

TANGAZA COLLEGE

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

**THE THEOLOGY OF THE GATE AMONG THE LUOS AS A TERRITORIAL
INITIATION IN RELATION TO CHRIST BEING THE ESCHATOLOGICAL
GATE TO THE HEAVENLY HOMELAND.**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement For the
Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies.**

**BY:
OLUOCH FELIX ADOYO.**

**TUTOR:
DR. REV. FR. AYLWARD SHORTER.**

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DEDICATION:

To my dear parents Anthony Adoyo and Theresa Adera for their unfailing support they have given me all this time and more especially when I was writing this thesis.

DECLARATION:

I, the undersigned student, declare that this is my original thesis, which has not been submitted to any institution for any academic credit.

All the information gathered from different literature and people interviewed have been substantially and professionally acknowledged.

Student's Signature *[Handwritten Signature]*

Tutor's Signature *[Handwritten Signature]*

Date 14TH FEB. 2002

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

After the African synod, which was held in Rome in 1994, the matter that arose very strongly was Inculturation of Christianity in the African culture. As a matter of fact Christianity as I know it is nothing less than an Inculturated or Incarnated Religion. Around that time the terminology that swept across Africa was "Inculturation". Many documents that came after the synod were full of the term "Inculturation". By "Inculturation" I mean the process by which the Gospel enters into a culture, takes from the culture all that is already gossiped and it is enriched by it- the culture.¹ The term Inculturation...expresses the great mystery of incarnation...it is called to bring the power of the Gospel into every heart of culture and cultures.² That is, it is an on going dialogue between Gospel and culture.³ After the synod, the anthill task that remains is the implementation of the outcome and exploring the specific areas that need to be Inculturated.

It is in the same spirit of the African synod that I would like to present the Luo concept of the Gate and see all the possible ways of Inculturating it. The Gate is very essential among the Luos as a Territorial Initiation into adulthood and consequently into the company of the ancestors. Once one has achieved this Territorial Initiation one is ranked on the same level with one's grandfathers, fathers, brothers and all those who have undergone this same kind of initiation.

¹Anthony, Bellagamba. Mission and Ministry In the Global Church. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1992, p.2.

²Aylward, Shorter. Toward a Theology of Inculturation. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 1988, p.224.

³Ibid. p.60.

The concept of the Gate will give us a clear image of the father as the Sole Domestic Authority capable of carrying out all the cultural-religious duties. It will also give us the importance of the first wife and the role she plays in the home enclosed by a fence with a Gate. This brings us to the patrilineal outlook of the Luos and their belief in the plurality of wives. Lastly, as we proceed in our exposition, we shall discover the importance of the firstborn son gotten from the first wife and his influence within the home.

The second reason for writing this paper apart from the purpose of Inculturation is to show those Christian Luos who think Christ did everything as far as culture is concerned. These Christian Luos think they have to do away with their culture in order to embrace Christ as being All in All. They say Christ is "enough". As a student of theology, I write this paper taking into account such Christians because this attitude has brought a lot of psycho-pastoral crises among the Luo Christians together with their pastors who very often are unprepared or incapable of dealing with such situations. The damage done to the Christians themselves and to Christianity is usually irreversible. This is the worst crime committed by the first Christian missionaries when they first arrived in the heart of Luoland. For them the Luos were first class pagans and their practices satanic. This is because they equated the Luo culture with ignorance. This was based on the *metheksis* of knowledge they had about the Luos who on the other hand were deeply and notoriously committed to their God, *Jok* perhaps even more than the missionaries themselves to their God. When they set foot in Luoland for the first time, their first mission was to *deluonize* the Luos and gives them the "culture of the church",

civilization. The result is, 100 years down the line; Christianity has not taken roots among the Luos and it is unfortunate that almost all the Luo clergy have followed their footsteps. The Christianity as we have it in Luo is ecclesiocentric and not Christocentric.

The methodology the missionaries used turned Luos into strangers to their own culture i.e. delinked from their culture. Hence today the process of *Luonizing* the Luos is urgently needed. Using the very words of Pope Paul VI, "You may and must have an African Christianity"⁴. I can paraphrase it this way, "You may and must have a Luo Christianity". As people living in this generation we should be able to situate the revelation of Jesus Christ in every culture of the world and in this case, the Luo culture. This is what I would call "Incarnational evangelization" of the Luos, which would be able to express more relevantly the intrinsic relationship between faith in Jesus Christ and Luo culture. By Luo culture I mean those things that help in the refining and developing of Luos' mental and physical endowments.

Apparently there has been no concerted effort on the part of the church even on the superficial level to make Jesus Christ and his message grow in the Luo culture just as it was with Jewish culture. To make a true Luo Christian, Inculturation is a must at all levels in obedience to Christ's command, "Go make disciples of all nations..." and not for a particular culture. True Inculturation seeks first the Kingdom of God, (Matt. 6:33).

⁴ Pope Paul VI, "Discourse of the Closing of the First Plenary Assembly of the Symposium of the Episcopal conferences of Africa and Madagascar (Secam)", Kampala, Uganda, (31st July 1969). AAS 61 (1969) 575.

Pope Pius XII, in 1945, making the first attempt of Inculturation, even though he did not achieve much, had this to say,

The Church ...is placed in the center of history of the whole human race...As Christ was placed in the midst of men so too His Church, in which he continues to live, is placed in the midst of the people. As Christ assumed a real human nature so too the Church takes to herself the fullness of all that is genuinely human wherever and however she finds it and transforms it into a source of supernatural energy.⁵

The scope of my thesis will try to pre-empt the meaning of the Luo concept of a home and its establishment because one cannot talk of the Gate without the home in the Luo setup. Then I will try to expose the significance of the Gate as a Territorial Initiation, the rituals and traditional mores involved in setting up a Gate. Lastly I will do theological reflection. My approach is going to be inductive in that I will start with the Luo context and see how the gospel message can be leavened to it.

⁵ Christmas message, 1945

CHAPTER 1

THE LUO

1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I am interested in the Luos of Kenya also taking into account that there are other Luo groups in Northern Uganda and Southern Sudan. The Kenya Luo sometimes referred to as *jalu*, are of Nilotic origin.⁶ The Kenya Luo are distinct from other Nilotic peoples like Shilluk, Nuer, Anuak and Dinka which make the northern block and the Acholi, Alur and the Jo-Padhola, which form the central block.

2 ORIGIN OF THE LUOS

It is a historically proven fact that the Luos migrated from Southern Sudan into Kenya. Historians like Crazzolara and Marie-France Perrin Jassy locate the origin of the great Luo trek somewhere near Nuer to the west of Bahr-el -Gebel in Sudan.⁷ Ogot referring to the present settlement asserts that: First, the Nilotes in their advance southwards... seemed initially to have moved into these areas, which more or less resembled their original hot lands of the Sudan where their cradle land appeared to have been.⁸ Owing to some linguistic and physiological relationship the Luos of Kenya have in common with the people of Southern Sudan, historians can safely assert that, that is

⁶ G.A.S. Northcote. "The Nilotic Kavirondo", Journal of Anthropological Institute, Vol.37 1907, p.58.

⁷ Marie-France Perrin Jassy. "Basic Communities in the African Churches", Orbis Books, New York, p.328.

⁸ B.A. Ogot "The History of the Southern Luo", Vol. 1, East African Publishing House Nairobi, 1967, p.37.

the land from whence the Luo migration commenced. The elders asked about the Luo origin, simply say, "We came from Sudan".

2.1 Factors that led to the Migration.

As a nomadic community, the Luos might have left their original land in search of better pasturage. Their demographic increase and fear of being absorbed by other neighbors are other possible reasons for their migration.⁹ Whatever the exact reasons for migration, the event left an irascible mark on the Luo imagination like the Exodus event of the Israelites. Like the Israelites the Luos are very proud to narrate to their children this great trek made by their ancestors along the Nile River to the Great inland water mass, L. Victoria (*Nam Lolwe*). For the Luo, the lake is the cornucopia, the great horn of plenty, which flow of richness and life abundant.¹⁰

2.2 The Geographical Location of the Luos in Kenya.

The Kenya Luo forms a block of its own along the shores of L. Victoria or *Nam Lolwe* as it is called indigenously. The Luos are established in the three main former districts: South, Central Nyanza and Kisumu districts in Nyanza province. These three districts can be divided into two zones, high rainfall zone and the Savannah of the lakeshore. The crop production in the highland zones is very high and hence the population is great. Along the lakeshore the crop production is very low and hence the major occupation of the people is fishing.

⁹ Jude, J. Ongong'a. "Life and Death, A Christian Dialogue" Eldoret Gaba Publications, Spearhead No. 78, Journal, 1981, p.7.

¹⁰ Onyango B. Ogotu and A.A Roscoe, "Keep My Word" East African Publishing House, Nairobi, 1974, p.11.

2.3 Education.

The children are given the basic, but practical knowledge of the situations in which they will find themselves throughout life. This education was in most cases done by imitations e.g. boys built models of huts or molded bulls while girls prepared imaginary dishes or pretended to be mothers nursing babies.

At boyhood, the father took charge of his sons' education. Each son had to accompany his father into the fields to look after the cattle or tend the garden, mend broken fences and repair huts. Each had to learn his father's trade e.g. blacksmith, medicine etc. Other things which the parents could not teach their children like sex education were learnt through age groups while in their dormitories: boys while in the *simba*, the bachelor's hut and girls in the *siwindhe*, the old woman's hut where the girls slept. The old woman took the responsibility of the girls' education in matters related to sex and how to comport themselves toward their husbands and in-laws. In general, elderly people were respected and considered sapient, custodians of wisdom and knowledge. Hence they were the ones who imparted important knowledge to the children.

2.4 The Name Luo.

There is no literary work that gives us details on how the name Luo came about. I acknowledge that some people have done research to establish the origin of the term 'Luo' and what they have seems to be a post factum approach. Etymologically, the elders have it that the name 'Luo' was derived from the fact that this group was constantly following after one another in search of better pasturage and that this

constant movement was conditioned by geography to a larger extent e.g. by rivers and mountains. Each time a lineage unit moved ahead, it was followed by another.¹¹ In such movements the Luos were guided by rivers, hence the Luo word *luwo* designates following after another or following along the riverbanks. It can also mean following after fish hence the Luo word for fishing is *luwo rech* or *lupo*. Because of this constant movement the Luos came to be called *oganda luwo*, people following after another. For the elders this is the origin of the term 'Luo'.

3. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have given the general outlook of the Luo of Kenya, how they came to be and their social life. I hope it has laid foundation for what is coming in the following chapters.

¹¹ Op.cit. Ongong'a, J. Jude, p.7.

CHAPTER 2

THE LUO CONCEPT OF THE HOME AND THE GATE.

1 INTRODUCTION.

The Luo Home constitutes an atomized, autonomous basic unit of Luo settlement at the social, economical and political levels. The home is completely under the authority of the father who had the disposition of the entire wealth within the homestead. The father figure as the uniting factor of the home is still in use to date even to designate his authority over innate things. The entire Luo life revolves around the framework of the extended family staying within an enclosed geographical locality.

Jassy Marie-France Perrin explains this concept of home very clearly, even though as an outsider, she makes one fundamental understandable mistake. She substitutes the Luo term for home with farm, which is incorrect and confusing. So for her the Luo home is equivalent with the farm.

2. THE LUO CONCEPT OF HOME AND ITS ESTABLISHMENT.

2.1 The Home.

To make this concept of 'home' clear, I shall begin with an already existing home where there are sons ready to build their own *simbui*. (*Simbui* are plural while *simba* is singular).

When a son is considered a grown up he stops sleeping in his mother's hut. He puts up a small hut called *simba* where he is supposed to sleep in. A *simba* is a hut,

which a son builds for himself in his father's homestead within the Gate before getting married.¹² *Simba* is only built by sons and not by daughters. The firstborn son from the first wife is the first one to build his *simba*. Then he is followed by the second, third ... sons in that sequence. The daughters do not build *simba* because they are considered "aliens". The term used for them is *Ogwang'* (wild cat). This is because the tradition allows the girls to get married elsewhere, for instance in Tanzania, Uganda etc. Luos are exogamous. They get their homes wherever they will get married. The building of *simba* is considered the first sign of maturity. It is only when the sons are judged to be grownups, especially at the time when their minds are beginning to open up to the things that appertain to adults that they can build their *simbni*. At this stage they can no longer sleep in their mothers' huts. They have to separate themselves from their parents according to the Luo Code of Ethics. For those who have not yet build their *simbni*, the tradition by conjecture allows them to sleep in their brothers' (cousins') *simbni*. However, this is discouraged because experience has proven that a bunch of boys put together breed attitudes and behaviors not at all condoned.¹³ They very often influence each other into activities such as abusing drugs like alcohol and *bhang'* or even becoming philanderers etc. This corresponds to what St. Paul says in 1Cor. 15:33, "Bad company ruins good morals." This is why an authentic Luo man, considered the Sole Domestic Authority would like his sons to build their *simbni* within the Gate so as to

¹² Jaduong Owuor Aroka, interviewed on 27th July 2001 at his residence in Kendu Bay, Konyango Location.

¹³ Jaduong' Isaya Nyandiko, interviewed at his Hotel in Kendu Bay Town on 18th July 2001.

have a close eye on them as any good parent would do. The authority of the father is tied up with the genealogical seniority.¹⁴

Simba cannot be built outside the Gate even if there is too much land left in front of the parents' houses neither can they be built behind the parents' houses no matter how much land is there. Once a fence has been put around the home and a Gate erected no *simba* can be built outside it. If it is built outside the Gate then it ceases to be *simba*.

A small boy, who still sleeps in his mother's house, in order to accomplish a taboo, can also build *Simba*. This boy must be the firstborn from the first wife. This happens if the first wife delayed in giving birth to a son, but the second wife gave birth to a son immediately; so her son is a grownup ready to build his *simba*. In this case the father builds *simba* for the firstborn son so that he can give a chance to the second son to build his.

2.2 The Establishment of a Home (*Golo Pacho*)

Before touching on how a home is established, I shall first try to set limits to what a home is in the Luo understanding. A home is any place where a son goes to build a house to stay with his family independent from his father, surrounded with a fence of *ojuok* and a Gate. The establishment of this home must be done in accordance with the Luo traditions; otherwise it is not a home.¹⁵ Truly speaking the Luo system of

¹⁴ Op.cit, Marie-France Perrin Jassy, *Basic Communities in African Churches*, p.4.

¹⁵ Jaduong' Anthony Adoyo, interviewed at his Residence in Maguti, Kendu Bay on 2nd August 2001.

home has enjoyed stability and immutability for a long time¹⁶, but now I foresee a situation where the Luo Home system might undergo evolution.

Why is it necessary for a son to set up a new home independent from that of the father? The culture demands that the son being a "village mate" of his father should set up his own home and a Gate to enable him manage his own affairs independently from his father.¹⁷ This is the most important reason. Another reason is, it is considered unethical and taboo for a man to have his sons and daughters get married whilst still in his father's homestead. That is, an adult son who himself had adult sons and daughters should establish his own farm (home) separate from his father's at some distance.¹⁸

Luos also believe that it is a bad omen when sons already married lose their children¹⁹ especially male ones whilst still in their fathers' homesteads. It means literally that he is not likely to have a firstborn son who is a prerequisite for setting up a new home. In this situation the father can say, "Let me allow my son to establish his own home so that the 'good wind' might blow upon him. Who knows *Nyasaye Nyakalaga* (Deus) might have mercy on him and give him a son." The woman who lost her children through stillbirth or infant mortality together with her husband were made to pass through the Gate as the medicine man, *ajuoga*, sprinkled them *manyasi*, medicine.²⁰ In most cases, when the son leaves the father's homestead and establishes his own home he begets a son.

¹⁶ Op.cit. Marie-France Perrin, Jassy, *Basic Communities in the African Churches*, p.12.

¹⁷ 'Jaduong' Reuben Otung'. Interviewed at his residence in Simbi area, West Karachuonyo on 4th June 2001.

¹⁸ Op.cit. Marie-France Perrin, Jassy, *Basic Communities in the African Churches*, p.5.

¹⁹ A woman who gives birth to children and her children die at infancy is called *Jaksoni*.

²⁰ Martin Oclolla, interviewed at Magawo Beach in Kendu Bay on 18th July 2001.

Luos also do not recommend the mother in-law and the daughter in-law to be productive in the same home and worse still if they are pregnant at the same time in the same home. This can prompt the mother in-law to forcefully stop giving birth, which is not good.²¹

The above reasons necessitated the Luos to establish their own homes and Gates. No male Luo is expected to stay in his father's homestead, grow old and eventually die and be interred there. In any case this could happen it was considered a sign of immaturity, as sons were not allowed to grow beards within their fathers Gates. Growing of beards is considered a sign of independence. This would translate well with the African saying: African children never grow up until their parents are dead.²² This shows clearly that among the Luos there is no room for celibacy and non-productivity as far as virility is concerned. The Luos are expected to beget children and especially the male ones who would ensure the permanence and stability of the family (home) and the community.

2.3 The Rite of Separation or the Procession

The rite of separation is the means by which one leaves behind one's world and as we shall see enters a new one. This is the ceremony of changing residence hence I can rightfully refer to it as a Territorial Initiation. Before the procession commences, at the preliminal stage on the morning of migration (separation), all those present

²¹ Mama Teresia Adera, interviewed at her Residence in Maguti Village on 2nd August 2001.

²² Aylward, Shorter. Religious Obedience in Africa, Pauline Publications Africa, 2000, p.13.

converge in front of this son's mother's house for a prayer and blessing to *Jok Nyakalaga*. The prayer takes this form: *Jok Nyakalaga* we thank you for giving us this new beautiful day, let it come with all the blessings. Today we are taking this your son (those present touch the head of the boy) out there in the open, all the 'bad wind' that might take possession of him we ask you to repulse afar. Let him have all the blessings there because he is still a child. Today he is migrating from his father's homestead, he is being separated from his father and his mother, be with him and protect him." Then he together with his wife or wives are sprinkled with *manyasi* (herbs mixed with water) with the mouth then the procession begins. In the procession, in front should be the children followed by the wives of this young man, then this young man. After this young man comes the sponsor, usually a paternal uncle, walking slowly with his *ragwar* (a stick like a hay-fork). At the rear end after the sponsor, are the parents of this young man including his father's first wife. His father is also carrying his *ragwar*. The procession is a slow one there is no hurry lest one knocks one's foot against a stone and falls down. The procession must pass through the father's Gate as this marks the liminal stage. It is the Gate, which is the site of entrance and exit rites. The other openings, within the home do not have the same quality of a point of transition between the familial world and the external world as the Gate.

On arrival at the site the old men present throw their eyes toward all the corners of the proposed site and ask themselves, "Which direction should the Gate face?" After consulting a little bit amongst themselves they say unanimously, "The Gate should face

this direction." Pointing toward that direction with their *ragwar*. Then the construction work begins. The first wife's house is the first to be built.

When all the structures have been put up, the home will have to be fenced in order to be an authentic Luo home. The fencing usually begins from where the Gate is supposed to be. You cannot start fencing the home from behind. In fencing you have to use only euphobia (*ojuok*) plant.

2.4. Listed below are the reasons why the Luos use *ojuok* in fencing their homes:

- a) The ancient name of the Luo God is *Jok* and beneath Him there are also other lesser deities like *Jok Nyakalaga*. This *Jok* was thought to be very remote that nobody could have any direct or indirect contact with him. This also explains why the Luos do not have temples or shrines built for him. This *Jok Nyakalaga* is believed to be omnipresent and at the same time far removed from people. From history we know that the Luos were a people on the move. Once they became sedentary, and also because they could not build *Jok Nyakalaga* a place for worship, they decided to use *Jok* himself for fencing their homes. (*Ojuok* is a distorted version of *Jok*). By using *ojuok* to fence homes, what they were doing in actual fact was taking *Jok* the Supreme Being and fencing the home with him. It was their profound belief that, *Jok Nyakalaga* would protect the home. This is why upto present time the Luos use *ojuok* in fencing their homes and also to ensure that *Jok Nyakalaga* comes closer to them. To make sure that *Jok* was completely involved in their household and daily chores they began to name their children with the names of *Jok* (*Nying Jok*) or as it is known today (*Nying*

Juok). This portrayed that *Jok* was in the house. Another thing, the Luos did not have any religious activity involving the whole community unless there was a grave reason for it. If not the family was enough to hold all the religious activities. Hence the importance of *ojuok* as the fence.

- b) *Ojuok* also has an aspect of endurance or permanence of some kind. Actually it is almost as eternal as *Jok Nyakalaga* himself. Once it is planted it will be there no doubt about that. Even if you cut it, it will regenerate. So if you plant it as a fence, it is a prayer in itself that, that home should be as permanent or eternal as the *ojuok* itself and consequently as *Jok Nyakalaga* the Supreme Being Himself. This can be seen in the offspring generated and who are in turn able to keep their progenitors in personal immortality. *Ojuok* is a permanent symbolism even if at one time in history there will be nobody living in that home it will still persist being there to show people that, "Here there was once a home and now it is *gunda* (vacated homestead)." And people will continue saying, "This is *gunda* so and so or this was the home of so and so." This also gives us another aspect of *ojuok* in that it has to be planted, it does not grow just like that.
- c) *Ojuok* is also a sign or a pointer to where there is a home especially to the visitors or strangers who might be in need of help like water for quenching their thirst, or a place to rest for a night. This shows the aspect of the Luo hospitality. It is also because of *ojuok* that a home is called *pacho* or home. One can seldom hear people say, "Look there is a home over there, can't you see *ojuok*?"

These are the real powerful reasons why Luos use *ojuok* in fencing their homes, which no other form of fencing can match. The symbolism of *ojuok* is very profound.

3. THE LUO CONCEPT OF THE GATE (*RANGACH*).

This is the gist of this paper and as the paper unfolds you will realize how rich it is and hence the need for Inculturation. The Gate marks a very important turning point in the life of a Luo be it a male or female. It marks the point of separation from one's previous surrounding and incorporation into the new surrounding. The Gate has both metaphysical and eschatological implications hence all male Luos are expected to have Gates.

In the literal sense, a Gate is a well-known way through which all dignified visitors like the in-laws enter the home.²³ There are also other openings leading into the home, but are not considered as Gates. From the lexicon, structurally the Gate is an opening permitting passage through an enclosure.²⁴ This definition is very close to the Luo definition of what the Gate is. That is why I picked it up.

Luos say boldly, "The Gate is the Home" and without it there is no home, because it is the Gate that carries all the rituals, taboos, customs, traditions, etc. that go along with the home. Without it these rituals, taboos etc. cannot be accomplished or even undone. The Gate is the sole strength of the home.

²³ Jaduong' Aora Otange, Interviewed at his home in Kotieno Gumba Sub Location on 5th August 2001

²⁴ Random House Dictionary of the English Language, the Unbridged Edition. Editor in chief- Jess Stein, Managing Editor-Laurance Urdang, Copyright 1967, 1966 by Random House.

With the Gate one is initiated and accepted into the company of *Jodongo* (elders, those who have Gates), and real ancestors with their patterns of behavior. Here the Gate symbolizes the rite of incorporation.

Structurally, the Gate must have two poles with one end hay forked on either side with a cross bar on top. Otherwise, it cannot be called a Gate.

In a deeper way and this is also a cause of concern just as structural Gate. The Gate technically means male progeny. If you do not have them then you do not have a Gate.

3.1 The Gate as a Structure and as Male Offspring.

3.1.1 Gate as a Structure.

Once you are in the site where you are to establish your home, you have to get the direction of the Gate before any construction work can begin on the site. It will face the direction, which the door of the first wife will face. Hence the Gate and the first wife's door should be exactly opposite each other.

Another factor to be looked into is that your Gate should not be diffused into your father's Gate. Your Gate must be independent from your father's Gate.

The topography, the landform and the gentility or the gradient of the soil must be considered. The Gate should not face a hill, mountain or a higher gradient of the soil. The Gate has to face downwards where the streams flow.

For those living near the lake or river, the Gate must face these water masses. This is the general rule, but the application might be different depending on the father's Gate and the availability of land.

Anywhere the Gate might face; there should be no possibility of arising feuds with the neighbors staying opposite your Gate. This is because feuds and quarrellings are enemy to development.

The Luo Gate does not face east in anyway whatsoever. Neither does the first wife's door can face east. That the sun rises and strikes the Gate and the door with its first rays? No this is a taboo. As the sun rises, it rises with so many good things and bad things. If it rises with bad things you are going to have bad things the whole day and nobody wants that.

Even though it is the door of the first wife that determines the position of the Gate and the Gate will also show you, which is the first wife's door, both are not equal. These two seems to reciprocate each other, but functionally they are not equal because they serve different purposes and one cannot assume the responsibility of the other. The Gate must have that structure I talked about. The Gate has its rituals, which the door doesn't have and are salient during deaths in the family, seasons, births etc.

In short a home cannot be established without a Gate structure.

3.1.2 Ritual in the erection of a Luo Gate.

The Luo Gate is established at a later date after a successful rite of separation (change of residence), from this young man's father's homestead and after the son has established his own home. The day of the erection of the Gate is a very big feast and everybody in the village is invited; animals are slaughtered and plenty of beer is brewed. On the night before the erection of the Gate the man is supposed to have sexual intercourse with his first wife. This is a sign cum prayer that the Gate may increase i.e.

in terms of male offspring. This is a fertility rite.²⁵ To seal everything and be sure of the success of the Gate the man and his first wife performs another sexual intercourse on the night following the erection of the structural Gate. According to mama Agnes, this sexual intercourse was performed at the Gate on both nights²⁶. I consider her a reliable source because she told me this out of experience and also because of her age. With this they blessed the Gate with increase of male progeny and other riches like livestock.

It is on this day that the initiation cycle is completed and the person is fully integrated into the Luo council of elders. This is the post-liminal stage. The initiation is done under a shade within the home after a simple structure of the Gate has been erected.

The Gate shows one's status because on this day this person is given a three-legged stool (*kom Nyaluo*) to sit on among the elders officially. The person who doesn't have a Gate is not allowed to sit on a three-legged stool, but on the grass. Before he is welcomed to sit on this stool he sits on the grass together with those people who do not have Gates. The sponsor then calls him out by his name and he answers "Present" (the women watching from a distance break into ululations). Then he proceeds to take up his seat among the elders on the right hand side of the sponsor. (They sat in a circle).

After taking up his seat among the elders he is given another privilege only accorded to those who have Gates. He is invited to draw beer from the pot using a small gourd called *ote* and serve his fellow elders. Each elder has to receive his gourd of beer

²⁵ See Jaduong' Anthony Adoyo.

²⁶ Mama Agnes Outa. Interviewed at her home in Kotieno Gumba Sub Location on 11th June 2001.

directly from the hands of this young initiate and not from any other hand. Those who do not have Gates are not allowed to draw beer from the pot. They just sit down on the grass and wait to be served.

Lastly, on this day this person is allowed officially to eat the tongue of a slaughtered animal together with the elders. During the meals the sponsor serves him with the tongue as a sign that he is now fully accepted as an integral part of the elders and he is now welcomed to attend all the council of elders' meetings and deliberate on issues surrounding and affecting the community. The eating of the tongue is significant because it is a sign of acquiring wisdom and good speech when counseling or settling disputes. This is why people often go to the elders for advice or during social gatherings they are frequently invited to talk or address the gathering. With the eating of the tongue, the whole process of Territorial Initiation and welcoming into *elderhood* is completed. In this transition there are no physical marks on the body like circumcision or scarification of any kind or even the removal of the six lower teeth. This is an honor and privilege that those who do not have structural Gates, no matter how old they are cannot be given. Quite often you will hear elders rebuking those who do not have Gates, "don't play with so and so, don't you know he has a Gate?"

After the meals the mother of this young initiate is invited to cast out bad spirits that might invade the home and pray for the protection of the home. She comes with the ash gotten from *yiend oyudho*²⁷, cypress tree. She throws this ash all over the home as she blesses the home. As she does this she calls out the name of one great ancestor who

²⁷ *Yiend Oyudho* signifies the Mortality within the Homestead, especially that of the Man.

is believed to have lived an exemplary life, had a successful family with many wives and children and had a lot of wealth so that he could protect this home. She says something like this, "Okeyo Randiak son of Ocholla who managed his family very well, we present here today entrust this our son into thy care. We ask you to protect him and his Gate so that anybody who would want to harm him may not succeed." All the elders present pour out some beer for this ancestor welcoming him officially into that home. From that time henceforth, this ancestor becomes the guardian ancestor of that home.

When the part of the mother is over, there follows a short interlude of exorcism by the sponsor. He takes *manyasi*, herbs mixed with water and sprinkles it on the Gate and on all the members of that home still praying for their protection against any harm. This ritual is also intended to prevent the pollution of the Gate, which must remain uncontaminated once it has been purified. This marks the end of the initiation rite and before everybody disperses, they march through the Gate to this man's father's homestead to destroy all the houses he had there. This symbolism means that this man has extirpated all his past and now he is a new man.

From this day henceforth, this man is expected to behave differently from those who do not have structural Gates, his line and level of thoughts have also to change. His associates have also to be those who have Gates. He is also expected to have a mentor, an old man to help him understand and cope up with the issues arising from his Gate.

A Luo must have his own Gate, which implies his own home, because at that point the lineage takes a different direction, i.e. the group descent divides itself.²⁸ When

²⁸ Jaduong' Ogol Oswe, Interviewed at his Residence in Gendia Village, on 11th June 2001.

one is still in his father's homestead himself and his children still bear the group descent of his father. That is, the authority of the father over the son is still absolute in all matters.²⁹ Once you have your own home and Gate you bear your own name and your children bear your name i.e. you give them proper group descent.

The Gate is very important for the Luo because it is the 'Home' and nothing can be done in the home without the Gate playing a key role e.g. accomplishing taboos related to death. During seasons like planting, ploughing etc. after the man and his first wife had had sexual intercourse the previous night; they have to pass through the Gate in order to reach the *shamba* to till it or plant on it. They cannot pass through any other opening other than the Gate. The same applies to harvesting, on the eve of harvesting the man and his first wife must have sexual intercourse, then in the morning they pass through the Gate to go and harvest. When bringing the first produce back home they must pass through the Gate. In this agricultural setting and in other social matters appertaining to the home the authority belongs to the first wife. After her husband, she has precedence over all other members of the homestead, both men and women. She must give signal for work in the fields and no one can sow, work, harvest or make the first beer without her permission. Violation of this can jeopardize the success of the home and the Gate.

The in-laws bringing dowry must pass through the Gate with the cows and not through any other opening. All the in-laws of all categories must pass through the Gate even if they are just coming for a visit.

²⁹ Op.cit. Marie-France Perrin, Jassy. Basic Communities in the African Churches, p.20.

If the man dies the first wailing (*nduru or uwii*) must be done from the first wife's house up to the Gate just outside. The wailing wives must pass through the Gate.

The rites which lift the regulations and prohibitions from mourning that are considered rites of integration into the social life of the society like the shaving ceremony, removal of special dresses etc. must be done just outside the Gate after passing through the Gate.

Those who will come to accompany the widows must pass through the Gate.

In short, any time a tradition or a custom has to be fulfilled in the home it has to be done in relation to the Gate.

3.1.3 The Gate as Male Progeny.

There are lots of expressions that connote the Gate as male progeny, which emphasizes the Luo belief in *polis*, especially male children. Children occupy a very important echelon in the social strata of the family hence a home where the children's cries are not heard is not a home.³⁰ Many a time you might hear people saying, "so and so has a wide Gate." This means the person in question has got a lot of children and especially the male ones. Girls were not counted as something even when they were plenty, they were not considered to be the Gate. Each son was counted as a Gate. During drinking sprees it was a frequent phenomenon to hear those proud men asking their fellow men, "Don't play around with me, don't you see my Gates? Can your Gate measure up with my Gate? If you look at the bedroom side of my home, what do you

³⁰ Okot, p'Bitek. *Song of Lawino & Song of Ocol*. Heinemann, Kenya, Intro. G.A. Heron, Illustrations by Frank Horley, 1989, p.67.

see? Only *simbni*. And look on the left again, what do you see? Only *simbni* and nothing else. All these sons if they invade you, can you really stand your grounds." At times they even go further and tell you, "There is no dung at your Gate."

The expression, "So and so's Gate has a lot of dung" would mean literally cow dung, but when used in this context it means the children's excreta. Hence the expression would mean so and so has many children. This might also technically mean, that there is plenty of food to allow the children produce a lot of excreta. So, to tell somebody, "Your Gate doesn't have a lot of dung" is an abuse of the highest order, more so if one doesn't have boys. Worse still if he doesn't have any child at all. This expression stems from the fact that long ago people did not have pit latrines so they used to help themselves in the bush, but the children used to go outside the Gate or in front of the house. So when people were passing by the Gate they could see these excreta scattered³¹ all over the places, hence the expression, "So and so's Gate has a lot of dung." This expression could also mean the literal 'cow dung' as I pointed out above, which would imply there are a lot of livestock, or wealth in that home.

If it is said, "So and so's Gate has no dung", would mean in that home there are no children, livestock and food.

The other expression is, "So and so's Gate is incompatible with him or is disturbing him." This would mean: this person was requested to undergo territorial initiation before getting any child and a son for that matter to try his luck there, for the 'good wind' blow upon him, for *Jok Nyakalga* to have mercy on him and give him a son,

³¹ Ibid, p.68.

but luck hasn't come his way. He has stayed in that new home for quite a period of time trying to get a son, but nothing. He has even changed the Gate, but no son is forthcoming. So we can rightly say, "He is incompatible with the Gate or the Gate is disturbing him."

Why should this be a cause of concern and worries? The Luos put all their trust in male children who would be able to carry on their lineage thus ensuring their personal immortality and contribute to the social reproduction of their kinship group.³² The girls are considered to be people of the distant worlds and they did not count. Even cows were better than them. That is why the people of the *yestergeneration* could proudly and boastfully declare, "If a hyena can give me so much cows on this my daughter, I will just throw her behind the home (*gunda*) for the hyena to eat her up." The girls also did not count because their children would find their proper group descent where their mothers would be married.

Out of concern, your father, paternal uncle, grandfather or any other emissary may be your mentor, who is equally disturbed by your condition may come to you confidentially, but officially and tell you, "My son or my grandson, it is upon you, you have to search or look for the Gate, you have to go for the Gate." This expression offers the man who is incompatible with his Gate a wide range of possibilities to choose from. Here there are a number of things that I need to analyze in order to give proper interpretation of the expression.

³² Laurenti, Magesa. African Religion, The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1997, p.121.

As one who has a home and a Gate, if you are told this, know that you are being requested to migrate from that home because it is inept of blessings. Close that Gate and go to another place, establish your new home there with a new Gate.

If you have only one wife by the time you are told this, be sure they are telling you to marry a second wife because the first wife might be barren. Or it might have been that the first wife is *Jaksoni*, she experiences recrudescence death of her children through stillbirth or infant mortality, and none of them has ever survived. So marry the second wife and try your luck with her.

One thing sons have to know, that their fathers or grandfathers are only happy when they see their grandchildren and especially their grandsons. This is because fertility (and fecundity) is the central requirement in marriage.³³ So when they tell you such a thing, take it seriously because it is with great concern and coming from deep down their hearts. What they usually have at the back of their minds is that if you are the one with the disability, then you have to give your wife some freedom to identify one of her 'other husbands' and move with. Without causing alarm or shame, the wife can look around and identify that 'other husband' with a steady family and then she can approach him. This 'other husband' if he is wise enough should accept the proposal for his refusal could make the woman break down. That can be shameful on her part. If he accepts then he has the obligation to exercise propinquity to this woman so that any time she needs seed he is available to provide. This issue is a top sequestered secret and should not be disseminated. The husband has to ratify this because the children resulting

³³ *Ibid.*, p.120.

from this relationship will bear his name legally and not that of their biological father. There might be a problem of *confusio polis* i.e. the resulting children might resemble their biological father and not the legal father. This was catered for in that the person to provide the seed had to come from that family so that the resemblance still remained within the family. This practice was sanctioned and sanctified by the Luos. It is a very good practice accepted community-wide and it is different from widow accompaniment.

If this man was polygynous and was impotent or his chromosomes were not compatible with those of his wives in that he was only giving birth to girls, no sons, still he had the obligation to search for the Gate. What I have described above is only possible with one wife. So in a case where a person is faced with the plurality of wives, how does he go about it? Once the home has been fenced the man has to leave 'unofficial openings' called *rode* which are not the Gate for the 'unofficial guests' of the wives. These guests must be the 'other husbands'. With that he might get a son.³⁴

Following this argument one immediately realizes that children and especially boys are not a gift as per the present argumentation and without them the domestic human development is retarded. This causes a lot of concern among the community members. Here the teaching of the church clashes with the culture. To quote *Gaudium et Spes*, even in case where despite the intense desire of the spouses there are no children, marriage still retains its character of being a whole manner and communion of life and indissolubility.³⁵ Here I take issue with those reckless pastors some of whom are theologically shallow and pastorally ineffective who preach that children are gift

³⁴ Mama Katharina Owiti, Interviewed at her Residence in Seka Village on 1st August 2001.

³⁵ Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, p.839.

from God that they should know in what cultural context they are preaching and what impact their preaching will have. "Will the community accept your preaching or will they just listen to you and behind your back they do exactly the opposite of what you told them, continuing with the tradition?" Think about it.

Now let me look if the Luo custom allows a polygynist to build separate homes for his wives in different areas each home having its own Gate i.e. one wife in Kisumu and the other in Nairobi. I may call this practice "Territorial Dispersion" of wives. This is not a Luo practice, wives are never separated they have to be in the same homestead. Even if some people practice this today, it is not there in the Luo Customs and Traditions, as I will show you shortly. To reiterate, all your wives have to be in the same homestead with the Gate facing the first wife's door. Building homes for wives is a new trend resulting from the weakness on the part of man.

Another factor that has made this establishment of separate homes possible is the modern trend in civilization and population mobility. This is contrary to the Luo tradition, which would like the family (home) to remain a unit protected by one man under one Gate. Since it is now a present phenomenon that is happening, what should be done? If you build these homes separately, away from the first wife's home, you don't erect structural Gates and you do not fence them with *ojuok*. Because if you fence with *ojuok*, you automatically have to erect a structural Gate, but homes like that do not have structural Gates. There is only one Gate where the first wife's home is. The so called 'Gates' possess no ritualistic significance, that even if these wives die their

remains just pass through their so called 'gates' because they are just like any other opening in the home.

Let me employ this example to elucidate my point. Suppose the first wife died leaving or not leaving behind a son, then the husband migrated to go and stay with the second wife wherever he territorially dispersed her, upon his death his remains cannot be interred in the second wife's home. Simply because there is no Gate there and also there is no main house where his body can be put. As you know the remains of the *Jaduong'* has to pass through the Gate. Hence his body has to be brought back to the home of the first wife and pass through the Gate. If both the first wife's house and the Gate had collapsed, they had to be reconstructed however crude. He has to be buried in the middle of that home with his head facing the Gate. Also he has to be buried there because that Gate was erected in accordance with the Luo tradition as explained above. All those customs and traditions that need to be fulfilled in connection with the death of *Jaduong'* are done and accomplished only at the Gate. Luos have only one Gate.

Another vivid example I would like to draw attention to is the "Burial of S.M Otieno Saga" that hit the News headlines both locally and internationally in the years 1986-87. It brings out with profound clarity importance of the Luo home (plus the Gate) and ancestral land. More can be read in Fr. Shorter's book, "The Church in the African City."³⁶

³⁶ Aylward, Shorter, The Church in the African City, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, new York, 1991, pp.6-7

4. CONCLUSION

From *Gaudium et Spes* no. 53 we gather that man comes to a true and full humanity only through culture, hence the Luos must be made conscious of their right to culture and their duty to develop themselves culturally. Using Nyamiti's ideas, I may say that, "No African (Luo) element should ever be rejected unless it can be proved that it is altogether incompatible with the modern African (Luo) way of life. But from the cultural excursion I have done above, it is pertinent that both the Luo concepts of the Gate and the Home are still compatible to the modern Luo way of life and therefore should be promoted. From *Lumen Gentium* no. 20, it is written, "...the Kingdom which the Gospel proclaims is lived by men who are profoundly linked to a culture and the building of the Kingdom cannot avoid borrowing elements of human culture."

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

1 INTRODUCTION

In theological reflection I am going to present an incarnated concept of the Luo Gate as being Christ centered, Christ who said, "I am the Gate" and elsewhere he said, "I am the Way." This is the Christ who left His Heavenly Homeland where he ^{Luo} ~~were~~ with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit in order to come into the world and help the inhabitants of the world make an Eschatological Territorial Initiation involving a change of residence.

In this chapter I am going to use Biblical passages in order to contextualize this concept of the Gate under the following headings, the Kingdom of God as our home, the church as our home and Christ as the Home and Gate par excellence of all the living.

2 THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS OUR HOME.

The Kingdom of God as our home will only become clearer if we understand it in the context of a Luo home and the supposition of its pre-existence. So as young Luo man and an elder brother (Son) ready to establish his own home, Christ left his Father's home in order to come into this world and establish the Eschatological Kingdom of His Father i.e. to unite all things to God and lead them back to God. Like any Luo home with many houses, Jesus tells us "... in my Father's house (home) there are many rooms (houses)..." Jn 14:2, this is the home Jesus is going to prepare for all those who are steadfast in faith till the end. The Father's house is where God is and whoever is with

God is in His house. The Eternal Father's house is present in this world for Jesus told us, "Eternal life is to know God and the Christ He has sent." For us, in order to reach this home Jesus is going to prepare for us demands a total detachment from this world, Matt. 8:20 "...the son of Man has nowhere to lay His head..." and also vigilance and fidelity cf. Matt. 25:1-13, the ten wedding attendants (five wise and five foolish). Truly speaking our real home is not in this world, Jn.15: 19. Our home is in the Kingdom of Heaven to which Jesus is returning (even though he never left it Jn 3:13 so He need not return). The moral decadence of this world has risen so enormously that it harbors so much hostility and hatred, the antitheses of Love contrary to the original shalom that existed before the fall. The world here is to be understood in a moral sense of the world order under the control of adverse spiritual forces.³⁷ So by Christ coming into the world he wants to lead us back into that original shalom, the eschatological peace and tranquility.

3 CHURCH AS OUR HOME.

The church as the people of God³⁸ makes the invisible presence of Jesus felt among the faithful. Jesus told us His family members are those who listen to the Word of God and put it into practice, with that He found a new Family. The new family is the people brought into unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is brought about by the new and perfect covenant, which is ratified in Christ, Jer. 31:31-34. So we as believers in Jesus, our family become those with whom we share the Gospel message

³⁷ New Biblical Commentary, 3RD Edition, Edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer, A.M Stibbs, D.J Wiseman, 1970, p.960.

³⁸ Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, Lumen Gentium, 21st Nov. 1964, p.321.

i.e. those who hear the word of God and put it into practice, Matt.12: 46-50. This new family must remain a unit just as the Luo family. It is the one church Jesus established to be a vehicle taking us to our heavenly homeland. He always wished this church to remain one, "...Father may they be one as You and I are one..." Jn 17:22. Unfortunately just as the Luo home disintegrated in that men now establish many homes for their wives other than keeping them in one home protected by one man and one Gate, so the church of Christ has also disintegrated. There are so many Christian denominations and even other religions that do not profess Christ. This newfound family transcends consanguinal ties, ethnicity or race, i.e. it is not according to the flesh, but in the Spirit. This race is the new people of God, 1Pet. 2:9-10. It thus, becomes the real home protected not by *ojuok*, but by the blood of Christ. Hence all the just from the time of Adam, from Abel, the just one to the last elect will be gathered together with the Father in the universal church.³⁹

The African Synod Fathers adopted the image of the church, as a "Family of God"⁴⁰ which they said is more appealing to the Africans whose sense of family is very cohesive. In the same note, Shorter quoting a Nigerian Bishop, Albert Obiefuna says, "The blood of family and tribe is thicker than the water of Baptism."⁴¹ This imagery doesn't make sense for the Luo if it is not used in conjunction with the Luo concept of the home, which is the condition, or matrix of all genuine human development and not the family. For the Luos even monkeys do have families, but not homes. Even the Luos

³⁹ Ibid. p.321.

⁴⁰ Various Authors (Maurice Schepers, O.P), The Theology of the Church as a Family of God, Tangaza Occasional Paper, No.3, Paulines Publications Africa, 1997, p.19.

⁴¹ Ibid. p.30.

staying in towns do have families, but not homes. It is in the home that the imagery of the church as a 'family' is realized. Hence the ecclesiology of the church as a family in isolation doesn't appeal to the Luo Christians owing to its present denigrated status.

The Church in the Middle Ages made wide use of the door (arches or gate) in her liturgical celebrations and the celebrations of the sacraments. The door (Gate) as understood in this context is the boundary between the foreign and the domestic worlds in the case of an ordinary dwelling or between the profane and the sacred in the case of a temple or a church. Most of the liturgies were began outside the church and then the procession entered the church through the door e.g. during Easter celebrations. In the celebration of the funeral rites, the priest waited/ waits the casket outside the door and after some prayers it is received into the church. When celebrating sacraments e.g. Baptism, the neophytes (catechumen) were made to stand at the door and were asked some questions after which they were received into the church. This was to show that they were being separated from the previous surrounding and are incorporated into the new surrounding. In some churches the baptistery is still outside near the main entrance. So the church as a family (home) made great use of the door (Gate) even in its architectural designs just as the Luo home made use of the Gate (door).

Because of this relationship between the church as a home and the Luo home, I would rather recommend, together with the first growing popularity of the Small Christian Community, that all the liturgical celebrations and more especially the celebration of the sacraments of initiations be done in the homes. This is because the celebration of the sacraments constitutes a sequence of rites of separations, transitions

and incorporation. The Luo home offers a very well suited ambience for the celebration of these with the celebration beginning from the Gate and the climax, consecration or the actual conferment of the sacrament being done in the first wife's house or under a shade just outside. It will make more sense than people going to the churches for services. The goodness with homes is that those who are just passing by can readily join in the celebration as I pointed out in chapter two. The liturgical celebration can always be followed by a meal in which everybody can partake, that is, food eaten together is sweet⁴² and not like in the church where only the chosen few partake in the Eucharistic meal. This can always be followed by a chat and some form of faith deepening discussions. Another important factor is that the Luo homes are fenced with *Jok (ojuok)* or God while the churches are often fenced with barbed wires, concrete walls or even electric fence, which symbolizes worldly insecurity. This is the trend that prevailed in the church of the apostles, which was home, house or family oriented. Now the church has taken a totally different direction that even among the members of the congregation they hardly know one another, this is more peculiar with urban churches. Each including their pastor minds his or her own business. This is not the kind of church we want or the apostles left behind.

4. CHRIST AS OUR HOME.

One cannot speak of Christ as the Gate without speaking of Him as the home. So in this line I would like to speak of Christ as our home. According to Harry Sawyer

⁴² Joseph, Healey, MM and Donald Sybertz, MM, Toward An African Narrative Theology, Pauline Publications Africa, 1966, p.257.

Jesus is the glory and epitome of what it means to be human.⁴³ Hence Christ is the perfect human being to have ever lived and he is the first human being to have ever authoritatively invited people to emulate his example. Matt. 11:28-30 "...come to me all you who labor and are overburdened and I will give you rest...learn from me for I am humble of heart..." Whoever follows Christ the perfect man becomes himself more a man.⁴⁴ He assures us He is the perfect place where the weary can find rest just as in a Luo home. Just as people are attracted to a Luo home because of the visible sign of *ojuok*, Jesus too attracts people to himself because of the visible sign of the cross. He confirms this by saying, "When I am lifted up I will draw all men (women) to myself." Jesus being our home is forever happy if we are with him wherever He is, Jn 17:24 "...where I am they may also be..." This is not a one-way traffic; if Jesus is our home then we also have a duty to provide Him with a home. He promises us that if we love Him, He and the other persons of the Most Holy Trinity will come and make their home in our hearts. Thus we are able to receive Trinitarian manifestations in our lives. This manifestation is of greater importance to the Christian whose destiny will be to live in this world waiting for the Parousia. Jesus speaks of His eschatological presence, which is the completion of the life of that of the Christian share with Him in this world.⁴⁵

Once one has attained Jesus Christ, salvation, one has to destroy one's past and receive on an inner transformation, which is life in the Spirit or life of Grace. St. Paul

⁴³ Aylward, Shorter. African Christian Spirituality. Ed. and Intro. By Aylward Shorter W.F., Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1978. p.43.

⁴⁴ Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern world. Gaudium et Spes, 7th Dec. 1965. p. 827.

⁴⁵ The Jerome Biblical Commentary, Edited by Raymond E. Brown, S.S, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., Roland E. Murphy, O.CARM. Foreword by His Eminence Augustine Cardinal Bea. S.J. 1968. p.456.

calls this the destruction of the old self or dying to *sarx* (body or selfishness). This fits well with what a Luo who has completed the Territorial Initiation cycle does. He symbolically destroys his past by demolishing all the houses (*simhmi*) he had in his father's homestead.

Jesus as the firstborn Son of the Father and our Elder Brother always recognizes the Father as the Sole Eschatological Domestic Authority, even though the Father had given Him all authority both in heaven and on earth, that at His name every knee should bend. Every moment He strives to be obedient and never to go against the Father's will. In Matt. 6:10 in the Lord's Prayer, we pray, "...your will be done..." and in Lk. 22:42, in the agony of the garden, Jesus prays to the Father, "...not my will be done, but your will be done..."

5. JESUS AS THE GATE

In Jn.10:7 Jesus calls Himself the Gate to the sheepfold, which implies that He gives legitimacy to all the entrants, shepherds and sheep. So in order to enter the sheepfold, we in turn enter through Christ because it is through Him that we reach perfect happiness. Notice that no one except Christ is the Door (Gate) because He alone is the True Light; others only reflect the light and are not themselves light. Thus in the thinking of St. Thomas Aquinas, there are many shepherds, but only one Door. All the shepherds pass through the Door (Gate), which is Christ, but only Christ is both the Door (Gate) and the Shepherd.⁴⁶ Hence like the Luo Home, which has only one Gate, so there is only one Gate (Entrance) to the sheepfold and Christ occupies it. Jesus offers

⁴⁶ Op.cit. Shorter, Aylward. Religious Obedience in Africa, p. 39.

accessibility to those who are going in and out and assures them of protection, which is in the form of spiritual sustenance, Jn.10: 9. This verse asserts Christ's salvational importance as the Gate. Jesus as the point of entrance and exit provides freedom of movement to the Christians in order to reach better pasturage, the pasture of life. This is the eschatological blessing found in Is. 49:9, the second song of the Servant.

From a Luo perspective, is Jesus qualified to call himself the Gate? Many think not. This is the point where the culture and faith clash and need to be reconciled. A real Luo would have no business considering Jesus to be the Gate on the contrary he would view Jesus as a total failure for a number of reasons. First, Jesus never built his *simba* as a young boy to show His first sign of maturity. The Holy Scriptures gives more weight to this in the passage where it is recorded that "the son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." The same passage also shows that even the foxes and birds are better off than Jesus because they have holes and nests respectively. It is also this same Jesus who used to withdraw to the hills in the evenings and spend nights in prayer. This is a clear indication that Jesus never had a *simba*. Again this Jesus did not have a place to entertain His guests apart from the fields, in Matt. 14:19, we read, "...make people sit on grass..."

Apart from not building His *simba*, Jesus did not marry. Actually as I explained in the second chapter, celibacy among the Luos is totally abhorred and this could even provoke the community's wrath and bring Him a woman by force. Celibacy had various implications: it frustrated the continuation of the life process therefore upon one's death one would not have one to keep him in personal immortality. As Van Gennep would put

it, during mourning the mourners and the deceased form a special group situated between the world of the living and the world of the dead and how soon living individual leave that group depends on the closeness of their relationship with the dead person. Widows and widowers (children) should belong to this special world longest...⁴⁷

Because He did not marry, it means He did not have a firstborn son who is a prerequisite in undertaking a Territorial Initiation thereby completing the cycle of initiation by erecting a structural Gate. So Jesus in his lifetime did not have a structural Gate or Gate as male offspring or even a woman to provide him with the male progeny. The pioneer missionaries who preached the Lord Jesus who neither had a wife nor children were often jeered. Tradition has it that these missionaries were asked questions like these, "You mean this Jesus did not have even one wife?" "What kind of Lord was He because we are sure He was never allowed to speak in front of the people?" Like St. Paul some were told, "Come back tomorrow we shall hear you."

It is this kind of thinking that the Gospel message should purify and make the Luo Christian understand that Jesus is above any culture. This is also true of people of different cultures for they can positively exchange their different experiences and traditions, even their different understanding of the same Jesus Christ.⁴⁸ Hence Luos should not take Jesus and restrict Him in the Luo culture. The Luo Christian should take the example of Jesus Himself when He broke ranks with the Hebrew culture that shaped

⁴⁷ Arnold, Van Gennep. *The Rites of Passage*. Translated by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle I. Caffee, the University of Chicago Press, 1960, p.23.

⁴⁸ Shorter, Aylward. *African Christian Spirituality*, p.21.

lift Him up. Otherwise, He cannot be free for all. The Luo Christians should not understand

the humanity of Jesus the same way they understand their own humanity. Jesus became a human being, which means before He was not a human being, He was God and still He is God.

By not marrying or building his *simba* even though He was the firstborn son in the Holy Family of Nazareth and of God Himself, He wants to show us the importance of celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven where our true home is and the demands required in order to attain it. Properly speaking Jesus still remains the Gate (both as structure and as male progeny) and Home par excellence.

As Jesus comes to the world from His heavenly homeland to reopen for us the Gate that was closed after the fall, He becomes the sole bringer of salvation and the only way to the Father i.e. “no one can come to the Father unless through me” or “those who came before me were thieves and robbers...” or “...those who do not go by the Gate are thieves...” Hence Jesus is only God’s Eschatological Envoy who has a universal and an absolute scope of bringing salvation to human race, Jn10: 16, “There are other sheep that do not belong to this fold, these I must lead too.” Jesus as the Gate fulfils the messianic hope expressed in Ps. 118 (117), “Here is the Gate that leads to the Lord’s presence, and hence shall just souls find entry.”

In Jn 14:3 Jesus tells us He will come again to take us so that through Him we can have access to the rooms He has already prepared for us in His Father’s Kingdom. Since He told us, “...I shall come to take you to myself...” I can interpret this verse to

mean Christ's invisible presence in the heart of the believer through the Spirit i.e. Jesus coming at Pentecost or Jesus' promised continued presence, "...yes I will be with you till the end of time..." Matt. 28:20. Jn. 17:4, the coming of the Spirit who is sent to sanctify the church (home) and that those who believe might have access through Christ (the Gate) in one Spirit to the Father. Jesus can also be talking of His second advent, the Parousia, when He will come at the end of time in glory to lead us home to be with the Father. This second coming is not only herald by Christ Himself, but also by two men in white. Acts 1: 11 "This Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven will come back in the same way as you have seen Him go into heaven." The verse (Jn.14:3) might also mean Jesus coming back to life after his death, the Resurrection, or Jesus coming to take the believer at the death of the believer. No matter what way Jesus comes to take the believer home the fact is he will come.

Jn.14: 3 seems to be the Jesus' utmost assurance that one day the Territorial Initiation of the believer will ever come to its consummation into the Trinitarian Life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the Kingdom of Heaven. This initiation does not require all the items listed in the Luo culture, but only one thing, to know Jesus who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, who is also the Entrance. Getting access through this Entrance is very easy. Jesus gives us the means in Matt7: 7-8, "...knock and the Entrance will be opened for you..." As believers what we need to do is only to knock. Jesus here becomes Gate par excellence who does not refuse entry to anyone who knocks. Just as the Luos say, "The Gate is the Home" and that nothing can be done in the home without the gate playing a key role so I can say with all aplomb that Christ is

both the Gate and Home in the Heavenly setup and nothing can take place in that heavenly homeland without Christ playing a key role. Hence there can never be a Christian without Christ. This is the Jesus who is the embodiment of the Father and everything the Father has, has been entrusted to Him, the firstborn Son of all Creation. To know Him is to know the Father and we should not be like Philip who asked him, "Show us the Father?" Jn.14:8. In verse 9 Jesus becomes a real Gate as male progeny because He is capable of keeping His Father in personal immortality for all eternity for He is the Eternal Son of the Father. Truly speaking, without Him the Father Cannot enjoy this personal immortality, for Jesus say, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."

5.1 The Two Ways

To get into this eschatological Kingdom of heaven (Home) we have to be very careful which way we follow. Despite Jesus telling us He is the "Way" Jn.14:6, apparently there is another way different from Him. In Matt. 7: 13-14 and Deut. 30:15, there are two ways mentioned, one wide and the other narrow. It is interesting to note that there is no mentioning of two Gates to correspond to the two ways, but only one Gate is mentioned. We are told the wide way is very popular and is followed by many people. It is not indicated whether it has a Gate or not, what we are sure of is that it leads to destruction. In this work I will have no doubt to assume that it has no Gate. On the other hand the narrow way is mentioned together with the narrow Gate and we are told both lead to life. It is a hard way and very few people find it. Reading this passage in solitary it is very difficult to identify this narrow Gate and narrow way with Jesus

Christ. It is only after reading the scripture in its totality that one is able to make such a judgment. The narrow and the wide way shows the absolute freedom God accords human beings, hence the decision for and against life is made in faith response to the Gospel message.

5.2 The Role of Mary as *Mikayi* (First Wife).

Mary as a mother and *Mikayi* (first wife) plays a very significant role in the life of Jesus. As a Luo mother, Mary is very influential and present when Jesus is making His Territorial Initiation on the cross. She even accompanies Him along the path to the cross. It is also on the cross that Jesus extends the motherhood of Mary to all humanity represented by the disciple Jesus loved most. Mary thus becomes a Luo mother par excellence.

In the contemporary society the motherhood of any woman has lost meaning in that most mothers terminate their pregnancies, others throw away their babies as soon as they are born, while others don't want to exercise their motherhood by conceiving so they use contraceptives to avoid pregnancies, etc. They shirk away from this noble responsibility. In this sense the church's image of Mary, as Mother is inadequate for the Luo Christians. If it is to appeal to them, then the Motherhood of Mary should be used together with her *Mikayiship* in the Luo understanding. Then it becomes her responsibility to hold the family of Jesus (church) together as any Luo *Mikayi* would do with her family. Understood this way, then all the Luo mothers and wives would find their fulfillments in the *Mikayiship* of Mary who takes precedence over all the members of the home.

Jesus as a Luo Elder Son has the responsibility to take care of His mother especially at old age when the father is not there. So the Luos will find it plausible to believe that Jesus after making His Eschatological Territorial Initiation took His Mother to be with Him in His Home taking care of Her. Hence the Luos have no reasonable doubt to believe in the Assumption of Mary. The doctrine of Assumption makes sense if Mary is seen to be the prototype of Bathseba. Just as Bathseba went to the King and prostrated before him I Kings: 1:15-16, Mary also goes to Jesus and tells him "they have no wine", Jn. 2. When Bathseba again goes to the King she assumes a new role of a King's Mother and she is given a seat at the right hand of the King. I Kings 2:19. From there she is able to intercede for us. This now becomes the new role of Mary as a King's Mother and she is even crowned Queen of Heaven.

6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have seen how the Gospel can be preached effectively using the very existing models found in the Luo culture. Now it is upon the church ministers to empower the Luos to come up with an Incarnated Christian Theology and Christology. The theological and christological elaborations developed should have the Luo cultural background as their status a quo. This is a theological pilgrimage which all Luos must make in order to transform the Luo churches from being carbon copies of the western churches to Luo Christian churches. They should also be geared at making the Luo become a Luo Christian and not a Christian Luo. In this way Christ our Elder Brother, Home and Gate par excellence will help us reach maturity in Him when we

finally make our Eschatological Territorial Initiation from this world into His Eternal Kingdom.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

As presented above in both chapters one and two and more especially in chapter two, we realize that the Luo culture has a lot to contribute to the gospel message for the salvation of the humankind in its macrocosm and the Luo Christian in particular. In preaching the Christian faith to the Luo Christian, Christ should form the common denominator of both faith and culture so that any dialogue that might take place might be Christ centered. This has not been so, the dialogue that has ever taken place was church centered and it had the church as its common denominator.

In my interviews with *jodongo*, elders I realized that in order to evangelise the Luos, Christianity has to open itself to the problems of today's Luo Christian world and discard the inadequate church centred theology of evangelisation not only for the Luo Christians, but also for the Christians of all cultures who need to relate meaningfully to the cultural-global realities of the time. This has to take into account the need to harmonize the culture that arises from the enormous secularism, science and technology to the primary culture of the Luos. With this changed approach to evangelization, Christians of all cultures would be capable of embracing the self-manifestation and personal communication of God. Vatican II Council stresses this by saying the "seed of the Gospel" is present in every culture, all that is needed is to awaken it. I concur with Vat. II Council by affirming that Christ was present in the Luo culture in a metahistorical way even before His incarnation. This presence is confirmed and fulfilled by the Luos' acceptance of Christ's bodily resurrection preached to them. Even before the missionaries ever set foot in Luoland to preach salvation, the salvific activity of the

Risen Lord already extended to the Luos in the virtue of the universal economy of the Spirit of the Risen Lord. Thus, this economy of redemption wrought by Jesus Christ our Elder Brother finds its culmination in the paschal mystery i.e. the self-emptying love (kenosis) of the redeemer. If not, Luos may have not entered into the divine plan for humanity and have their place in the salvation history.

It is important to understand the Luo Christian in order to be able to see his/ her world view through his/ her lenses and be able to come up with an integrated Christocentric Luo Theology and not an ecclesiocentric Roman or western theology.

This is what I have tried to do in the theological reflection, to integrate the Luo concept of the Gate and Home into the gospel message where Christ is both the Gate and the shepherd and Home. Owing to the supremacy of the Home over the church as a structure, attention should be directed to an evangelization at the level of community or family (home) and a totality of a human Luo existence. Hence the conversion of the Luo is exclusively and dynamically based on his faith response. This is why I insist on going back to the original where the celebrations of the liturgy and sacraments were done in the homes and not in churches due to their religious and cultural significance.

Lastly the Luo Christian would appreciate if the preaching of Jesus as the Gate were intensified. It is in Jesus as the Gate that the Luo Christian reaches full maturity. Since the Luo Gate is one and Jesus also proclaims himself as the only Gate to salvation the Luo will find it significant to believe in Him. Jesus as the Eschatological Envoy of God who provides access to the Kingdom of God fulfills all that the Luo Gate demands.

This is a new discovery, which nobody has ever made. We Luos can now proclaim Jesus as our Home and Gate par Excellence in whom we find our Christian maturity.

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INFORMANTS

Anthony Adoyo Okeyo interviewed at his residence in Maguti Kendu Bay on 2nd August 2001. He is Retired Deputy Principle Otok High School.

Teresa Adera Adoyo interviewed at her residence in Maguti Kendu Bay on 2nd August 2001. She is a Retired teacher of Maguti primary school.

Martin Ocholla Okeyo interviewed at Magawo Beach in Kendu Bay on 18th July 2001. He is a Retired Head Teacher of Migingo Primary School.

Isaya Nyandiko interviewed at his Hotel in Kendu Bay town on 8th July 2001. He is a Retired Assistant Chief of Kakwajuok Sub Location.

Owuor Aroka interviewed at his residence in Konyango Location, Kendu Bay on 27th July 2001. He is a Retired Principle of Gendia High School.

John Adongo interviewed at his business premises in Kendu Bay town on 4th January 2001. He is a businessman at Kendu Bay town.

Kathorina Owiti interviewed at her residence in Seka village on 1st August 2001.

Agnes Outa interviewed at her residence in Kotieno Gumba Sub Location on 11th June 2001.

Aora Otange interviewed at his residence in Kotieno Gumba Sub Location on 11th June 2001.

Ogol Oswe, interviewed at his home in Gendia Village on 9th June 2001.

Reuben Otung', interviewed at his residence in Simbi Village of Kendu Bay on 15th July 2001. He is a Retired Assistant Chief.

Otung', interviewed at Obaria beach of West Karachuonyo, Kendu Bay on 15th July 2001. He is a very well known Luo elder, Sage (*Ker*).

Ondielo interviewed at Kendu Bay shopping centre on 21st July 2001. He is a Retired Game Warden.

Eli interviewed at his business premises at Gendia Shopping centre on 27th June 2001.

Min Obago interviewed at her home in Gem Oremo of Kendu Bay on 14th June 2001.

All the Informants were selectively and carefully chosen. They are aged from 65 years and above. The oldest I ever interviewed was 96 years old.