Kenyan in this position. MA, interview of Antti Kuokkanen 21.10. 2019.

<sup>792</sup> Kuokkanen 2009, 41–49.

<sup>793</sup> Kuokkanen 2009, 51–53, MA, interview of Pauli Heikkinen 6.5.2020. “The development of Oasis Villas in Nairobi is the key to the long-term financial sustainability of the Church.” IA, *Coratafrica* May 1999. One of the LEAF missionary families also lived in these luxury homes. This aroused resentment both in other missionaries and local people. “How could the LEAF leadership in Helsinki be so careless?” MA, Email from Rune Imberg 17.6.2020.

movement challenged the traditional ways of doing things. **LEAF** youth work was encouraging since many young people were not happy with the liberal line of the Finnish Church. Among the senior members, on the other hand, more liberal thinking gained support, challenging traditional conservative values. This was also reflected in mission work: The financial situation was tight.<sup>794</sup> The first half of the 1990s was difficult in many ways. In addition to the Church's poor finances, the prospects of the Nordic mission societies were receding.

**The Transition Plan** was the final attempt to correct the distorted trend. It was initiated in 1994 but not applied until 1997, following consultations between the Church and her mission partners. The final portion was agreed upon in December 1995 in a two-week workshop. The missions agreed to support the running expenses for 15 years and to create new income sources for the transition process. For her part, it was intended that the Church distribute grants to the parishes, congregations, and pioneer work. Then, finally, monitoring was to be carried out.<sup>795</sup> The guiding principle of the plan was to help the Church gradually break free of financial dependence. In this way, she could be responsible for her own affairs in the future.<sup>796</sup>

Things did not develop as expected. The Annual General Meeting of 1997 unanimously rejected the 1996 financial report due to its many obscurities. Even the auditing was not carried out. The treasurer, Eero Kemiläinen (LEAF), refused to explain: "I am not going to say anything about the financial report because last year I was not authorized to sign checks or spend money. I had to concentrate on the transition plan, which affects this year." LEAF Financial Director Pauli Poussa promised funds for an additional AGM for the completion of the auditing adding: "We don't want to blame anybody." The SLM and the WMPL did not give any promises of financial support before the crisis at the MLTC was resolved.<sup>797</sup> The heated atmosphere at the meeting was evidenced by a police guard. Some members of the opposition were charged and sentenced at the police station afterward. There they were given whiplashes for their behavior. As Kemiläinen's punishment, his work permit was not renewed the following year.<sup>798</sup>

The year 1998 was financially the most difficult and critical time. The auditor's report of 1998 revealed that the support from the mission societies had dropped while the running costs had grown tremendously. The deficit was deepened by losses in Church-owned institutions. To cover the running expenses, money from the Medical Department, Designated Funds, and Pension

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<sup>794</sup> RA, BVA, E: 6 v. 3, Nordic Missions supporting ELCK meeting in Stockholm 17.5.1994.

<sup>795</sup> Kuokkanen 2009, 49–82.

<sup>796</sup> MA, interview of Antti Kuokkanen 21.10.2019.

<sup>797</sup> *ELCK Newsletter* 2/1997. For the MLTC crisis, see chapter "Colonial Hosts under Attack".

<sup>798</sup> MA, interview of Eero Kemiläinen 21.10.2019.

Fund were sequestered without adequate measures being put into place to cover those losses.<sup>799</sup>

The Church leaders considered the Transition Plan to have a Western stamp on it. Big money was coming from the missions, but surprisingly it was not enough for salaries. This made the Kenyans angry. Further, the timetable implemented for the Plan was considered too busy in certain areas. In addition, the goal was pursued by force and the missionaries accused and criticized Bishop Francis Nyamwaro “too much”. The Europeans simply did not consider the Kenyans as equal partners. All of this together caused aversion to the plan; it was not even tried to understand!<sup>800</sup> The missions, in turn, argued that the money had disappeared and was misused. They were looking for answers but were not given them. Therefore, many missionaries did not trust the leadership. Church politics also played a role. As a result, the missions reduced their support to the Church and many missionaries left the country for the time being.<sup>801</sup> One can see that the mistrust was mutual. The question is whether the difficult issues had created the mistrust or vice versa.

According to Antti Kuokkanen (LEAF), who was the last missionary as Treasurer, the plan failed badly and there was no follow-up at all. Both the Kenyans and the missionaries were to be blamed. Neither party complied with the agreed program. There were several reasons for this: weaknesses in administration, cultural aspects, human mistakes, misunderstandings, etc. The financial crisis was unavoidable.<sup>802</sup> The Coratafrica 2005 report, an external study of the situation, paints the same picture. It argues that the plan was not properly discussed or understood by key stakeholders, who were also simply not ready to do so.<sup>803</sup>

The financial crisis did not come as a surprise. The signs had been in the air for a long time and attempts had been made to rectify the situation but to no avail. The missions had made major mistakes in pumping money into projects and other activities that were not constructively integrated into the Church's organization. The Church faced the impossible task of caring for her employees without a sustainable financial foundation. Given that the missions controlled the economy and were in fact in the position of Treasurer until 1998, it may be

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<sup>799</sup> Kuokkanen 2009, 73–78. “Today there is no pension for the ELCK workers!” MA, interview of Luke Ogello 7.10.2018.

<sup>800</sup> MA, interviews of James Otete 1.6.2016, John Momanyi 19.5.2016, Richard Olak 2.6.2016, Walter Obare 9.10.2018. “I tried to bring them together, missionaries and the opposition, but they fought against me. I was not lonely because Jesus was there. The Church was for everybody,” Francis Nyamwaro 9.7.2016.

<sup>801</sup> MA, interview of Kuula Tapio 22.8.2016 (LEAF rep.) and Kerstin Nilsson 8.9.2018 (BV rep.).

<sup>802</sup> According to Kuokkanen, this plan failed. “The name Transition Plan became synonymous with economic hardship and the whole plan was associated with a negative image.” Kuokkanen 2009, 49–82.

<sup>803</sup> IA, *Coratafrica* 2005, 31. This study was ordered from Corat Africa in March 1998 by Bishop Francis Onderi, Assistant Bishop Luke Ogello, General Secretary Daniel Mundia, Treasurer Antti Kuokkanen, Mission rep. Karin Gunnarsson and Mr. Karl-Erick Lundgren. RIA, *Coratafrica* May 1999, 6.

asked whether their task was to put the finances in order. It must be said, however, that there was a common will to curb this distorted economy, but no one was able to intervene with the necessary force. Ironically, both the Church leadership and the missions pursued the same goal: they wanted the Church to take care of her affairs independently. However, the results did not coincide at all. The most dramatic consequence was that the basic mission of the Church received very little or no support. The crisis was a reality not only financially and operationally but especially spiritually.

Against this background, one may rightly ask whether the missions should have reared the Church to take care of her affairs without coercive supervision. The Church should also have been allowed to learn from her mistakes without abandoning her. It seems that the missions failed in their endeavors: They were unable to care and raise the Church mature enough for a new era.

## 9. What Is the Church?

The unstable situation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya forced her to consider her existence. She needed to know what foundation would withstand the crisis. “What makes a Church a real Church?” was a matter of reflection. Because of its nature, Matongo Lutheran Theological College was at the center of these discussions seeking out a direction to take: the true Christian Church is identified by her hallmarks, the Word and the Sacraments. Dedication to the Lutheran Confessions generated enthusiasm within the Church, foretelling of revival.

### 9.1 The Church’s Lutheran Basis

#### 9.1.1 Academically Advanced College

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya was growing fast towards the 1990s, as indicated before.<sup>804</sup> To meet the challenges of this growth, Matongo Lutheran Theological College had to improve its training. In the beginning, this meant taking care of many practical matters: increasing building capacity, receiving enough teachers, students, and other staff. One of the most difficult issues was to get enough money to run the activities. Yet, the vision of the College developing academically was in the minds of the Church leaders and the MLTC principals even from the beginning.<sup>805</sup>

Following Karsten Valen (NLM), Jaakko Lounela (LEAF) was appointed Principal in 1981. As a PhD, he evaluated the College in the following words:

When I came to Matongo people spoke of a Theological College. But I realized it had not reached that level. Students attending MLTC had backgrounds of different educational levels. Some had finished the basic education, some had started senior secondary school, but only a few had completed their degrees. So, I preferred to call MLTC a Theological Seminary.<sup>806</sup>

Students from different backgrounds came to the Seminary. Samuel Ole Makau was the first from the Maasai, Alfred Kamokol from the Pokot, and Samson Mwita from the Kuria. The reputation of Matongo Lutheran Theological College had also spread abroad. One student came from Ethiopia and one from Eritrea. Even from Congo, a refugee was planning to come, but the Church leadership was not ready to receive him. They were mainly concerned for his safety. Lounela had regular meetings with different theological seminaries from East Africa, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania. Through these meetings, guidelines for advanced curriculum were introduced. He also planned for a Bachelor of Theology program, together with Makumira College, but it was not supported

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<sup>804</sup> See chapter “Increasing Western Influence”.

<sup>805</sup> Arkkila M. 2017, 12.

<sup>806</sup> Translation by author. MA, Lounela 2017, 1.



by the missions, which no longer wanted to cooperate with this institution. The library was expanded and developed, although the economy was tight.<sup>807</sup>

Erling Lundeby (NLM) became Principal in 1986. He focused on teamwork because besides him there were only a few teachers: John Nyang'au, John Momanyi, Roland Gustafsson, and Arto Seppänen. Flexibility and a willingness to cooperate were needed. At the turn of the decade, however, serious disagreements arose between the missionary teachers. Time and energy were spent settling those. Lundeby resigned in 1990.<sup>808</sup> John Nyang'au Osugo acted as Principal after Lundeby's resignation. Nyang'au had studied at Makumira College and was ordained in 1980. Since then, he had been teaching at the MLTC. In between teaching responsibilities, he studied at the Lutheran Brethren Schools in Fergus Falls, MN, USA, from 1983–1985.<sup>809</sup> At that time the shortage of teachers was at its worst; at the beginning of the 1990s, there were only three teachers present: John Nyang'au, Thomas Asiago, and Arto Seppänen. "The MLTC has been operating by jerks and stops [...] Often I have been here alone, with 53 students on three different courses. Fortunately, the students have had enough patience," Seppänen wrote to Finland.<sup>810</sup>

In February 1991, Arto Seppänen (LEAF) was appointed Principal. As Principal, he focused on reinforcing the confessional Lutheran stance. Together with Reijo Arkkila, who had returned from Finland, they introduced the International Lutheran Conferences, the first of these in 1992. Foreign Lutheran contacts now came to the attention of the people in a whole new fashion.<sup>811</sup> Seppänen managed to persuade the Board to allow a new kind of division of responsibilities: The Principal was responsible for the academic side and the Vice-Principal for practical matters. In this way, the principal was free to focus on the development of teaching and did not have to deal with the squabbling of students. "Nyang'au as my vice-principal handled practical matters nicely," Seppänen recalled.<sup>812</sup>

Especially Rune Imberg's (SLM) period of leadership 1992–1996 was a period of expanding the College academically. As a Doctor of Theology (DTh), he was well prepared for the task. Both the qualifications of students and the academic level of teaching were raised. Having a Secondary School Certificate was now obligatory for entering the College and most of the teachers already had academic degrees. Diploma courses were introduced, including Greek and Hebrew studies. In the demand for both biblical languages, the MLTC was one

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<sup>807</sup> MA, Lounela 2017, 1–4.

<sup>808</sup> See chapter "Focus on Lutheran Confessions".

<sup>809</sup> Nyang'au was born in 1948 and was baptized by James Otete in 1960. His mother belonged to the SDA, but his father acted as a lay evangelist of the LCK. MA, interview of John Nyang'au 25.3.2020. Nyang'au's study paper dealt with ELCK history following the general views of the missions. See Nyang'au 1985.

<sup>810</sup> Translation by author. ASA, Arto Seppänen to Reijo Arkkila 19.10.1990.

<sup>811</sup> See chapter "Theology of the Cross".

<sup>812</sup> Nyang'au was very disappointed when he was not appointed the principal. He resigned for a period but returned as the vice-principal. MA, interview of Arto Seppänen 1.7.2018.

of the first in all of Kenya at the time. The number of teachers also increased. In addition to Western missionaries<sup>813</sup>, the Kenyans took more responsibility for the teaching: John Momanyi, Richard Olak, John Nyang'au, Thomas Asiago, Joseph Ochola and Walter Obare. In the middle of the decade, Obare and Ochola were sent abroad for postgraduate studies, Ochola to Fjellhaug International College in Oslo, and Obare to Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. The International Conferences opened contacts with other Lutheran theological schools and for scholarship possibilities abroad.<sup>814</sup> The MLTC Staff described Imberg's period with these words: "Imberg's acumen, visionary pathos, and Christian dedication promoted the development of the college from an academic, tutorial, and administrative point of view, always with the intention of fostering good pastors and leaders, in the best interest of the Church."<sup>815</sup>

After the first pastoral course, PTC I, two other courses were held, PTC II 1982–1986 with 11 students and PTC III 1988–1992 with 13 students. At the beginning of the 1990s, there was a first diploma course for certificate holders, DC I 1991–1993 with 7 pastors followed by DC II 1995–1998 with 6. A special training course for 20 evangelists was arranged in 1990–1992, SOC I. They were later ordained as pastors. The first Diploma in Theology began in 1993 with 23 students; DT II started in 1995 with 22 students. About 90 students graduated from Evangelistic training courses between 1977 and 1995 (ETC 12–ETC 17).<sup>816</sup>

Matongo Lutheran Theological College was following up on present-day needs and was ready for future demands. Despite its financial difficulties and the small size of the staff, it was able to develop academically. The 1990s were particularly significant in this regard. This institute was no longer just a Bible school or a seminary but had become an academically advanced college. Matongo Lutheran Theological College was ready to lead the Church into theological reflection. This turned out to be much more challenging than expected.

### 9.1.2 Are We Lutherans?

In 1988, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya celebrated her 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. In honor of the celebration, a booklet titled "Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya 1963–1988" was published. John Momanyi, James Otete, and

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<sup>813</sup> Dean Apel (1992), Aatos Vesamäki (1992), Reijo and Marjatta Arkkila (treasurer), Väinö and Mairikki Uusitalo (treasurer), Katrina Imberg (typing), Kristian Norrback, Gunner Jensen, Erik Wiberg, Bjørn Hinderaker. Several visiting lecturers did not belong to the permanent staff. MA, Email from Rune Imberg 28.7.2020. For lecturers, see also M. Arkkila 2017, 13.

<sup>814</sup> Both Obare and Ochola were Doctors of Theology, Ochola's through a dissertation, Obare was a double Honorary Doctor. Obare was elected Bishop in 2002 after Francis Nyamwaro. Ochola served as the first Kenyan principal of the MLTC in 2008–2016 and became the Bishop of the Lake Diocese in 2012 and the archbishop in 2020 after Obare. Asiago served as the first bishop of the Southwest Diocese in 2005–2019. Arkkila M. 2017, 12–15, Imberg 2017, 56–59.

<sup>815</sup> MLTCA, Minutes of MLTC Staff Meeting 5.9.1996.

<sup>816</sup> Arkkila M. 2017, 12–13.

Richard Olak wrote about the history and expansion, Constitution, and Faith of the Church. The five mission partners described their activities in Kenya.<sup>817</sup>

In his article, “The Faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya”, Richard Olak explained why the structure of the Church followed a low-Church tradition rather than a high-Church tradition. This was due to the founding mission society, the Swedish Lutheran Mission, whose roots were in the teachings of a layman, Carl Olof Rosenius. Although all the Nordic mission societies (and indeed also the WMPL) shared a similar revival base, there were major differences in their practices. Some wanted to adhere strictly to the Lutheran doctrine which was also reflected in their practice. The Sunday services took place in an orderly fashion. Others preferred charismatic forms without systematic order. In some congregations, altars were not used. “A call for a decision” was emphasized, free suggestions for songs and free testimonies. Olak was not pleased. Lutheran worship services should have well-prepared preaching; the songs and prayers should complete the text. In the Lutheran Church, there should not be room for an “isolated kind of doctrine”. All partners should unite themselves in the Lutheran practices.<sup>818</sup>

The following year, Olak explained his stand even more clearly. People in Kenya as well as in Europe are blind by nature, they cannot understand the work of God by themselves “until by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the word, which is preached and heard, purely out of grace and **without any cooperation on his part**, he is converted, becomes a believer, is regenerated and renewed.” The type of teaching, where the man could be saved through other means than by grace alone, “cannot be given any chance in this Church”. This was the reason why also the order of Lutheran service should be respected. All the missionaries had to integrate with the Church and serve her respectively.<sup>819</sup> Olak seems to have adopted the original Lutheran teaching that the human will did not cooperate in the process of salvation.

Richard Olak’s firm stand was not considered favorably by the Norwegian Lutheran Mission. Former MLTC Principal, Karsten Valen, as a representative of the ELCK 25-year Jubilee Celebration, wrote to the leaders of the Church. According to him, the Norwegian Lutheran Mission was labeled as non-Lutheran without cause:

This I feel is not a correct description of the matter. Our missionaries are told to teach and administer the sacraments according to the Lutheran Confession, and so they are doing. Not to have an altar in the Church is a matter of order and not of doctrine. It is an adiaphoron, how the service is conducted. Here varieties are acceptable without disturbing the unity of the

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<sup>817</sup> Lutheran Church work in Kenya 1948–1973.

<sup>818</sup> Olak 1988, 24–29.

<sup>819</sup> The Emphasis in original. IA, EI: 5, *Theology of MLTC* by Richard Olak.

Church [...] This is a very biased description of the worship services in Pokot if those are the ones thought of.<sup>820</sup>

According to Arto Seppänen, some SLM missionaries were also offended by Olak's writing.<sup>821</sup>

The same topic was later discussed in several missionary meetings. In Stockholm 1990, for example, the problems were viewed as deriving from different high- and low-Church liturgical practices. It was agreed that the practices of worship services or spiritual meetings can vary depending upon the context.<sup>822</sup> In this meeting, Arne Sohlberg (NLM) explained the NLM stand: "In our Christian understanding, we are Rosenians, so to some extent we believe, that taking a stand makes a human being a Christian, at the same time we challenge the audience to decide, whether they want the Word to function in their lives."<sup>823</sup> Arto Seppänen continued concentrating on the topic. He received a request from Richard Olak to teach at the Pastor's Conference in May 1991:

We need awakening in spirituality and liturgy! [...] The Lutheran Reformation was a confessional and liturgical movement. All rediscoveries of the Gospel were put into liturgical use. Luther was a prophetic preacher, a great dogmatician, and also a practical liturgist. It was just Luther's German Mass of 1526, which led the Lutheran Reformation to victory [...] The power of the Lutheran Reformation was the combination of doctrinal and liturgical interest.<sup>824</sup>

Richard Olak's writing from 1988 was like the starting shot for future disputes. The following year at Matongo Lutheran Theological College, a heated debate began on Lutheran theology and its implications for Church life. Liturgical issues were also discussed at Pastoral Conferences. These discussions followed the lines drawn in the sand by Richard Olak, Karsten Valen, and Arto Seppänen. It was not just about dissenting theological opinions, however. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya wanted to know and recognize her foundation and roots. What is it to be a Lutheran? was a question about identity.

### 9.1.3 Focus on Lutheran Confessions

While the second generation was taking leadership positions in the Church, the future direction and especially the question, "what is Lutheranism?", were eagerly discussed at many meetings. These discussions culminated at Matongo Lutheran Theological College, where the future Church workers were trained.

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<sup>820</sup> IA, EI: 5, Correspondence Chairman/President 1968–1988, Karsten Valen to ELCK 5.10.1988.

<sup>821</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 45, Arto Seppänen to Reijo Arkkila 25.11.1988.

<sup>822</sup> NLMA, Dbb 0038, ELCK related missions working group in Stockholm 11.5.1990.

<sup>823</sup> NLMA, Dbb 0038, *Note from the ECLK related missions working group* by Arne Sohlberg 15.5.1990.

<sup>824</sup> RA, BVA, E 6 v 3, *Liturgy and confessional Lutheranism* by Arto Seppänen.

The College Board Chairman, Richard Olak formulated the central question of this period: "What kind of workers are we training at MLTC and for what purpose?" On 13 July 1989, the Church arranged a seminar for the MLTC Board and staff to clarify the identity of the College as a theological institution.<sup>825</sup>

At this seminar, Principal Erling Lundeby presented the paper "MLTC – Where are we and where are we going?" Lundeby argued that the Mission societies, four Scandinavian and one American, had brought along "a breath of tradition and emphasis that can be taken as confusion". Matongo Lutheran Theological College should formulate its policies and stand independently on its own feet. Not every Scandinavian Church (Denmark and Norway) accepted all the Lutheran confessional writings in their Constitutions. The Confessions were guidelines, but each new generation had to formulate itself a new concept of how to face the future. Concerning liturgical forms, he stated that "a sensitive pastor should choose the worship style that suits his people best". The ELCK had been too dependent on Western liturgical forms and failed to develop music, art, architecture, and liturgies in local idioms. In the end, he summed up his message as follows:

We do not accept a theological division between clergy and laity. What the clergy is and does as clergy they do because they are part of the laity – the Laos (people) of God. Thus, MLTC must discourage any sign of clericalism among the students in order to create and maintain in them the Reformation character. The Bible urges us to serve, not lord over the congregations, 1 Pet. 5:2-3.<sup>826</sup>

It appears that Lundeby intended to emphasize the importance of contextualization in the Lutheran context. He was also concerned about maintaining Christian servant leadership in the Church.

Of the missionaries, Lundeby's presentation was most welcomed by Roland Gustafsson (SLM). According to him, Lundeby had chosen some misleading words and phrases, but the aim was correct: "MLTC wants the students to become thoroughly familiar with the Bible and have absolute confidence in it as the infallible Word of God."<sup>827</sup> Arto Seppänen's answer was titled "On the Confessionalism as a Foundation of Matongo Theology". In Lundeby's presentation, Seppänen saw reformed evangelicalism<sup>828</sup>. The Reformed understanding of the Church was based on "happenings" while Lutherans

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<sup>825</sup> "MLTC, being a pastoral training institution, must be very clear on doctrine." IA, EI: 5, Corr. chairman/president 1968–1990, *Theology of Matongo Lutheran Theological College* by Richard O. Olak.

<sup>826</sup> KIA, Kirjeenvaihto 1989–, MLTC – Where are we and where are we going?

<sup>827</sup> IA, AVI 21, Dept. minutes 1988–1993, Minutes of the seminar 14.7.1989, *Roland Gustafsson's response*.

<sup>828</sup> Evangelicalism is a worldwide, trans-denominational movement within Protestant Christianity that maintains the belief that the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus' atonement is the essence of the Gospel. Evangelicals believe in the centrality of the conversion or "born again" experience in receiving salvation, in the authority of the Bible as God's revelation, and in spreading the Christian message. Stanley 2013, 11.

emphasized the right doctrine. “Lutheran understanding of confessionalism is not, that every new generation is to formulate its own confessional statements,” he stated.<sup>829</sup> John Nyang’au’s paper was read by Rev. Thomas Asiago. Nyang’au was worried about the theological differences which were rooted in Europe and America. He saw that the time was ripe to reveal these differences to know what kind of theology is present at the MLTC. He was confused by Lundeby’s arguments and therefore asked: Which of the Lutheran Confessional books should be left out if not all are accepted? Concerning the liturgy, he challenged Lundeby to explain what he meant by the “Western liturgical burden” that the Church should get rid of when growing towards independence.<sup>830</sup> Richard Olak gave an oral response. He was concerned about Lundeby teaching in the manner of the Evangelicals, mixing law and Gospel. These so-called “Evangelicals” were well known in Africa. They were not Lutherans, but they did share the same willingness to proclaim the Gospel. “They don’t accept that what the Gospel carries is enough,” Olak explained with concern.<sup>831</sup> He also felt that the concepts “*sola fide* and *sola gratia*” were missing in Lundeby’s paper. “The aim for the Mission societies and for ELCK must be to remain in the Lutheran teaching, following what is biblical, and not to temper with our good, rich and blessed Lutheran doctrine.”<sup>832</sup>

After four months, in October 1989, another meeting was arranged. This time, Olak had prepared a written answer to Lundeby’s paper. He felt that Lundeby in some portions had taught contrary to Lutheran doctrine. First, when Lundeby talked about a holistic understanding of Lutheranism, it may not mean that “a Kenyan man is different in nature from the people of the sixteenth century”. The natural man is unable to save himself. Salvation was “purely out of grace and without any cooperation on man’s part”. The theology of “decision making” was not Lutheran. Second, Lundeby mixed Law and Gospel when he stated: “God will work law and Gospel in the hearts of the listeners”. It was the preacher’s or teacher’s duty to distinguish between Law and Gospel. “No one can claim to be a good or true Bible expositor if he cannot distinguish between the Law and the Gospel.” The Law did not offer grace, but the Gospel did. The students should be taught to understand the difference between them. Authoritatively, Olak reminded everyone: Other kinds of teaching were not tolerated at the College!<sup>833</sup>

Lundeby felt misunderstood, mistreated, and unable to continue as Principal. In addition to theological differences, he considered the disagreements with the new teacher, Anssi Simojoki (LEAF), to have inflamed the entire operating environment. Simojoki had replaced Arto Seppänen during Seppänen’s home-leave and the pre-existing disagreements escalated. Lundeby

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<sup>829</sup> KIA, Kirjeenvaihto 1989–, *A response to Lundeby’s paper*.

<sup>830</sup> KIA, Kirjeenvaihto 1989–, *A response concerning MLTC theology*.

<sup>831</sup> ELA, Transcript of *Olak’s response to Lundeby’s paper on Matongo theology*, MLTC, 13.7.1989.

<sup>832</sup> IA, AVI 21, Dept. minutes 1988–1993, Minutes of the seminar on 14.7.1989.

<sup>833</sup> IA, EI: 5, *Theology of MLTC* by Richard Olak.

decided to resign in 1990, as did Roland Gustafsson.<sup>834</sup> Arto Seppänen wrote to his predecessor back in Finland, explaining that Lundeby's resignation had to do with the loss of the confidence of the Church leadership. According to him, the Church Head office further interpreted Roland Gustafsson's actions "as a joint conspiracy" to close Matongo Theological College.<sup>835</sup> Kjell Strømme (NLM) suspected a different kind of conspiracy. He wondered whether the Finns just wanted to bring their own theology to the seminary. If so, the happenings could be interpreted as a "calculated move" leading to "chaos" at the MLTC. The contextuality of missiology, instead, meant that personalities themselves should not become the primary focus of the Gospel! "In reality, this is disapproval of the NLM and what we stand for," he wrote sadly to his superior in Norway.<sup>836</sup>

The Head Office was not able to handle the crisis in the way that would please the mission partners. The two mission societies, the NLM and the SLM felt that they were ignored in making decisions. Per-Ebbe Ingvert (SLM) wrote to Richard Olak: "We believe that a matter of distrust and complete lack of confidence in a theological seminary may be very serious and unless every root of the problem can be removed, we fear that it may spread like a disease." Arne Solberg (NLM) also wrote to Olak: "This situation, furthermore, has shown the necessity of discussing the nature of cooperation, how do the different parties cooperate and communicate with each other."<sup>837</sup>

The Nordic missions all basically represented the same type of Christianity, Scandinavian Lutheran revivalism. They all emphasized the teachings of Lutheranism, but there were still significant differences in their understanding of the Lutheran Confessions and liturgy. These differences and various personal factors led to a crisis at Matongo Lutheran Theological College. This crisis challenged the relations of the Church and her workers, the missions and their missionaries remaining a trauma to affect their future interactions. The result of this turmoil demonstrated that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya wanted Matongo Lutheran Theological College to remain firm in its confessional Lutheran basis. Richard Olak wrote: "Therefore the Church is confessional, and since the college is meant to train workers who will mainly work for the Church, it is also confessional [...] Being confessional for this Church and college is not only a matter of tradition but a matter of deep faith."<sup>838</sup>

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<sup>834</sup> Simojoki and Lundeby had serious disagreements, which led to visible disputes. Lundeby 2017, 47–52. MLTC students sensed the quarrel between the missionaries. In their view, Lundeby and Simojoki fought over power. MA, interview of Jared Oomo 21.9.2018. "Tension can be creative, but I feel that now it has turned destructive for MLTC as a Christian institution of higher learning, in that it is tearing our fellowship apart [...] The situation is detrimental to our integrity as teachers of theology – the Word of reconciliation." IA, Apt I, Erling Lundeby to the Head Office ELCK 14.7.1990.

<sup>835</sup> Translation by author. ASA, Arto Seppänen to Jaakko Lounela 30.12.1990.

<sup>836</sup> Translation by author. NLMA, Dbb 0037, Kjell Strømme to Arne Solberg 4.9.1990.

<sup>837</sup> IA, Apt 3, Arne Solberg to Richard Olak 16.8.1990, Per-Ebbe Ingvert to Richard Olak 9.5.1990.

<sup>838</sup> Olak 1998, 13–15.

#### 9.1.4 Holy Communion Concerns

As the Church grew, the question of the availability of Holy Communion became crucial. The lack of pastors, the lack of altar wine, and the lack of finances meant that the Lord's Supper was available only a few times per year, or perhaps once a year. From time to time, consideration was given to plans for solving the problem.<sup>839</sup> In 1974, John-Erik Ekström (SLM) pondered whether he could use plain bread or even "Marie"-biscuits instead of wafers. "Why should we use something non-African, difficult to understand, and as secret as wafers." In his letter of reply, Gunnar Nilsson stated that there was no problem using unleavened bread. This was done in Ethiopia. "But maybe it will face opposition from the Africans, who are used to wafers!?"<sup>840</sup> In 1983, the Planning Committee discussed the matter with concern:

We should discuss this issue not only from the financial viewpoint but also in looking at the spiritual needs of our members. Our members should receive Holy Communion once a month, as well as reliable teaching. Some of our congregations are not receiving Holy Communion even once a year!<sup>841</sup>

The importance of pastors was emphasized when discussing the administration of the two Sacraments, Baptism and Holy Communion. Initially, the Church followed the example of her founding mission society, the Swedish Lutheran Mission: Unordained male missionaries administered the Sacraments while they were on the field. Even the first Church President, Martin Lundström, did so before his ordination. This practice was also followed by one SLEAF and several NLM missionaries.<sup>842</sup> Despite attempts to the contrary, the availability of Holy Communion continued to be poor.

In the late 1980s, the question of Holy Communion escalated. Arto Seppänen (LEAF) had noticed different Holy Communion practices among the missionaries. In extreme cases, even Coca-Cola had been used for Holy Communion instead of wine in Marsabit. Therefore, he decided to concentrate on the topic.<sup>843</sup> He taught in class:

The wine must be real wine, any soft drink like juice, Fanta or Coca-Cola is an offense against the institution of Christ. The Greek word for the wine used in the New Testament is 'Oivos' and means always fermented wine [...] Historically, the use of soft drinks derives from Tatian, a Gnostic heretic and the Encratite heresy in the second century, which used only water in the place

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<sup>839</sup> MA, Copy of Kururia's written statement on Practical and ethical issues affecting ELCK. History Seminar in March 2007.

<sup>840</sup> Translation by author. RA, BVA, e1 L: 1, J-E Ekström to Gunnar Nilsson 8.10.1974 and Gunnar Nilsson to J-E Ekström 30.10.1974.

<sup>841</sup> IA, AVI: 20, Minutes of other committees 1983–1987, *Tume ya Upangaji* 14.9.1983.

<sup>842</sup> See chapter "Aimed at Pastoral Leadership".

<sup>843</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 45, Arto Seppänen to Reijo Arkkila 25.11.1988, 21.4.1989 and 7.7.1989. The Norwegians defended themselves, stating that it was extremely difficult to get Church wine in Marsabit. MA, interview of Arto Seppänen 1.7.2018.



of real wine in the Holy Communion, but they were condemned by the Church. The Church has followed the third rule of the so-called Ecclesiastical Canons of the Holy Apostles (Apology 24:86), where it is stated that only bread and real wine can be used in the Holy Communion. Cyprian taught: "For when Christ says, 'I am the true vine,' the blood of Christ is assuredly not water but wine." With many other arguments from the Old Testament, the early Church rejected the practice of the Holy Communion without real wine. In the Lutheran Confessions, the Encratite heresy is shown in Apology 23:45.<sup>844</sup>

Seppänen's liturgical enthusiasm was noticed and caused tensions between him and Principal Erling Lundebý. According to Seppänen, Lundebý wanted to control his teaching on liturgy requesting to read his lectures beforehand and trying to correct some of the issues raised by his colleague.<sup>845</sup> Lundebý remembers the situation differently. He was concerned about Seppänen's plans to increase the teaching of liturgy from one to four terms, contrary to the curriculum. However, his aim was not to censor Seppänen's teaching.<sup>846</sup> He considered Seppänen's enthusiasm as a "hyper-liturgical approach to Lutheranism".<sup>847</sup>

When liturgical matters were discussed at Pastoral Meetings, it created a storm. The Norwegians strongly disagreed with Arto Seppänen. Together with some Swedish missionaries, they accused him of practicing sacramentalism and being a Roman Catholic.<sup>848</sup> "Seppänen is Catholic oriented [...] and his sacramentalism lies so far from our stand," Kjell Strømme wrote to Norway. According to him, the Norwegians were most irritated by the way Seppänen and other Finns defined Lutheranism "as it works in Finland" and not following the Pietistic traditions. Whoever dared to come forth with something outside that framework would be labeled as non-Lutheran. In addition, contextualization was not accepted, as it would destroy the Lutheran heritage. Lutheranism was thus just a "mechanical transmission" of Lutheran tradition without a missiological corrective to the Kenyan context.<sup>849</sup> The Church leadership supported Seppänen. Together with Richard Olak he was chosen to the Handbook Committee, acting as its chairman. It was assigned to prepare guidelines for the Church's liturgical practices. Furthermore, the matter of altar wine was considered: "*Mvinyo iwe kutoka zabibu, siyo soda au maji ya matunda mengine* [the wine should be from grapes, not soda or other juices]."<sup>850</sup>

At the Pastoral Conference of 1992, Seppänen presented a paper titled "The infant communion". His paper practically proved it possible to have infant

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<sup>844</sup> ASA, Arto Seppänen's lessons on *Liturgics MLTC* Soc 1991.

<sup>845</sup> MA, Email from Arto Seppänen 29.12.2019.

<sup>846</sup> MA, Email from Erling Lundebý 9.8.2020.

<sup>847</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 45, Erling Lundebý to Reijo Arkkila 28.5.89.

<sup>848</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 45, Arto Seppänen to Reijo Arkkila 25.11.1988.

<sup>849</sup> Translation by author. NLMA, Dbb 0130, Kjell Strømme to Tor Arne Haavet 27.5.1992 and Kjell Strømme to E. Grandhagen and Tor Arne Haavet 5.10.1993.

<sup>850</sup> ASA, Kitabu cha maelezo kwa watumishi wa KKK.

communion in the Lutheran Church. In his presentation, Seppänen relied on Saint Augustine, who considered Holy Communion necessary for salvation.<sup>851</sup> Now, even LEAF missionaries disagreed with each other. Anssi Simojoki gave a contrary view. He viewed infant communion as being impossible in the Lutheran Church, arguing that the Eucharist was not necessary for salvation in the manner baptism was. Confession and Absolution could not be practiced without proper teaching.<sup>852</sup> WMPL Director Bob Andrews put into words what the Norwegians had tried to present amid past theological debates:

We have sometimes given ourselves to talking about theological issues hot in Europe or America – e.g., the communion of children – without much obvious reference to the life of the Church in Africa. It would be good, however, to return to talk specifically about African questions and African realities in biblical and theological ways.<sup>853</sup>

One could argue that the Church had to find solutions to the problems it encountered in different situations and times. From a human point of view, it was understandable that many practical solutions were sought for the regular reception of Holy Communion. Christians suffered from a lack of it. If pastors were not available, laymen were to be resorted to. If wine and wafers were not available, why not use other ingredients? From a theological perspective, it could also be argued that the elements were not to be replaced by substances other than bread and wine as the Bible indicated. In addition, the administration of Holy Communion was solely the responsibility of the ordained pastors according to the Book of Concord. It seems that the various parties were unable or unwilling to understand opposition arguments. At best, it was a conflict between different priorities of Lutheran theology, at worst, a conflict between the Swedish and Norwegian low-Church and Finnish high-Church representatives. The Church leadership, for its part, wanted to follow the latter view of Holy Communion and related liturgical practices. General Secretary Richard Olak, in particular, profiled himself as a successor to this line.

### 9.1.5 Theology of the Cross

John Nyang'au was appointed Acting Principal in 1990. Arto Seppänen accepted the post at the beginning of 1991. As Principal, Seppänen wanted to continue to reflect on Lutheranism. In December 1991, together with Reijo Arkkila, he arranged a two-week seminary for all Church pastors concerning the Augsburg Confession. Both Seppänen and Arkkila later valued this seminary as the initial

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<sup>851</sup> MLTCA, Papers, *Infant communion* by Arto Seppänen 25.–26.8.1992.

<sup>852</sup> MLTCA, Papers, *Response to Rev. Arto Seppänen's study* by Anssi Simojoki 25.–26.8.1992.

<sup>853</sup> NLMA, Dbb 0250, *Bob Andrews to Delegates of the ELCK/Supporting Missions Consultation* Nairobi, 27–29 October 1998. One could argue, that – as a communal matter – children's Communion was closer to Kenyan thinking than to Western!

impetus for the confessional awakening in the Church.<sup>854</sup> This awakening is indeed observable in future events.

In 1992, an International Lutheran Confessional Conference was arranged at Matongo Theological College. International Lutheran scholars, Kurt Marquart and Ingemar Öberg came to Matongo as the main guest lecturers. Bishop Olavi Rimpiläinen<sup>855</sup> from Finland accompanied them. The Conference concentrated on Lutheranism, the mission, the challenges, and the tasks of the Lutheran Church. The number of participants reached over one hundred. They were from different parts of Africa and other continents. A group of 15 pastors came from Finland. Principal Arto Seppänen welcomed all and stated that the visit of the Ghanaian Lutheran Church President, Paul Kofi Fynn, in 1988 was the starting point of this Conference. The President was looking for a confessional Lutheran seminary for his students to study in. "His visit made us see the real need for Confessional teaching in Africa," Seppänen explained.<sup>856</sup>

The two main lectures were held by Professors Ingemar Öberg from Sweden and Kurt Marquart from the United States. Professor Öberg, who was profiled as a respected Luther scholar, lectured on "Luther and mission". He demonstrated Luther's emphasis on mission-oriented teaching: the true *Missio Dei* happened "through Christ and the Church with the Word and the Sacraments to all people". According to Öberg, this did not materialize in "revivalistic Protestantism", which was focused on "the charismatic missionary call, the mission organization and the message of conversion".<sup>857</sup> Kurt Marquart presented a lecture on "Church growth". Like Öberg, he considered the true growth of the Church as happening through the Word and the Sacraments. Human-centered evangelism was not a Biblical mission:

The spiritual heirs of Zwingli and Calvin [...] put subjective religious experience in the place of God's objective means of salvation [...] In 'evangelical' (really unevangelical because antisacramental) parlance, 'come to Calvary' is, in fact, an invitation to religious experience, decision-cards, commitment-prayers and the like, but not to God's own appointed means of salvation, the life-giving holy Gospel and sacraments of Christ.

The Church's public worship brought salvation to people. The Eucharist did not only symbolize Christ but brought him to be present bodily amongst His people. According to Marquart, the liturgy was not an adiaphoron, but a central part of the Lutheran mission.<sup>858</sup>

Short presentations for the panel discussion were presented by John Momanyi, Karsten Valen, Boris Sandberg, and Richard Olak. Momanyi reminded the assemblage of the pastors' responsibility to apply Lutheran teaching in

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<sup>854</sup> Arkkila 2013, 164–165, Seppänen 2004, 144.

<sup>855</sup> For Rimpiläinen's presence, see Junkkaala 2021, 487–489.

<sup>856</sup> Arkkila M. 2017, 20–21, *We Believe, Teach and Confess*, 8–10.

<sup>857</sup> Öberg 1993, 28–66. On the same subject, see Öberg 1991.

<sup>858</sup> Parentheses are included. Marquart 1993, 69–82.

practice. Valen also emphasized that Lutheran teaching and practice belonged together. Sandberg taught about the importance of the Gospel: "Lutheran Church is a trademark of a specific understanding of the Gospel, which we see as biblical. It is not the same as Roman Catholicism or Calvinism. That which is specifically Lutheran is to have the same doctrine as the apostles."<sup>859</sup> Olak shared this view and explained how Lutheran theology does not mean something else in the African context compared to the Western context. The modern idea of "Africanizing Christianity" is not acceptable. In that kind of theology, the only saving Gospel, sin, and Bible are forgotten. In their place, it concentrates only on African people, their culture, habits, and beliefs. Olak agreed with Dr. Pobee, who wrote: "The secret behind the Africanization of Christianity is the work of Satan himself, the spirit of Antichrist." The Church needed an unshakable stand, which was the Word of God. The Reformers were right:

Man's unregenerate will is not only turned away from God but has also become an enemy of God so that he desires and wills only that which is evil and opposed to God [...] We poor sinners are justified before God and saved solely by faith in Christ so that Christ alone is our righteousness.<sup>860</sup>

It is worth noting that both Ingemar Öberg and Kurt Marquart, accompanied as well by Boris Sandberg and Richard Olak, touched on topics that sparked passionate theological debates in the future. The difference between Lutheran and Reformed theology was highlighted in their presentations. Particularly the Norwegians had noticed these priorities. Kjell Strømme, for example, was very displeased with Kurt Marquart's presentation. According to him, the Word was not in its center. Despite all this, "Seppänen praised it!" Strømme's main criticism of the conference was related to the lack of contextualization: No one was particularly concerned about how the Lutheran teaching fit into the Kenyan context.<sup>861</sup>

In July 1992, Tor Arne Haavet wrote to Kjell Strømme that they were discussing how to reach the Church with "our view". Therefore, they planned to invite their esteemed theologian, Professor Carl Fredrik Wisløff, to Matongo.<sup>862</sup> The following year this visit was realized. Carl Fredrik Wisløff was a distinguished Lutheran scholar, who could be characterized as one of the leading figures of modern Luther research in Norway. He was a powerful challenger of liberal theology, emphasizing the biblical authority, the importance of Luther and Rosenius, and the need to proclaim Law and the

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<sup>859</sup> We Believe, Teach and Confess, 101–121.

<sup>860</sup> Olak 1993, 118–121.

<sup>861</sup> Translation by author. NLMA, Dbb 0130, Kjell Strømme to Tor Arne Haavet 27.5.1992.

<sup>862</sup> Translation by author. NLMA, Dbb 0130, Tor Arne Haavet to Kjell Strømme 30.7.1992.

Gospel.<sup>863</sup> However, according to Reijo Arkkila, the central Lutheran teaching of rebirth through baptism was unclear in Wisløff's teaching. This sparked debate at the MLTC.<sup>864</sup>

The success of the first conference inspired the organization of further symposiums.<sup>865</sup> At the second International Conference in 1994, there were representatives from Ethiopia, Botswana, Cameroon, Congo, Finland, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, the USA, and Zambia. Professor Naaman Laiser from Tanzania expressed his joy for Lutheranism finding its way onto the African continent. According to him, it was important to keep the teaching genuine, because the original Lutheran teaching aimed at the salvation of souls. "We should also pray for our Lutheranism that it may truly be an instrument in the gracious and powerful hand of God for the salvation of our people in Africa," Laiser stated.<sup>866</sup> Dr. Robert Preus from the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod was the main lecturer. He was an internationally renowned and respected scholar of Lutheran Orthodoxy. Preus highlighted the difference between the theology of glory and the theology of the cross:

For Luther, the most important article of our Christian faith, the most beautiful and precious message that could be preached, taught, and confessed was the message of Christ crucified, the redemption of the world through His doing, suffering and death, the salvation and justification of the sinner who believed in Him and belonged to him. This is the heart and center of the Gospel, which alone saves a poor sinner [...] We Lutherans have not always been faithful to our heritage. We have not always believed in the power of the Cross which we preach. May God help us to continue to draw water from these wells of salvation, which are God's Word, and thus be faithful theologians of the Cross.<sup>867</sup>

Richard Olak saw the significance of the conferences as reinforcers of confessional Lutheranism:

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<sup>863</sup> Talonen 2005, 200–201, Wisløff was happy about his visit: The missionaries needed intercession. *Utsyn* 8/1993. In addition to Church history, Carl Fredrik Wisløff profiled himself as a "missionary professor" defending the authority of the Bible and the importance of Christian revival. He emphasized a Rosenian type of Christianity with low-Church practices and a personal conversion experience. Sjaastad 2016, 212–215, 241–264.

<sup>864</sup> Arkkila 2011, 316. In analyzing Wisløff's teaching, Väisänen 2005 makes the same attention: Wisløff often emphasized rebirth in faith to the extent that rebirth in baptism was overshadowed by it. For Wisløff's concept of baptism, see Wisløff 1990.

<sup>865</sup> The other mission partners were not satisfied. Especially NLM and SLM missionaries complained about the planning, information, and invitation procedures: All of them were poor because the other missions were not involved very much. According to the NLM, also the themes could have been more central and relevant according to the Lutheran Confessions. KIA, Kirjeenvaihto 1992–, Consultations between the Nordic missions in Stockholm 14.5.1992. To secure the confessional line of the conferences, Arkkila consciously wanted to keep the arrangement in his own hands. MA, interview of Reijo Arkkila 20.11.2018.

<sup>866</sup> Laiser 1994, 147.

<sup>867</sup> Preus 1994, 40, 107.

It is important that the ELCK move forward resolutely as a confessional Lutheran Church. The MLTC is a key place in this regard. There are fundamental questions about the theological training that future employees of the Church will receive. The two international Lutheran meetings held at the seminar have given encouragement to the whole Church. Work should continue on this line at the seminary. In the spring of 1994, Robert Preus opened up central perspectives on the Lutheran biblical theology of the cross. It is indeed the clear theology of the cross that is needed in Africa.<sup>868</sup>

The Lutheran activity of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya was noted widely, even at the headquarters of the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva. Its officials tried to prevent the first Lutheran Conference from being held and forbade Tanzanian Professor Naaman Laiser from participating.<sup>869</sup> Despite this pressure, a further two conferences were arranged in 1998<sup>870</sup> and 2004.<sup>871</sup>

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya had faced many difficulties and trials and was living under the cross. Therefore, the theology of the cross was timely and necessary. It was not African or Western but Biblical theology. According to it, Jesus' cross was the foundation of the true Church. In the world, she lived under the cross; glory would be achieved in heaven. Confessional Lutheranism wanted to proclaim this message. The International Confessional Lutheran Conferences intensified the interest in Lutheranism in Kenya also affecting the rest of East Africa. Matongo Lutheran Theological College had become the center of this development.

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<sup>868</sup> Translation by author. Arkkila 1995, 134–135.

<sup>869</sup> The LWF wanted to “torpedo” the first conference by planning a meeting of African Church leaders in Nairobi at the same time. Olak informed that the ELCK will not attend that meeting and will not cancel the planned conference anyway. The LWF warned Naaman Laiser not to come to Matongo threatening to freeze the LWF aid to the ELCT. Botswanan Bishop, Philip J. Robinson, told at the conference, that the LWF had also put pressure on their Church to accept women’s ministry. MA, interview of Arto Seppänen 1.8.2017. “Noël Rabemanantsoa (LWF Africa Secretary) is always very active if he realizes that something is happening in Africa without very close ties with the LWF.” KA, LEAFA II, file 213, Reijo Arkkila to Richard Olak 18.4.1991. The LWF headquarters at Geneva followed ELCK events attentively. KIA, LEAF 1994–1995, Anneli Janhonen to Reijo Arkkila May 1994.

<sup>870</sup> “Christianity can only maintain its strength and value and achieve the set objective when it keeps its identity. True unity will always be there so long as they believe in the Lord. For us to emphasize confessionalism, we mean that we would like to enter the new century very clear in identity portraying the true image of the Lord of the Church. A compromise to get closer to other religions even those outside the faith, just for the sake of good neighborliness of fairness will jeopardize the effectiveness of the ‘Mission of the Lord’.” Olak 1998, 140–141.

<sup>871</sup> “Against the modern tide of postmodernism and all fallacies of ancient paganism, we as Biblical Christians maintain that above all varying and changing human truths there is God’s eternal truth revealed to us in his Word. Parting ways with the Bible, thus, means separation from the living God [...] My intense desire that the clergy of my Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, and of other Lutheran Churches in Africa and elsewhere, as well, would be strengthened in this one scriptural truth of God and made wise and bold in their witness to the truth of God’s testimony about His Son, Jesus Christ.” Obare 2004, 12.

### 9.1.6 The Power of God

After the first International Lutheran Conference, pastors enthusiastically discussed Lutheran topics. In August 1992, all pastors were invited to the MLTC for their annual meeting. Secretary-General Richard Olak was asked to give a lecture on the “Law and Gospel”. He wondered why this topic was so popular that it was repeated over and over again. Either it was a sign of Lutheran enthusiasm or there was “a problem with our Lutheran heritage”. In his presentation, he left this question unanswered, referring to the current challenges facing the Church, but asked representatives to form an opinion to consider the matter in a joint meeting with the mission partners.<sup>872</sup>

The same subject was highlighted at the Second International Lutheran Conference, March 1994. In his lengthy lecture, Robert Preus reminded that preaching the Gospel was the preachers’ central task. The law showed “the hopelessness of trying to atone for our sins and reconcile ourselves with God by our own efforts”. Instead, righteousness came through the Gospel. The theology of glory denied the saving power of the Gospel, by clinging to worldly visible things as if they were the signs of success. The theology of the cross focused on the Word and Sacraments and waited for glory, but not until in heaven.<sup>873</sup> The difference in focus was revealed in a Bible study by Kjartan Jónsson (SIK). According to it, the proclamation of God’s healing power required more faith than the proclamation of the remission of sins:

It is easier to proclaim the forgiveness of sins because it does not need any test of our faith [...] Let none of us have little faith simply in the name of Lutheran theology. Luther was a man of great faith. Let us allow the Holy Spirit to distribute the spiritual gifts amongst us, not only the gifts of preaching and teaching. Let us take Jesus seriously.<sup>874</sup>

This Bible study sparked a critical debate. It was seen as representing a Reformed position, where the power of God was often seen in miracles instead of the Word and sacraments.<sup>875</sup>

Pastors Henry Otworì, Joel Ogutu, and Leonard Oner taught in unison with Robert Preus. Otworì noted that mixing the Law and Gospel was very common in the ELCK congregations, due to lack of trained workers. Evangelists and assistants who were preaching every Sunday were not equipped to understand Lutheran theology. The other cause of this was the charismatic pressure from all over. Joel Ogutu agreed: “There is a big tendency that the main message of our preaching, especially within our young congregations, is just to condemn people and not to really preach Law and Gospel.” Another reason was that the

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<sup>872</sup> MLTCA, *Law and Gospel* for ELCK Pastors Conference MLTC 25.–26.8.1992.

<sup>873</sup> Preus 1994, 61–86.

<sup>874</sup> The Theology of the Cross, 32–37.

<sup>875</sup> MA, interview of Reijo Arkkila 20.11.2018.

people originated from different types of spiritual groups<sup>876</sup> emphasizing the law. “We need the wonderful Gospel message, and we are called to be preachers of the Gospel on this changing continent of Africa today!” Oner reminded that everyone by nature thought he must do something for his salvation. Instead, salvation was through grace:

When you hear You, You, You, the proclamation is the law. When you hear Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, even if the language is not understood by the You, we know that the Gospel is being proclaimed [...] To those who have AIDS, we are called to proclaim the Gospel. The reason is that they have broken hearts; they have lost hope and are full of fear. Therefore, they desperately need to know God’s mercy and grace [...] If they believe the Gospel, God will forgive their sins and will accept them as His children without any merit of their own, but just in the name and blood of Jesus Christ.<sup>877</sup>

According to pastors Henry Otworu, Joel Ogutu, and Leonard Oner, Lutheran teaching had not yet been integrated into all ELCK congregations. The lack of trained workers, pressure from the surrounding spiritual groups, and various charismatic movements were the reason for this. The Church needed preachers of the Gospel. Her actual mission was to save souls. The program statement of the second International Lutheran Conference was clear: “The Gospel is the Power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.” (Rm 1:16)

## 9.2 The Church’s Teaching Assignment

### 9.2.1 Diakonia for Everybody

Initially, the driving force behind women’s work in the LCK was the need for literacy training. Therefore, the focus was on teaching reading and writing. The education was adapted to meet the requirements of everyday life with family care, children’s education, and agriculture. Some other topics were nutrition, childcare, health, and hygiene. Through tailoring and handicrafts, women could earn a living. Evangelization and Bible-teaching were included. Since the early 1960s, Gunhild Andersson (SLM) was the first missionary working in this field, followed by Greta Brorsson (SLM) in the 1970s.<sup>878</sup>

In 1970, the Church established a Women’s Development Committee, *Kamati ya maendeleo ya wanawake*. The first reading groups for women began

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<sup>876</sup> One characteristic religious movement among the Luo people of Western Kenya was called Legio Maria. It was initiated by repeated appearances of a mystic woman delivering messages about the incarnation of the son of God as a black man. Legio Maria broke away from the lay Catholic movement in 1963 and was legally registered in Kenya in 1966, expanding massively in the late 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, also spreading to many other African countries. Barrett and Padwick 1989, 66. Legio Maria settled at Matongo in the early 1990s opposite the MLTC gate. It was easy to identify from the colorful flags around the compound. MA.

<sup>877</sup> The Theology of the Cross, 127–129, 133–136.

<sup>878</sup> Gustafsson ed. 1998, 10.



at four different sites. By 1973, there were already 12 of these groups, led by both missionaries and Kenyan group leaders.<sup>879</sup> Local Kenyan leaders were trained twice a year. The work expanded rapidly, and as early as the early 1980s, there were 45 groups of women with 800 active participants. By the late 1980s, the work changed in nature, partly because of the limited resources and partly because of the social situation of women who had now become literate. During this decade, “Priscilla” -groups<sup>880</sup> provided Bible study and practical work for both men and women. As women's work grew, the need for a specific training center became even more necessary. The SLM applied for money from the SIDA and received positive feedback. Kisii County offered a plot about five kilometers from Nyamira, and construction began in June 1979. The center was completed in November 1980. It was called Ogango Center, offering basic courses for women's group leaders as well as short courses for the wives of evangelists and pastors. There were also seminars for secondary school girls, tailors, and nursery teachers.<sup>881</sup>

Awareness of Diakonia spread widely, with each mission society introducing it in their respective areas. Deacon Raija Partanen (LEAF), who worked in Kisumu (1985–1989), Kakamega (1989–1993), and Matongo (1993–1998), experienced a rising “Diakonia revival” especially at Nyagowa while teaching there with pastors Henry Kabasa and David Chuchu. Many pastors were involved, feeling that the teaching also enriched their work. Partanen's motto was: “Diakonia is everybody's responsibility!” From the Kisumu Center, Diakonia work spread to specialized areas: the disabled, beggars<sup>882</sup> and abandoned women. Especially in Kisumu, there were many co-workers: Joseph and Pamela Osumba, William and Margaret Akandi, Rose Ojuang, Ruben Ngotewe, Margaret Akayu, Silvester Ochieng', Leonard Oner, and Japhet Rabach Dachi.<sup>883</sup> In the 1990s, Sirkka Kuula (LEAF) and Deaconess Mariana Mora

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<sup>879</sup> Jemimah Oenga, Marita Mogeni, Adah Olak, Jelia Maruko, Billiah Abuga, Elimelidha Moraa, Esther Bonareri, Kemunto. Missionaries involved were Gunhild Andersson, Brita Ekström, Brita Iiskola, Maj-Len Åbonde. KIA, LCK Reports, *Report of women work 1973*.

<sup>880</sup> Seline Oseko was the first Lutheran lady who was confirmed 23.12.1951 at the age of 19. At that time, the services were held in a banana leaf house, which was used as a school. Afterwards, they were given tea and biscuits. In her Priscilla group, there were 15 active members. They raised money by selling woven fabrics and snacks during the Synods. For that reason, some people called them “*mama uji*” [mothers of porridge]. They also had an “Evangelical Lutheran Choir”, which still sings. Seline was considered a “none-tribe” among the Kisiis because she was a Luhya. MA, interview of Seline Oseko 7.10.2018. Oseko died in early 2019.

<sup>881</sup> Nilsson ed. 1981, 26–37.

<sup>882</sup> Beggars' Day was arranged 2–3 times per year for almost 100 participants. They were given food, clothes, blankets, and spiritual guidance through Bible teaching. MA, interview of Raija Partanen 5.10.2015.

<sup>883</sup> Ramba was sheltering eight women starting from 1988. These women were abandoned because they could not have children. Even Indians were among the sponsors through the Lions Club International. Rev. Joseph Osumba was organizing this work. A Church building and a house for workers were also built. MA, interview of Raija Partanen 5.10.2015.

worked together and paid special attention to Kisumu street kids<sup>884</sup> and prisoners<sup>885</sup>. They came up with some solutions to make women's practical daily lives easier, such as a solar cooker and a fish smoker, which were very helpful in this sunny lakeside town. They also introduced a wafer machine that prepared wafers for the need of Holy Communion and even for sale elsewhere.<sup>886</sup>

To coordinate and strengthen Diakonia, the Executive Committee requested Matongo Lutheran Theological College to draw up a female training plan for the parish-workers. Principal Reijo Arkkila sent a letter to the Women's Development Committee asking how this training relates to the Ogango Center. According to him, there was an opportunity to start a Diakonia course together with an evangelist course as early as 1980.<sup>887</sup> However, the plans progressed slowly. Only in 1989, the first four female candidates were admitted to the College.<sup>888</sup> Following the success of this experiment, the Church decided to begin a second Diakonia course for two years in 1994. This 16-women course was held at Ogango Lutheran Deaconess College (OLDC). Karin Gunnarsson (SLM) served as Principal there for a year, followed by Rev. James Aera.<sup>889</sup>

Elizabeth Ayalo and Patricia Omenda were among the first students in this course. They were both pleased with the teaching: "The discipline was strict and good." For their practical training, they visited local schools, taught children and women. Upon graduation, the pastors at first assumed that the deaconesses would only carry their bags. After a while yet their work came to be appreciated. According to Ayalo and Omenda, the current situation where pastors and deaconesses study together at Matongo Theological College is not a good one because of the moral misconduct that has taken place.<sup>890</sup>

Graduation at Ogango Lutheran Deaconess Center was held on 28 March 1996. Fourteen graduating women had been studying subjects on the Bible, as well as practical applications such as healthcare, sewing, and typing. "There is a great need for parish workers, especially for teaching women," Principal Rev.

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<sup>884</sup> At the beginning of 2000, Bishop Richard Amayo requested that Kuula start a special school for these street children. This School was functioning over 10 years at the Kisumu Lutheran Center. MA, interview of Sirkka Kuula 22.8.2016.

<sup>885</sup> Leppänen worked at the Kodiaga Prison for Children and experienced a revival at the beginning of 2000. Here, the children themselves started a "Lutheran Church of God". MA, interview of Tuula Leppänen 6.10.2015.

<sup>886</sup> MA, interviews of Sirkka Kuula 22.8.2016 and Mariana Mora 17.10.2018.

<sup>887</sup> MLTCA, Letters sent -1986, Reijo Arkkila to Kamati ya maendeleo ya wanawake LCK 30.10.1978.

<sup>888</sup> Lessons on Diakonia were held separately for girls, but evangelists too were very interested. Partanen also taught part-time at Ogango and felt that it was good to concentrate on the topic. MA, interview of Raija Partanen 5.10.2015.

<sup>889</sup> Ekström 2011, 407-408. Altogether, six courses were completed before the school was closed due to a lack of funds. Courses were popular and there was competition, because of many applicants. Both James Aera and Karin Gunnarsson felt that it was a mistake to move Diakonia training back to Matongo. Presently, Ogango is not used by the ELCK but instead hired by a local school. MA, interview of James Aera 22.10.2018.

<sup>890</sup> MA, interviews of Elizabeth Ayalo and Patricia Omenda 25.3.2020.

James Aera told the guests. Other teaching staff included Vice-Principal Karin Gunnarsson, Samwel Mogeni, Kristian and Anna Norrback, James Nyakundi, Gunhild Andersson and several part-time teachers. The ceremony was held at the Ogango church, with Richard Olak preaching. Bishop Nyamwaro, General Secretary Mundia, and Rev. Joel Ogutu were among the speakers and several choirs sang.<sup>891</sup>

The development of the Church's women's work was rapid and the early 1990s can be described as a period of special enthusiasm for Diakonia. The key to this success was her commitment to education, which focused on Ogango Lutheran Deaconess Center. The activities were funded by the missions which were now able to channel support for Diakonia through Development Aid. The challenge for the future was to arrange funding at the end of this support.

### 9.2.2 Teachers' Training College

In the early 1980s, President Daniel arap Moi wanted religious education to be emphasized at schools and encouraged students to study the Bible. His example led people to see the importance of Christian education even in schoolwork. Since then, the idea of establishing a teacher training college also came forward in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya. General Secretary Richard Olak raised the issue at a consultation between the Church and her supporting missions in Stockholm, 1986. At about the same time, the discussions gained new momentum as the School Chaplain Walter Obare and a Danish missionary, Education Secretary Alf Bach-Kofoed with his wife Margit became excited about the idea. They forwarded the plan to the mission director of the SLM, who supported it and forwarded it to the Church Head Office. In 1988, Per-Martin and Gunnel Hjort (ELM) were sent to start the planned college.<sup>892</sup>

The beginning seemed promising, but gradually dark clouds emerged. The biggest controversy was about the location. In the early stages of discussions, Othoro was considered the best location since the required buildings were already there. Chairman Momanyi instead wanted for it to be at Kenyoro<sup>893</sup> and persuaded the Kisiis to vote for this. At this point, Kenyoro carried the day. However, Matongo<sup>894</sup> also had its spokesmen, most notably Rev. Walter Obare,

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<sup>891</sup> ELCK Newsletter 1-2/1996.

<sup>892</sup> MA, interview of Walter Obare 9.10.2018. KA, LEAFA II, file 208, Stockholm September 10-12.9.1986, Lounela 2007, 171. Obare was active in raising this issue. Together with Reijo Arkkila, he arranged a course for teachers in December 1986. MA, interview of Reijo Arkkila 20.11.2018.

<sup>893</sup> The Kenyoro plot is mentioned already in 1984. IA, EII 27, Corr. Gen. Sec. 1982-1985, ELCK Office meeting 26.7.1984.

<sup>894</sup> "If the plans for TTC move ahead, a class might start in May 1988, and MLTC has been mentioned as the place to start." IA, EII, Corr. Gen. Sec. 22 1985-1989, Erling Lundebj to Johan Naustvik 26.11.1986.

Rev. Samwel Mogeni<sup>895</sup> and the Principal of Matongo Secondary, Samwel Michoro<sup>896</sup>. Together with the new leadership of the Church, they were able to change the course of things, so that it was finally decided that the college would begin at Matongo.<sup>897</sup> Erling Lundeby and Roland Gustafsson were planning to start the TTC in Nairobi, but these plans did not receive support.<sup>898</sup> At this stage, all the parties were interested in the project.

The mission partners did not eventually fund the project. From the beginning, especially the Swedish Lutheran Mission was enthusiastic about it, promising money and workers for this. The Norwegian Lutheran Mission was also very interested.<sup>899</sup> And according to the Oslo negotiations in May 1989, all the others joined in this willingly. Erling Lundeby's resignation from the MLTC brought about a change. Both the SLM and the NLM now withdrew their promises to support the project.<sup>900</sup> The Head Office wrote to Per-Ebbe Ingvert, the SLM Mission secretary, explaining that they had full confidence in the Planning Committee, and they intend to continue implementing the plan despite pressure from the missions. "The crisis of confidence at the MLTC to us is something that we do not identify with the mission but with the individuals." Surprisingly, they then criticized the SLM and the NLM perception of the school and wanted to correct it: The teachers' training college did not mean a new Bible school. Christianity would be taught there, but it would become an institution registered by the Ministry of Education following the official curriculum. "Fear always does not come from God and less faith led Peter to drown", the letter concluded.<sup>901</sup> It seems that there was disagreement not only over the location of the school but about its purpose in general. The Church leadership wanted to build an educational institution that would prepare

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<sup>895</sup> Ondicho remembers that Mogeni and Peter Abuga were fighting each other over the matter. Kenyoro even broke away from the ELCK for a while. MA, interview of Richard Ondicho 24.6.2019.

<sup>896</sup> Samwel Michoro was very willing to give facilities and land for the TTC. Secondary teachers were later also allowed to teach at the College. MA, interview of Vuokko Peltola 23.8.2019.

<sup>897</sup> Both Luos and Kisiis were angry at Momanyi because they did not get the TTC to their desired areas. Oomo sees this as one of the reasons, why Momanyi left for studies. MA, interview of Jared Oomo 21.9.18. Per-Ebbe Ingvert had reservations towards both Othoro and Kenyoro based on "availability of communications". IA, EIII: 7 Education Secretary, Per-Ebbe to Richard Olak 4.12. 1989.

<sup>898</sup> KIA, LEAF 1994–1995, Erling Lundeby to Tor Arne Haavet 24.3.1995.

<sup>899</sup> "TTC under ELCK might be of fundamental importance. Our mission is ready to do our best to assist you. The SLM would most probably be able to get assistance from SIDA [...] I believe that the NLM might have capacity to provide Lutheran tutors for this college. United effort is a main condition for the success of the project." IA, EIII:7 Mission secretary, Per-Ebbe Ingvert to ELCK 20.3.1989.

<sup>900</sup> "I feel compelled to ask myself if not the handling of the crisis of confidence at MLTC is not estranging one of the missions. The NLM might have been a mission which had the ability to make an important contribution [...] I am no longer convinced that I can even recommend it." IA, EIII: 7, Education secretary, Per-Ebbe Ingvert to ELCK 3.1.1991.

<sup>901</sup> IA, EIII: 7, Church Education Secretary, Francis Nyamwaro, Samwel Mogeni and Richard Olak to Per-Ebbe Ingvert 16.1.1991.

official teachers for Kenyan schools and felt that the missions had misunderstood the situation.

The first minutes of the Planning Committee date from 1991. Members of this committee were Samwel Nyanchama, Samwel Michoro, Francis Mong'are, Walter Obare, Japheth Dachi, Francis Odongo, and Peter Ombui. Arto Seppänen was appointed coordinator up to the end of his second term, December 1992. Seppänen recalls that the members were enthusiastic and expected quick solutions. He thought of himself as a "doubting Thomas", reminding people of practical matters. The plans developed slowly. Due to a lack of funds and facilities, the college was not opened as originally planned in 1991, but in September 1994.<sup>902</sup> The first graduation of 98 new primary school teachers took place on 27 July 1996. About a thousand people attended the Celebration. Principal Samwel Nyanchama addressed the audience: "There has been one cardinal rule through the hardships during the first years: being long in solution and short in problem!" The celebration was represented by Honor's guest, Assistant Minister for Energy and Natural Resources Mariita Atebe and the Nyamira District Education Officer Elishama Lijoodi.<sup>903</sup>

The leadership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya had firmly decided to start Matongo Teachers' Training College. Surprisingly, they faced opposition from the mission partners, all of whom had initially pledged their support. Both the Swedish Lutheran Mission and the Norwegian Lutheran Mission withdrew their promises. The reason was that – from their perspective – they had been mistreated at Matongo Theological College. Despite opposition, the Church leaders managed to join forces and thus to start the Teachers' Training College without the help of the missions. Here, in their initiative, they demonstrated their independence from Western rulers. In this respect, the Kenyan Church leadership had grown over the years.

### 9.2.3 Youth Vocational Training

Since Atemo Youth Polytechnic was functioning well, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya requested vocational training also to other areas of the country. The missions responded to these wishes, as these thoughts suited their priorities. The SLM, for example, built Bobembe Vocational school in 1984. Its home engineering curriculum was for about 50 students.<sup>904</sup> By the 1990s, there were already several other mission-supported vocational schools at different locations.<sup>905</sup>

At the beginning of the 1990s, LEAF missionary Tapio Kuula started planning a vocational school in Kisumu. In 1992, he managed to buy a plot close to the city center, Mamboleo. A welder, Martin Ogega from Kawangware,

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<sup>902</sup> Harjula A. 2008, 41–43, MA, interview of Arto Seppänen 1.7.2018.

<sup>903</sup> ELCK Newsletter 1/1996.

<sup>904</sup> SLEAFA, BV BREV, BV's annual report of 1984, 82.

<sup>905</sup> See chapter "Emphasis on Schoolwork".

assisted Kuula with the construction. During construction, he taught young men practical work.<sup>906</sup> After the main construction period was over, the first class of the school, now called the Youth Training Center, started at the beginning of 1997 with Reino Piittala (LEAF) as Principal. Young men were taught metalwork and other practical skills by John Oriwo. Home economics was introduced by Elizabeth Ondumbe. Samuel Ondola taught mathematics, physics, and chemistry. Alice Odhiambo was the school Secretary. Piittala was succeeded by Lorna Olak in 2001.<sup>907</sup>

Richard Ouma was born in 1970 at Kandegwa. His parents were members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, as was his grandfather. Richard went to the ELCK-sponsored schools and studied at Atemo Youth Polytechnic, 1987–1990. At Atemo he was involved in many congregational activities, Sunday school, catechetical teaching, choir practices, and youth competitions. After coming to Kisumu for driving lessons in 1991, he started working with Tapio Kuula. Kuula served as his supervisor. Ouma appreciated him: “He was very strict, and his training was the best training ever!” First, Ouma worked with the construction of the fences surrounding the project and then as a driver. During the years 1995–1996, he studied marketing and bookkeeping. He continued by studying business management for three years. In 2011, he became the Principal of the Youth Training Center. His dream was to develop the school into a Lutheran Technical Training Institute.<sup>908</sup>

The students at the Youth Training Center were widely appreciated. Kuula remembers that when some students were hired by the Industrial Plant East-Africa Limited in Nairobi, the Indian owner asked: “What have you done? These men are different from the others!” Kuula answered: “These men believe in God.” According to Kuula, this was mission work at its best, “spiritual and earthly work hand-in-hand.”<sup>909</sup> Home economics was also very popular, and the possibilities for employment were good afterwards. Eunice Mbeta, for example, studied this course and then received a job at Kakamega University.<sup>910</sup>

In 2013, Richard Ouma had to leave his duties as Principal because he refused to pay the Church Head Office 10 percent out of all the funds the Youth Training Center received from the missions and the student fees, as the Church required. “It would have meant the end of the school,” he explained. After Ouma had left, the school was able to function for only one year before its abolition. Currently, the facilities are rented out for other purposes.<sup>911</sup> The future of a

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<sup>906</sup> MA, interview of Tapio Kuula 22.8.2016.

<sup>907</sup> Lorna is Richard Olak’s daughter. MA, interview of Reino Piittala 21.11.2019.

<sup>908</sup> MA, interview of Richard Ouma 16.10.2018.

<sup>909</sup> “My original plan was to create practical work possibilities for these men. Kenyan champion rally car driver, Rob Collins, hired some of them and was pleased.” MA, interview of Tapio Kuula 22.8.2016.

<sup>910</sup> MA, interview of Isaya Mbeta 20.11.2018.

<sup>911</sup> MA, interview of Richard Ouma 16.10.2018.

successful vocational training institute was ruined in the wink of an eye, due to poor Church and missionary<sup>912</sup> management.

#### 9.2.4 Plans for a Luther Academy

In the early 1990s, the idea of building an educational center in Nairobi emerged. Particularly LEAF missionaries were active in this matter. In 1991, Anssi Simojoki (LEAF) wrote to the Head Office about the importance of this enterprise, explaining that LEAF would be ready to support it. According to him, the Luther Academy was based on the idea that “all domestic and international activities in the capital of the Republic of Kenya must take place on the terms of the ELCK.”<sup>913</sup> The following year, 1992, LEAF missionary theologians Reijo Arkkila, Timo Reuhkala, Arto Seppänen, Anssi Simojoki, and Reino Toikka wrote to their Mission Board in Helsinki about the future development plan. In their letter, they wondered why the Missions were reducing their support at the same time as the Church was planning to re-organize her educational strategy. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya was a growing Church that wanted to fight for the Gospel and the Lutheran Confessions. “The Church cannot compromise on the quantity and quality of education,” they concluded.<sup>914</sup> At this stage, however, the plans did not go forward. One reason seems to be that Anssi Simojoki’s position as the District Leader of Nairobi was under supervision due to ongoing disagreements at the Uhuru Highway congregation.<sup>915</sup>

In February 1995, General Secretary Daniel Daudi informed the missions that the Church had decided to start six Bible centers: Ogango, Atemo, Cheshinende, Nairobi, Marsabit, and Kapenguria. The Executive Committee had also resolved to move pastoral training from Matongo Lutheran Theological College to the proposed Luther Academy, which the Church was ready to build. Matongo would continue training evangelists, in addition to which it would supervise the programs offered at these other training centers. The purpose was to serve different areas according to their own needs.<sup>916</sup> Reijo Arkkila was not happy with the Church’s new initiative. He did not consider the

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<sup>912</sup> “LEAF should have continued supporting the Center and not let it go down this way!” MA, interview of Reino Piittala 21.11.2019.

<sup>913</sup> IA EII: 26, Corr. Gen. Sec. 1989–1992, Anssi Simojoki to ELCK Head Office 27.5.1991.

<sup>914</sup> KIA, Kirjeenvaihto Kenia–Helsinki 1992–, LEAF missionaries to LEAF Executive Team 11.1.1992.

<sup>915</sup> LEAF had made inquiries about Simojoki and the Head Office answered, feeling, however, that according to the Constitution, it was the matter for the Mission Board: “The pastor is talented in many ways: He is able in his work, e.g., he is a good preacher and able leader and so on. Nevertheless, it is evident for us in this Office that, it is becoming almost impossible for him to relate with other workers.” KIA, Correspondence Kenya-Helsinki 1992, Francis Onderi and Richard Olak to Seppo Suokunnas and Tuula Sääksi 30.12.1992.

<sup>916</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 209, Daniel Daudi to Tuula Sääksi 22.2.1995. “This was decided without informing the principal, staff, and the Board of MLTC. We just read it in the minutes!” MA, Email from Rune Imberg 22.6.2020.

decentralization of education into six separate centers a good thing. According to him, there was a need to secure confessional Lutheran teaching. To let everyone themselves decide what to teach would lead to confusion. Matongo Lutheran Theological College was still needed, alongside the Luther Academy for centralizing education. According to him, the Luther Academy was “one of the most important projects of this decade for the whole of eastern Africa.”<sup>917</sup> Already in March, Väinö Uusitalo (LEAF) informed that the training of evangelists would not be split into different centers after all. This was Francis Nyamwaro’s decision. According to Nyamwaro, “the Church will fall apart if different tribes are working in their own areas to train their evangelists with their own tribe and own missionary organizations”.<sup>918</sup> In Africa, decisions could change very quickly!

In a confidential letter to Reijo Arkkila, Daniel Daudi Mundia asked him to contact the leaders of the Missouri Synod on behalf of the Church. According to Mundia, Luther Academy was needed to serve all the Lutheran Churches in Africa, providing them with “genuine, confessional Lutheran theology”. He also encouraged Arkkila to act according to the plans for the establishment of the African Lutheran Council as outlined during the Second International Lutheran Conference to unite confessional Lutherans throughout the continent.<sup>919</sup> This time the plans evolved rapidly. Already in June 1995, Anssi Simojoki informed the Head Office that he had found a suitable plot for the Luther Academy.<sup>920</sup> The Missouri Synod was also interested in joining the project.<sup>921</sup> “I think this is a splendid idea! Nairobi is a central city and the Luther Academy located there could exert leadership in missions and confessional Lutheran theology all over Africa”, the widely known Lutheran scholar, Robert Preus, wrote to Reijo Arkkila.<sup>922</sup>

However, not everyone was enthusiastic about this enterprise. The leadership of the Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland was not wholeheartedly behind it.<sup>923</sup> The correspondence between the LEAF Home board and the Kenyan missionaries was frequent. Mission Director Tuula Sääksi was particularly suspicious about the Missouri Synod’s role.<sup>924</sup> Erling Lundebý (NLM) was also suspicious. He was puzzled that only LEAF missionaries were

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<sup>917</sup> MA, *Aspects of the Nairobi Training Center Project* by Reijo Arkkila 3.1.1995

<sup>918</sup> Translation by author. MA, Väinö Uusitalo to Tuula Sääksi 11.3.1995.

<sup>919</sup> MA, Daudi Mundia to Reijo Arkkila 30.3.1995.

<sup>920</sup> KIA, LEAF 1994–1995, Anssi Simojoki to Head Office/ELCK 8.6.1995.

<sup>921</sup> Arkkila had met with Missouri Synod’s African Secretary Robert Roegner, Theological Advisor Daniel Mattson, and the Leader of the Ghana Lutheran Church Paul Kofi Finn in 16.11.1994. At this point, they were all interested in the project. MA, *Aspects of the Nairobi Training Center Project* by Reijo Arkkila 3.1.1995.

<sup>922</sup> MA, Robert Preus to Reijo Arkkila 5.5.1995.

<sup>923</sup> “LEAF mission department was not supporting our plan.” MA, interview of Reino Toikka 28.8.2019.

<sup>924</sup> KIA, LEAF 1994–1994, Tuula Sääksi to LEAF missionaries 3.2.1995, Tuula Sääksi to Tapio Kuula 21.12.94 and 27.11.1995, Väinö Uusitalo to Tuula Sääksi 16.12.1994, Anssi Simojoki to Tuula Sääksi 16.2.1995.



involved, not to mention Anssi Simojoki. Still, he considered Nairobi as the best location for future theological training.<sup>925</sup> Johannes Selstø (NLM) was worried that LEAF would take the whole project under its own wings without considering other mission societies: “We must fight against it with all our might.”<sup>926</sup> The NLM Mission secretary Arve Myra feared the same: the Finns might move forward in their plans without the Church being involved.<sup>927</sup> According to Anssi Simojoki, the final blow came when the Lutheran Heritage Foundation, which was especially interested in this enterprise, decided to withdraw from it.<sup>928</sup>

The Church, the missions, and each missionary involved had their own channels to work through. It seems that the planning process for the Luther Academy was hectic with too many stakeholders involved, and all this without adequate communication between them. Even personal conflicts affected the situation. It is also clear that not all the parties shared the same view on the importance of Confessional Lutheran teaching. The Church leaders were strongly behind this goal. They encouraged the LEAF missionaries to move forward with the plans. Although the dream of a Luther Academy and an African Lutheran Council<sup>929</sup> did not materialize at this point, the process inevitably demonstrated that the leadership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya wanted to act as the *primus motor* in strengthening confessional Lutheranism in Africa. This time around yet the other forces were stronger.

### 9.2.5 Signs of Lutheran Revival

In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, Synods were arranged annually in every congregation from September to December. People gathered to hear God’s Word, to listen to choirs, and themselves sing. These Gospel celebrations lasted for two or three days usually on weekends. They had been arranged from the beginning of the Church. Gustaf Norrback describes the Synod of Matongo in 1963:

The huge church was filled with people. Men and women, children and adults sat packed on benches, chairs, and extra seating. The heat was all-consuming. Soon we were all wet with sweat. The strange thing was how the children sat with their mothers, completely still [...] Many choirs participated [...] The preacher spoke Kiswahili. One interpreter translated it into the language of

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<sup>925</sup> KIA, LEAF 1994–1995, Erling Lundeby to Tor Arne Haavet 24.3.1995, Memo of meeting in Nairobi with A. Kuokkanen.

<sup>926</sup> Translation by author. NLMA, Dbb 0251, Johannes Selstø to Tor Arne Haavet 11.1.1996.

<sup>927</sup> NLMA, Dbb 0250, Arve Myra to Tor Arne Haavet 27.1.1996.

<sup>928</sup> The reason behind this was the leadership dispute at the LHF. MA, interview of Anssi Simojoki 18.9.2019.

<sup>929</sup> The African Lutheran Council was finally established during the International Confessional Lutheran Conference in Lusaka 12.-14.4.2011 on the initiative of Reijo Arkkila. Arkkila M. 2012, 37. For several reasons, not least because of the leadership struggles of the Lutheran Evangelical Church in Africa, the matter did not progress on a practical level. MA.

the Ekegusii and another to the Dholuo. The pace was rapid and seemed to increase during the sermon. Sometimes you didn't know whether the preacher or the interpreter came first.<sup>930</sup>

"Our intention is to make all people come to listen to the Word of God at these spiritual meetings, not only young people as it is now," the Church President Otete wrote in his report of 1973. Surprisingly, he was worried about adults and elderly people, who were not so active to attend spiritual meetings as the younger ones. Young people made up the largest percentage of the members. The Church grew from the inside.<sup>931</sup> Ingemar Helgesson visited several Synods in 1975:

These are blessed days when we are faced with the Word of God. At the end of the Church year, the recommended texts are especially touching [...] It is important that everyone remain alert and make clear if he or she is prepared to meet the Lord Jesus. It is absolutely necessary for the unbeliever to be judged already here, to be convicted of sin, but also that we see that in Jesus everything is perfect.<sup>932</sup>

Even at Pokot, Synods were held. "*Mkutano wa kiroho* [Synod]" in Chepareria was held on 5-6 March 1983. Kjell Strømme wrote: "Tempted to get some people from Sekerr, but since I do not have a car that can carry people, it is difficult."<sup>933</sup> The Kibogo Church in the Luo area was consecrated on 11 September 1983 during a Synod. The Church was full of people. John Momanyi preached about light and salvation: "The most important thing is to learn how Jesus came and gave His blood for us. I hope for revival so that every Church worker would be a missionary in his or her own place."<sup>934</sup>

In the early 1990s, Church life faced serious challenges. Many congregations were reported to be dying.<sup>935</sup> However, the synods continued being popular. They gathered large crowds, especially in the areas of the Kisii revival, Kenyoro, and Erandi. At times, it was calculated that there were even over 1500 people present. The synods lasted for two or three days. The Bible was read and preached, the basics of faith were taught, many choirs sang. The revival of the 1980s continued to be strong.<sup>936</sup> In 1996, the Road – a famous Finnish Gospel band – visited the Maasais. The people were countless. Seppo Piisola wrote about one incident:

The Maasais were clapping their hands and the jewelry made a sound when they were jumping. I was afraid that the message would be forgotten while

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<sup>930</sup> Translation by author. Norrback 2001, 13–14.

<sup>931</sup> IA, A I: 1, Minutes of AGM 1971–1977, *LCK President's report to the Committee* held at Matongo 5.2.1973.

<sup>932</sup> Translation by author. RA, BVA, E1 e: 35, Ingemar Helgesson to Gunnar Nilsson 24.11.1975.

<sup>933</sup> Translation by author. NLMA, Dc. L0002, *Dagbok for Sekerr* by Kjell Strømme 1983.

<sup>934</sup> Ss 40/1983.

<sup>935</sup> See chapter "The First Love Is Disappearing".

<sup>936</sup> Arkkila 2004, 30.

Maasais were watching these white UFOs [...] What a great night at the Enosampuru congregation! Familiar songs were sung, accompanied by a guitar. "Thank you, thank you Jesus" translated well into the Maa language.<sup>937</sup>

At the Pastor's Conference on 22 September 1993, Rune Imberg emphasized the importance of the Synods as centers of spiritual life. They strengthened both local Christians and made the Church known among the people from other denominations. New members were received through hearing the Gospel message: "I suppose it is the same with men who previously were pagans, that our Synods have been influential in leading them to Christ."<sup>938</sup> Richard Olak rejoiced over the spiritual life of the 1990s. There was a spiritual awakening in the Synods. However, he was concerned about the purity of the teaching:

The Lutheran Church has enormous challenges [...] some of the teachings in the synods has been clear Lutheranism but there is also an emphasis on Pentecostalism and the theology of glory. The Church leadership and clergy should be able to handle this spiritual movement properly. This is a key issue for the Kenyan Lutheran Church right now. It is much more important than difficult economic issues.<sup>939</sup>

Despite her many challenges and theological contradictions, the Church gathered together large crowds of people. Particularly, young people were actively involved. The Synods were popular. They had been organized annually since the early days of the Church and were a strong testament to the Gospel. Together with the liturgical awakening and the emphasis on the Church's teaching assignment, the Synods of the 1990s can be considered as signs of a Lutheran revival.

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<sup>937</sup> Translation by author. Heinonen 2001, 85, 90–91.

<sup>938</sup> MLTCA, volume 11, *ELCK – Past, present and the future* by Rune Imberg, 22.9.1993.

<sup>939</sup> Arkkila 1995, 134.

## 10. The Church as an Identity Issue

In the early 1990s, the Republic of Kenya was shaken by ethnic conflicts that manifested themselves in political tension and violence. These affected many groups, but Kikuyus, Luos, Kipsigis, and Maasais fought at the forefront. The disagreements were not so much about ethnic issues, but rather reflected the difficult political situation in the country, which was maintained by the dictatorial regime of President Daniel arap Moi. Kikuyus trusted the president, while Luos relied on the opposition leader Oginga Odinga, their ethnic brother. It was about power.<sup>940</sup> The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya was also in a precarious state. Ethnic conflicts intensified, reflecting the social situation in the country. The competition for the Church's leadership exacerbated the inflamed atmosphere.

### 10.1 Towards Bishophood

#### 10.1.1 Personal vs Communal Motives

The year 1994 foreshadowed a storm in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya. The representatives of the missions were increasingly concerned about the situation. In January, Karin Gunnarsson, the SLM mission representative, wrote to Chairman Francis Nyamwaro and General Secretary Richard Olak with a complaint:

The problems are of two main categories: Moral/lifestyle, economic/mismanagement, both of them against the commandments of our almighty and holy God. But even worse is a third category: privatization [*sic*, keeping matters private, not making them public] and cover-up. This leads to weakness and inability of the leaders to handle other important matters of the Church in a straight[forward] and the righteous way [...] I appeal to you, please, do not cover up whatever is wrong, bring it into light, confess it publicly, rectify it, seek the forgiveness of God and man that you may be restored spiritually.<sup>941</sup>

As the representative of SLEAF, Alf Wallin wrote to his superiors in Finland:

First, I can say that it was not a pleasant AGM. The "*siasa* [politics]" that is always present became something very unpleasant this year. The main reason for this was a group called the ELCK FOCUS. The representative of this group is a young man from Itierio. He has for a long time made accusations, especially regarding Church headquarters and those who work there. The charges are corruption, immorality, etc. Unfortunately, some of these are correct. A large part of it, however, is pure hyperbole and embellishment. It

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<sup>940</sup> See chapter "Church and Society".

<sup>941</sup> IA, EII: 25, Corr. Gen. Sec. 1992–1994, Karin Gunnarsson to ELCK Head Office 3.1.1994.

is quite clear that there is someone or some persons who are likely to pay for and utilize this spokesman.<sup>942</sup>

The purpose of the “Focus Team” – which Wallin mentioned in his letter – was to point out some Constitutional problems in the Church, the misuse of funds, missing auditing reports, etc. It was represented by different ethnic groups, mostly Luos and Kisiis, John Momanyi acting as chair, Meshack Ngare the secretary. Some other members were Thomas Nyagato, Isaac Osewe, Charles Rioki, Peter Moseti, Johnson Ataro, Zachary Atandi, Henry Kabasa, David Omolo, Richard Olak, Charles Gwaro, Samwel Mogeni, Christopher Sure, Aristarko Ongoro, and David Atura. The “young man from Itierio” was Stephen Obiri.<sup>943</sup>

The Luo pastors had drawn up a two-part memorandum submitted to the Head Office on 25 July 1994. It painted an alarming picture of the Church. The 1994 general election was based on a “tribal attitude rather than Christian” because Luos had been excluded of the decision-making process. Now they wanted to raise their voices via this memorandum. The first part highlighted the history of the “earmarking” practice. It was hoped that this practice would not be addressed in future missionary negotiations in Oslo. The second part consisted of seven separate sections. First, the Church should be divided into three dioceses led by bishops, one of which is the presiding bishop. Evangelists could be replaced by deacons. Second, scholarships should be awarded on merit and not on favoritism. Third, the Head Office should be moved to Nairobi and made available to every ethnic group. Fourth, the Church should follow the Lutheran theology of the cross. “The procedure that the Head office seems to be adopting is geared towards the theology of glory.” Fifth, nepotism should be eliminated when employing people. Sixth, the office of the accountant was not conducive to the achievement of the aims. Finally, morale at the Head Office was not at the desired level as regards marital lives.<sup>944</sup> Most SLEAF missionaries supported the Luo rebellion in their hearts. They sympathized with the suffering of “their own”.<sup>945</sup> The Luos had lost confidence in the Church leadership.

Reijo Arkkila, the LEAF mission representative, had met with representatives of the NLM and the SLM. They had decided to support the Luo pastors' request that the earmarking of funds not be addressed at all at their

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<sup>942</sup> Translation by author. SLEAFA, FLM BREV, Alf Wallin to SLEAF 27.1.1994.

<sup>943</sup> MA, interview of Meshack Ngare 24.3.2020.

<sup>944</sup> The memo was signed by Johnson Ataro, Luke Ogello, Jared Oomo, Richard Olak, Japhet Dachi, David Omolo, Mark Odongo, Meshack Ngare, Walter Obare, Richard Amayo, Joseph Osumba, David Chuchu, Isaac Odera, James Bolo, Henry Kabasa, Andrew Juma, Leonard Oner, Joseph Ochola. SLEAFA, ELCK BREV, *Luo pastors' memorandum* 25.7.1994.

<sup>945</sup> “Maybe it would have been better to concentrate on the other tribes too. Sometimes we were blind to affairs at home, but a small organization had to concentrate its work.” MA, interview of Rut Åbacka 20.3.2017. “We missionaries were probably biased [partiska] in a way that surprises you when you think back on it 25 years later. The situation was inflamed throughout the Church.” Translation by author. MA, Email from Kristian Norrback 15.1.2020.

forthcoming meeting. They had noticed that the Luos had been mistreated at the Annual General Meeting since they were “ruthlessly ignored” in all selections. All the Nordic missionaries shared the view that the Head Office was not up to date. The economy was in poor shape, but no one intervened. The next budget had proposed growth of 112%, regardless of the economic crisis. John Michoro as accountant had taken on too much power in the Head Office. The new General Secretary, Daudi Mundia, had so far kept a very low profile. Finally, mission leaders should support Rune Imberg on his economic policy, which was opposed by the Head Office.<sup>946</sup>

The strong reactions of various parties arose from the ambiguity caused by the Church leadership reform. Others feared that the constitutional violations associated with it would jeopardize the very essence of the Church. The question overshadowed by other issues was: Is the Constitution independent of time and place, binding on all, or were the Church laws changeable according to the situation? Vigorous reactions were also compounded by uncertainty about personal positions. As individual ethnic groups and people tried to secure their place in the Church, the common good was left behind. This was reflected in many activities, including the work of the Church headquarters, on which the missionaries had already lost confidence. Luos had the same concern. In opposition, they fought for their existence. In that sense, their struggle was understandable. The Focus Team, which included both Luos and Kisiis and former Church leaders, also set out to oppose the current leadership. Although everyone considered their actions to be justified on good grounds, it must be stated that the intense struggle of the personal stakeholders blaming “others” did not build any kind of spiritual unity. On the contrary, it caused a fighting attitude in the other parties as well. As a result of all this, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya lived under dark clouds as she moved towards a new era.

#### 10.1.2 “Colonial Hosts” under Attack

Matongo Lutheran Theological College had financial problems since its founding in 1978. The money from the mission societies and the local congregations was simply not enough. All the principals struggled with the same problem of how to keep the seminary running, of how and when new courses for pastors and evangelists should start. In front of these problems, also the food was under special control. The students, of course, were not happy about these measures complaining about them. Even rebellion and strikes appeared.<sup>947</sup> Problems escalated during Principal Rune Imberg’s time. The MLTC Board, staff, and Executive Committee constantly discussed the situation. At the beginning of 1994, reductions concerning student benefits were introduced: no more free writing material, free soap, or toilet paper. Instead,

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<sup>946</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 212, Reijo Arkkila to Tuula Sääksi and Antti Kuokkanen 16.9.1994.

<sup>947</sup> Arkkila M. 2017, 24–27.

students were given 100 shillings per term. Funds for their food expenses were also cut off. Districts were supposed to contribute to the expenses: they were to pay some food, part of the school fees, and transportation.<sup>948</sup>

The former Principal Erling Lundebj had developed a way for students to raise money for their transport and other expenses. They were allowed to cook for themselves cheaply and use the remaining money for private purposes (*kujinyima [self-denial]*). Now that this practice was stopped to save the school on expenses, the students felt that they were blamed for wasting money and that they were not listened to. It seemed to them that the principal wanted to demonstrate his power without listening to them. Therefore, some students began to boycott lessons and gossip about the principal. The Head Office secretly supported their actions. Things developed into a crisis.<sup>949</sup> "This is a fight against the colonial hosts," Väinö Uusitalo wrote to Finland. The students had risen to oppose Western control. Kebaso, one of the students, was much like a "KANU-agent" repeating: "May God bless the President and United Kenya."<sup>950</sup>

The students went on a strike on October 17, 1995. Through a memo, they explained that they no longer trusted the principal. It was time for him to leave the office because of his "totally brutal leadership". Rune Imberg was also accused of dividing Luos and Kisiis and not having respect for Kenyans.<sup>951</sup> The very same day, Chairman Francis Nyamwaro and Vice-Chairman Luke Ogello came to negotiate, but the students refused to return to their classes. The following day, the staff decided to send all the students to their homes. This happened on October 19.<sup>952</sup> Uusitalo wrote to Finland: "For us in Matongo, the MLTC strike is a big deal. In the whole Church, it is a minor issue. Everyone is playing the bishop's game. Jeremiah Nang'au from Kenyoro came and said that the Annual General Meeting would be very heated and that the Church was going to fall apart!"<sup>953</sup> The NLM Mission representative Arve Myra was

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<sup>948</sup> RIA, Financial long-term plan for MLTC. Most of the Districts did not give any money to the MLTC and even special Church offerings had disappeared and never reached the College. MLTCA, Letters, Rune Imberg to District Leaders of ELCK 26.10.1995.

<sup>949</sup> MA, interviews of Tom Omolo 18.9.2018, Hamilton Shihemi 27.9.2018, David Chuchu 18.10.2018, Richard Amayo 23.10.2018, "Imberg did later realize his mistake." James Tengecha 9.11.2018, "Imberg was close to the office and wanted to show his authority. He called us to his 'white house' (the biggest missionary house at the upper station of Matongo) and informed us about the changes. He was somehow afraid of us. There was an information gap between the staff and the students." James Mbori 9.5.2017.

<sup>950</sup> The students accused missionaries of colonialism. Kebaso shouted: "Finnish men play golf, a game of the colonial rule." Translation by author. MA, Väinö Uusitalo to Tuula Sääksi 11.3.1995.

<sup>951</sup> MLTCA, Memo from MLTC students to ELCK Head Office signed by 50 students 17.10.2017, one absent with permission. "You lack respect for Africans." KIA, LEAF 1996, Min. MLTC Staff 20.5.1996.

<sup>952</sup> MLTCA, Letters in 1992–, Rune Imberg to district leaders of ELCK 26.10.1995. Richard Amayo was the student secretary and he read the memo in front of the Church officials. Imberg misbehaved, but "we were wrong". MA, interview of Richard Amayo 23.10.2018.

<sup>953</sup> Translation by author. MA, Väinö Uusitalo to Reijo Arkkila 16.12.1995.

convinced, that it was all about the episcopacy. Already at this stage, the Church leadership wanted to dismiss Rune Imberg and make John Momanyi Principal so that he would not run for election. However, the Executive Committee and the Board opposed this plan.<sup>954</sup> Imberg himself also saw that Church politics were at the center of events: “If the MLTC had just had internal problems to solve, I believe that we really could have managed them [...] Our MLTC problems, however, got out of our hands, because they became connected with Church politics.”<sup>955</sup>

The reaction of the Executive Committee was very harsh on the students. Each of them received a stern warning. Their behavior was “improper, unconstitutional and not biblical”. It was also against the norm of the call of God’s servant. This kind of behavior was not tolerated. “Do not continue to live like the heathen, whose thoughts are worthless, whose minds are in the dark [...] Get rid of your old self, which made you live as you used to [...] Your hearts and minds must be made completely new (Eph. 4.17-26).”<sup>956</sup> The Head Office asked Imberg to continue as principal and arranged reconciliation between the parties.<sup>957</sup> This process was successful, and peace returned for a moment.

Due to previous events and misconduct, the MLTC staff wanted to support the principal and expel Nicodemus Kebaso.<sup>958</sup> The Board agreed and dismissed Kebaso in February. The student became furious about this threatening to kill the principal and some other teachers. The Luo students were also threatened. Contrary to the Executive Committee decision the Head Office now allowed Kebaso to continue his studies.<sup>959</sup> The atmosphere was exacerbated to extremes when Kebaso preached from the text of his choice on Friday, May 17, 1996. He warned in Jeremiah’s words (5:25-31 and 7:5-11) the “fat and sleek” and those who did not take care of the “fatherless, and poor”. “Has this house, which bears my name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the Lord.” Everybody understood that the preaching was addressed at the principal. Kebaso was summoned to a staff meeting, where he explained his words:

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<sup>954</sup> NLMA, Dbb 0250, Arve Myra to Tor Arne Haavet 27.1.1996.

<sup>955</sup> Imberg 2017, 60.

<sup>956</sup> MLTCA, Letters in 1992–, Daniel Mundia to all MLTC students 15.2.1996.

<sup>957</sup> MLTCA, Letters in 1992–, Daniel Mundia to Rune Imberg 25.1.1996.

<sup>958</sup> Kebaso had already been expelled from the MLTC during Karsten Valen’s time, both for his reckless behavior and for failing in retakes. “This does not end here,” he had threatened the teachers. Probably for political reasons, the ELCK leadership allowed him to come back. MA, interview of Jaakko Lounela 9.9.2014. “Unless the wrong which the principal has suffered in this connection is redressed, and unless the students are in some way held responsible for their actions, we may have to ask you to reconsider our position as teachers at MLTC.” Signed by Väinö Uusitalo, Kristian Norrback, Erik Wiberg and Bjørn Hinderaker. KIA, LEAF 1996, *A Joint note of concern from MLTC teachers* of the SLM, SLEAF, LEAF, and the NLM to their respective mission representatives.

<sup>959</sup> According to Imberg, there were plans to beat and kill some teachers, especially himself, burn his car, riot on the compound, and to beat up the Luo students. KIA, Rune Imberg to Daniel Mundia 14.2.1996.



I had a dream: You, Imberg, were persecuting and going to kill me. God said: Let him beware how he deals with the poor [...] You should not use me as a scapegoat for your own injustices here at the college [...] I wrote to the Provincial CID office and the President about the case, so be careful what you do about me [...] It is you Rune who are dividing the Church, dividing the Luos and Kisiis at the College, financing the court case. You are just after me because I am a KANU member [...] Like Mandela and Kenyatta, I am now being persecuted for my words. Professor Mugambi says: "There is no missionary, who is not a colonizer." And I feel victimized, lonely, and unwanted here.<sup>960</sup>

The Board again decided to suspend Kebaso and recommended the Executive Committee dismiss him immediately. Rune Imberg wrote a letter to Kebaso on behalf of the Board stating: "We hope and pray that God will lead you to understand your mistakes and to true repentance. God's grace is abundant for every sinner, who repents and when that happens, there is joy in heaven (Luke 15:7, 10)."<sup>961</sup>

The situation was ignited by the fact that Kebaso had connections with the country's government and the President himself, and the Kenyan government of the time did not tolerate white men who did not respect Kenya's leaders. Kebaso had a good relationship with a Kisii man named Geoffrey Masita from Magwagwa, who was married to the sister of Kipkalya Kones, the Minister of State. Kones was very close to the president himself. In addition, Mathew Ole Esho was an Executive Committee member of Kawangware and worked for the immigration office in Nairobi. He was a strong supporter of Nyamwaro and was willing to help him to get the position of bishop. Finally, Government officials advised the Church Head Office to escort the white missionary out of the country.<sup>962</sup> The Head Office relieved Imberg of his duties and required him to leave Kenya before Monday, June 17, 1996. "For the purpose of security", a copy of the letter was also sent to the Principal of Criminal Investigative Division (CID) for Nyanza province, District CID Nyamira, and the Principal Immigration Officer Nairobi.<sup>963</sup> On Saturday evening June 15, the Swedish missionaries at Itierio saw some police officers from Kenya Security visiting the Church

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<sup>960</sup> Present were: Rune Imberg, John Momanyi, Richard Olak, Väinö Uusitalo, Erik Wiberg and Bjørn Hinderaker. KIA, LEAF 1996, Min. MLTC Staff 20.5.1996. Hinderaker wrote a personal note concerning the meeting: "This morning prayer seems to be no accident or incompetent use of words, but rather a conscious and calculated attack on the college and Church, with the aim of arousing the discontent of the other students." RIA, *The MLTC Morning Prayer* 17/5-96 of Nicodemus Kebaso.

<sup>961</sup> MLTCA, Rune Imberg to Nicodemus Kebaso 10.6.1996.

<sup>962</sup> MA, interviews of James Mbori 9.5.2017, John Miruka 3.10.2018, Joshua Nyamwaro 25.10.2018, "Ole Esho mobilized the Masais for Nyamwaro," Richard Ondicho 18.11.2018.

<sup>963</sup> "The missionary has been relieved from his duty as the Principal of MLTC, he is given a compulsory leave and required to be out of the country before Monday, June 17, 1996." KIA, LEAF 1996, Daniel Mundia and Francis Nyamwaro to Rune Imberg 13.6.1996.

Headquarters. They headed towards Matongo. At this point, the SLM mission authorities ordered the Imberg family to leave Matongo immediately.<sup>964</sup>

Official sources draw a picture of misbehaving students who were disciplined by the principal and the Church leadership. However, behind the scenes, there was much more involvement. This is evident from interviews with students of the time. According to them, the Head Office utilized some students to act and show hostility towards the principal, even though it wanted to portray a different image in public. In many meetings, Rune Imberg had strongly emphasized that the Church could not move to episcopacy until the Constitution was also modified to reflect this new order. Administratively, this entailed changing districts into deaneries based on ethnic boundaries. The Head Office was reluctant to wait any longer and saw Rune Imberg as a threat to its plans. Francis Nyamwaro, who was campaigning for the episcopate, wanted to get rid of this disturbing missionary, and Daudi Mundia and Luke Ogello supported him in this goal. Nicodemus Kebaso was their link on behalf of the students. Therefore, it was important for him to remain at the College. Some students – pressured to join the others – did not even know the true reason for the controversy.<sup>965</sup>

Francis Nyamwaro and his team used every mean possible to win the episcopal election. They were able to get students, Church officials, missionaries, and even the government of the country to act according to their wishes. The fight appeared to be a one-man show, but there were much deeper reasons beneath it. The financial problems at Matongo Lutheran Theological College were connected to the leadership struggles. The Church was in turmoil because of her new planned leadership structure. Who would lead the Church of the future, Kenyans or “wazungu [whites]? Ethnic issues also raised their heads: Were Kisiis still in charge or did Luos also have something to say about that? The struggle over power – by questionable means – was obvious. A key issue for the future would be the identification and healing of mutual wounds caused by this battle.

### 10.1.3 Quarrelsome Aftermath

The events at Matongo Lutheran Theological College had a strong effect on the relationship between the Church and her mission partners. The situation was addressed in numerous letters and meetings. The Swedish Lutheran Mission and the Norwegian Lutheran Mission somehow managed to date their letters as soon as 14 June 1996, the day following Imberg’s termination letter! Both sides

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<sup>964</sup> MA, Email from Rune Imberg 19.11.2018. Kebaso sued the Church. His case was dealt with until he died in the early 2010s. “The principal at the time, Osmo Harjula, asked me to help him with the case since he was afraid and didn’t know what to do.” MA, Interview of John Momanyi 19.5.2018.

<sup>965</sup> MA, interviews of Thomas Asiago 3.10.2016, Tom Omolo 18.9.2018, “Kennedy Atura came with the list saying: You have to sign!” Hamilton Shihemi 27.9.2018, Moses Okoyo 5.10.2018, David Chuchu 18.10.2018, Richard Amayo 23.10.2018, Kennedy Atura 7.10.2018.

eagerly awaited an explanation. The Swedish Lutheran Mission even threatened to pull its money and missionaries out of the country, if no clarification was received.<sup>966</sup> In his reply, General Secretary Daudi Mundia implied that it was a matter of human life. The Head Office could not ignore the warnings received by Rune Imberg and others:

To us, the life of Dr. Rune, the staff, the students, and the community at the MLTC are more important than the Executive Committee, constitution, etc. The constitution can be amended but you cannot amend the lost lives [...] I hope with this in mind the blames piled to the ELCK would be lessened.

The missions were further advised to continue sending teachers to the MLTC. The situation would be discussed at the next Executive Committee.<sup>967</sup>

Very quickly, on 24 June, the mission representatives were invited to a meeting at the Itierio Head Office. Francis Nyamwaro, Luke Ogello, Daudi Mundia, John Michoro, Tapio Kuula (LEAF), Kerstin Nilsson (SLM), Valerie Silva (WMPL), Solveig Nylund (SLEAF), and Eilef Gard (NLM) attended this meeting. Nilsson felt there was “something hidden” in the background.<sup>968</sup> Silva did not receive answers to her inquiries regarding the cause<sup>969</sup> and Kuula noted that the case of Imberg was not openly discussed. According to Kuula, the Church leaders “warned us that the Swedish Lutheran Mission was now in trouble with the Church, but the other organizations had no cause for concern”. According to the Church leadership, the reason for the dismissal was Imberg’s way of working and handling matters.<sup>970</sup> In his concluding remarks, Nyamwaro stated that there was a “gulf” between the parties due to cultural differences. Both sides were not honest with each other. In the future, such a meeting would be held monthly. “Hopefully, these meetings will help to decrease this gulf.”<sup>971</sup>

The MLTC was to continue its teaching starting on 17 June, but only Acting Principal John Momanyi and Väinö Uusitalo (LEAF) were present at the time. Richard Olak, Kristian Norrback (SLEAF), Erik Wiberg (SLM) and Bjørn Hinderaker (NLM) were absent. Uusitalo held the morning devotion with the students, including Nicodemus Kebaso. The students were then assigned to do self-study. The senior pastoral course was temporarily sent home. Mairikki Uusitalo wrote: “The students have rejoiced at being able to force Imberg to leave Matongo, but they were amazed to find out that other teachers did not appear. The Norwegians are in Nairobi and the Wiberg-family in Kisumu.” *The*

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<sup>966</sup> IA, EII: 28, Corr. Gen. Sec. 1994–1996, Chairman Nils-Göran Nilsson, Vice-Chairman Ingemar Helgesson and Mission Secretary Roland Gustafsson to ELCK 14.6.1996, Tor Arne Haavet to ELCK 14.6.1996.

<sup>967</sup> IA, EII: 28, Corr. Gen. Sec. 1994–1996, Daniel Daudi Mundia to Mission Secretary Roland Gustafsson 17.6.1996.

<sup>968</sup> MA, interview of Kerstin Nilsson 8.9.2018

<sup>969</sup> IA, EII: 28, Corr. Gen. Sec. 1994–1996, Valerie Silva to Mission Representatives of SLM, SLEAF, NLM, and LEAF 5.7.1996.

<sup>970</sup> Translation by author. KIA, Tapio Kuula to Paavo Erelä 27.6.1996.

<sup>971</sup> IA, EII: 28, Corr. G/sec. 1994–1996, Valerie Silva to Mission Representatives SLM, SLEAF, NLM, and LEAF 25.7.1996.

*Standard* (newspaper) reported twice on the MLTC events. The first edition concerned disagreements between Rune Imberg and the Board. Another informed that the missionary sponsors had now frozen their financial support to the College. They were mentioned by name, but LEAF was not included.<sup>972</sup>

The departure of the Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland from the mission front had been noticed elsewhere. Otieno Gilbert Olak, son of Richard Olak, wrote an angry letter to the LEAF leadership. There was “corruption, lack of leadership, authoritarianism and many other evil things” in the Church. Matongo Lutheran Theological College was in chaos, but surprisingly, LEAF was ready to support the college without condemning the abuses. Instead, it provided moral and financial support. “We need a clean Church, and we are not going to be associated with these crooks.”<sup>973</sup> While some blamed LEAF missionaries, others relied on their neutrality. General Secretary Daudi Mundia wrote to LEAF as early as August asking for more teachers. Dr. Reijo Arkkila was specially asked to come.<sup>974</sup>

Väinö Uusitalo was appointed the next principal of the MLTC, followed by Osmo Harjula at the beginning of 1997.<sup>975</sup> Pirkko Igendia, Reino Toikka and Minna Pyysalo joined the staff as part-time teachers. Reijo Arkkila arrived in 1997. They were all LEAF missionaries. Erik Wiberg came back to Matongo; Kristian Norrback had returned to Finland; Bjørn Hinderaker had been transferred to Kapenguria by the Norwegian Lutheran Mission. The Kenyan teachers were John Momanyi as Vice-Principal, Richard Olak, and John Nyang’au. The first post-crisis staff meeting was held on 5 September. The new Principal Väinö Uusitalo opened the meeting with Matthew 16: 21–26: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” The staff regretted “the untimely and unprecedented” dismissal of Rune Imberg. His intentions had always been for “the best interest of the Church”. The meeting then continued with practical matters.<sup>976</sup> Matongo Lutheran Theological College was operational again.

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<sup>972</sup> Translation by author. KIA, Tapio Kuula to Paavo Erelä 27.6.1996, Tapio Kuula to Tuula Sääksi 4.7.1996, MA, Mairikki Uusitalo to Marjatta Arkkila 21.6.1996.

<sup>973</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 205, Otieno Gilbert Olak to the LEAF leadership 24.6.1996. The Mission Director Tuula Sääksi answered: “We should all build one united Church. The problems, however painful they are, must be taken up and discussed together. We should not start making parties inside the Church but try to find ways how to unite our strength as separate mission-organizations and the Church.” Tuula Sääksi to Gilbert Olak 2.7.1996.

<sup>974</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 205, Daniel Mundia to Mission Secretary Paavo Erelä 1.8.1996. Others had also noticed LEAF’s neutrality. In a private discussion with Reino Toikka 2.3.1996, Francis Nyamwaro requested LEAF to mediate in the Church’s difficult situation. KIA, LEAF 1996, Reino Toikka to LEAF March 1996.

<sup>975</sup> MLTCA, Minutes from MLTC Staff meeting 5.9.1996. Väinö Uusitalo succeeded in creating peace at the MLTC. When Osmo Harjula replaced him at the beginning of 1997, the previous crisis was already settling down. Harjula O. 2008, 38.

<sup>976</sup> MLTCA, Board and Staff 1996–1997, MLTC Staff meeting 5.9.1996, “That I will have to continue to struggle with a student I have attempted (but failed) to dismiss from the school. This makes a positive relationship impossible and will also poison the atmosphere of the school,” Bjørn Hinderaker to MLTC 11.9.1996.

During the missionary consultation at Matongo on October 10–11, 1996, the Head Office strongly accused Rune Imberg of disrespecting the Kenyan Church leadership. SLEAF missionaries were also accused of failing to remain impartial in their work. As the representative of the Swedish Lutheran Mission, Roland Gustafsson had the most negative attitude, asking whether they should continue to work in Kenya at all<sup>977</sup>. “Maybe we do not understand our African brothers well because of our two different environments, culturally and traditionally?” asked Bob Andrews, the Director of the World Mission Prayer League. Boris Sandberg (SLEAF), in turn, was willing to give up the “ear-marking system” to restore peace. Finally, all the mission representatives wondered what should be done to recover mutual good relations.<sup>978</sup>

The unfortunate events of Matongo Lutheran Theological College were, in their way, a reflection of the Church's longing for independence. The Church Head Office had decided to take the lead, regardless of the price. It probably felt that by acting this way, it could eventually break away from the yoke of patronage. However, its contradictory actions did not inspire confidence. The donors, on the other hand, thought the leadership was not wise in doing so without understanding the true voices and actions of their co-workers. In any case, mutual respect was lost and instead of jointly working for the common good, personal aspirations were quite evident. Although the inflamed situation in the Church continued for a long time, Matongo Lutheran Theological College was able to continue its teaching. Under changing circumstances and despite difficulties, it became a symbol of continuity. Recalling the foundation of God's word, it also served as a conscience for the Church: What did Almighty God think of everything that had happened? Was there room for repentance?

## 10.2 “We Want a Bishop”

### 10.2.1 Democratic Election

The power struggle over the episcopal leadership of the Church predicted a lively election event. The night before the election itself, many did not sleep at all but did electoral work. “All means were allowed,” Rev. Joseph Osumba

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<sup>977</sup> An official Apology was already made, but all the parties were not ready for reconciliation! In September, the Head Office had informed that after “turning every stone” and with the “leadership of the Holy Spirit” the Executive Committee accepted their mistakes and pleaded the SLM and Rune Imberg for forgiveness. “Dr. Rune Imberg was also forgiven in absentia.” NLMA, Dbb 0251, Daniel Mundia to Roland Gustafsson 4.9.1996. “We are, however, a little in doubt about the message of reconciliation and forgiveness [...] A number of matters in the running of MLTC are not yet clarified to us and to Rev. Dr. Imberg, so it is rather difficult to be released, forgiven and set free.” NLMA, Dbb 0251 Roland Gustafsson to Boris Sandberg (SLEAF), Bob Andrews (WMPL), Paavo Erelä (LEAF) and Tor Arne Haavet (NLM) 10.9.1996.

<sup>978</sup> KIA, LEAF Kenya pöytäkirjoja, ELCK/Supporting missions' consultation 10–11.10.1996 in Matongo, Kenya. By “ear-marking” Sandberg referred to the practice of the missions to pre-target their funding. For this, see chapter “Financial Dependence”.

recalls.<sup>979</sup> Supporters of Francis Nyamwaro were accused of bribery.<sup>980</sup> The Head Office was accused of distributing pre-filled ballots in advance<sup>981</sup> and inviting more delegates than it would have been officially authorized to do.<sup>982</sup> The election day was eagerly awaited.

The Annual General Meeting was held at Matongo church on January 18-19, 1996. On the first day, which continued the next morning, the reports of the committees were discussed. According to Bjørn Hinderaker (NLM), who reported on events to his superior in Norway, the reports were processed very quickly without taking into account the disappearance of funds from medical care. Instead, Nicodemus Kebaso, Chairman of the Hospital Committee, accused the missionaries of interfering in the work and not sending enough money. The inflamed situation at the MLTC was “ignored” for half an hour. In the voting, Church leadership silenced the critical voices which questioned the event. Rune Imberg asked which constitution would be followed, the old or the one in preparations. This question and all other critical doubts were silenced. “The meeting itself was anything but a Christian gathering,” Hinderaker evaluated the meeting.<sup>983</sup> The Annual General Meeting “smelled of dictatorship and corruption,” Ingemar Klemets (SLEAF) wrote to Finland.<sup>984</sup>

On the second day, the 19<sup>th</sup>, the bishop's election was held. The press, radio, and television were present. For the sake of peace and order, there were also policemen present, led by Mr. Marubi.<sup>985</sup> Rev. Japhet Dachi was the Presiding officer. Accountant John Michoro was responsible for counting the votes. The voting process itself went well; there were no disagreements then. Francis Nyamwaro was elected with 114 votes.<sup>986</sup> After the result, Richard Olak

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<sup>979</sup> MA, interview of Joseph Osumba 23.9.2018.

<sup>980</sup> “200 Kenyan shillings was an established fact because of the colour of the notes. Before the counting, Kebaso was heard to say that Nyamwaro was going to get 117 votes, and he got 116.” MA, Email from Rune Imberg to Martti Arkkila 19.11.2018, “Samwel Michoro gave people money to win,” Interview of Richard Olak 2.6.2016.

<sup>981</sup> “There were more ballots than officially could have been.” MA, interview of Richard Amayo 23.10.2018. “Election day came. The atmosphere was tense. One of the delegates, Christoffer Sure, asked if he could quote a Bible verse, which he was not allowed to do. More and more upset he continued shouting that on his way to the election hall he had received a ballot paper which already had the name of the sitting Chairman on it.” Translation by author. IKA, Ingemar Klemets to his relatives 28.1.1996.

<sup>982</sup> Districts were divided into small groups so that there would be as many delegates as possible for voting. MA, interview of Solveig Nylund 20.11.2018.

<sup>983</sup> “The treatment of funds is completely scandalous. If it will continue undisturbed, the Church will soon be in bankruptcy, and not just economically. Church discipline was not a reality. Everyone simply lived as they wished.” Translation by author. NLMA, Dbb 025, Bjørn Hinderaker to Tor Arne Haavet 24.1.1996. The excitement of the meeting is illustrated by the fact that the Head Office was planning to flee the scene. This is evident from the conversation that Marocha recorded by mistake. MA, interview of Anthony Marocha 27.10.2018.

<sup>984</sup> Translation by author. IKA, Ingemar Klemets to his relatives 28.1.1996.

<sup>985</sup> “Marubi was not a Church member, but Nyamwaro used him.” MA, Interview of Thomas Asiago 3.10.2016, “Marubi – cobra in Ekegusii – was the powerbroker at the AGM”, Richard Ondicho 18.11.2018.

<sup>986</sup> MA, interviews of John Michoro 8.11.2018 and Japhet Dachi 10.12.2016.

addressed harsh words directed at the Head Office. In his speech, he noted that in Africa people are building grass houses. Ants cause the roof to leak. This had happened in the election. There was a leadership problem. Preaching should have been the number one concern of the Church, not politics.<sup>987</sup> Bjørn Hinderaker wrote to his superiors in Norway: “A shock! – The Assembly had heard about the economic dishonesty, mismanagement, and manipulation, and yet they chose the same leader?!”<sup>988</sup>

*The Standard* informed its readers that some delegates were accused of distributing money and giving out “extra” ballots in advance. Christopher Sure, a member of the Homa Bay District Executive committee, protested the outcome and demanded a repeat, saying it was carried out unconstitutionally. He termed the elections “null and void”, threatening to go to court. The Presiding officer Japhet Dachi dismissed all the allegations and stated that he was not aware of them. The official result of the vote was: Francis Nyamwaro with 114 votes, Richard Olak with 75, and John Momanyi 3.<sup>989</sup> *The Daily Nation* wrote: “Clerics reject bishopric election,” because Francis Nyamwaro was over 65 years. According to the newspaper, the Church had lost more than 2 million Kenyan shillings under his leadership. Nyamwaro, the bishop-elect, was then reported to deny all allegations: “The election was democratic and lawful. I am clean. I never floated the Church’s regulations.”<sup>990</sup> Ingemar Klemets wrote home:

The informal 'coronation' of the newly elected bishop was slightly absurd. Maybe because of psychological pressure, the bishop wore big sunglasses. He must have had trouble sleeping and his eyes were running. As a garland, he received a glittering Christmas decoration in silver and all the colors of the world. The decoration reached down to his knees.<sup>991</sup>

The election was historical and a major media event for the Church. In the presence of the press, radio, and television, it was extremely important to present an outwardly good image of oneself. However, the “official truth” and the truth in people’s hearts were far apart. Many people were shocked: The Church had become a political arena where Christian values, especially integrity, were not respected. Western-influenced African leadership – a development briefly described in the introduction – had shown its ugly face. Personal power and gain had supplanted the real task of a leader: to achieve the well-being of the whole community while respecting common values. As a

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<sup>987</sup> MA, interview of Japhet Dachi 10.12.2016.

<sup>988</sup> Translation by author. NLMA, Dbb 0250, Bjørn Hinderaker to Tor Arne Haavet 24.1.1996.

<sup>989</sup> *The Standard* 22.1.1996.

<sup>990</sup> *Daily Nation* 22.1.1996 and 25.1.1996.

<sup>991</sup> Translation by author. IKA, Ingemar Klemets to his relatives 28.1.1996.

result, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya would live under clouds of uncertainty and confusion for a long time.<sup>992</sup>

### 10.2.2 Opposition Reaction

The post-election period was turbulent. Luos in particular were increasingly dissatisfied with the situation. Ingemar Klemets (SLEAF) described the upcoming events: "The reaction of Luos was not delayed. The day after the election, a press conference was held in Kisumu where the opposition informed the press that the Church members did not accept the election. The opposition was under a lawyer's investigation, and this will be followed upon."<sup>993</sup> SLEAF missionaries supported the Luo opposition and planned not to attend the installation ceremony of the bishop-elect. Boris Sandberg explained their stand in a letter to the Norwegian Lutheran Mission:

Yes, it is true that we will not participate in the installation of the bishop. As we wrote in the letter to the Church, there are many things which are not as they should be. First of all, the election was not correct and there had been a mixture of the old and new constitutions during the preparations which led up to the election. Secondly, the expulsion of Rune Imberg was on false pretenses. Thirdly, if we would be attending the installation it would give the "opposition", especially among the districts in Nyanza, a wrong signal that we have let them down. There is systematic oppression of those who do not accept the election procedure. Those two pastors who took the case to court have been suspended by the office contrary to the Executive Committee decision. The office has frequently side-stepped the Executive Committee.<sup>994</sup>

The situation was extremely difficult for SLEAF missionaries. They met on March 25 at Rukongo mission station to discuss what to do. "Are we able to stay in Kenya? Will the Church stand? What would happen to Rukongo?" they asked each other.<sup>995</sup>

Francis Nyamwaro was taken to Kisumu High Court on February 29, 1996, on charges of dishonest elections and misuse of resources. However, the court ruled in favor of him. After receiving an acquittal, Nyamwaro placed his opponents under Church discipline. Eleven were sentenced: Richard Olak,

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<sup>992</sup> The situation continued to be difficult during the time of Walter Obare, Francis Nyamwaro's successor. The "Unity in Christ Reconciliation Retreat" was held in Nairobi on February 4–10, 2008 to address the situation, without finding lasting solutions. RIA, *TAABCO 2008*.

<sup>993</sup> Translation by author. IKA, Ingemar Klemets to home in Finland 28.1.1996.

<sup>994</sup> NLMA, Dbb 0251, Boris Sandberg to Tor Arne Haavet 12.9.1996.

<sup>995</sup> MA, interview of Ingemar Klemets 14.10.2019. Due to the tightened situation, SLEAF registered itself as "SLEAF Aid Limited" in 1998. "We wanted to secure future work permits and registration of vehicles." MA, interview of Solveig Nylund 20.11.2018. The situation was especially difficult for the SLM as well. Rune Imberg (SLM) was accused by the Head Office of attending the opposition meeting at Matongo 24.1.1996 and funding the court case. His name was mentioned in the court affidavit. NLMA, Dbb 0251, Daniel Mundia to Roland Gustafsson 16.7.1996.



Henry Kabasa, Meshack Ngare, Thomas Asiago, John Momanyi, Richard Amayo, Charles Gwaro, Peter Moseti, Christopher Sure, Zachary Mokua, and Johnson Ataro. In addition, the SLEAF missionaries were addressed harsh criticism for being biased.<sup>996</sup> Henry Kabasa, along with ten others, received a letter of suspension, dated 7 June 1996. He was suspended from his clerical duties “with immediate effect”. Kabasa replied without fear: “I would like to state to you that no amount of intimidation or threats will stop me from testifying for the truth in this Church. You may be able to snatch my duties or my property, but you shall never snatch my faith.” According to Kabasa, the Church had become “barbaric and tribalistic”, which negatively affected her spiritual life.<sup>997</sup>

Faced with opposition, Luos gathered to oppose the new leadership of the Church. On August 24, at Kanyango, Rev. Johnson Oyieyo Ataro was chosen as an opposition Bishop-elect of Victoria Lake Diocese (Nyanza). The idea was to have purely a Luo diocese so that Kisiis and Luos would not be divided as earlier planned. Johnson Ataro, born in 1942 at Samanga, was a natural choice for this position since he was the Church’s second ordained Luo pastor. He began his studies at Makumira in 1969, served as an evangelist at Othoro between studies, and was then ordained by James Otete on January 23, 1975. After 1976, he had been the Nyanza District leader following Richard Olak. As a district leader, he was a member of the Executive Committee and was thus aware of Church affairs. Johnson Ataro was married to Elsa Anyango.<sup>998</sup> According to Boris Sandberg, SLEAF supported these actions:

We do understand the request made by the Victoria Lake Diocese of the ELCK and we consider it to be justified. Through constitutional changes and in the name of democracy this group has been effectively cut off from all decision-making in the Church. We as a minority in Finland do fully understand the problem. The majority of the Church should see to it that the minorities are not persecuted. If SLEAF is forced by the situation to choose sides, then we will not be able to cut the ties with those whom we have worked very closely with for more than thirty years. The whole Church is close to us, but a special part is closer for historical reasons.<sup>999</sup>

After a few months, the Luos gave up on the appointment of their bishop. The Church Head Office was willing to make peace by inviting the Lutheran World Federation as a peace mediator. A reconciliation meeting was held in Nairobi and an agreement was reached. Meshack Ngare recalls that money was a factor in finding “reconciliation”. The Lutheran World Federation pledged a

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<sup>996</sup> MA, interviews of Thomas Asiago 3.10.2016, Luke Ogello 7.10.2018, and Meshack Ngare 24.3.2020.

<sup>997</sup> IA, EII: 28, Corr. G/sec. 1994–1996, Henry Kabasa Okombo to the General Secretary 1.7.1996, “We all received suspension letters,” MA, interview of Meshack Ngare 24.3.2020.

<sup>998</sup> MA, interviews of Johnson Ataro 25.9.2018, “I was called ‘the treasurer of riots’ since I worked with both Nyamwaro and Ataro,” Silvester Ochieng’ 17.9.2018.

<sup>999</sup> NLMA, Dbb 0251, Boris Sandberg to Bob Andrews (WMPL), Paavo Erelä/Seppo Suokunnas (LEAF), Roland Gustafsson (SLM) and Tor Arne Haavet (NLM) 5.11.1996.

significant sum of money to calm the situation.<sup>1000</sup> However, the atmosphere in the Church was difficult for a long time. As an example of this, an opposition ordination ceremony was held at Rukongo as late as 7 March 1999, with Richard Olak administering the ordination of Samuel Omondi. He was assisted by Johnson Ataro, Henry Kabasa, Ben Odero, David Chuchu and Meshack Ngare.<sup>1001</sup> No real consensus was reached via lucre. The Luo opposition status continued, simply taking on new forms.

The Church had been divided based on different ethnic aspirations. Each group sought identity through its leader, considering the leader of the other group a threat to its existence. Expectations of power had divided the various parties into opposing groups. This arrangement also affected the missions. Of these, particularly SLEAF missionaries had been involved in the ethnic struggle. They were identified in their “own” battle, but they saw nothing wrong with it. The Church had deviated from the basic Christian teaching, the unity of “every tribe and nation”. She was to form the body of Jesus, where each member acted for the common good. This was vital for her. The original task of the bishopric was precisely to create unity. While the apparent ecclesiastical unity remained under the new leadership, the fragmentation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya continued well into the future.

### 10.2.3 The Bishop's Installation

The *ELCK Newsletter* described the bishop's installation ceremony in Kisii town as a “historical event”:

Sunday the 6<sup>th</sup> of October 1996, the first bishop of the ELCK, Rev. Francis Nyamwaro Onderi, was consecrated into his episcopate. This event took place at the Kisii Stadium with more than 1500 participants in the service [...] The traffic in busy Kisii town stood still while hundreds of Christians followed the cross to the stadium. In the procession, the cross was carried by Evangelist David Ameya.<sup>1002</sup>

A procession of Christians, Church leaders and officials, choir members, and Bishop-elect Francis Nyamwaro Onderi followed the cross at the head of this column. The ceremony began with divine service. The liturgy was led by Rev. John Osugo and the preaching was by the Tanzanian Roman Catholic Bishop Dr. Raymond Mwanyika. Aware of the problems in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, he recalled that there were no limitations of any kind in Jesus Christ, nor were there any ethnic ones. Then, many choirs sang. The Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, Dr. Samson Mushemba, conducted the installation assisted by President Emeritus, James Otete Nchogu.

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<sup>1000</sup> MA, interviews of Johnson Ataro 25.9.2018, Richard Amayo 23.10.2018, “The LWF betrayed us with its money!” Meshack Ngare 24.3.2020.

<sup>1001</sup> Missionaries were not involved in the ordination. “But in my heart, I was supporting them!” MA, interview of Ingemar Klemets 14.10.2019.

<sup>1002</sup> ELCK Newsletter 1–2/1996.

Bishop Mushemba reminded that “the Church is the body of Christ and Christ has set His servants to take care of the flock that is bought by Jesus’ precious blood.” After the oath, Francis Nyamwaro was blessed and given the special insignia of the episcopate, the cross, the ring, the vestments, the mitre, and finally the crosier, the rod.<sup>1003</sup> The presence of a Catholic bishop was not uncommon. It was very typical in Africa that the boundaries of the denominations were forgotten at public celebrations. African communality was evident in practice also among Christians.

LEAF missionary Väinö Uusitalo had the honor of carrying the bishop's staff.<sup>1004</sup> Other Missions were also represented, except SLEAF. It supported the opposition by boycotting the event.<sup>1005</sup> For many others too, the ceremony had a bitter taste of it. Kerstin Nilsson, the SLM representative, remembers that she could not rejoice at the occasion.<sup>1006</sup>

The *ELCK Newsletter* reported these events on three pages. Christopher Sure’s column “God save the Queen” waxed expansive:

The army knew that their success is the Queen’s success and the success of all the English people would be the victory of the Queen! The Queen therefore was and still is the symbol of unity [...] The ELCK like any other Church or organization has made numerous changes in her managerial structure since it actually means that there was the first President of the ELCK, then the first Chairman of the ELCK, and now the first Bishop of the ELCK. Shouldn’t we Christians ask God to save the Bishop as the English did the Queen? [...] Some of us celebrate this new aspect of the ELCK with tears of joy and yet others accept it with the sorrow of tears. Will there ever be a balance?<sup>1007</sup>

The column was indeed startling. Before its independence, Kenya had been under the Queen of England. But the Kenyans themselves – contrary to official statements – didn’t give praise over this fact of history. This era of history did not raise Kenyan self-esteem, quite the opposite. In the column, the importance of the Queen culminated in her unifying power: “Her success was the success of the people.” Comparing the Queen to the new Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, the question of the Church’s leadership was combined with the question of independence and unity. Kenyans did not appreciate the Church without a bishop. In their eyes, the Church without a bishop did not receive her much-longed-for recognition in the society. A true Church should have a prominent leader to guide her people to success and unity, equipped with good self-esteem. Like the Queen, the Bishop was now to be a symbol of these goals, leading his people in the desired victorious direction.

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<sup>1003</sup> *ELCK Newsletter* 1–2/1996, MA, “Consecration of the first bishop”. Handout.

<sup>1004</sup> “I guess many others would have liked to be in his position.” Uusitalo M. 2017, 62.

<sup>1005</sup> Igendia 2008, 30.

<sup>1006</sup> MA, interview of Kerstin Nilsson 8.9.2018.

<sup>1007</sup> *ELCK Newsletter* 1/1996.

#### 10.2.4 Mutual Clarification

The post-election period was difficult, especially from the point of view of the missionaries. Their dissatisfaction was expressed in many ways. Solveig Nylund (SLEAF), the Personnel Officer, prepared a report entitled “Correctable irregularities in ELCK”. In it, she sharply criticized the Church administration: The Chairman controlled discussions too much, the Standing committee misused its power by deciding things on behalf of the Executive Committee, the committees were too many and too large, some exceeded their powers without even recording these decisions, budgeting was out of control, the auditing had shortcomings. Finally, the growing disrespect towards the missionaries was described:

The mission societies being a “milking cow [cash cow]” is too clear. It is appearing as if the mission societies are in debt to the ELCK by demanding funds from all of them [...] There is no common understanding of how gifts are received. No common understanding of how different the mission societies are. There is no understanding of the missiology, why missionaries and mission societies are here.<sup>1008</sup>

At Iterio headquarters, Solveig Nylund criticized Francis Nyamwaro for running for the bishop’s office, since he exceeded the required age limit. She also refused to pay the salary of the new employee because no formal decision had been made on the employment. The bishop rebuked her for her actions and intimidated her by saying that it would be better for her to leave the office. Her next work permit was delayed.<sup>1009</sup> The officials at Headquarters felt that she had exceeded her authority and did not appreciate the leadership of the Church.<sup>1010</sup>

Tapio and Sirkka Kuula (LEAF) also found the situation in the Church unpleasant:

It is difficult to rejoice along with the winners in this situation. We ask what lies ahead? We believe that sinful activity has taken away the blessing of our God in the work of the Church, but we also believe that He has the power to turn things around and make sinners recognize their sins and repent, and thus participate in Jesus’ redeeming blood.<sup>1011</sup>

The Kuulas experienced the tightening grip of the new lead. Sirkka Kuula had spoken to Francis Nyamwaro and urged him to repent along with other leaders. As a result, the Kuulas were not welcomed back to Kenya.<sup>1012</sup> However, it was not just about the missionaries and their behavior. Personnel Officer Martin

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<sup>1008</sup> It is not clear to whom the report was addressed. Most likely, it was intended only for the missions. The archive location infers this. KA, LEAFA II, file 214, *Correctable irregularities in ELCK* by Solveig Nylund 15.2.1996.

<sup>1009</sup> MA, interview of Solveig Nylund 20.11.2018.

<sup>1010</sup> “Nylund later apologized.” MA, interview of John Michoro 8.11.2018.

<sup>1011</sup> Translation by author. KIA, Tapio Kuula to Paavo Erelä 22.1.1996.

<sup>1012</sup> MA, interview of Tapio and Sirkka Kuula 22.8.2016.

Akuku, who replaced Solveig Nylund at Headquarters, also refused to pay the bishop's daughter, who had been hired by the bishop himself, without consulting other members of the office. Akuku was fired for his actions.<sup>1013</sup> The missions and missionaries did not feel valued in the present Church. They were worried about the common future. The Church leadership, in turn, required respectful and obedient behavior towards it.

All the Nordic mission societies were tired of the situation. They had lost their confidence in the new leadership and blamed it for the Church's problems. However, Bob Andrews, the WMPL General Director, had a different approach. In consultation of the supporting missions held at Matongo from 10 to 11 November 1996, he wondered whether the root of the problem was the lack of understanding between different cultures and traditions.<sup>1014</sup> Already in August, he had addressed his Nordic colleagues with the following words:

We have to admit we are not all thrilled with the changes in the ecclesiastical structure of the Church, but the decision to elect the bishop and deans surely is not the basis for the problem. I wonder if we would not come closer to the root if we looked in the area of Church structure and Kenyan culture. I believe if we do this honestly we will have to admit that as European and American mission societies we have been guilty of introducing organizational structures from our countries that do not necessary fit in Kenya [...] our financial policies and failure to teach and allow the Kenyan Church to follow biblical practices of Christian stewardship has contributed significantly to the problem [...] I would like to suggest that, as leaders of the mission agencies, our attitude be an attitude of humility and repentance for the part we have played in creating an untenable Church structure and financial situation in the ELCK, rather than by a negative attitude towards the ELCK leadership [...] We do well to remember that the Church is not ours but the Lord's and that He has promised that the gates of hell will not prevail against it.<sup>1015</sup>

With fresh eyes and apart from the Nordic context, Bob Andrews was able to look at the situation differently from his colleagues. He felt that the missionaries, for their part, were to blame for the situation. It was time to look in the mirror and confess the facts. He had a more understanding attitude towards the situation than most of the other missionaries. At this stage, very few were able to agree with his views. Complete distrust towards the Church leadership was openly expressed in many ways. Naturally, the Church's new leader responded in the same manner. Bishop Francis Nyamwaro made it very clear. Those missionaries who were unable to adapt to the new situation should

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<sup>1013</sup> MA, interview of Martin Akuku 11.11.2018.

<sup>1014</sup> See chapter "Quarrelsome Aftermath".

<sup>1015</sup> KA, LEAFA II, file 206, Bob Andrews to Mission societies 1.8.1996.

leave the country: “We want no more missionaries who do not want to work with us.”<sup>1016</sup>

## 10.3 The Church in Her Kenyan Context

### 10.3.1 Church and Society

The President of the Republic of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, was succeeded by Daniel arap Moi in 1978. He ruled until 2002 and no longer ran for election under constitutional pressure. Although Moi was loyal to Kenyatta, he was never accepted into Kenyatta’s inner circle. He came from a small community and ethnic group and was thus regarded as the proper candidate to steer the country without ethnic dominance. By the early 1980s, he indeed had emerged as an effective ruler who was able to change the course of the “Kikuyu mafia”. However, when politicians Jaramogi Oginga Odinga and George Anyona sought to register a socialist opposition party in 1982, Moi struck back by making the country a *de jure* one-party state. In August of the same year, there was a coup against him. It failed, but it created uncertainty in the country. Since then, Moi’s tenure evolved in a dictatorial direction. Security forces, police, and the military were instrumental in suppressing any criticism of his authoritarian rule.<sup>1017</sup>

In 1987, Moi boycotted Norway and Sweden on his overseas trip because of their criticism of his regime. Instead, he came to Finland, where the Finnish government received harsh criticism from abroad. “Ruthless power politics, where violence, kidnappings, and other human rights abuses are common,” the Finnish Christian magazine *Sana* described Moi’s administration during this visit.<sup>1018</sup> As a follow-up to Moi’s visit, the United Nations Human Rights Committee issued a note to Finland in July 1994 because the authorities had prevented a demonstration against Moi in Helsinki.<sup>1019</sup>

Churches had generally not criticized former President Kenyatta. However, by the mid-1980s, individual Church leaders raised their voices against Moi.

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<sup>1016</sup> MA, interview of Luke Ogello 7.10.2018. Coratafrica October 1999 describes the complete distrust between the parties. The missionaries were blamed for dictating the financial resources, not respecting the local leadership, manipulating especially through the funds, and not encouraging the locals to be involved in the development. The missionaries, in turn, accused the Church leadership of lacking spiritual leadership, practicing poor management and administration, manifesting no interest in co-operation, and having no indigenous vision. IA, *Coratafrica* October 1999, 16.

<sup>1017</sup> Cokumu 2013, 100–104. Daniel arap Moi died 4.2.2020 and was buried 12.2.2020. “For 24 years, Moi confounded friends and foes in equal measure.” *The Standard* 12.2.2020.

<sup>1018</sup> Translation by author. KA, LEAFA II, file 41, Reijo Arkkila to Aatos Vesamäki 8.9.87. Kenya’s relationship, especially with Norway, remained frigid. In 1990, Moi accused Norway of accepting Kenyan political refugees to use the country as their asylum. Moi cut his ties with the Norwegian government including NORAD. “It is also a powerful signal to foreign countries that their friendship will only be accepted on a basis of mutual respect for one another’s sovereignty. When that is seen to be lacking, the alternative is a drastic move in which both parties lose something.” *Daily Nation* 28.10.1990.

<sup>1019</sup> “Uutiskatsaus syyskuu 1993–elokuu 1994” – *Mitä Missä Milloin* 1995, 107.

The Presbyterian Rev. Timothy Njoya and Anglican Bishop Henry Okullu were among the bravest. In particular, the human rights situation and electoral abuse were criticized. Moi responded by warning the clergy not to politicize. He was concerned about the transformation of Churches into political and commercial communities. He considered only fifteen of Kenya's more than 800 Churches to be "genuine religious communities".<sup>1020</sup> In 1988, Church leaders of various denominations were unequivocal in their condemnation of the general election. They claimed to represent the entire nation since 80% of the population were baptized Christian, including the President himself. The president's criticism came at a price: it led to imprisonments and assassinations.<sup>1021</sup> The Churches feared the President over these actions and did not dare to oppose him. According to Rev. Richard Ondicho, this was the main reason why the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya did not criticize him but included his name in Church prayers.<sup>1022</sup>

However, because of his positive attitude towards Christianity, Moi was appreciated by many Churches. He regularly attended Church services and encouraged schools to teach the Bible. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, for her part, followed the Government very closely. Although she was not officially involved in politics, some of her members were politically active and had connections with KANU and the presidential administration.<sup>1023</sup> Since the Anglicans did not obey him, Moi wanted to attract other Churches to cooperate with the government. In this way, he tried to control them.<sup>1024</sup> James Otete, Francis Nyamwaro, and Walter Obare were all attracted to politics. "Otete aspires to the Kisii county council and diligently holds his election speeches so that he does not have time to run the Church," Tuula Sääksi informed her superior.<sup>1025</sup> Similarly, she described Nyamwaro's activities: "Nyamwaro went to Nairobi to swear allegiance to President Moi. He is the treasurer of the cooperative movement in the Kisii region, in a rather high position. Mogeni stated very bluntly that this pastor is more concerned with finances than running his Church."<sup>1026</sup> Walter Obare was also politically attentive. This became apparent already during his studies at the MLTC. Jaakko Lounela

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<sup>1020</sup> KIA, Reports, *LEAF Kenya Mission Report of 1984* by Jaakko Lounela.

<sup>1021</sup> Meredith 2011, 400–402, Branch 2011, 134, 179–182, 190–202.

<sup>1022</sup> "This is how people spoke at that time. I remember it very well." MA, interview of Richard Ondicho 18.11.2018.

<sup>1023</sup> MA, interview of Walter Obare 9.10.2018.

<sup>1024</sup> Moi had special ties to the Kenyan Church leaders. One time, Leino and John Momanyi visited his farm at Nakuru as the ELCK representatives. "The President talked, and we ate well." MA, Interview of Raija Leino 21.7.2018.

<sup>1025</sup> Translation by author. KA, LEAFA II, file 36, Tuula Sääksi to Lauri Koskeniemi 12.11.1979.

<sup>1026</sup> "Mogeni carefully carries out his pastoral duties and serves the Church more than many others." Translation by author. KA, LEAFA II, file 35, Tuula Sääksi to Paavo Savolainen 17.9.1978.

remembers him asking for a study leave to join the KANU provincial campaign.<sup>1027</sup>

Moi was accused of involvement in human rights abuses and in corruption. The burnt body of Foreign Minister Robert Ouko was found on 15 February 1990. He had condemned the President and his cabinet for increasing human rights violations and corruption. During the trial, some of those who testified on Ouko's behalf were also found dead. The following death under suspicious circumstances occurred in August 1990. The Anglican Bishop, Alexander Muge, who had spoken out against corruption and the "land-grabbing" politics of the government, died in a "car accident". One of the ministers had threatened him publicly in advance. As a result, criticism of the Moi administration increased.<sup>1028</sup> Moi continued to be accused of low economic growth leading to poverty and unemployment, nepotism, and patrimonialism. On the other hand, Moi had his achievements. He was able to achieve peace and order, which led to national development and internal cohesion. During his era, educational opportunities increased, and minority ethnic groups were offered better opportunities to study.<sup>1029</sup>

The December 1992 presidential and parliamentary elections were a political farce.<sup>1030</sup> FORD-Kenya joined forces with the Islamic Party, which was not officially registered, since – unconstitutionally – it was based on religion. Oginga Odinga was their candidate, representing Luos. FORD-Asili candidate was Ken Matiba, a Kikuyu. Mwai Kibaki, a Kikuyu as well, represented the Democratic Party. Moi only defeated his opponents by a narrow margin, despite many electoral corruption practices that favored him. He received only 2.1% of

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<sup>1027</sup> "Moi wanted to get hold of the ELCK and other smaller Churches since the Anglicans didn't obey him." MA, interview of Jaakko Lounela 9.9.2014.

<sup>1028</sup> Meredith 2011, 400–403, Branch 2011, 190–193. Moi intervened strongly in Ouko's death investigation, dismissing even his most influential minister, Nicholas Biwott. Odinga suspects that one of the President's motives was the fear of losing foreign financiers. However, the ultimate truth about the murderer was never clarified. "A mystery it remains to date." Odinga 2015, 184–190.

<sup>1029</sup> Obote–Magaga 2013, 110–135. "Unlike the imperial Mr. Kenyatta, who governed behind closed doors, Mr. Moi traveled the country, courting its ethnic and tribal groups and gaining wide popularity. He introduced free milk for children and pledged to do away with endemic graft and elevate Kenya's struggling tourism-and-agriculture economy. He won Western support with anti-communist policies during the Cold War." *The New York Times* 3.2.2020.

<sup>1030</sup> "The general election campaign was arduous. The government and ruling party put every conceivable obstacle in our way. Special Branch officers hung around Agip House day and night, and our people were arrested on spurious charges all over the country. The authorities often refused permits for, or otherwise prevented our rallies. Ethnic rivalry was systematically stirred up by carefully designed public pronouncements through the broadcast media and in KANU's own daily newspaper, the Kenya Times, and by clandestine activities on the ground. President Moi and his hawkish parliamentary associates openly warned and threatened. Despite the advent of the new multi-party era, there was very little to choose between Moi's attitude at this time and his remark in September 1991 that opposition supporters would be 'crushed like rats'." Odinga R. 2015, 203.



the votes from Kikuyus.<sup>1031</sup> Officially, KANU continued to lead the political arena. The ethnicization of politics continued with a strong division between the Kikuyus and the Luos.<sup>1032</sup>

In response to the election result, ethnic cleansing in the Rift Valley erupted. “Outsiders”, namely non-Kalenjin or non-KANU supporters, were required to “go back to their motherland”. The violence spread across the province, continuing throughout 1992. The death toll reached 800. Under pressure from foreign financiers and to the surprise of many, Moi restored the multiparty system in 1992. “I have not changed my mind – it is because of the Western media set against us, because of the economic setting today,” Moi declared.<sup>1033</sup> Rune and Katrina Imberg wrote about the situation in the country:

For many reasons (tribal conflicts, corruption, and power struggle) the conflicts have flared up in the form of unrest and tribal war in several parts of the country, especially in Nairobi and Western Kenya. Three weeks ago, the battle started at Sondu, only 5 km from Matongo. Houses were burned, businesses were closed, cows were stolen, and many people lost their lives. Officially there were 25 dead, possibly even more. At the moment, it is quieter but every day you hear about unrest in different parts of the country.<sup>1034</sup>

During his tenure as Accountant, John Michoro had noticed that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya and the Kenyan government had close ties – in a way as if they were copying each other: independence, financial problems, partnership difficulties, and constitutional pressure.<sup>1035</sup> Indeed, the events of the Church reflected the events in society. For all its shortcomings, the state was a trendsetter for the Churches. Moi was a powerful leader; the Churches wanted strong leaders. The state strove for independence from previous rulers, freedom to make its own decisions, and opportunities to control the flow of funds. These were similar to the claims of the Churches. In the governmental administration, corruption flourished, elections were dishonest, and insurgents were severely punished. All of these things were

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<sup>1031</sup> The official turnout was 68%. Over 80% were likely to vote, and there were many rejected votes. Of the votes, Moi received 36%, Matiba 25.95%, Odinga 19.85% and Kibaki 17.31%. Ndege 2013, 153.

<sup>1032</sup> Meredith 2011, 400–403, Branch 2011, 190–193.

<sup>1033</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1034</sup> Translation by author. Parentheses are included. SLEAFA, BV BREV 1990–1993, Circular mission letter of Rune and Katrina Imberg 25.3.1992, “The Kipsigis and probably also the Maasais killed 10–15 Luos in a surprise attack. This happened during a market day at Sondu. The road between Kadongo and Katito has not been used. Oginga Odinga is alleged to have said that Moi should say how he wants it, if he wants war, he will get it. Don’t understand what the Kipsigis and Moi have planned. You are soon surrounded by hostile tribes. Probably it is fear from Moi’s side,” Alf Wallin to Boris Sandberg 9.3.1992. Translation by author. “One afternoon early in 1992 we returned from Kisumu. Sondu was empty. Kipsigis armed men with spears had driven other people out of the area.” MA, interview of Reijo Arkkila 20.11.2018. Kikuyus and Pokots, Digos and Luos were fighting at the end of 1993! NLMA, Dbb 0128, Johannes Selstø to Tor Arne Haavet 10.12.1993.

<sup>1035</sup> MA, interview of John Michoro 8.11.2018.

familiar in the Churches as well. The government called for a new constitution to achieve its governance goals; the Churches had the same need.

According to Lutheran doctrine, the power of both the state and the Church comes from God. They have different roles in the world. The mission of the state is to secure earthly peace and prosperity for the people living in its territory. It has the financial and operational authority to carry out this task. The mission of the Church, in turn, is to provide for the spiritual well-being of her people, emphasizing life in the context of God. Her power is in the Gospel, the cross of Jesus. On earth, she bears the crown of oppression until she reaches heaven where the glory will be revealed.<sup>1036</sup> The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya was looking for recognition of her environs. In her search for this identity by following the example of the state, however, she forgot her actual mission. The crown was more attractive than the cross.

### 10.3.2 Church and Mission

When the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya sought for her identity, this search did not take place on a theoretical level through the terms of “Church” and “mission”. Instead, it manifested itself as a national awakening against Western missions who used their power to rule the Church that was not their own. For Kenyans, the Church in this struggle represented “my own” and the missions represented “their foreign”. The missions, on the other hand, treated these concepts differently from a theological perspective, which was manifested on several occasions in discussions at Matongo Lutheran Theological College. This apparent contradiction had a surprisingly strong impact on the interaction between the Church and her mission partners, not to mention the practical lives of the congregations.

According to Lutheran confessions, the Word of God creates the Church. Together with Baptism and Holy Communion, it is the actual hallmark of the Church. Everything in the Church is based on the work of Christ. Baptism achieves this exchange through faith: Christ takes away our sins, while the sinner is clothed in His righteousness. The “communion of saints” takes place always whenever believers gather in the name of Jesus Christ. In a special way, this occurs through the Holy Communion, in which the true body and blood of Christ are present and consumed for the remission of sins. According to Risto Ahonen, the ecclesial missionary nature rises from the very essence of the Church: everyone is called to believe in Christ and to join this communion.<sup>1037</sup>

Pietism brought a new perspective to the Church’s mission of saving souls. The main responsibility for this now lies with the small, revitalized communities living within the Church. The task depended on the activity of the

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<sup>1036</sup> “If everything is as it should be, then both regiments will stick to their territory so that each one can have their own mission.” Translation by author. Wisløff 1985, 214–231.

<sup>1037</sup> Ahonen 2000, 154–165. For the Lutheran conception on *Church*, see Kinder 1958 and Sasse 1966.

volunteers. Such an emphasis was easily associated with a Reformed type of teaching, in which the role of man in salvation was emphasized. In this regard, the original Lutheran teaching of salvation "without any cooperation" from man strongly opposed it. However, some Pietistic directions adopted the original Lutheran view on this particular question.<sup>1038</sup> David Bosch points out that Pietism must be credited with the strong Protestant missionary enthusiasm. This was reflected in the march of many European and later American mission societies. Ordinary men and women now became involved in the world mission.<sup>1039</sup>

Kenya was full of different kinds of Christian Churches, emphasizing the Bible message, each in her way. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya profiled herself in the Gospel-centric proclamation that focused on salvation by grace, considering that the deliverance from the judgment of the law was found solely in the Gospel message. The "Church of mercy" attracted many people because they saw many other surrounding denominations emphasizing the law. For all the ELCK mission partners as well, the emphasis on the Gospel was central. They all stressed the importance of the doctrine of justification, the doctrine of grace. The differences in emphasis, which sometimes caused heated debates in the Church, were due to their different Lutheran and Pietist roots.

Keeping the Church and the missionaries working together was not an easy task. The role of the Church as a creator of unity was especially important to the first Church President, James Otete, as well as to the founding mission society, the Swedish Lutheran Mission. A similar emphasis continued during the periods of John Momanyi and Francis Nyamwaro. In principle, all the mission partners shared the same view. In practice, however, this was often overlooked when focusing on their specific work areas and ethnic groups. The search for the unity of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya was often turbulent due to many human motives. The ecclesiastical unity was yet supported by a strong awareness of the Church as the Kingdom of God. The common tone was found in the missionary goal given by the King Jesus Himself: "Go and make all nations my disciples!" The Church and the mission were not opposites. They belonged together.

### 10.3.3 Church and Identity

The concept of the "Church" has been important to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya since her independence. Her Christians wanted to break free from Western control and find their role as a Kenyan Church. They wanted to be a Kenyan Church led by a Kenyan leader, respected among her peers. Although small in size, she held great promise:

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<sup>1038</sup> The differences of the Lutheran and Pietist conceptions on *Church* are explained by Laitinen 1953, 159–163 and Fagerberg 1972, 251–273, 264–265.

<sup>1039</sup> Bosch 1991, 252–261.

We in the LCK feel and regard ourselves as a little flock. Perhaps this expression 'little flock' may bring us a temptation of fearing and losing hope in witnessing the Gospel of Salvation. However, let us remember that we are not alone, and the service we do is not ours. It is His, who doesn't change. We are nothing but a weak instrument, which has to get the strength of working from Him. Let us stick to His word who says, "Fear not, little flock for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you that Kingdom (Lk. 12:23).<sup>1040</sup>

A church building to gather the "little flock" was essential for the self-esteem of Christians. Before churches had been built, members gathered under the trees, but at some point, each self-respecting congregation wished to have her church building. People began collecting sand, stones, and macadam and brought "harvest sacrifices" to achieve this common goal. For example, between 1973 and 1980, SLEAF built 10 permanent churches in collaboration with Kenyan Christians. There were many applicants, but "those who made the biggest efforts ended up first in the queue". All the missions helped local congregations build their churches.<sup>1041</sup>

As new mission societies arrived on the field, the concept of the "Church" re-emerged. The founding mission, the Swedish Lutheran Mission, was concerned that focusing only on specific areas and ethnic groups would jeopardize unity. "Everything should be done to preserve the LCK as a Church," the SLM Mission Director Sigurd Stark stated with concern.<sup>1042</sup> James Otete was also worried. He wrote in 1977:

All servants of this Church are servants of the whole Church, whether they are missionary pastors, medical staff, teachers, indigenous pastors, or evangelists. The Church, by way of the Executive Committee, has power over all of them to staff everyone in the place where he is needed.<sup>1043</sup>

In the 1980s, the Church regarded her character as a spiritual community. Was the Christian mission to work in worldly or spiritual matters? Development Aid challenged the proclamation of the Gospel. "What makes a Church a true Church?" was enthusiastically discussed at pastoral meetings at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>1044</sup> The Church was understood to be something other than a political body. The Executive Committee expressed this in the words: "If the Church employee wishes to take part in political affairs, he ought to measure whether these activities will interfere in his Church work." It further pointed out that politics should not be pursued "in a destructive way but by honoring the Christian Ethics".<sup>1045</sup>

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<sup>1040</sup> IA, A I: 2, AGM 1971–1977, *LCK President's report* held at Matongo 5.2.1973.

<sup>1041</sup> Translation by author. MA, Klemets L. 2009, 3.

<sup>1042</sup> Translation by author. SLEAFA, BV BREV, Sigurd Stark to Helge Hildén 22.7.1969.

<sup>1043</sup> IA, A I: 2, AGM 1971–1977, *Report of 1976* by James Otete at AGM Itierio 1–2.3.1977.

<sup>1044</sup> See chapters "Projects or Evangelism?" and "The Church's Lutheran Basis".

<sup>1045</sup> IA, A II: 6, Ex.com 1980–1983, Ex.com minutes 22–23.9.1983.

General Secretary Richard Olak visited the Nordic countries several times. When comparing Kenyan Christians to Western missionaries and their churches during his 1982 tour, he had noticed a big difference: Many Nordic churches were empty at the time of divine services. According to Olak, the message of Jesus was the only way to salvation for the Kenyan Christians. In this sense, they took their faith seriously. They were warmer than the Europeans, Olak explained and continued: "If you are not warm, you are cold!"<sup>1046</sup> Being a Christian to a Kenyan meant worshiping in services on Sundays. Especially LEAF missionaries were criticized on this basis:

Wives and children do not go to Church but play on the lawn as the Kenyan people leave the church. They give a bad example. Men play golf, a game from colonial rule. One missionary had been home three Sundays running, and when he was requested to give a ride to a village congregation on the fourth, he said he was on holiday and went to play golf. Finns also drink alcohol. We want believing missionaries like the Norwegians.<sup>1047</sup>

Focusing on the hallmarks of the Church – the Word and the sacraments – inevitably also led to the question of spiritual guidance. However, the ELCK Christians felt that leadership was not so much about theology as it was about social status. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya felt inferior to other Churches. She wanted to become a socially recognized and respected community among her peers. Since many secular communities also did not appreciate the Church without a bishop, the decision was clear: "We want a bishop!"<sup>1048</sup>

From the perspective of the ELCK Christians, religion and life belonged together. To them, the "Church" represented "my own" and everything they longed for in life: Peace with God, eternal life, the forgiveness of sins, independence, good self-esteem, strong identity, security, togetherness, joy, caring for others. As a spiritual family, the Church provided shelter in a society that after colonialism no longer felt like home. She was worth fighting for. Comparing their Church with those of the Missions, the Kenyans noticed that they were not at all inferior. On the contrary, they had something to be proud of. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya was blessed with active members who had placed their hopes in the blood of Jesus. For them, the Gospel of the cross meant life.

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<sup>1046</sup> Translation by author. *Utsyn* 33/1982.

<sup>1047</sup> Translation by author. MA, Väinö Uusitalo to Tuula Sääksi 11.3.1995.

<sup>1048</sup> See chapter "Program Declaration".

## Conclusion

Between 1968 and 1996, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya was largely united and served as a single diocese led by Kenyan leaders instead of Western missionaries as earlier. She desired to discover whether she was a Kenyan Church or just a Western mission. At times, the struggle was intense. The three main portions of the study followed the Kenyan leadership exploring this struggle. Under James Otete Nchogu (1968–1980) the Church focused on finding her national self-esteem, under John Momanyi Kururia (1980–1988) her spiritual mission, and under Francis Nyamwaro Onderi (1988–1996) her social status.

With the awakening of the Kenyan nation, the Churches also seceded from foreign custody strongly criticizing it. The ELCK leadership crisis of 1964 can be valued as it was a manifestation of this. The Kenyan Church leaders did not allow missionaries to control the independent Church. Against this background, James Otete Nchogu's era as the first Kenyan leader of the Church was challenging. The confrontation between the Kenyan Church officials and the missionaries had a strong effect on the atmosphere. As the former rulers wanted to retain their status, the Kenyan workers made it clear that this was no longer possible. The strong, but at the same time humane appearance of James Otete, was crucial in clarifying the situation. Although Otete stuck to his leading position powerfully without giving in to Western pressure, his humanity brought relief to the situation. The inflamed atmosphere gradually cooled down and the Church began to grow rapidly.

To guarantee and secure growth, the leadership actively looked for new mission partners from abroad. Soon, five new mission societies entered the field: The World Mission Prayer League (1969), the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Association of Finland (1970), and the Norwegian Lutheran Mission (1977). In addition, the Evangelical Lutheran Mission from Denmark (1974) joined the work through the Swedish Lutheran Mission, with the Icelandic Lutheran Mission (1978) coming in through the Norwegian Lutheran Mission. Despite their differences, these missions all shared a strong Christian vision of "saving souls". The proclamation of the Gospel was aimed at the birth of faith, emphasizing revival and focusing on evangelism. Their Gospel-centric proclamation resonated with the Kenyans. Despite all their distinguishing factors, the Church and her mission partners tried to find a common way forward. President James Otete played a significant role in this. He reminded everyone that the mission societies were needed but that the Church set the pace, namely, exercised supreme power over matters. As the shepherd of the flock, Otete dared to put into words what was needed in difficult situations. Respect and stability followed his programmatic statement.

James Otete Nchogu's administration, including Vice-Presidents Francis Nyamwaro, Jeftha Michoro, Richard Olak, Samwel Mogeni, Nicholas Oenga, and General Secretaries Daniel Ogetii, Gustaf Norrback, John Momanyi, and Boris Sandberg, assisted by many evangelists, assistants, volunteers, and

missionaries, had a positive effect on the Church, which grew strongly. The number of Christians more than doubled. In 1968, the congregations had 65 with 8,000 members; at the end of the 1970s, the figures were respectively 130 and 20,000.

In 1980, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya selected her second Kenyan president – now termed Chairman – John Momanyi Kururia. Otete was defeated by three votes. The election was influenced by clanism among the Kisiis. Others had felt that they were inferior to those in power. The younger generation longed for a leader who would also consider them. In Momanyi, their wishes were fulfilled. He was a leader who listened and sat alongside the parishioners without emphasizing his position. The most senior pastor, James Otete, gave his seat peacefully to one of the youngest at that time. How power was transferred was of great importance for the continuation of the Church's work.

The Church continued to grow. New forms of work were found, new ethnic groups were reached, and new mission centers were built. By the end of Momanyi's term in 1988, there were already 201 congregations and more than 10,000 new members. Along with this development, the focus of work began to shift to projects. The novel Government Aid sponsored projects, which the missions brought to the field, required more and more time and energy at the expense of evangelization. The Kenyan Church leaders were aware of the situation but were not able to influence it. There was a situation where the missions were still in charge of the course of development, despite efforts to the contrary. Concerns over the challenging relations between the missions and the Church led Momanyi to propose special training courses for missionaries to find a common way forward.

As the focus of spiritual work shifted to the less spiritual, a revival was born among the Kisiis, in the parish of Kenyoro. Some Church leaders were dismissive of the revival because they saw signs in it that were contrary to the Lutheran doctrine. John Momanyi acted as a supportive father of the young people involved. He was aware of the dangers of the revival drifting outside the Church. He was supported by several missionaries who themselves had a strong Christian revival background. The events which transpired were discussed at multiple meetings, with some opposing and others encouraging. Gradually the opposing attitude waned, and the revival remained in the Church for the benefit of all parties. Many of the Kenyans involved later became respected long-term workers in various positions, even as a future Bishop of Nyamira Diocese.

At the same time, the Church was evolving into a pastor-led Church instead of the former lay leadership. This direction had already been chosen in 1978 when Matongo Theological College began its theological degree program. For the first time in the Church's history, a group of pastoral students graduated on 28 March 1984. After that, new courses trained workers for spiritual leadership for the congregations, though not fast enough for growing needs. The emphasis was on the Biblical foundation following the Lutheran Confessions. For this

reason, the women's ministry was not accepted, despite pressure from both the Lutheran World Federation and the Western rapidly liberalizing Churches. However, all the missions related to the Church supported the conservative values of Lutheranism and were not willing to go in that direction.

The Church wanted to follow the confessional Lutheran policy represented by her mission partners. Although John Momanyi did not express himself as a strong opinion leader, his position was clear on this issue. Since Vice-Chairman Francis Nyamwaro was not a strong trendsetter theologically either, General Secretary Richard Olak carried the cloak of theological insight upon his shoulders. His theological and financial superiority was praised especially by the missionaries. Olak was a powerful Lutheran confessor who guided the Church's theological development into a confessional Lutheran Church. Many missionaries highly valued him as a spiritual leader from whom they received support and help when needed.

Francis Nyamwaro Onderi took over the chairmanship when John Momanyi left for the United States for graduate studies. In a way, this was a coup, since Momanyi had planned to return to his former position. Thus began the competition for bishophood, as Momanyi himself described the situation. Nyamwaro had a will to power, although he was considered a humble and kind-hearted leader. Nyamwaro's time in leadership was overshadowed by dark clouds. The economy was in a crisis, the mission societies also having their financial difficulties. The congregations informed the Executive Committee about the paralysis of their activities. Employees focused on matters other than Church care, and the enthusiasm of the early days seemed to have waned. Ethnic disagreements also arose, especially between Luos and Kisiis.

The battle was also fought in the theological arena. As the second generation of ELCK members took leadership positions in the Church, the future direction and in particular the question of "what is Lutheranism" were enthusiastically discussed. At times, the conversations became heated. They were fueled by differences between the missions. The Nordic missions represented the same type of Christianity, the Scandinavian Lutheran revivalism. They all emphasized the teachings of Lutheranism, but there were nonetheless significant differences in their understanding of the Lutheran Confessions and liturgy. These differences and various personal factors led to several confrontations. Through them, it became clear that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya wanted to stay firm in her Lutheran basis by following confessional Lutheran teaching.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya grew rapidly despite difficulties. Between 1977 and 1993, the congregants tripled from 17,000 to 52,000; the congregations more than tripled from 104 to 339. The number of pastors and evangelists also increased, but not quite as fast, from 61 to 173. To meet the rapid growth, the Church had to improve her training. Matongo Lutheran Theological College developed academically and its relocation to Nairobi was seriously contemplated. There, it would have served as a center for confessional



Lutheran education throughout East Africa. However, these plans did not materialize because the various parties did not have a common will. Diakonia training was introduced and eventually initiated in 1994 at Ogango Lutheran Deaconess College. In the same year, the Teacher's Training College was opened at Matongo. Along with many other vocational schools that had already started in the past, the Youth Training College in Kisumu introduced its vocational training in 1997. In the field of education, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya was ready to face the challenges of the future.

The question over the episcopacy developed fatally. The issue had been discussed and prepared for a long time, but it seemed to have come too quickly. The missions were not enthusiastic about it, but almost all the Kenyan Church members supported it. Through the bishopric leadership, the ELCK hoped to eventually find her fulfillment as a full-fledged Church among her peers. This expectation was accompanied by many worldly desires. The Kenyan people longed for independence in their relations with the Western missions. Therefore, they had decided to take the lead. Another burning topic concerned tribal issues. Were the Kisiis still in charge of the Church or did the Luos also have something to say about that? Nyamwaro and his team used all available means to win the election. They were able to cause the MLTC students, Church officials, missionaries, and even the Kenyan government officials to act according to their wishes. In these conflicts, the gap between the Church and her mission partners was put to the test. Some already predicted the end of their relationship.

The Kenyans appreciated Bishop Francis Nyamwaro for his leadership skills in human encounters. He met his neighbors with understanding and equality, treating other ethnic members equally. He was liked for his humility. He was ready to listen and forgive. He behaved politely and was not harsh. On the other hand, many missionaries questioned his ability to lead. They condemned him for unconstitutional activity. To them, Nyamwaro appeared uncertain, easily led by others. However, many Kenyans felt that Nyamwaro was criticized by the missionaries too much because he largely managed to keep the Church together.

Amid many problems, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya found comfort and joy in Lutheran doctrine. Salvation was by grace for the sake of Jesus Christ alone. According to the Lutheran Confessions, this was true Biblical teaching. The theology of glory misled the focus on worldly matters. The theology of the cross, instead, pointed to heaven, where glory would be revealed. This Gospel-centric message created enthusiasm among Kenyans. Many Synods, Gospel festivals, brought together thousands of people as a sign of revival.

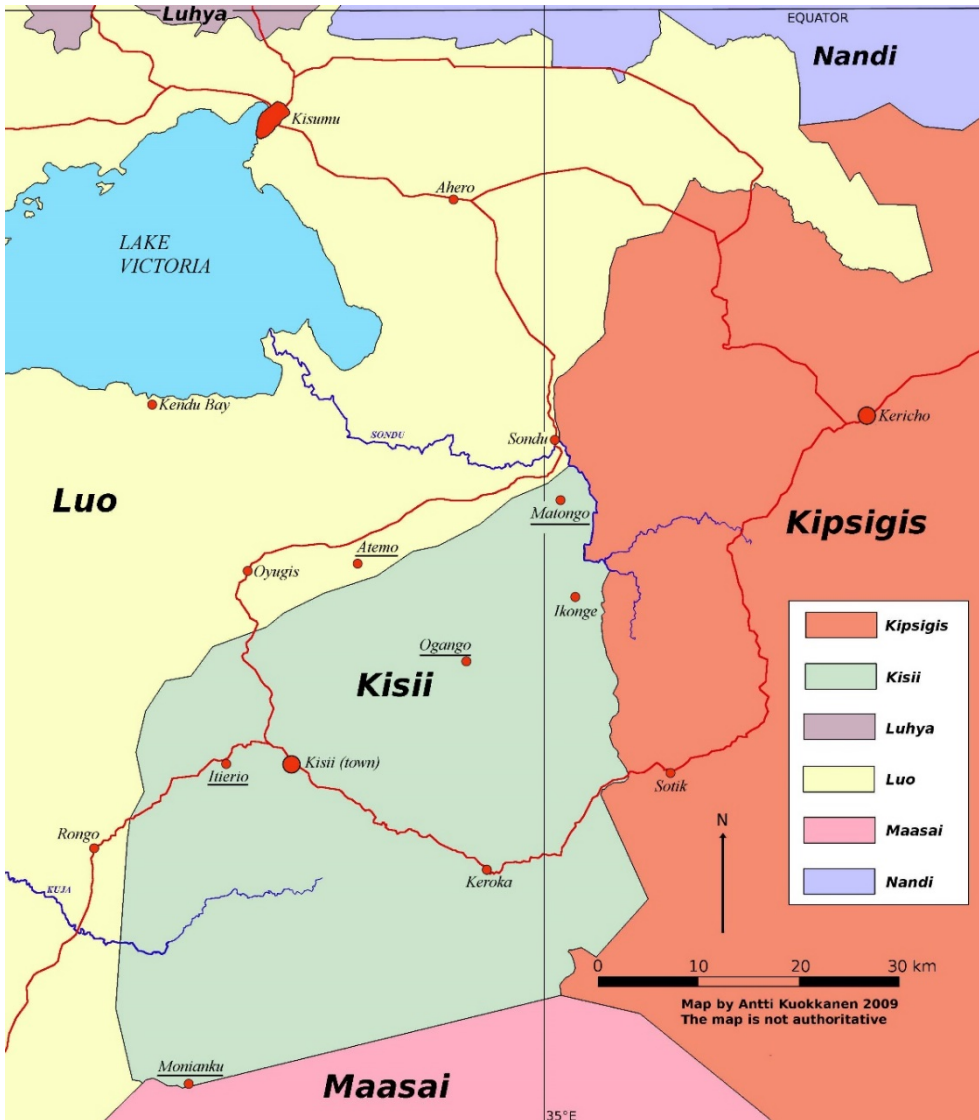
In the development of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, the question about the "Church" was central. According to confessional Lutheran teaching, she was identified by her hallmarks, the Word and Sacraments. The question of Church leadership was connected to the same discussion. For

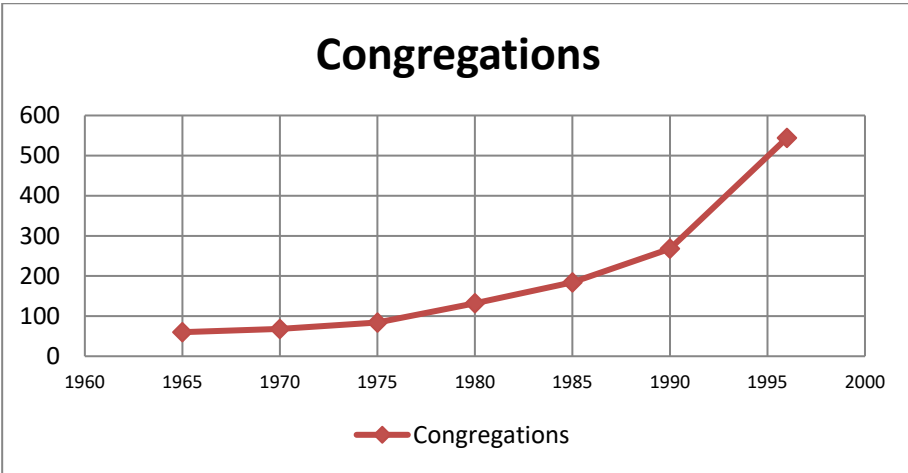
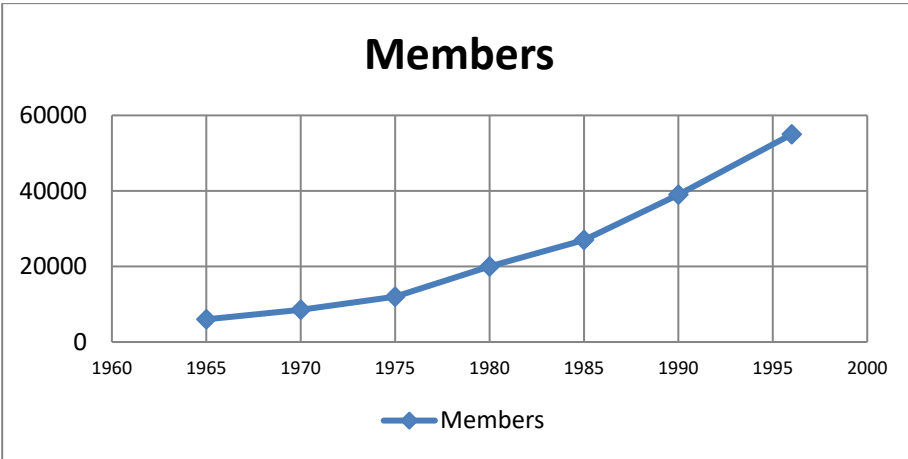
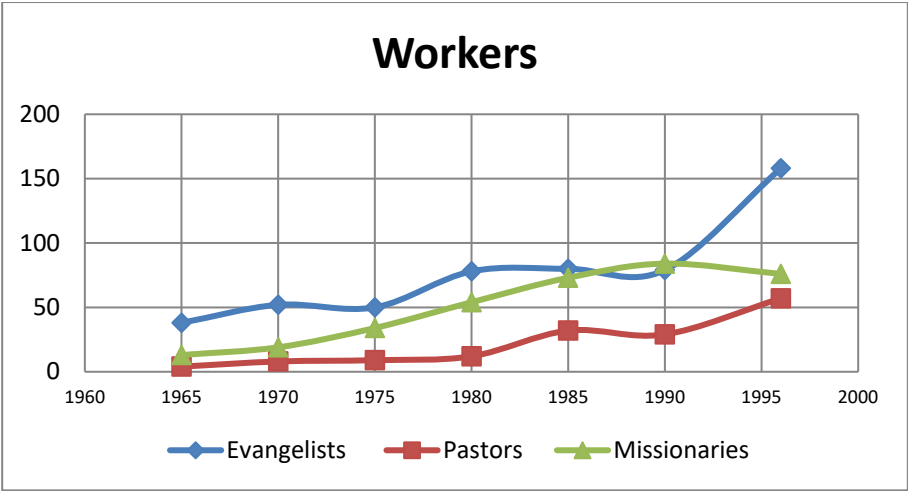
Kenyan Christians, this issue was not so much about theology as it was about social status. The Church felt inferior to other Churches. She wanted to become a socially recognized and respected community. Since many secular communities did not appreciate a Church without a bishop as well, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya hoped to have a bishop as her leader.

The events occurring in the Church well illustrate the time after colonization of Kenya. The struggle for independence of a small Kenyan Church in finding her ecclesiastical identity was intense. Through it, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya achieved everything she was looking for. She was no longer a Western mission but instead an independent, Gospel-centered Lutheran Church led by a Kenyan bishop. Despite this, not everything appeared to be in order. Many worldly ambitions had obscured her mission of proclaiming the Gospel. She was in danger of losing her true identity as part of the Kingdom of God. Ultimately, however, the message of the forgiveness of sins in the blood of reconciliation of Jesus Christ gave her new hope.

## Annexes

**Annex 1** Map of Eastern part of Nyanza Province, where the Luo, Kipsigis and Kisii ethnic groups border. AKA.





## Abbreviations

**AGM / AGA** ELCK Annual General Meeting / Assembly  
**BV / SLM** Bibeltrogn Vänner / Swedish Lutheran Mission  
**Corr.** Correspondence  
**DYM** Delegation för Yttre Mission [Delegation for Foreign Mission, SLEAF]  
**ELCK / LCK** Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya / Lutheran Church of Kenya  
**ELCT** Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania  
**ELM** Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Denmark  
**Ex.com** ELCK Executive Committee  
**FELM / SL** Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission / Suomen Lähetysseura  
**FINNIDA** Finnish International Development Agency  
**Gen. Sec. or G/sec.** General Secretary of the LCK / ELCK  
**KELC** Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church  
**LCMS** Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod  
**LEAF / SLEY** Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland / Suomen Luterilainen Evankeliumiyhdistys  
**LHF** Lutheran Heritage Foundation  
**LWF** Lutheran World Federation  
**MLTC** Matongo Lutheran Theological College  
**NCCK** National Council of Churches in Kenya  
**NLM** Norwegian Lutheran Mission  
**NORAD** Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation  
**OLDC** Ogango Lutheran Deaconess College  
**SIDA** Swedish International Development Authority  
**SIK** Icelandic Lutheran Mission  
**SLEAF / SLEF / FLM** Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland / Svenska Lutherska Evangeliföreningen i Finland / Finnish Lutheran Mission  
**SM** Scripture Mission  
**TTC** Matongo Teacher's Training College  
**WMPL** World Mission Prayer League

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## Abstrakt

Under perioden 1968–1996 var den evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan i Kenya i stort sett enad och fungerade som ett enda stift. Den hade kenyanska ledare istället för som tidigare västerländska missionärer. En viktig fråga för kyrkan var om hon skulle betrakta sig som en kenyansk kyrka eller som ett resultat av västerländsk mission. Stundom var dragkampen inom kyrkan i detta avseende hård. Föreliggande undersökning riktar fokus på det kenyanska ledarskapet när det gäller att utforska denna kamp. Under James Otete Nchogu (1968–1980) fokuserade kyrkan på att hitta sin nationella självkänsla, under John Momanyi Kururia (1980–1988) var kyrkans andliga uppdrag i blickfånget och under Francis Nyamwaro Onderi (1988–1996) rörde det sig i huvudsak om kyrkans sociala status i det kenyanska samhället.

James Otete Nchogus tid som ledare kulminerade i kyrkans sökande efter en nationell självkänsla i förhållande till västerländskt inflytande. Även om Otete kraftfullt betonade sin ledande ställning och inte så lätt gav efter för ett västerländskt tryck, innebar hans mänskliga framtoning att menings-skiljaktigheterna hölls under ytan. Den tidigare inflammerade situationen lättade gradvis och kyrkan upplevde en snabb tillväxt. Den aktuella frågan under John Momanyin Kururias tid som ledare blev frågan om vilket kyrkans egentliga uppdrag var. Handlade det om förkunnelsen av evangeliet eller skulle tyngdpunkten mera ligga på det statliga biståndsarbete som också understöddes av missionsorganisationerna? Situationen var nämligen den att missionsorganisationerna fortfarande hade ett viktigt ord med i laget, även om ansträngningar gjordes för att missionärernas inflytande skulle minska. De kenyanska kyrkoledarna var inte omedvetna om situationen, men de förmådde inte i någon högre grad påverka den. Vi den här tiden uppstod också en stark ungdomsväckelse inom den Ekegusii-etniska gruppen. John Momanyi blev något av en ledare för dessa ungdomar och även flera missionärer, som själva hade en stark väckelsebakgrund, blev ett stort stöd för de unga. På det sättet stannade väckelsen kvar inom kyrkans ramar. Francis Nyamwaro Onderi kom i sin tur att starkt betona biskopens ledarroll i kyrkan. Det bidrog till ett försämrat förhållande mellan kyrkans ledning och missionärerna.

Trots många problem fann den evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan i Kenya tröst och glädje i den lutherska betoningen av frälsningen som en oförtjänt gåva för Jesu Kristi skull. Detta budskap väckte genklang hos många kenyaner. Synoder och gospelfestivaler samlade folk i tusental.

Under hela undersökningsperioden var frågan om "kyrkan" central för den evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan i Kenya. Enligt en konfessionell luthersk undervisning identifieras kyrkan av sina kännetecken, Ordet och sakramenten. Frågan om kyrkans ledarskap var nära sammankopplad med denna fråga. För kenyanska kristna handlade frågan inte så mycket om teologi som om social status. Man ville nämligen att kyrkans skulle bli erkänd och respekterad i samhället. Eftersom en kyrka som saknade biskop inte åtnjöt denna respekt i

det kenyanska samhället, blev det viktigt att arbeta för att den evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan i Kenya skulle få en biskop som ledare.

Händelserna i kyrkan å sin sida illustrerar mycket väl den postkoloniala perioden i Kenya. Den lilla evangelisk-lutherska kyrkans kamp för självständighet i sökandet efter sin kyrkliga identitet var intensiv. Kampen resulterade dock i att kyrkan fann sin egenart. Den lösgjorde sig allt mera från beroendet av västerländsk mission och utvecklades till en självständig kyrka med en kenyansk biskop som ledare. Vägen dit var lång och det fanns mycket som ville skymma kyrkans uppdrag i evangeliets tjänst. I slutändan gav dock budskapet om syndernas förlåtelse för Jesu Kristi skull kyrkan ett starkt framtidshopp.

Martti Arkkila

## African Church or Western Mission?

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya Seeks Her Identity 1968–1996

Between 1968 and 1996, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya was largely united and served as a single diocese led by Kenyan leaders instead of Western missionaries as earlier. She desired to discover whether she was a Kenyan Church or just a Western mission. Under James Otete Nchogu (1968–1980) the Church focused on finding her national self-esteem, under John Momanyi Kururia (1980–1988) her spiritual mission, and under Francis Nyamwaro Onderi (1988–1996) her social status.

The events occurring in the Church well illustrate the time after colonization of Kenya. The struggle for independence of a small Kenyan Church in finding her ecclesiastical identity was intense. Through it, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya achieved everything she was looking for. She was no longer a Western mission but instead an independent, Gospel-centered Lutheran Church led by a Kenyan bishop. Despite this, not everything appeared to be in order. Many worldly ambitions had obscured her true mission of proclaiming the Gospel. She was in danger of losing her true identity as part of the Kingdom of God. Ultimately, however, the message of the forgiveness of sins in the blood of reconciliation of Jesus Christ gave her new hope.

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