

"THE FUNCTION OF DIVINATION AND  
THE ROLES OF AJUOGA (DIVINER-  
DOCTOR) IN THE CHANGING SOCIETY OF  
THE LUO OF WESTERN KENYA 1904-1986."

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A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of  
requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts  
in the University of Nairobi.

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DECLARATION.

This Thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Declaration	i
Contents	
Abstract	v
Acknowledgements	vii
 <u>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.</u>	
1.1 Statement of the problem.	1
1.2 Rationale of the study.	2
1.3 Literature review.	3
1.4 Methodology.	11
1.5 Field problems.	19
Footnotes.	20
 <u>CHAPTER TWO: SETTING.</u>	
2.1 Historical setting.	24
2.2 Geographical setting.	28
2.3 Transport and communication.	30
2.4 Social organisation.	31
2.5 Socialization.	40
2.6 Religious belief system.	44
Footnotes.	48
 <u>CHAPTER THREE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF DIVINATION.</u>	
3.1 Definition of divination.	53
3.2 The process of becoming <u>ajuoga</u> .	59
3.3 The origin of the Luo healing spirit possession ( <u>juogi</u> ).	61
3.4 The <u>Sepe</u> spirit possession.	63
3.5 Wagande spirit possession.	64

	<u>Page</u>
3.6	Mumbo spirit possession. 65
3.7	.The process of becoming <u>ajuoga juogi</u> spirit possession. 66
3:7.1	Rites of separation. 70
3:7.2	The transition rites. 72
3:7.3	The rites of incorporation. 75
3.8	The training of <u>ajuoga</u> . 78
3.9	How divination is done by gourd ( <u>ajawu</u> ). 80
3.10	How divination is carried by board ( <u>mbofua</u> ). 88
3.11	The divination by using pebbles and shells ( <u>goyo gagi or ajua</u> ). 93
Footnotes.	105

CHAPTER FOUR: FUNCTIONS OF AJUOGA IN THE LUO SOCIETY.

4.1	Socio-political functions of <u>ajuoga</u> . 114
4.2	The socio-economic functions of <u>ajuoga</u> . 118
4.3	Social life and the work of <u>ajuoga</u> . 122
Footnotes.	131

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CHANGING SOCIETY OF THE LUO OF WESTERN KENYA.

5.1	The coming of the Missionaries to Luoland. 134
5.2	The evangelistic approaches of the Mill Hill Fathers.
Footnotes.	153

CHAPTER SIX: THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY  
ON DIVINATION AND THE ROLES  
OF AJUOGA .

6.1	The changes brought by Missionary work on the Luo way of life.	157
6.2	Effect of evangelistic work on the Luo divination.	160
6.3	The process of choosing which course to take when one is confronted with a social problem .	167
6.4	Impact of the Missionary evangelistic work on the other roles of <u>ajuoga</u> .	172
	Footnotes .	181

CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION. 183

7.1	A need for a dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and <u>ajuoga</u> .	190
7.2	Re-examination of the healing apostolate of Jesus Christ .	192
7.3	A call for implementing African Christian theology.	194

Footnotes . 201

Glossary . 204

Abbreviations . 211

Bibliography . 212

APPENDICES: 224

Appendix 1: List of informants. 225

Appendix 2: Questionnaires. 239

MAPS:

- Map 1: Map of Kenya : Location of the study area Kisumu and Siaya districts. ix
- Map 2: Kisumu Catholic Diocese 1987. x

FIGURES:

- Figure 1: Approximate movements of the Nilotes. 25
- Figure 2: A hoisted quail's cage with herbal medicine. 34
- Figure 3: The diagram of a Luo homestead (dala) 36
- Figure 4: Diagram of quail's traps. 103

PHOTOGRAPHS:

- Photograph 1: The Luo divination gourds (ajawu). 82
- Photograph 2: The drums used for divination. 84
- Photograph 3: The divination board (Mbofua/Mbofua). 89
- Photograph 4: Ajuoga trying to push a disc which has stuck proving that ajuoga has identified the cause of his client's problem. 91
- Photograph 5: Divination pebbles (gagi). 94
- Photograph 6: Ajuoga and a client at divination session. 97

ABSTRACT.

This study is a contribution to the current interest in the African traditional values. It focuses on the divination and the roles of ajuoga (diviner-doctor) in the Luo Religion.

Questionnaire interviews, written sources and on the spot observation were the methods of investigation used in this study. Written sources used in this study include archival material and published works. On the spot observation method of investigation was used to find out why people consult ajuoga.

In the course of the study it became evident that there are only three major Luo divination methods. They are divination by pebbles (gagi), by divining board (mbofua) and by gourd (ajawu). Ajuoga can use more than one divination methods. The divination results helped the Luo to cope with the complexities of life.

The changes brought by both the Missionaries and the British colonial rule upset the traditional set up of the Luo. The Missionaries in particular condemned most traditions and customs of the Luo as heathen. The British colonial administration

also introduced a compartmentalized system of government which deprived ajuoga of some of his functions in the society.

However, the fieldwork showed that, at village level ajuoga still plays the role of a teacher, a counsellor and a technical advisor. For instance when one is confronted with a cultural issue which he had not encountered before, ajuoga would confirm from the supernatural the correct procedure to be followed. He will also give the advice to his client on how to solve similar problems in future. Ajuoga is still consulted to promote socio-cultural activities. He is consulted in conjunction with the modern experts in different fields such as agriculture and health. The situation at the moment is that the roles of ajuoga in the traditional environment have been transformed but not replaced by the social changes which were accelerated by the evangelization work of the Missionaries.

The fieldwork also revealed that more modern material objects have been incorporated in the divination objects to reflect modernity. The nature of consulting the ajuoga is also changing.



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discussions and not to forget Mrs. Abonyo, a friend who extended African hospitality to the trying condition of urban life by offering me a free accommodation for over two weeks at Kisumu town.

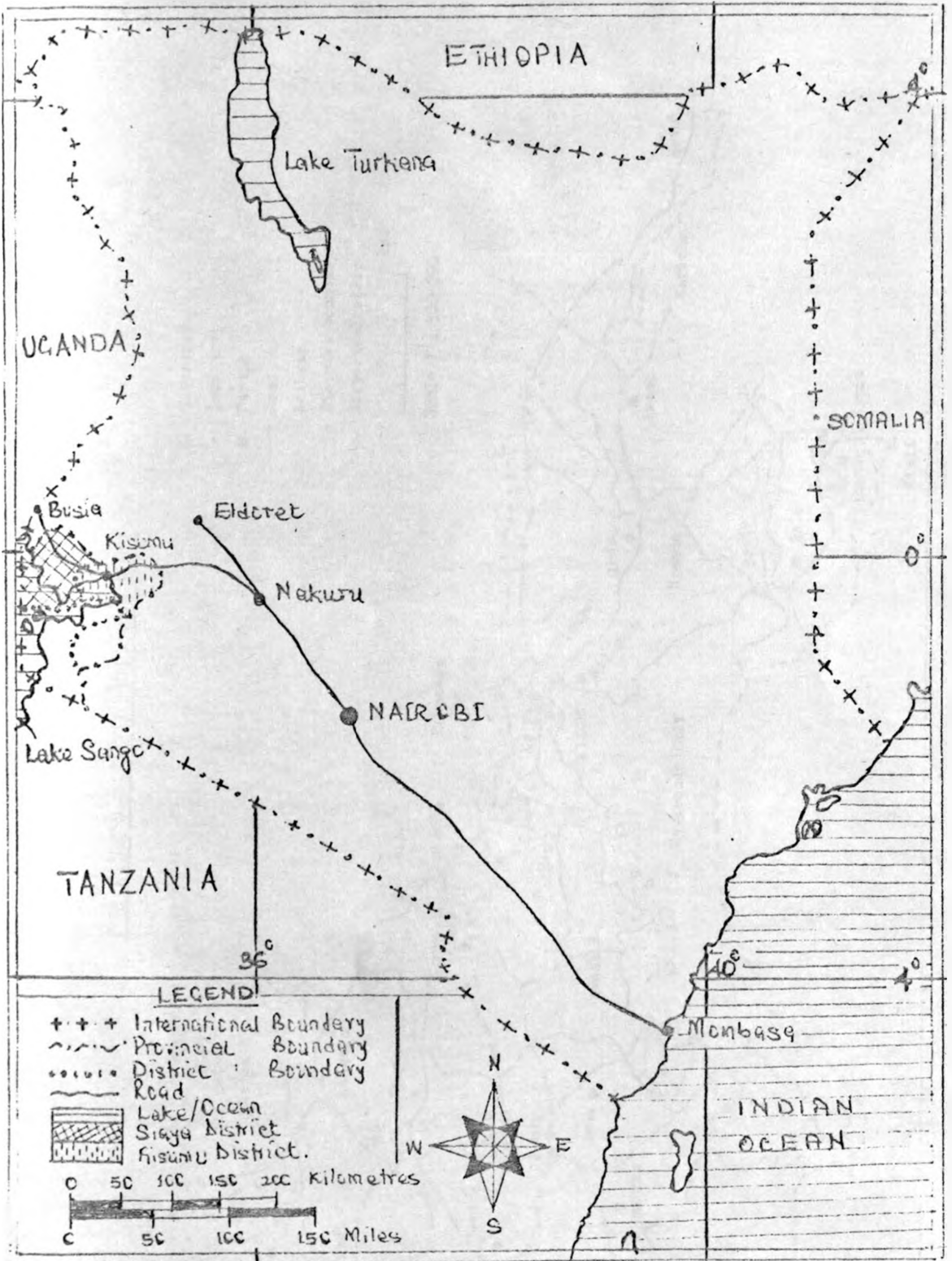
It would have not been possible to complete this work without the moral support of my husband Nyagode, and the children Adhiambo, Ahawo Onyango, Achieng' Atieno and the young Nyagode. They were patient and understanding most of the time while I was absorbed in this study. Special thanks goes to my sister Akinyi for having taken care of my family while I was away on several occasions in gathering the data. I should not forget to thank my brother Omondi for taking photographs, drawing diagrams and maps used in this study.

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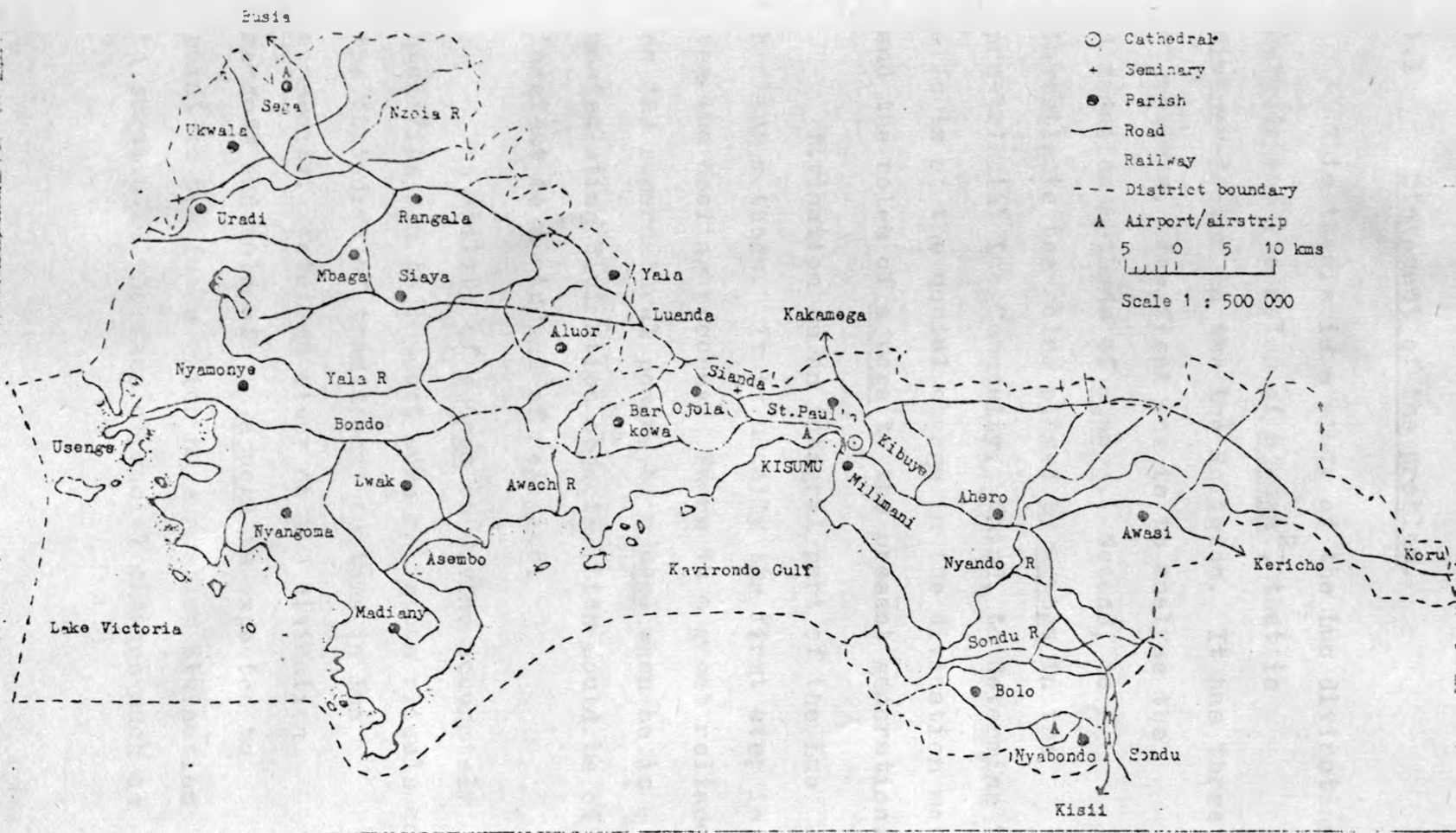
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LOCATION OF THE STUDY AREA: KISUMU AND SIAYA DISTRICTS.



Map 2

THE KISUMU CATHOLIC DIOCESE 1987



## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 Introduction

#### 1.1 Statement of the problem.

This thesis is a study of the Luo divination<sup>1</sup> methods and the roles of ajuoga<sup>2</sup>, that is diviner-doctor in the Luo Religion. It has three objectives. The first one is to analyse the divination methods of ajuoga. Second, to investigate the roles played by ajuoga in the pre-colonial Luo Community. Third, to determine the effects of the social change in the divination methods and the roles of ajuoga to the present generation.

Divination is an integral part of the Luo healing methods. It is usually the first step in the Luo healing process. There is a great reliance on the supernatural powers by ajuoga when he is manipulating divination objects which would be of interest to a student of religion.

The ability of ajuoga to divine accurately qualifies him to conduct some religious rituals and become the custodian of traditional customs in Luo community. Detailed study on the divination methods and role of ajuoga is expected to point to the facts which have enabled divination to survive in the face of social changes such as

those brought by Christianity and Western culture.

## 1.2 Rationale of the study

The current interest in the traditional values has stimulated this thesis.<sup>3</sup> Divination is an important aspect in African traditional Religion. It has been used as the only means of communicating with the spirits of the dead relatives and other spirits. When Missionaries came to Western Kenya, their teachings discouraged the Luo Christians from consulting ajuoga yet most Luo Christians still visit ajuoga as this study reveals. The survival of divination methods in the face of social changes calls for systematic investigations to identify the felt religious need it still fulfils in the present Luo society.

At personal level, the interest in carrying out this study was stimulated by the writer's observation in her traditional home village in Siaya district in Western Kenya. It indicated that many rural Luo Christians often seek the supernatural aid from ajuoga in times of crisis while they profess to be practising Christians contrary to most Christian churches' regulations. This observation points to the fact that there is a felt

need which divination provides that has not been replaced by Christianity and Western culture.

### 1.3 Literature Review.

There are many books written on the Luo of Western Kenya. Digolo<sup>4</sup> and Dupre<sup>5</sup> have compiled two bibliographies on the literature about the Luo. Digolo's work covers the Literature upto 1984. Both works include published and unpublished manuscripts. Their contents are arranged according to disciplines.

The literature which is relevant to this study can be divided into four categories. The first category consists of books written in Dholuo<sup>6</sup> by the Luo authors. The writers who fit in this category are those who were born at the end of the nineteenth century and lived in the traditional Luo environment. They helped in Missionary work and participated actively in colonial administration. The most important literature in this category is a book by:

Mboya, P. Luo Kitgi gi Timbegi. Anyange Press, Kisumu, 1938.

It is a handbook of Luo Customs. This book is very useful for those who want to have basic ideas about the Luo. Mboya states that his aim of writing this book is to put down in writing Luo customs for future generations. It is Mboya's conviction that indigenous culture should be promoted before the foreign ones. He puts it in Dholuo as:

(onego jopiny ket chikgi gitimbegi  
mabeyo ka misingi mokuongo, eka  
giger buche gitimbe welo e wi mise  
ma gise radho)<sup>7</sup>.

Mboya presents a balanced picture of the healing institution of the Luo. He specifically points out that

there are some people presumably in the Luo community with harmful medicine (nawi). These people are known as jonawi. The activities of janawi (sing.) are checked by ajuoga such as jadil<sup>8</sup>, jamrweri<sup>9</sup>, and other specialised ajuoke (plural of ajuoga) in herbal treatment and divination. Mboya also points that ajuoga who was specialised in divination advised warriors on how to handle their opponents when they were going for a raid. The information in this book about divination and socio-political roles of ajuoga stimulated the writer of this study to look for more information.

The second category of literature consists of the work written by researchers who belong to the Luo ethnic group. The aim of the writers in this section is to contribute to the body of knowledge about the Luo tradition as they have it in addition to field investigation.

Ocholla-Ayayo, A.B.C. Traditional Ideology and Ethics Among the Southern Luo. The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, 1976.

In this book Ocholla-Ayayo made a more comprehensive study of the Luo culture than the study done by Mboya which is mentioned above. Ocholla-Ayayo discusses various aspects of the Luo culture such as economic, religion and socio-political institutions. He outlines the changes which some of the Luo social institutions have undergone.



Even though Paul Mboya shows that he is aware of the changes taking place in the Luo customs, he does not discuss them in greater detail as Ocholla-Ayayo does in his book being referred to here. It would appear that Ocholla-Ayayo continues with discussion of the Luo culture where Mboya left.

More important to the present study is the section where Ocholla-Ayayo outlines the healing function of the ajuoga in the Luo community as follows:

The ajuoga always advises on all matters concerning ceremonies and removal of bad yath used by jamkingo<sup>11</sup> jandagla<sup>12</sup> or by jasihoho.<sup>13</sup> The ajuoga manages ordeals which are used to settle a dispute. ... Ajuoga is able to see those things which are hidden to us or placed by jochiende (evil-spirits).<sup>14</sup>

He rightly observed that some ajuoke (diviner-doctors) are possessed by various categories of spirits such as Sepe, Mumbo, Lang'o which enable them to divine. It is a point which is raised by most writers in this category of literature. Ocholla-Ayayo attempts to define healing concepts and gives their corresponding words in English. This is of great benefit to the present study. For example instead of using words such as black or white magic, terms which are more meaningful to western scholars than to African people, Ocholla-Ayayo prefers using Dholuo

names such as nawi, yath and others in order to maintain the cultural meaning of the words.

Ogutu, G.E.M., "An historical analysis of the Luo Idea of God". M.A. Thesis. University of Nairobi, 1974.

He has identified the origin of Wagande and Sepe spirit possession. His study stimulated the writer of this study to identify the possible cultural origin of other healing spirit possessions such as Mumbo.

Anyumba, H.O., "Spirit possession among the Luo of Central Nyanza". Presented at Makerere University, 1955.

In this paper Anyumba gives a vivid description of events in the battle field which might have created the psychological state of spirit possession such as slain bodies of Nandi warriors which were left in the battlefield unburied, a sight which Nandi women would be distressed to see. The effect of such ghastly sight presumably on the Luo side of the battlefield is that one who is possessed by the Nandi healing spirit sees a vision of a Nandi woman wailing while the bangles are making noise. The Luo associates power of divination with scenes or objects which had been in contact with corpses.<sup>15</sup>

The two studies carried by Anyumba and Ogutu are useful in this study. While Ogutu identifies the origin of some Luo divination spirits, Anyumba shows the events which might have contributed to the development of Luo healing spirits.<sup>16</sup>

The third category of literature used in this study by European writers who have attempted to describe the Luo culture either in Dholuo or English as they understood it. Some of these writers are Missionaries and ethnologists. Only two books are mentioned here. One of them is written by Mayor who was an evangelist and educator. He was a member of the Church Missionary Society. The other book is by Whisson who is an anthropologist.

Mayor, A.W., Thuond Luo (Luo Heroes).  
Anyange Press, Kisumu, 1938.

Mayor in this book says that he writes for younger readers a story book. However he cautions teachers to advise their pupils that the stories about magic, consulting the ajuoga and bewitching other people are superstitions and should not be taken seriously by christians.

Mayor's book is about some Luo heroes. Most of these heroes mentioned by the writer were ajuoke<sup>17</sup> or they possessed powerful bilo<sup>18</sup> which

enabled them to perform miracles. For example a spear could not penetrate the body of Lwanda Magere who was a great warrior because he had a powerful bilo. Gor Mahia was believed to change his nature. He was a well-known Luo ajuoga. In this book, Mayor also describes occasions when some ajuoke participated in socio-political activities such as enhancing success during an inter-clan or ethnic fighting by manipulating supernatural powers in the pre-colonial times. This is a point already raised by Mboya in his book cited above.<sup>19</sup>

Whisson, M.G., Change and Challenge.  
Christian Council of Kenya,  
Nairobi, 1964.

Whisson writes for Missionaries, priests and administrators whose work may make them come in contact with the Luo. He describes in great detail the Luo culture including their traditional religion. In this book, Whisson has shown how social changes have affected the Luo culture. He however, gives very little emphasis on the work of the ajuoga. His observation that there are some fraudulent ajuoke who are aware that they are cheating. He identifies this as one of the negative aspects of the Luo healing institution, a point often overlooked by African writers who are more often absorbed in defending their culture against the

negative attitudes of western scholars to the African culture. Indeed the Luo had quack ajuoke amongst them and that is presumably the reason why one would move from one ajuoga to another to get maximum service.

The last category of literature is represented by one Roman Catholic Church document which shows what the universal church says about the ajuoga.

The book is: Katekism Mokwongo gi Mar Sakrament.  
Mill Hill Falhers, Diocese of  
Kisumu, 1925.

It is a booklet which contains a portion of the Catholic Catechism. It is used for guiding Catholic Catechumens in the learning of the basic principles and teaching of the Catholic Church. It consists of questions and answers written in Dholuo which a catechumen<sup>20</sup> is expected to master before he is baptised or received in the church. In the book, it is stated that one way of not keeping the first Commandment of God is by consulting the ajuoga.<sup>21</sup> This implies that the Catholic Church discourages seeking traditional guidance from the ajuoga.

The literature cited above brings out the picture of the present study as follows: Ogotu identifies the origin of some spirit possession of Nandi and Sepe

which gave rise to divination skills in his M.A. Thesis.<sup>22</sup> Whisson supports the idea that there are some spirits which the Luo associate with the power of prophecy.<sup>23</sup> Anyumba in his article, "Spirit Possession Among the Luo" explains the events which have given rise to the Nandi spirit possession. Ogutu asserts that the ajuoga was a highly respected member of the Luo community.<sup>24</sup> Whisson adds that some of the ajuoke are fraudulent.<sup>25</sup>

It has also been shown in the literature mentioned here that the ajuoga played other important functions in the community other than healing such as in the socio-political organisation. Ocholla-Ayayo points out that some of the famous ajuoke acted as advisors in the Chief's Council and as arbitrators in conflicts between two parties.<sup>26</sup> Mboya also noted that the ajuoga blessed the warriors when going for raids to defend their territory, and at times advised them against a fight if he foresaw defeat.<sup>27</sup>

The literature mentioned here shows very little about the impact of Missionary and colonial administration specifically on the Luo divination methods. It is hoped that the field information will fill this gap.

#### 1.4 Methodology.

In an attempt to understand the religious significance of divination to the Luo this study uses on the spot observation methods, interviews and written sources.

On the spot observation approach<sup>28</sup> was useful for data collection because of the nature of the study which involves investigating people's private life. People consult ajuoga privately. They would only reveal the outcome of the discussion to their close associates. In this case, the most suitable way one would know the religious significance of divination is by observing the divination sessions. This approach also enabled the researcher to cross check the oral information got from informants. The shortcoming of the approach was minimized by the researcher's knowledge of the traditional beliefs of the Luo. She was born in a Luo family and brought up in the rural Luo cultural environment. The accumulative experience she has on the Luo culture enabled her to investigate deeper into the problem than a non-Luo researcher would have done. Some of ajuoke such as Obara,<sup>29</sup> Ngwawe<sup>30</sup> Ndeda<sup>31</sup> found it necessary that the researcher first observed how they were conducting divination before the oral interview. A camera was used to take photographs of the divination tools used by various ajuoke during the interview.

The historical perspective is represented in this study by elderly informants who have experienced changes in divination methods and roles of the ajuoga. These are people mostly over eighty years who are able to identify changes which have taken place in the divination methods and roles of the ajuoga as far as they can remember.

The field investigation was carried out in Nyanza Province of Western Kenya. It is the traditional homeland of the Luo of Kenya.<sup>32</sup> Nyanza Province consists of South Nyanza, Kisumu and Siaya districts. The data was collected in the Kisumu Catholic diocese which falls within Siaya and Kisumu districts.

The investigation was planned to concentrate in the places around the Catholic Missions built before 1940. These are Kibuye and Nyabondo Missions both in Kisumu district. In Siaya district, investigation was to be carried out around Aluor, Rang'ala, Mbagha, Segha and Yala Missions. In the course of field work, it became unnecessary to go to Aluor Mission as some of the christians and the clergymen who had been there were found in other Missions. However, Asumbi Mission in South Nyanza was visited because some key informants were staying there. More field work was carried out



in Siaya than in Kisumu as shown by the number of places visited because there are more older missions in Siaya than Kisumu district.

Three categories of informants were interviewed during the field investigation. They were christians, the ajuoke (diviner-doctors) and members of Legio Maria Church. The age and experience of the informants were taken into consideration. The appropriate informants were those who had witnessed different changes in divination and the roles of the ajuoga in the Luo community. Such people were over fifty years. The Missionaries first settled in Luo homeland at the beginning of this century. Most Missions were built in 1930's. These Missions are Segga, Mbagga, Yala, Rang'ala and Aluor. So, it is assumed that people who were born by 1930's and are now over fifty years have observed more changes in divination roles of the ajuoga than the younger generation.

The initial proposed number of informants was five hundred. The writer hoped to interview them all with the help of two assistants. At that time it was felt that the larger the number of informants interviewed the more information one would get. This was not the case in the field situation, which proved that the rush to interview many

informants would not enable the researcher to get accurate detailed information. The researcher dropped the use of the two helpers and concentrated at getting qualitative information from few experienced informants.

At first ten ajooke (diviner-doctors) were interviewed, three of them from Kisumu district and the rest from Siaya. Amongst them were two women ajooke. They were the only ones willing to give information regarding their work. Later two ajooke were interviewed at Kisumu town to check if urban problems were the same as those found in the rural areas. It was found that problems presented to both urban and rural ajooke were basically the same. They revolved around solving health problems, fear of witchcraft and to stimulate success in business. However the urban ajooke were found to be more innovative than the rural ones by incorporating non-Luo divination methods such as use of Jini, the Coastal area healing spirits to enhance their divination skills. A total of eight Legio Maria Sect members were interviewed. Four of them were healers (ajooke). They were interviewed to assess the effect of social changes brought by Christianity and Western culture as manifested in the sect's healing work. The average age of the ajooke informants was fifty years, for both traditional Luo ones and the Legio Maria healers. Those who were apprentice by the coming Missionaries in their area were preferred. Some of the ajooke,

like Ndeda<sup>33</sup>, who were interviewed were not aware that Christian churches did not approve of their divination work. He was a married person and a practising ajuoga by the time Rang'ala Mission was built in 1921. He was not aware of the conflict between his divination and Missionary work upto the present time.

More information was sought from members of the Roman Catholic Church. The information from the Catholic members was cross checked by those got from members of Church of the Province of Kenya and Africa Inland Church. The idea of interviewing non-Catholic members of other churches was not only to cross-check the information from Catholic members of the church but also to get more information from them about the problem. Christians interviewed included women from other communities married by the Luo men. Their knowledge about divination and Missionary work in their respective areas were considered. The appropriate Christian informants were identified by the church leaders. At Kibuye Catholic Mission in Kisumu, it was the priest in charge of the Mission Fr. Silvester Sulwe who directed the researcher to informants such as Anthony Obong'o who stays at Nyahera outside Kisumu town.<sup>34</sup> Obong'o in turn directed me to ex-chief Ochuka<sup>35</sup> and Pastor Miyumo<sup>36</sup> of Ogada African Inland

Church. Obong'o, Ochuka and Miyumo are among the active living first generation christians at Ojola and Ogada Missions. They have alot of knowledge about pioneer Missionary activities and colonial administration around Kisumu town which need to be recorded before their memories fade away. Gilbert Juma,<sup>37</sup> a Catechist at Ukwala Mission earlier directed the researcher to important informants such as Norbertus Odiwuor<sup>38</sup> and Raphael Asanda<sup>39</sup> who live in Ukwala and Segga parish respectively. Both areas are in Siaya district. The researcher found the old people who lived in the Mission stations very useful informants since they were conversant with Missionary attitude towards Luo culture and the divination work of the ajuoga. But some of them like the white Missionaries saw nothing good in African belief system.

In most cases the meeting with informants took place in the afternoon after the garden work or late in the evening. The first meetings with elderly informants were marked by lengthy but necessary introduction. I would then explain the nature of my visit, that I was gathering information about all the known methods of divination and the roles of the ajuoga as far back as they could

remember. Questionnaire in appendix B was followed either in a formal way or by a general discussion. Group interview was not encouraged although in some cases I found when it had already been arranged. This happened three times during the field investigation, at Ukwala Mission where the Chief Catechist invited me to a seminar for Catechists after which we held a discussion about this study with all of those who attended the seminar. At Rang'ala, Carolus Nyamlwang' arranged for a group interview<sup>40</sup> and also at Nyakach A.I.C. Mission.<sup>44</sup> However, individual interviews were preferred to the group ones, because the former enabled introverts to contribute as much as they could without waiting for others to talk.

Most field work was carried in the months of December 1985 to April 1986. It was a period for the long rains and a lot of garden work. Both conditions of the wet season and a lot of garden work did not hinder the field investigation to a great extent.

The field study area was divided into three zones. Zone A was covered from Kisumu town either by road transport or on foot. It covers places visited such as Kisumu town, Kano, and Nyakach locations in Kisumu district. Zone B was covered from my maiden home in South Uganda location. It covers the

northern part of Siaya district around Yala, Rang'ala, Sega and Ukwala Missions. Zone C was covered from my present home in West Alego location. It covers places in southern part of Siaya district especially around Mbagu Mission.

I was overwhelmed by the cooperation I got from the local people. In some cases I walked on foot for over four kilometres in unknown places and yet I was able to reach my destination with the assistance of the local people I met on the way. This is how I reached Mzee Obong'o's home in Nyahera, Raphael Asanda and Norbertus Odiwuor in North Ugenya. However, in some cases I had to ask someone to take me to an informant like in a case when a friend from Kisumu took me to Michael Mumbo, and Loise Ooko in N. Sakwa near Bondo Market.

Zone A was covered around March when people were more involved in shamba work. I did not hesitate to join my would-be informants in the shamba, partly to create the rapport between us and partly because I was interested in shamba work. I made several trips to Rang'ala, Sega, and Mbagu Missions by road transport.

### 1.5 Field Work Problems.

The cooperation I got from the informants and the local people was more than the problems I encountered during the field investigation. In many cases my informants gave me proper direction of where to get the next informant. During two occasions I enjoyed free accommodation in Rev. Ajugo Koga's home in Nyakach and at the house of Mrs. Abonyo a friend who accommodated me for more than two weeks in Kisumu town. However, there were few problems I encountered during the field investigation which are worth mentioning here, such as the unwillingness of some Catholic clergymen to give access to their private archives and information. I would like to stress here that the majority of the Catholic priests were cooperative. In fact in one occasion a Missionary priest invited me to visit his parish and talk to the knowledgeable people about my study,<sup>42</sup> an invitation I readily accepted. The major problem was felt in the inability of some elders and the ajuke to explain the significance of various articles used in divination. All the ajuke interviewed would not remember when new articles such as pieces of glass were incorporated in the divination pebbles. This made it difficult to trace the changes which had occurred in divination.

As a whole the field work was interesting and enjoyable to the researcher and most informants. The latter became aware that the usefulness of divination to the Luo has been recognised at academic level.

Footnotes:

1. J.S. Mbiti, African Religion and Philosophy. 1969, p.166 defines divination, "a method of finding out the unknown by means of pebbles, numbers, water, animal entrails, reading palms, throwing dice and many methods." The Luo believe that the action of the supernatural such as spirits of ancestors and other dead relatives could be benevolent or violent to their living relatives. The activity of these spirits which are unfavourable to man's health could be identified by divination methods and their action checked. The anti-social action of one person to another one is also easily identified by divination skills.
2. Ajuoga is the name given to a person in the Luo community who has power to divine the unknown. The word ajuoga is equivalent to an English word diviner-doctor. Ajuoga finds out the cause of a problem or disease then provides treatment.
3. In Kenya the interest in cultural and religious heritage has been illustrated by the government when it includes African Religious heritage as an examinable subject in the high school syllabus. The public has been encouraged to recapture and value their heritage by the Ministry of Culture and Social Services when it encourages provincial cultural festivals. Ajuoke (plural of ajuoga) were allowed to show the public how they sustained the lives of their patients in Nyanza cultural festival held for the first time in Kisumu town in 1985. See Daily Nation



Newspaper and Standard Newspapers of August 5, 1985.

4. Obonyo Ochieng' Digolo, "A Selected bibliography of the lacustrine Nilotes 1984." Department of Educational Communication and Technology. Resource Centre Kenyatta University College, 1985.
5. E.C. Dupre, The Luo of Kenya. An annotated bibliography, N.Y., 1968.
6. Dholuo is the language spoken by the Luo.
7. P. Mboya, Luo Kitgi Gitimbegi, 1938 op. cit. p.36.
8. Jadil is a specialised ajuoga in the treatment of mental illness and spirit-possessed patients.
9. Jamrweri is a specialised ajuoga in removing witchcraft put in someone's possession for ill-intention such causing harm to the intended person.
10. Yath - means medicine. In the old days it used to refer to herbal medicine alone.
11. Jamkingo - is a person with harmful magico-medicine which can cause harm to human beings.
12. Jandagla - more or less means the same as jamkingo. See Footnote 11 above.
13. Jasihoho is a person with evil-eyes.
14. Jochiende are evil spirits. The Luo believe in both good or bad spirits.
15. Suitable divination board is made of wood from a boat which capsized with many people or from a tree where someone committed suicide.

16. The work of Ogutu refers here is, G.E.M. Ogutu, "An historical Analysis of the Luo Idea of God". M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1974.
17. ajuoke is the plural form of ajuoga. It is equivalent to the word diviner-doctor in English.
18. bilo strong magic with medicinal value.
19. Mboya's work referred to here is P. Mboya, Luo Kitgi Gitimbegi. 1938 op cit.
20. Catechumen in the Catholic Church is a person who is preparing to get baptismal rite under the instruction of a Catechist.
21. Katekism Mokwongo gi Mar Sakrament. Mill Hill Father, 1925, p.15.
22. G.E.M. Ogutu, M.A. Thesis, 1974 op cit. p.160.
23. M. Whisson, Change and Challenge, 1964, op cit. p.8.
24. G.E.M. Ogutu, M.A. Thesis, 1974 op cit. p.167.
25. M. Whisson, 1964, op cit. p.8.
26. A.B.C. Ocholla-Ayayo, Traditional Ideology and Ethics among the Southern Luo. 1976, p.100.
27. P. Mboya, 1938 op cit. p.30.
28. This approach involves being at the scene of the activity so that one witnesses what is taking place.
29. Interview, Obara Owuor, a practising ajuoga, Rang'ala, Siaya, March 5, 1986.

30. Interview, Ngwawe Patrick, a practising ajuoga, Ambira, Siaya, February 28, 1986.
31. Interview, Ndeda Naftali, a practising ajuoga, Boro, Siaya, March 5, 1986.
32. Luo of Kenya forms the Southern block of the River-lake Nilotes.
33. Interview, Ndeda Naftali, Boro, Siaya, op cit.
34. Interview, Silvester Sulwe, a Catholic priest, Kibuye Catholic Church, Kisumu, February 13, 1986.
35. Interview, Ochuka, ex-senior chief, Ogada, Kisumu, February 17, 1986.
36. Interview, Samson Miyumo, a priest or pastor in A.I.C., Ogada, Kisumu, February 2, 1986.
37. Group Interview, Juma Gilbert, a Catechist, Ukwala, Siaya, November 8, 1985.
38. Interview, Odiwuor, Norbertus, ex-educator Humwundu, Siaya, November 10, 1985.
39. Interview, Raphael Asanda, Ligega, Siaya, December 13, 1985.
40. Group Interview, Nyamlwang', Carolus with Gaitano, S., Gaitano, J., Oyong Clara, Anyango Mary, Sewe Philip, Rang'ala, Siaya, February 16, 1986.
41. Group Interview, organised by Ajujo Koga, a pastor in A.I.C. Nyakach, Kisumu, February 19, 1986.
42. Interview, Maskula Marlinus, a Catholic Missionary priest, Kibuye Mission, Kisumu, February 13, 1986.

CHAPTER TWO

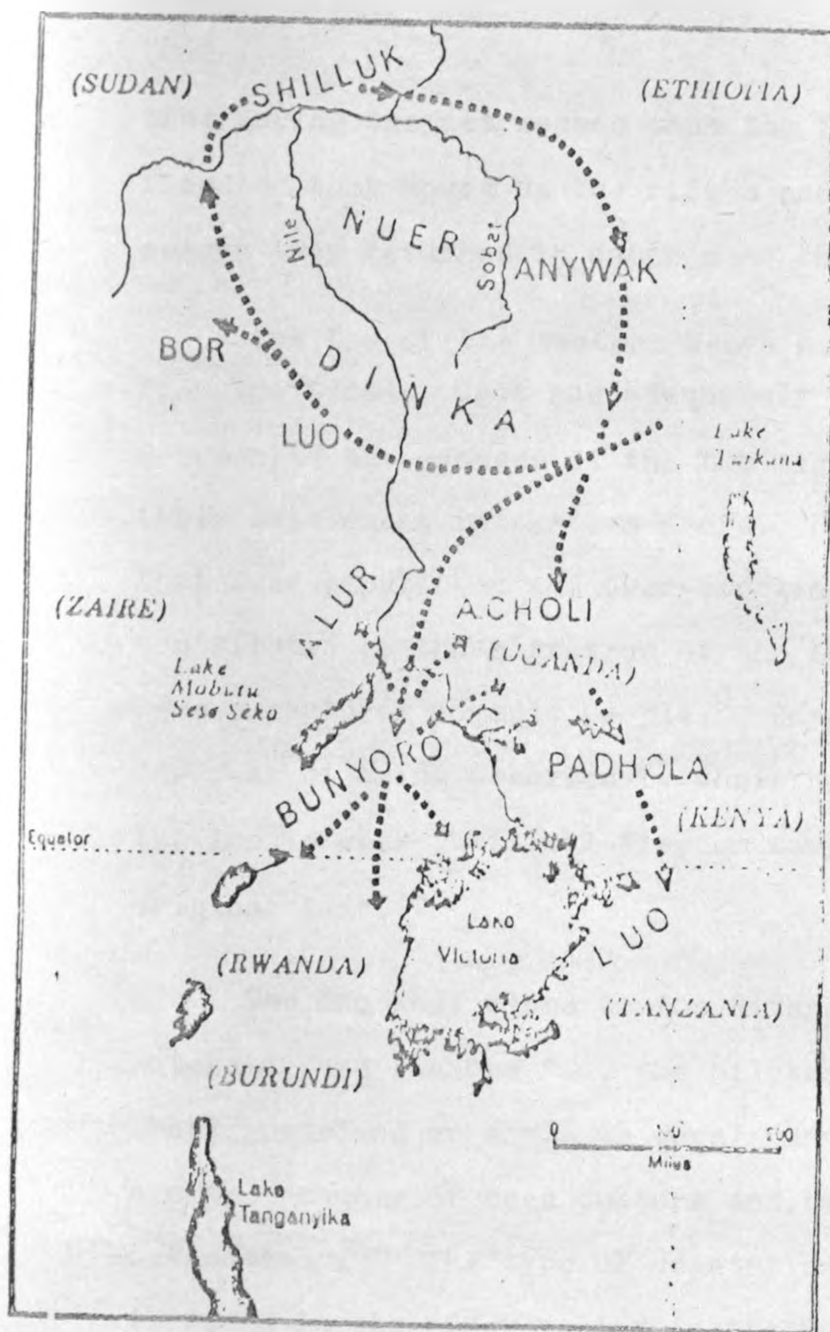
2.0 SETTING

2.1 Historical Setting.

The Luo of Kenya are Nilotic people. The Nilotes are classified into three groups. They are the Highlands, the Plains, and the River-Nilotes. The Luo belong to the River-Nilotes group.<sup>1</sup> The Dinka, Nuer, and Shilluk of the Sudan are other people in the same group as the Luo.<sup>2</sup> In Uganda the people who belong to the River-lake Nilotes are Alur, Acholi, Labwor, Palwo, Jonam, Lang'o and Padhola.<sup>3</sup> The territory occupied by the River-lake Nilotes extends from North-West of Sudan to Northern Tanzania towards the border of Zaire.<sup>4</sup> Ongong'a has noted that the River-lake Nilotes occupy three distinct regions. The Shilluk, Nuer and the Dinka occupy the northern zone; in the central zone are the Acholi, Alur and Jo-Padhola; finally the Luo with whom we are concerned in this study occupy a zone around the shores of Lake Victoria<sup>5</sup> (see Fig.I. p.25).

Ogot shows that most authorities seem to agree that the Luo had evolved as a distinct group by the year 1000 A.D. and they were living in the present Republic of Sudan.<sup>6</sup> The homelands of the Luo in Sudan was flooded annually and remained under water for about four to six months.<sup>7</sup> It became necessary

Fig. 1. Approximate movements of the Nilotes.



Source: J.J. Ongong'a "Life and Death". Gaba Publication, October, 1983 p.vi. Adapted from the map drawn by Dr. R.S. Odingo, in History of the Southern Luo, Vol.I. B.A. Ogot. E.A.P.H., Nairobi, 1967, p.6.

that during the wet season when the lowland was flooded, they moved up the ridges and in the dry season they returned to camps near the river.<sup>8</sup>

The Luo of the Western Kenya migrated from the Sudan. Ogot has adequately documented the process of the Luo migration and their settlement in Western Kenya. He suggests that over-population and over-stocking might have contributed to the migration of the Luo since they were a pastoral nomadic people.<sup>9</sup> Ongong'a adds that the fear of being absorbed by their neighbours led the Luo to seek political freedom away from their original land.<sup>10</sup>

The Luo kept close to the River Nile and other waters around because "... the Nilotes preferred the short grassland or savannah woodland areas suitable for a mixed economy of seed culture and pastoral activities".<sup>11</sup> The type of vegetation just mentioned is found in the river valley in the Sudan.<sup>12</sup> As one moves away from the river valley one encounters desert vegetation which is not suitable for grazing and cultivation.

The Nile river also provided the Luo with fish which was part of their main diet.<sup>13</sup> It is a protein food they still like. Herring's observation

that, "the Luo themselves could not ignore the basic necessity of finding homelands where their subsistence oriented economy could be practised successfully"<sup>14</sup> points to the fact that they had no alternative but to confine themselves along the river valleys and lakes so that they practise their traditional economy.

Before the Luo reached and settled in Kenya, they interacted with people of different cultures such as the Ateker of Central Sudan and the Bantu speaking people in Uganda.<sup>15</sup> Such contacts no doubt influenced their culture.

By the beginning of 19th century Labwor and Pakwach regions in the Northern Uganda were recognised as permanent settlements of four small Central blocks of the River-lake Nilote communities which were the Abwor, Akwa, Palwo and Jonam.<sup>16</sup> Further South in Uganda, the migration of the Southern Luo<sup>17</sup> was led by groups of Cwiny-Padhola and the Omolo people. By 18th century Ogot says that the Luo had settled in many parts of Nyanza Province.<sup>18</sup>

In Nyanza Province, the Luo first settled in lowland areas with good pastures such as the present

Alego locations, then to Sakwa, Asembo and Uyoma.<sup>19</sup> High altitude areas such as Gem locations, North Ugenya, Seme, some parts of Nyakach and Kisumu were only occupied when there was no more suitable land for pastoral economy.<sup>20</sup> The Luo were already settled in the present Siaya and Kisumu district by the time the British Colonialists and Missionaries moved to the area at the beginning of the 20th century.

## 2.2 Geographical Setting.

Kisumu and Siaya districts are bounded to the West by Lake victoria<sup>21</sup> which is 1136 metres above sea-level. South Nyanza is on the Southern part of the area. Kakamega district lies in the Northern-eastern part and Busia district on the Western side of Kisumu and Siaya districts.

Most of Kisumu and Siaya lie between 900 and 1500 metres above sea-level. Nyanza Province as a whole is drained by six main rivers. They are Sio, Nzoia, Yala, Nyando, Kuja, Sondu and their tributaries. All except R. Yala empties their water into Lake victoria.

Ecologically, the area can be divided into two rainfall zones. These are high and low zones. In Siaya district the high rainfall zone includes



Buholo, South and North Ugenya and Gem locations. In Kisumu district some parts of Nyakach locations and the Eastern part of Kisumu locations bordering Bunyore hills are in the high rainfall zone. This zone rises steadily from approximately 1400 metres to 2000 metres above sea-level at the foot of the Nandi escarpment.

The zone has sufficient rainfall which enables two planting seasons. The land is relatively fertile. Crops such as maize, varieties of millet and other cereals plus bananas are grown. Population is very high in this zone and land problems and disputes are common.<sup>22</sup>

East Ugenya, Alego, Uyoma, Sakwa, Yimbo, Asembo and some parts of Seme locations bordering the lake-shore and Kano plains are in the low rainfall zone. Land in this zone rises from 900 to 1200 metres above sea-level. Crop-production is very low towards the lake-shore. The majority of the people tend to be fishermen and fish forms the main source of their body building food.<sup>23</sup> Land is mainly suitable for grazing. Cotton and Sugar-cane are the only cash crops grown in this zone.

### 2.3 Transport and Communication.

Siaya town is situated in the centre of the district whose name it bears. It is connected to Kisumu town, the provincial headquarters of Nyanza Province, by the main ~~road~~ ~~road~~ and to the divisional headquarters of Ukwala, Boro, and Bond by murrum feeder roads.

Kisumu town is the third largest town in Kenya. It has had a bright future right from the colonial period. As early as 1901 it became the Uganda Railway line terminus. Goods coming from the Coast had to be shipped through Kisumu port to Uganda. Later lake transport was extended to Tanzania when the three territories of East Africa became under the British Colonial administration. As a port it now serves Uganda as well as Tanzania.

Kisumu district has a better road network compared to Siaya district. The Mombasa-Busia road to Uganda passes through Kano locations, Kisumu town, the northern side of Siaya district to Busia. The Kisumu-Kisii Migori road is also a permanent road and passes through the southern part of Kisumu district, while the Kakamega-Kisumu road passes in the northern side of Kisumu district.

The network of roads may appear extensive

according to the above description, but, not all parts of the two districts have adequate transportation system. Areas with good transport attract economic activities. Missionaries too chose areas near the main roads and with healthy climatic conditions.<sup>24</sup> Catholic Missions such as Rang'ala, Sega, Yala and Ojola were all located on the main Kisumu-Busia road.<sup>25</sup>

#### 2.4 Social Organisation.

Social Organisation of the Luo is based on the communal life, kinship ties and the observance of social rules. It is a patterned relation: geared towards making individuals committed to the affairs of the society. The observation of the social sanctions or rules guide each individual to conform to the norms of the Luo society.

Cases of those who deviate from the accepted norms are expected. The society has a mechanism which helps to accommodate deviant members of the society. This is done by the ajuoga who divines and suggests how to integrate back into the society those who violates the set up norms.

The basic Luo social structure is a homestead (dala) or pacho) headed by the senior man. He is the

owner of the homestead (wuon dala). In normal circumstances, the approval of wuon dala is sought before any social function takes place in the homestead.

The inner arrangement of dala is the focus of religious observance in the Luo traditional society. Great care is taken when performing the ritual of constructing dala. It is believed that failure to perform the rituals in a prescribed way makes the affected family members unhealthy. The senior members of the clan are consulted for proper guidance on how to build a new homestead (ligala).<sup>26</sup> At times the ajuoga is consulted for guidance and to identify any predicament on the choice of the site and the proper way to perform the ritual connected with constructing Ligala. This is a point Paul Mboya explains when he says in dholuo:

Ka Jaduong' dwaro goyo pacho mokwongo,  
odhi ka ajuoga mondo one ka ringre nokwe  
gi joge kata onyalo medo nyodo e dalano.<sup>27</sup>

Translated as:

When one wants to construct a new home, he would first go to the ajuoga to find out if he would lead a healthy life in the new home or not.

The rituals of constructing a new home emphasizes how the Luo, like many other communities,

value peace and stability. Mboya says that when a man is ready to construct a new home he takes a cock, his wife carries fire and the eldest son of his first wife carries an axe. They are accompanied by the man's uncle and his father if he is still alive to the new site of the proposed dala. A cock symbolises the patrilineal Luo community. Fire is a sign of warmth hence life in the new home. An axe symbolises the home as the centre of activities. The presence of all members emphasize the communal life of the traditional Luo society.

The son of the person who sets out to make ligala cuts a branch of a tree with the axe he took from the old homestead. The pole is used for hoisting a quail's cage. The cage contains symbolic cultural articles which are supposed to generate health and prosperity in the ligala. A smooth pole is preferred because it reflects the smooth or peaceful life expected in the ligala. The articles in the quail's cage are identified by Paul Mboya as:

1. Bad hen's egg so that if somebody with all-motive takes witchcraft to this ligala the witchcraft would become inactive as a bad egg.
2. Okwero herb, the name of this herb in Dholuo means to restrain. The herb is used symbolically to stop people with

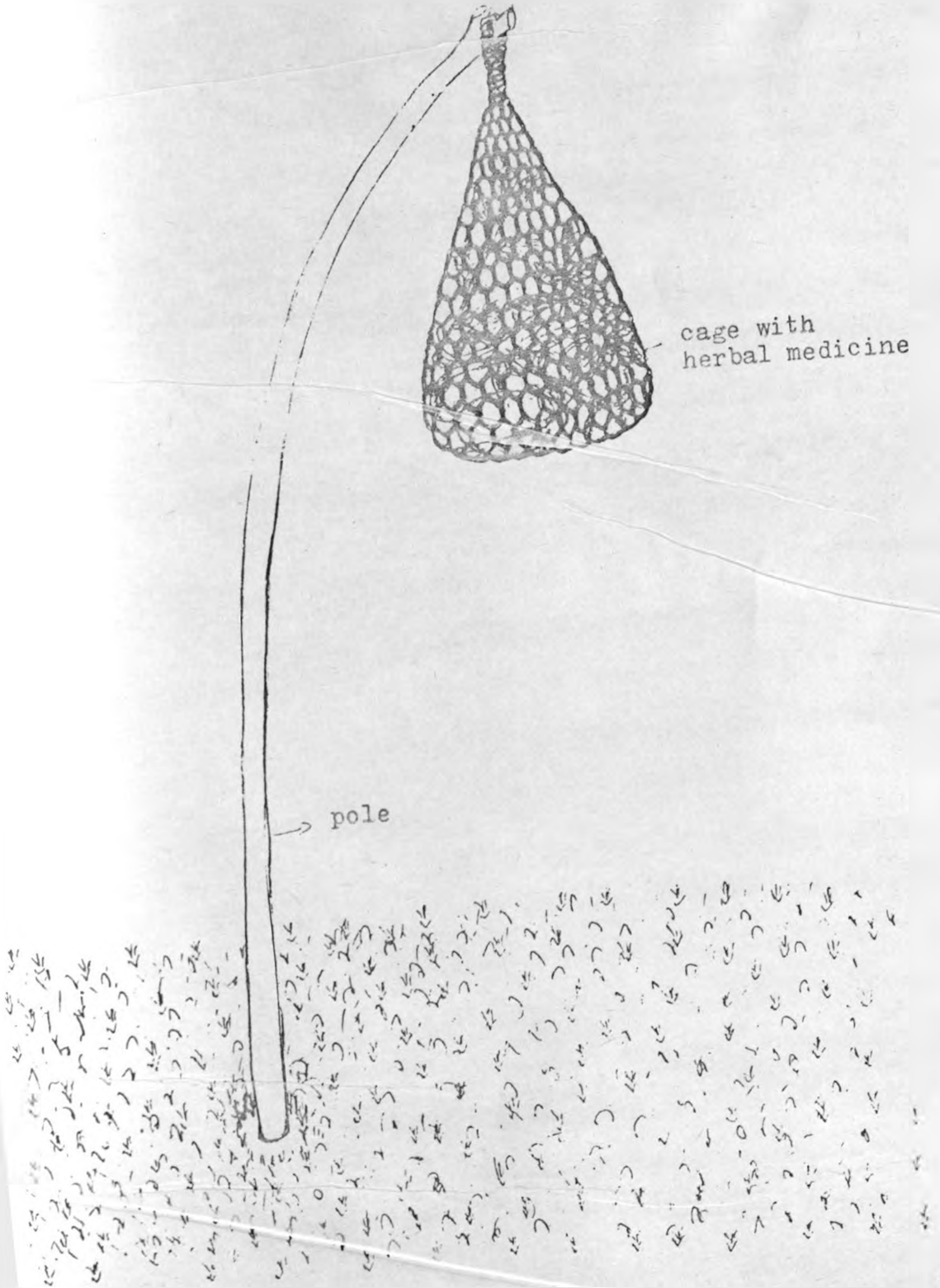
bad-motives from entering Ligala.

3. Opeya herb. It is a symbol of fertility.
4. Star grass. It is also a symbol for prosperity.<sup>28</sup>

The cage with the above mentioned herbs is then put at one end of the pole which is raised up and the end is in a hole dug in the ground to enable it to stand on its own.<sup>29</sup> After this the owner of the new home makes a knot with grass and his uncle who accompanied him to the site also ties one to show his approval. In the evening a cock is taken to the site and covered with the traditional Luo basket (hamiero or atonga) to stay over night. If the cock is found at the site the following day, it is a sign that the site is suitable for ligala, then the people concerned start building houses.

The first house to be built in the ligala is abila.<sup>30</sup> It is constructed at a spot directly facing the main entrance of the ligala about two thirds the distance from the gate to the opposite fence. When abila is ready wuon dala spends the night in it with his first wife.<sup>31</sup> If the woman had reached menopause, wuon dala spends the night alone with a piece of yago fruit<sup>32</sup> in her place. The Luo believe that sexual union is a sign of fertility and no sex union was expected with a woman who had

Fig. 2. A hoisted quial's cage with herbal  
medicine.



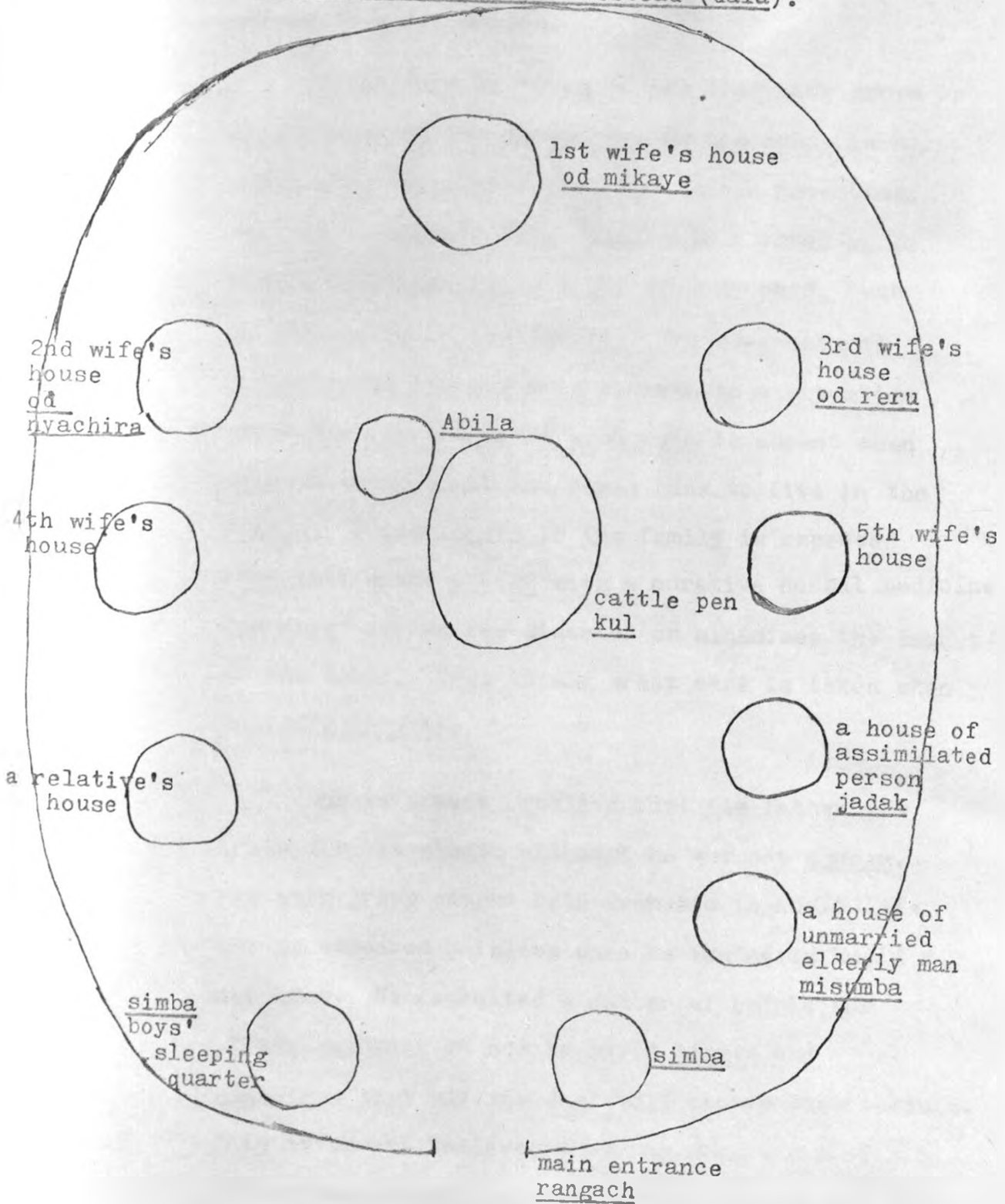
reached menopause.

After building the abila the houses of wuon dala's wives are built in order of seniority. The first wife's house is built directly opposite the main entrance just above the abila. She is called Mikaye. The houses of other wives are built on either sides of the Mikaye's house<sup>33</sup>. The second wife's house is built on the left side then the third wife's house is built on the right of Mikaye's house. In very rare cases that we find that the houses of women who were married after each other is built on one side of Mikaye's house. After building the houses of wuon dala, the sons' houses are built on the lower parts of their mothers' houses. Lastly the houses of land clients (jodak) and old women without sons are built below the sons' houses. Young boys' quarter (simba) are built close to the main entrance of the homestead.<sup>34</sup>

The abila<sup>35</sup> is the socializing centre for the male people. It is situated near the cattle-pen (kul) so after the boys have tethered the cattle, they gather in the abila for their meals with the elders and to warm themselves. "They also assemble in the abila to discuss the day's affairs of the village."<sup>36</sup> The boys move to simba immediately they finish their meals if the elders want to



Fig. 3. The diagram of a Luo homestead (dala).



engage in a discussion.

Great care is taken to see that each grown up male member of the family builds his house in a culturally acceptable position in the homestead. Failure to observe this results in a taboo whose consequences manifest itself in many ways, such as ill-health in the family. The supernatural repercussion becomes more serious in a situation where the first wife of wuon dala is absent when dala is being built and comes back to live in the ligala. Sudden death in the family is expected soon unless the ajuoga with a curative herbal medicine (manyasi) averts the disaster or minimises the impact of the taboo. That is why great care is taken when building (ligala).

One informant recalled that his father was known for his wisdom although he was not ajuoga. His peer group sought help from him in adult life but he appeared helpless when he wanted to build a new home. He consulted a number of people for proper guidance on how to build ligala and assurance that all would go well in his undertakings. This informant believes that the prosperity of his father was brought about by proper observation of rituals pertaining to building the ligala.<sup>37</sup>

The roles of wuon dala do not end after building the ligala. He is the head of the entire family<sup>38</sup> and responsible for maintaining law and order, observance of customs and economic welfare of his people. While he would rebuke the male members of the family directly, he indirectly disciplines the girls through their mothers and other female adult members of the family. In this way both male and female know how to avoid offending him.

The type of the family being discussed here consists of a man as the head of the family, his wife/wives,<sup>39</sup> the married sons, their families and married daughters.<sup>40</sup> Other people who live in the homestead but have no blood relationships with the rest of the family members, such as the land clients (jodak), are part of the family. Such an extended family may occupy more than one homestead. As the family grows it expands into lineage then to clan level.

For identification purposes in social and economic activities each wife of wuon dala is the head of the household (jokanyiego).<sup>41</sup> Social functions are led by Mikaye's household followed by the household of the second wife (Nyachira) and the rest of the other wives' households. Identification

by household enables each member of the extended family to know the roles they should play in the social life. Male leadership in each household is also based on seniority. The younger brother would not be considered to take leadership when his elder brother is still alive. However in cases where one shows charismatic quality of leadership he becomes a recognised leader of a clan or lineage depending on the extent of his influence.<sup>42</sup>

A household is an autonomous socio-economic basic unit in the extended family, whether or not its members are physically dispersed at any one time. They are given the rights to cultivate the family land by wuon dala. This is a part of the land owned collectively by "Joka-kwaro, a group of three to five generations deep, depending on the closeness of its members".<sup>43</sup> Younger wives of the sons work in their mother's land. When more sons get married, the older daughters-in-law become less involved with their mothers-in-law's domestic work and concentrates in their own house work. At this stage they should be allocated pieces of land for cultivation and have their own granaries for storing grains. However meals are shared collectively unless one is undergoing a ritual.<sup>44</sup> The boys take meals with their elders in the abila or in their simba

when they have visitors to entertain. Younger boys or children take meals with their mothers in the eating places. The communal method of sharing food acts as a social control mechanism to the women who have a tendency to prepare food late. They have to adhere to the eating time lest they are called gluttons (jowuoro) who eat alone when others have gone to bed.

Mikaye still controls the economic activities of all households. She is the first person to start digging, sowing and harvesting before other household members of the family can do so. Wuon dala spends the night in Mikaye's house before digging, sowing or harvesting starts. The sex act was a sign of fertility therefore when the head of the family shared a bed with the eldest wife for ritual purposes it is an assurance of good harvest and good health.

## 2.5 Socialization.

Man in the pre-literate societies learnt the norms of his people through informal education referred to here as socialization. In the Luo community socialization of children is done by all members of the family on sex-line. However, babies are taken

care mostly by women. As the children grow, they are taught to conform to the behaviour expected of their sex-groups. As such it is not unusual for adults to make remarks to the children which show that boys and girls should behave differently. A girl would be reminded not to sit like a boy when she sits carelessly. A boy would be told not to cry like a woman. In this way the children grow with a firm belief that there were certain actions which reflect feminism and others which portray men's behaviour.

During their young period boys tend to keep away from the women folk. This is partly dictated by the division of labour in the traditional community which confines women to housework while men's work takes them away from the village. Men are usually involved in tasks such as taking care of the domestic animals, clearing the land for cultivation. They also fish. In the old days they used to go hunting. At home men repair broken fences and roofs which are leaking.

There are specific handcrafts made by women and those made by men. Making pots is the work of women while constructing granaries, making trays (odheru) and traditional Luo baskets (hamierini) are

the work of men. Whereas women do most of the work near their houses men tend to work near the abilla or under a tree away from women. Division of labour along sex-line reflects difference in socializing boys and girls in the traditional Luo society.

The abila is the meeting place for men. The youth are also allowed to sit and relax in it. It is where elders are able to educate youth in the traditions of the society especially of their lineage. This type of teaching becomes more intensive when a boy is ready to marry. Elders often identify to the boys the clans from which marriage is prohibited.<sup>45</sup>

The traditional teaching is done in stages and at appropriate times in ones life cycle. For example a father would emphasize the allocation of pieces of land when there is a quarrel over the use of a certain piece of land or when he is getting very old.

Socialization of girls is geared towards making them future acceptable wives. They are expected to know the house work and garden work properly. Women with grown up girls have good reasons to be harsh with their daughters who show a tendency of being lazy. So when a girl fails to perform some housework

properly, elderly women may make remarks such as:

You will be returned home with the people who will come to your husband's home to perform the ceremony of duoko. In dholuo it says, In nyane, noduoki gi joduoko.<sup>46</sup>

Socializing the youth to be acceptable members of the Luo society is done in an informal way wherever there is enough time in the traditional environment. In the evening after supper old women emphasize to the girls the need to be hardworking and respectful members of the society by telling them folk-tales to illustrate their stories. The boys are told heroic stories which emphasize bravery.

Everyday affairs of the village are learned through observation and participation. Kinship relation of one's paternal and maternal sides is learned through elaborate introduction whenever people meet and make regular visits to them. In the present time it is not possible for youths to visit regularly their relatives because most of them are in school most of the time. Vacation periods are not long enough for visiting most relatives. However, before the western way of life encroached in the traditional Luo society the aim of socialization was to make one more acceptable in the communal life.



## 2.6 Religious belief system.

The Luo call their deity Nyasaye, other supernatural powers are under him. He is ultimately responsible for everything. In the past, the society sought help from him individually or collectively during communal sacrifices such as drought time. The sacrifice was offered to Nyasaye by representative members of each major clan led by the ruler (Ruoth) who officiated or selected the ajuoga to officiate on his behalf. However, the Luo approach ancestral spirits in everyday life more often than Nyasaye. Ancestral spirits (kwere)<sup>47</sup> belong to a family or group of families. Their action is confined to their respective families. One becomes an ancestor (kwaro) only after death. The dead continue to be active in family affairs. The only difference is the form of their participation. They are invisible and possess spiritual powers that they can use on behalf of their families for good or evil action depending on the type of relationship that existed between him and the rest of the family member. For instance it is believed that after death the action of a an ancestor can be either violent or normal depending on how he was treated by his relatives and how his funeral rites were performed. If the dead was not given

proper burial rites their existence in the spirit world is believed to be unhappy and they would probably return as evil spirits to seek vengeance. The fear for vengeance by the dead and the respect the Luo have for the dead make them take care and perform funeral rites according to the laid down cultural procedures. Even after the funeral rites have been performed properly, the ancestral spirits are often appeased by offering libation to them. This can be done after harvesting crops, more so when there is a good harvest to signify thanks-giving and remembrance. Alternatively, it can be offered when there is social health or problem in the family or household. The ajuoga is consulted to identify the particular ancestor causing the problem and what he wants. A sacrifice could be offered to them collectively but the one causing the problem is more beseeched than others to restrain him from evil action.

Among the members of the Owiny Sigoma lineage who live in West and Central Alego locations of Siaya district, the head of each extended family wuon dala used to produce a bull and traditional beer annually in turn after each harvest. The bull was offered as sacrifice to their clan ancestor and leader, who was called Owiny Sigoma. The offering used to take place in one of the Owiny's major homesteads

now treated as the ancestral shrine. It is known as Rengro. The bull was offered as thanks-giving to Owiny so that he would purify his lineage to enhance their well-being. The late Murunga recalled that the last sacrifice was offered by himself in the 1960<sup>s</sup>.<sup>48</sup>

The Luo also believe in evil and good spirits which roamed about the countryside in the pre-christian time. Evil spirits belong to the dead people who did not lead good lives on earth or died from plagues. They are believed to cause serious illnesses such as small-pox before it was eradicated and measles in children. In the old days, the Luo used to believe that evil spirits of small-pox could be heard talking while they were moving from home to home to cause small-pox epidemic. They used to put food outside the door way for the spirits to eat and deceive them that all the members of that homestead were dead and that there were no people in that homestead to be affected. The spirits then moved to the next homestead. Alternatively the Luo used to beat drums and tins to chase such spirits away towards the lake where they were believed to drown.<sup>49</sup> The presence of evil spirits upto now make life in the community extremely precarious.

The Luo still believe that good free spirits possessed healing power. The power of divining is given by God. So when one is possessed by the healing spirits, he or she is considered to have received this special gift from God. To exorcise the divination spirits amount to giving away to bad spirits. "Good free spirits or healing spirits manifest themselves in living people by speaking through them".<sup>50</sup>

Actions of all the Luo supernatural agents could be controlled by ajuoga except those from God. The researcher is not aware of any bad actions the Luo believe to come from Nyasave. He is benevolent. So, whatever he does, he has reason for doing so. In the pre-christian period, most of the calamities were believed to come from individuals with evil motives or collective action of a particular segment of the community. Famine, death and floods were often believed to be caused by anti-social actions of warriors such as killing of an alien woman during fighting. Misfortunes in the family such as frequent deaths from a particular household is still believed to be caused by evil actions of some family members, either by breaking taboos or bewitching other people.<sup>51</sup>

Footnotes:

1. B.A. Ogot (ed.) Zamani. A Survey of East African History, E.A.P.H./Longmans Kenya, 1974, pp.81-83.
2. Ibid. p.84.
3. Ibid. p.81 see the chart for the River-Like Nilotes.
4. G.P. Murdock, Africa: Its People and Culture. McGraw-Hill Book Co., N.Y., 1959, p.304.
5. J.J. Ongong'a, "Life and Death." Gaba Publication, 1983, p.6.
6. B.A. Ogot, History of Southern Luo. Vol. 1 EAPH, Nairobi, 1967, p.41.
7. B.A. Ogot (ed.) Ecology and History in East Africa. Hadith 7 KLB, Nairobi, 1979, p.79.
8. Ibid.
9. B.A. Ogot, 1967, op cit. p.41.
10. Pastoral nomadic people such as the Maasai at present and the Luo in the old times give greater weight to stock-rearing than agriculture. They find it necessary to move from place to place in search of grazing land.
11. J.J. Ongong'a, 1983, op cit. p.7.
12. B.A. Ogot, 1967, op cit. pp.41-42.
13. Most of the Sudan is grassland. Rich grass

suitable for pasture could be found in the river valley in the dry season.

14. B.A. Ogot (ed.) 1979, p.77.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.  
Herring explains that Ateker belongs to para-Nilotic group of people, formerly known as Nilo-Hamitic.
17. Ibid.
18. Southern Luo will be referred here as the Luo.
19. B.A. Ogot, 1967, pp.153 ff. See also W.R. Ochieng', 1974, pp.19-45.
20. B.A. Ogot, 1967, op cit. p.154.
21. Ibid. p.131.
22. Lake Sango was formerly known as Lake Victoria and it is still popularly referred to as L. Victoria.
23. J.J. Ongong'a, 1983, op cit. p.8.
24. Ibid.
25. G.E.M. Ogutu, Ph.D. Thesis 1981 op cit. p.164 has identified several factors which determined the choice of a site for the erection of a Mission station. First, he says, there was the geographical factor relating to physical landscape. Most Mission stations were built on high ground with good visibility. Security and population of the area was considered.

The Missionaries also considered means of transport since most stations are near the major roads.

26. See map 2 p.xiii.
27. The new homestead is called Ligala. Dholuo. It ceases to be Ligala when the plants used for building the hedge have grown to the height of most houses in the homestead. This is about 3 metres high.
28. P. Mboya, Luo Kitgi Gitimbegi. Anyange Press, Kisumu, 1938, pp.53-58.
29. See diagram of a hoisted quails cage on page 40.
30. Abilla is the traditional office of the owner of the homestead.
31. The first wife referred to here is the woman wuon dala set out with to build Ligala.
32. Yago fruit is measures about 40cm. by 15cm. It is brown.
33. See figure 3 the diagram of a Luo homestead on p. 42 of this thesis.
34. In the Luo homestead, there is only one main entrance which should be used by all the visitors to the homestead. However there are other small entrances called (rodhe) in Dholuo which serves the family members as short cut to the nearest houses to them. There could be many rodhe in one homestead.
35. Abilla is the first house to be built in a Luo homestead.

36. A.B.C. Ocholla-Ayayo, 1976, op cit. p.203.
37. Interview, Obuka Odak an elder, Uranga, Siaya, February 2, 1985.
38. The word family as used here refers to the extended family which consists of more than one nuclear family.
39. Luo is a polygamous society therefore marrying many wives is acceptable.
40. Although girls are not considered permanent residents of their maiden home, they are still recognised members of their parents family. They continue to use their paternal clan name when they are married.
41. A Luo household consists of a woman as the head, with her offsprings which include married and unmarried sons, daughters and grandchildren.
42. In the old days, one would become a recognised leader of the clan or lineage when he was a brave and successful warrior, or in possession of a strong bilo or ability to treat sickness or carryout divination accurately. A person with these traits would command more respect even in his own family than his senior, but he will not officiate in place of his seniors.
43. See H.W.O. Okoth-Ogendo (ed.) Approaches to Rural Transformation in East Africa. Bookwise Ltd., 1981, p.166.
44. When a child or a man dies, the mother or the wife of the deceased is not supposed to share



a meal with the rest of the family members until the funeral rites are completed.

45. The Luo are an exogamous society where marriage is prohibited with a person from the same clan.
46. N.A. Othieno-Ochieng', Luo Social System (with special analysis to marriage rituals). Equatorial Publishing Ltd., Nairobi, 1968, pp.27-28. This writer says that Dwoko which means "to return" in Dholuo is the only Luo marriage ceremony which the bride-grooms female relatives visit the bride's home. They go with the bride and on return, the bride is considered a married woman. It is difficult to understand why the Luo scared the young girls of being returned to their homes after this ceremony because a bride is secluded and participates in house-work after the ceremony.
47. The ancestors were family members of their living relatives who died in old age.
48. Interview, Bernadus Murunga, an elder, Sigome Mange, Siaya, February 2, 1985.
49. Interview, Zakaria Okoth, Legio Maria priest, Nzoia Market, Siaya, March 4, 1986.
50. G.E.M. Ogutu, 1974, op cit. p.119.
51. The Luo still believe that most sickness and misfortunes are caused by witchcraft applied by ill intention relatives and friends.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.0 THEORY AND PRACTICE OF DIVINATION

#### 3.1 Definition of Divination.

Mendelsohn has defined divination as "a form of communication with higher power".<sup>1</sup> A detailed definition by H.J. Rose says:

divination is endeavour to obtain information about things which will happen in future or otherwise removed from ordinary perception, by consulting informants other than human. While mostly directed to foretelling the coming events, it is not confined to this but may seek to find out what is going on at home while the inquirer is abroad.<sup>2</sup>

Rose's definition shows that divination is not only used to find out the future events but it could be used as a telephone to get information where face to face interaction is not possible. The latter idea in Rose's definition does not convey the meaning of divination in this study. Mbiti defines divination as:

a method of finding out the unknown by means of pebbles, numbers, water, animal entrails, reading the palm, throwing dice and many other methods.<sup>3</sup>

Mbiti adds:

"diviners (who carry out divination) have knowledge of how to use some of the unseen forces of the universe. They also use some of their common sense and good imagination".<sup>4</sup>

Mbiti has identified some of the devices used during divination in order to obtain the desired information as pebbles, dice and many others. He rightly observes that diviners use psychological knowledge as well as power from the unseen forces. Some methods of divination involve the interpretation of the pattern made by objects being used. The ability to interpret the patterns is believed to come from the supernaturals.

In this study divination refers to the methods of diagnosing the suffering by external signs and revelation. The external signs refers to objects used as an aid to identify the source of the suffering.

Divination like prophecy<sup>5</sup> is a religious phenomenon. It might have arisen as a result of the existence of supernatural powers like deities, and spirits who control the lives of people. Man and supernatural powers belong to different category of being and so direct interaction between them is not possible. The Luo use divination to identify the cause of their social and health problems. This is so because they believe that misfortune or sickness is caused by unforeseen forces such as spirits and sometimes

secretly by fellow human-beings. The action which one takes after divination does not form part of it. For example if the divination reveals that ones anxiety is caused by someone and if the affected person decides to inflict harm on the person causing him anxiety, his action does not form part of divination as illustrated below.

During one occasion the researcher of this study observed the difference between divination and other Luo methods of healing. A client<sup>6</sup> wanted to know what had caused his son to drop in class work and to play truant. The ajuoga's diagnosis revealed that a close female relative of the boy took his bag and a filled up exercise book, added witchcraft and hid them in a roof above the cooking place. The more the articles were turning dark by smoke the more the boy disliked going to school. The ajuoga suggested that the lost articles of the boy should be removed from where they were hidden to enable the boy to continue with his studies. This is the end of divination in this case. The ajuoga then set out to retrieve the lost articles by using Luo method of healing known as rwiro.<sup>7</sup> At the end of rwiro session, the bag, and the books together with what looked like human-waste were recovered by the ajuoga. The boy, his parents, and step-mother

recognised the bag and the book as belonging to the boy. This case shows the difference between divination, witchcraft and rwiro as one of Luo healing methods. The action of the person whom the ajuoga identified as having kept the boy's book and bag amounted to witchcraft, the identification of the problem was done by divination while the process of retrieving the articles is another aspect of the Luo healing. There is a clear distinction between witchcraft and divination not only among the Luo as explained above but among other African Societies too.

Kenyatta writing about the Gikuyu says, "the most hated and unpopular magic among the Gikuyu is (orogi) witchcraft"<sup>8</sup> and divination is Kuragura.<sup>9</sup> The Luo who are being studied here call divination mbofua and witchcraft is known as nawi, as such witchcraft and divination are two distinct mystical powers.

In Africa a widely documented divination method is found in West Africa among some diviners in Nigeria and Dahomey. They are famous for their knowledge of what is called the Ifa divination system.<sup>10</sup> Parrinder summarises Ifa divination system as follows:

It consists of two principal methods. One is by cord which has four nuts strung on either ends. This is thrown on to the ground, and the interpretation

is given according to how many of the nuts present convex or concave surfaces. This method is used for simple consultation. In the more complex system the diviner uses a wooden board which is round or rectangular, along the edges of which are carved mythical figures. The board is sprinkled with powder in which the diviner makes. He sits by the board and hold sixteen palm trees in one hand. He passes them rapidly to his other hand, and makes a stroke on the board according to the number of nuts left in his hand. If two nuts are left he makes one stroke in the powder. If one nut is left he makes two parallel strokes. If more than two or none at all is left then that turn doesn't count and he tries again. The process is repeated eight times ...<sup>11</sup>

From Parrinder's description of the Ifa divination there is a considerable use of both knowledge and relying on the supernatural powers to interpret the numbers.

Among the Luo who are the focus of this study, there are many types of ajuoke specialising in different field of "treatment." The people who possess only knowledge in herbal treatment without divination skills are called Nyamrerwa. They do not qualify for the name ajuoga. Some people possess powerful herbal-medicine (bilo) which protects one against witchcraft. They are called Jobilo (meaning people with bilo). Some people are able to exorcise evil spirits, they are called jodil. Others are specialists in removing already applied

witchcraft. There are called jomrwiri. All these specialised fields need a knowledge in divination. This is because they need to know whether what they set to do will succeed or not.

The Luo also have seers. They are specialised in revealing the cause of suffering without using external signs. In a situation where one is only interested to find out an issue which is unknown to him, he looks for someone who is reputed for divining accurately. Ajuoga like Ndeda and most seers would be appropriate specialists. Ndeda "sees" in the dream the problems of his clients who were going to consult him the following day. During an interview he stated that he does not use any herbal medicine to enable him to foresee but he gets power from God. He "sees" most of the major problems of his clients in the dream and minor ones in their shadow or in the water which he uses as a tool of divination.<sup>12</sup> The unique characteristics of the Luo divination is that as a rule people who possess witchcraft (nawi) do not divine accurately.

### 3.2 The process of becoming ajuoga.

The process which one takes to become ajuoga is an elaborate one. Mbiti referring generally to the process of becoming a traditional healer or diviner-doctor in Africa says:

There is no fixed rule governing the calling of someone to become a medicine-man (ajuoga). This may come when he is still young and unmarried or in his middle or late life.<sup>14</sup>

In the Luo society one would feel the urge to become ajuoga at an early age regardless whether he is a male or female person. However, people are allowed officially to practice when they are grown ups. The most suitable time is when one is married and have given birth several times.<sup>15</sup> The urge to become ajuoga is more common in some families where one or two members have been successful ajuoga. The process of becoming ajuoga involves a lot of rituals based on the Luo religion. A summary of the Luo religious world view is necessary here.

Nyasaye is the Luo dominant deity. He is the creator of everything and is found everywhere. Spirits and ancestral spirits<sup>16</sup> follow Nyasaye in cosmic order. The Luo name their children after their ancestors. The ancestral spirits are close to their respective families and are concerned with



the social welfare of their living family members. They continue to occupy the social status which they had when they were alive.<sup>17</sup> Their action can be malevolent when offended. So, great care is taken to conform to the wishes of the ancestors by frequently appeasing them.

While everybody is named after an ancestor and has got an ancestral name, not everyone possesses the free spirits connected with divination power. It is a special gift from Nyasaye. It falls upon anybody in spite of his age, sex and social status in the community. But, it is more manifest in some families than others.

The spirits which bring the call to divine in the Luo Society have been grouped into four categories. These are Lang'o, Sepe, Wagande and Mumbo spirit possession. They form a spirit possession cult. Spirit possession is defined by Ogutu as a:

a phenomenon where the spirit of the dead person or thing possesses and manifests itself in a living person by speaking through him by giving him some supernatural power or charisma and influences in the community.<sup>18</sup>

The possessed person is not an ordinary person. He occupies a higher social status in the community

because of his other ability to divine and offer treatment.

### 3.3 The Origin of the Luo healing spirit possession (juogi).

The origin of the Luo healing spirit possession as a cult is the outcome of the cultural interaction between the Luo and other people. The origin is more associated with raids and tribal war-fare between the Luo and the people they interacted with during the course of their migration and settlement in Nyanza province. The above factor has been observed by Anyumba when referring specifically to the Lang'o spirit possession. He says:

... spirit possession as an institution with elaborate machinery for dealing with spirit and medicine is traditionally associated with raids and tribal war between the Luo and Lang'o.<sup>19</sup>

The Nandi and Kipsigis<sup>20</sup> are neighbours of the Luo living in Kano and Nyakach locations of Kisumu district upto the present time. The Luo and Nandi were both pastoralists during the pre-colonial period. They all valued cattle for economic and social prestige and so they often raided each other for livestock. Accounts of such raids particularly

where the Luo defeated the Nandi are still a living memory in the Luo oral tradition in the Kano locations.<sup>21</sup> One such raid where the Nandi warriors sustained heavy losses is reported by Hollis as having taken place in 1890. Out of five hundred Nandi warriors only one returned alive to his community.<sup>22</sup> Anyumba describes a typical battle scene where the Nandi warriors were killed by the Luo of Kano locations and which might have contributed to the development of the Lang'o spirit possession as:

... the terror night raids made worse by the sudden outburst of the bells of Lang'o warriors; the horrifying memory of wild Lang'o warriors yelling and brandishing their swords in a state of great agitation. The ritually undesirable killing of the Lang'o women in a battle and the decomposition in Luoland of unburied Lang'o corpses from the decisive battle which ensued following along period of uncertainty is thought to have led to a state of spirit possession on a bigger scale never known before.<sup>23</sup>

The above information from Anyumba and Hollis show that the Luo and the Nandi used to fight. During a fight either party often got casualties. The typical fighting scene like the one described by Anyumba above might have produced psychological effect on the people who came across it. The Luo upto now do not leave corpses unattended to, when they are in a position to bury them.<sup>24</sup> So one would only expect

to find the opponents corpses in the battle field within Luoland. Any mental anguish would only reflect the vision of the corpses of their opponent but not those of the Luo warriors. Another factor which supports Anyumba's observation that the sight of corpses after the Nandi and the Luo fight led to the development of spirit possession is that the Luo associate the power of divination with the objects which have come in contact with the dead. For example, the most suitable wood for making divination board comes from a boat which has capsized with many people or a tree where someone committed suicide.<sup>25</sup> People possessed with Lang'o spirit possession mainly found in areas close to the Nandi and Kipsigis such as Kano, Nyakach, Kisumu and Seme locations.

#### 3.4 The Sepe spirit possession.

The Sepe spirit possession like Lang'o is an outcome of the interaction between the Luo and the people known as Sewe from Eastern side of Padhola in Uganda during the nineteenth century. Like the Lang'o spirit possession, the Sepe spirits might have originated from the spirits of the Sewe warriors who died during the raids between the Padhola settlers and the Sewe people. The Sewe

people are thought to have been either the plain or highland Nilotes.<sup>26</sup>

The account of Professor Ogot about the war-fare between the Padhola and Sewe people shows that at first the Padhola people had more casualties than the Sewe when he says; "the raiders had taken the Padhola by surprise and for a time they appeared powerless and confused."<sup>27</sup>

As the Luo continued with their migration southwards to Western Kenya, a segment of the Padhola settlers led by Owiny moved to Western Kenya and eventually settled in West Alego location.<sup>28</sup> This explains why the Sepe spirit possession is common mainly in Ugenya and Alego region of Siaya district and among the neighbouring Bantu people of Samia Bukhoyo, and Bugwe in Uganda. The region which is in close proximity to Padhola in Uganda.<sup>29</sup>

Other categories of spirit possession related to the healing and divination are Wagande and Mumbo. Their origins too have been traced back to the interaction between the Luo and other communities.

### 3.5 Wagande spirit possession.

The origin of the Wagande spirit possession has also be traced back to the warfare between the

Baganda slave traders, Arabs and the Luo in the nineteenth century slave trade along the shores of L. Victoria. Lonsdale, reports that the Baganda traders used to come to the shores of the L. Victoria in search of more slaves. The Baganda traders who died in the slave raids gave rise to the Wagande spirit possession found mainly along the shores of L. Victoria.<sup>30</sup>

### 3.6 Mumbo spirit possession.

Mumbo spirit possession like Wagande is a water cult. It is believed to have reached its peak in the nineteenth century.<sup>31</sup> This also was the time that the Baganda kingdom was very powerful and the Baganda traders went as far as the shores of L. Victoria in search of slaves. The development of the Wagande and Mumbo is thought to have taken place the same period.

Mumbo is believed to be a large water-snake which inhabits L. Victoria. It is believed to own white goats, cattle, sheep and fowls which are only visible to the people possessed by Mumbo spirits. Unlike the rest of healing spirits discussed above, Mumbo spirit possession is the only one whose origin is not connected with war-fare. This fact has led some scholars to assume that Mumbo is a later development in the spirit possession cult of the Luo.<sup>32</sup>

The Luo believe that the activities of spirits are either destructive or beneficial. Spirits are considered beneficial when they give healing and divination power and destructive when they are harmful to the possessed. So, whoever shows the signs of being possessed by the spirits is treated cautiously as people are not yet sure of whether they are evil or good. The spirits might have possessed a relative who had died or they can be evil spirits which because of their destructive nature and lack of divining power, they had been exorcised and "thrown ritually on the way".<sup>33</sup> The good spirits which bring divination are usually nursed with care and are not exorcised as it is believed that when they are exorcised one is left without protection and soon the evil spirits will possess the same person.<sup>34</sup> Therefore it is important that the origin and nature of the spirits is known before initiation ceremony is done.

### 3.7 The process of becoming a juoga through juogi spirit possession.

There are two major ways by which a Luo becomes the ajuoga. These are by being possessed by the juogi

by acquiring the techniques of divination through inheritance or taught by an acquaintance. The process of becoming ajuoga through being possessed by the juogi spirits is characterised by elaborate rituals. The rituals are preceded by certain events which must be identified as signs of a call to divine. The signs may be physical, mental, significant dreams or remarkable happenings. Such signs are believed to come from God through ancestral spirits. Some of the common symptoms are serious illness which may be physical or mental. The victim may see various visions depending on the category of spirit possession he or she manifests. When illness begins to subside due to the rituals and medical steps taken, the sick then becomes possessed. The spirit might reveal their message and after initiation, the victim gets power for divination and knowledge of herbal medicine. The period from the time one falls sick to the time one starts practising varies from one category of spirits possession to another and on the competence of the practitioner preparing the novice to the healing profession.

Whisson has observed that the process of becoming ajuoga among the Luo follows, "the pattern of vision, fasting and returning with



power to heal".<sup>35</sup> This observation is correct as far as spiritual aspects of the call to divine is concerned, but when we recall that the belief system of Africans permeate all spheres of their lives, then it would not be misleading to include also the physical aspects of the divining call of the Luo ajuke as shown below.

The call to divine or healing spirit possession in Luo community usually starts with serious illness. This can be a raging headache,<sup>36</sup> stomachache<sup>37</sup> or pains all over the body.<sup>38</sup> This is what Buxton implies when referring to the characteristics of a call to heal among the Mandari people as; "suffering is an intergral part of a call and it takes a variety of forms".<sup>39</sup> If the sickness continues for a long time, the victim seriously loses weight and the skin becomes dry due to lack of enough nourishments. "The victim of Sepe spirits tends to have constipation whenever he eats mutton and turn wild at the sight of sheep".<sup>40</sup> The victim of Sepe spirits is able to identify a pan in which mutton has been cooked however well it is washed.<sup>41</sup> "Immediately one shows a sign of dislike to mutton and jabbars, he is taken to the specialist of appeasing Sepe spirit-possession".<sup>42</sup>

The first sign of the Lang'o spirit possession can either be a vision<sup>43</sup> or sickness.<sup>44</sup> The vision consists of a flash of fire accompanied by a Nandi woman dressed in the traditional attire which consists of skin, necklaces and earrings made of beads and bangles advancing towards the victim with a sword and a spear. The bells which the vision wears on her ankles make alot of noise. The vision makes the victim very violent as he struggles to protect himself from it. The vision is clear sign that the patient is suffering from the Lang'o spirits and he is immediately taken to the Lang'o spirit specialist.<sup>45</sup>

In the case of Wagande spirit possession, the victim first becomes sick and sees people rowing a boat towards him as they try to catch and put him in the boat. As the disease progress the victim becomes violent and asks for the peddle to help him row the boat. At the same time he tries to speak the Luganda language. The sick would be taken to a specialist for initiating people possessed with Wagande spirits.

Mumbo spirit possession, like Wagande, produces a manifestation symbolising water cult such as the vision of a rainbow, sometimes a big

water snake believed to be the mother of fishes in Lake Victoria. The vision gives the victim a message which often comes to pass as in the case of the vision of Obondo Mumbo.<sup>46</sup>

The unique characteristic of the pattern of a call to divine found in Mumbo spirits possession is that whereas the rest manifest the power of the call to divine after initiation, Mumbo comes with an accurate prophecy at the initial stage of spirit possession.

Like other rites of passage a call to divine among the Luo conforms to the pattern of the rites of passage as has been described by Van Gennep.<sup>47</sup> We shall describe the initiation rites of ajuoga using Van Gennep's pattern.

### 3:7:1 Rites of separation.

This is the stage in the initiation rites where a novice is removed from his usual residential place temporarily to a different place. This happens

as soon as the type of juogi of the victim or novice is identified. He is taken to the home of ajuoga who is specialized in initiating people possessed with that particular category of juogi. He is expected to stay there until he feels well. It is believed that juogi sometimes directs the victim to the home of the specialist. If this happens the victim starts speaking in tongues (dhum). The duration of suffering of the victim might be shorter compared with the others who had to wait for the right specialist to be brought to them. It is believed that in a situation where a victim goes to the specialist by himself, he acts under the guidance of juogi spirits.<sup>48</sup> In some cases the victim takes along period before he gets the proper specialist to provide treatment and to prepare him for the healing profession. He or she might visit several ajuoke without success as in the case of one victim of Mumbo spirit possession who suffered for twelve years without getting the right ajuogi specialist.<sup>49</sup> The explanation given by the specialist who fails to appease the victim is that, the spirits are still hiding (juogi obuto). They are not yet ready to speak out (dhum). The refusal of juogi to 'speak' might be attributed sometimes to the application of witchcraft by the victim's enemy. But when the novice speaks

in tongue (dhum), it is a proof that the novice and specialist are possessed by the same type of juogi. The specialist then tries to identify individual outstanding spirits in this particular novice using his divination instruments. He often spends a long time singing and shaking his divination gourds to control the novice. He also carries out some ritual and gives herbal medicine to the novice to reduce his violent nature. When the sickness subsides and all the payment<sup>50</sup> done for the services rendered to the novice by the specialist, the preparation is made to take him or her back home.

### 3:7:2 The transition rites.

This is the stage where instructions are given on how one should conduct himself in his new way of life. It starts with the journey back home from the specialist homestead. The novice is dressed in plain clothes over which he wears large cowrie shells, iron bells and his face is painted white. The Wagande novice carries a peddle, Lang'o one carries a small sword and spear with jingle bells on the legs. Sepe victim ties mainly

Bombwe creepers and wears goat's skin. The novice actually carries all the things which used to appear to him in the vision except for rainbow or snake in the case of Mumbo spirits possession. He is accompanied by the entourage of the already possessed people with the same spirits and his specialist. The presence of the already initiated people in the spirit possession cult symbolizes the new status of the novice. It shows that he is in the process of joining the group he is walking with: the group that is endowed with spiritual gift of divination and herbal knowledge. The way of life which awaits him demands a different behaviour from the one he has been leading. He is taught how to conform to the present way of life by the group taking him home. No doubt, this group would have great impact on his life. One of the personalities in it is supposed to remain his close associate in the healing profession. This is in fact his specialist. He pays his specialist dearly for his services and he must remain his close friend.<sup>51</sup>

At the novice's home, the ceremony may take one to three days. During this time a number of goats and white chickens may be slaughtered for the ritual. Sheep are not used in this occasion because they are used for exorcising evil spirits.

Juogi are not regarded as evil spirits. Dancing, eating and drinking the traditional beer is part of the ceremony. A goat used for the last ritual known as diso is made to go round the novice three times if she is a female person or four times in the case of a male person. It is then held until it urinates which is a sign that the juogi spirits are willing to accept it. It is then kicked to remove the evil spirits in it which might interfere with the initiation rites. The animal is slaughtered and the meat is shared among the family members and the visitors. Some of it is placed at the back of the hut for juogi. Some parts of the meat given to the specialist. The specialist examines the entrails to see if the novice has successfully been initiated into the spirit cult. The entrails in this manner act as divination tool. If the hut for the spirits has not been built then one is made which the novice may use in future for divination work. A piece of goat's skin is tied on the middle finger of the novice as a sign that he is one of the initiated spirit possessed person (jajuogi).

After the meal, his head is shaved, a sign of new life. The shaving of hair features so much in other

rites of passage of the Luo. It is done at birth, when the baby is taken out for the first time and also during the funeral rites. The new life incorporates sacred activities which are controlled by the spiritual world. The ability of the juogi spirits to give the novice divination power makes the spirits play a very important role in the novices' religious life.

### 3:7:3 The rites of incorporation.

The ritual which follows the shaving is solemn and leaves a lasting impact on the novice. In the case of Wagande spirit possession, fire is lit in a pot over the head of the novice while he is being instructed to obey juogi spirits by observing the food taboo, proper way of dressing, and general behaviour pertaining to the spirit-possessed person (jojuogi). The name of his master spirit is added to the name of novice. This is the rite of incorporation where a change of behaviour is expected and new name is often given to fit the new personality. A white chicken is used in this ritual as a symbolic representation of juogi. The novice is then shown or introduced to members of his family and the work he used to do as the last ritual of incorporation. The ritual unites the novice with his family members once



more. This is symbolically necessary as he has been out of touch with the ordinary people. He is given presents in kind by his relatives as a sign of their recognition of his new status in the community. The gifts also serve as a remembrance of the time the novice was accepted in the healing profession. The white chicken is a reminder for the novice to strive to remain a unique person in the community.<sup>52</sup> He is unique in the sense that he is in a position to communicate with supernatural world. Materially, his unique position is shown in the way he dresses. He puts on goat's skin on his middle finger and carries some religious objects which he puts on such a necklace made of cowrie shells and a whisk.

The people with juogi spirits are constantly under pressure from the spirits. It is not uncommon to hear jajuogi sings in praise of his spirits in the middle of the night or walks around and goes to far places because the spirits have directed him to do so. The researcher was told of a very interesting case of how juogi preoccupies those possessed by a lady informant. This lady is possessed by Mumbo spirits. Her spirits made her to read the Bible. They forced her to buy one in her vernacular and

read it while under the influence of the spirits yet she has not learnt how to read. This shows how culture is accommodative and responds quickly to social changes taking place in the society. The act of reading is a foreign concept in the Luo community, but the fact that it is admired and accepted by juogi spirits demonstrates the flexibility of the culture when change is necessary. Other latest manifestation of juogi includes effort to talk in English. The ability of divination cult to incorporate new elements is a phenomenon not only found in the Luo community but among other people too. Okot p'Bitek reports that modern dances and foreign articles have been incorporated in the ritual ceremony of the various free spirits possession connected with divination among the Central Luo of Uganda.<sup>53</sup>

The divination skills brought by spirit possession is not learned in a formal way but acquired through intuitive knowledge and insight. The possessed person has no control over himself when he is carrying out divination. This is what Beattie meant when describing spirit possession and spirit mediumship:

... a person's actions are believed to be dictated by an extra human entity which has entered his body. The individual concern assumes another identity 54

therefore on gaining consciousness he is not responsible for his action.

Spirit possession is not the only way by which one becomes ajuoga in the Luo society as already stated at the beginning of this section. The skills of divination can be inherited or acquired from a friend or other relatives. The duration of apprenticeship varies from one sponsor to another and according to the apprentice ability to master divination skills. But it is not common to find a father and a son practising divination in the same homestead. The reason being that one was officially allowed to practice at mature age when one was already having his own biological children and possibly a homestead in the case of a man. Women could also be possessed by healing spirits at any stage in their lives but they could only practise divination officially in married life.

### 3.8 The training of ajuoga.

The most common way a Luo becomes ajuoga is by inheriting the profession and being possessed by the juogi spirits. The acquisition of divination

skills by inheritance involves continuous training over a long period. The sponsor is usually a close relative of the apprentice and shares the same residential enclosure. The apprentice undergoes both formal and informal training. He acts as an assistant to the ajuoga who sponsors him. One can be an apprentice as early as ten years of age. His first duty is mainly to fetch and prepare herbal medicine if his sponsor knows herbal treatment.<sup>55</sup> He is not forbidden to go to the divination hut while his sponsor is carrying out consultation work and so he often hears and sees ajuoga interprets the position of the pebbles if he is using the shells (gagi) or how to control the divination board. As time goes by some of the apprentices may drop out while those who like the divining work remain to become ajuoke.

The male ajuoke tend to train their sons, cousins or grandsons. Women too tend to train their daughters or grand-daughters. This follows the Luo way of socialization which is done along sex lines. However there are some cases in which ajuoga trains people to the opposite sex.<sup>56</sup>

The training of ajuoga involves learning the symbolic meaning of the position of divination

shells; how to handle the divination gourd which ajuoga uses, and involves also the knowledge of strong bilo which enables him to forecast events accurately.

Ajuoga with juogi healing spirits continue to be under the tutelage of his sponsor after the initiation ceremony until the sponsor feels that his pupil is competent enough to work on his own. The sponsor continues to interpret his pupil's dreams and visions and confirms the use of various herbs as revealed to his pupil in dreams and vision. Jajuogi may only learn how to use other tools for divinations when his juogi spirits allow him to do so.<sup>57</sup> The most common tools used by ajuoga in carrying divination are gourds (ajawu) board (mbofua) divining pebbles and shells (gagi). A small number of ajuoke as field work shown use water as the main instrument when divining.<sup>58</sup> Ajuoga may use more than one of these tools to carry out divination accurately. As a rule the ajuoga with juogi spirits uses gourds and other tools for divining.

### 3.9 How divination is done by gourd (ajawu).

The gourd for divination is selected from an

ordinary calabash plant. It is cylindrical in shape of about 15-30 cm. long, and about 15 cm. wide at their widest part well developed calabash with no scar on the outer part is preferred to a thin ugly looking one. It is not only the Luo who attach importance to the appearance of the divination gourd. Leakey says that the divining gourd of the Kikuyu "might have no scar or mark of any kind on its exterior".<sup>59</sup> The Luo select nice looking gourds because they attach a great importance to divination. The inside of a gourd is made hollow by removing the seeds and other contents. The gourd is dried in the sun for sometime and put in a cool place to dry further. Some ajuoke decorate the exterior of their gourds and others do not. Some shells are put inside the divining gourd then it is sealed. The divination gourds are sacred. It is only the owner and his sponsor who handles them. As a rule the ajuoga with juogi spirits uses a gourd for divination (see picture of divination gourds p.82 ). He or she may have more than one gourds.

The consultation is done mostly in the morning or very late in the evening.<sup>60</sup> It takes place in the consultation hut. Ajuoga sits on the left

Photo: 1 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE LUO DIVINATION  
GOURDS (AJAWU).



side of the hut as one enters the hut and the client sits on the right.<sup>61</sup> When there are many people in the hut which rarely happens, the younger people move towards the left part of the hut. The beginning of consultation is marked by greetings and few exchanges of words. By the end of the greetings, the client has confidence in the ajuoga. While the greetings are going on, ajuoga might be putting on his professional attire such as goat's skin, a head gear made of the same animal's skin on top of his clothes. Women ajuoke do not possess the traditional head gears.

When ajuoga is ready, the client then presents his problems. Ajuoga seeks solution to this problem by consulting his juogi through the gourd. The two sit about a metre from each other. The client is required to put consultation fee on the floor between him and the ajuoga. This can be done when ajuoga has started consultation or before.<sup>62</sup>

The beginning of consultation is marked by singing in praise of his or her juogi. He occasionally beats the drums. Ajuoga may have two or more small drums. (See photograph of drums used for divination p.84 ). All these are



Photo: 2 DIVINATION DRUMS.



done to stimulate possession by juogi. The gourd is continuously shaken. When at last, the juogi possess ajuoga, he belches and the message is delivered in the gourd using unintelligible sounds. It is the language of spirits.<sup>63</sup> The ajuoga translates the message to his client. The message from spirits includes the identification of the problem being investigated and an indication as to whether it can be solved. The client may ask some questions so that a point is clarified.

Ajuoga passes the information to the spirit while shaking the gourd and whistles if he is a man.<sup>64</sup> The rattling of the gourd stimulates the spirits to talk therefore it has to be done when ajuoga wants to communicate with the spirits.

At times ajuoga turns to other divination techniques such as divination board (mbofua) or divination pebbles (gagi) to clarify a point for his client depending on the nature of the question. However some questions which a client may ask during the consultation may be answered without using the divination instruments. The explanation given is that ajuoga "sees" the answer in the clients shadow. This follows the theory of homeopathic magic which works on the principle that like produces like.<sup>65</sup> The Luo believe that

a person's shadow has all his attributes therefore, if one steps on the shadow of a person with destructive bilo, the victim may be affected. It follows that even what affects one spiritually can be "seen" in ones shadow by ajuoga using his insight.

The gourd divination technique of the Luo is full of mystical elements and presents a phenomenon difficult to explain empirically. Such elements are observable as ajuoga communicates with the spirit world. He belches and talks with great force which indicates communion with juogi. This is followed by ventriloquistic speech.<sup>66</sup> The many different voices produced by ajuoga is believed to be the voices of the spirits. This makes the messages from ajuoga very mystical such that even when he is not very accurate in identifying the cause of a problem which is the case sometimes, the client will not feel so much cheated, but will find some explanation to support ajuoga such as:

he is not God to know everything or that he only missed a point but in other cases his predicted conforms to the clients suspicion therefore he was not totally wrong.<sup>67</sup>

The client then goes away in full confidence that his problem has been identified. In a case where

ajuoga devines accurately as the case cited below his or her fame spread beyond the village.

An elderly man called Odak recalled how one day, his three fat bulls were stolen. He traced the trucks left behind by the foot prints of the bulls upto a nearby village called Wagandia in West Alego location of Siaya district which is occupied by a lineage who are notorious for stock theft. He felt that at least one of the bulls had not been killed by the following day. Somebody had told Odak about Loise Ooko a woman ajuoga in North Sakwa. Mzee Odak managed to find Loise. Loise communicated with her juogi spirits in the divining gourds and assured Odak that the three bulls were still alive and he would find them if he reached the place where they were hidden before the following day. Odak, determined to get his famous bulls alive or dead followed the direction he was given with the assistance of police from a nearby local chief's camp. He found his bulls. Ever since, that day he recovered his cattle he is full of praise for Loise. Friendship between the two families developed as a result of the accurate divination of Loise. However, Loise gives credit to her juogi spirits not to her divination gourds.<sup>68</sup>

3.10 How divination is carried by board (mbofua).

The Luo divination board is rectangular in shape and measures 25 cm. by 12 cm. with a disc of  $3\text{cm}^2$  (see the photograph of the divination board p. 89 ). The most suitable material for making the board comes from a piece of wood from a traditional Luo boat. The boat should have capsized and killed some people. Alternatively a piece of wood taken from a tree where somebody had committed suicide can be used. In both cases the material used for making divination board are possessed with the spirits of the dead. Ogutu explains this point when he says:

Each boat is named after a famous person, a married daughter (Mugogo) or a grandparent. Her/his spirit enters the boat and it is no longer a thing but a spiritual personality.<sup>69</sup>

A little water is sprinkled in the middle of the board lengthwise and a disc of about three square centimetres is moved along it, up and down by ajuoga when he tries to establish the cause of his client's problem. As soon as the name of the person who is supposed to be causing problem is mentioned the friction is caused and the disc sticks so hard that even if more water is added on the board to make it move easily, it doesn't move. When this happens, the board is tilted and the disc

Photo: 3

PHOTOGRAPH OF THE DIVINATION  
BOARD (MBOFUA/M. BOHUA).



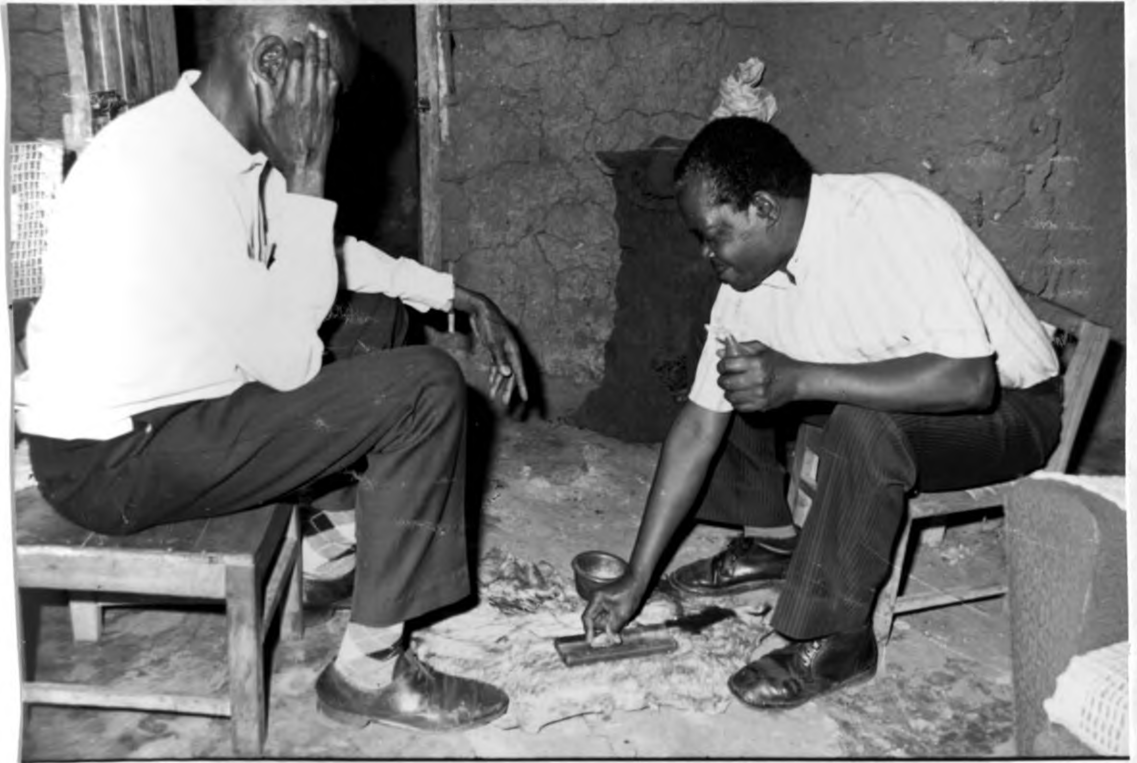
mbofua

removed to enable the consultation to continue. Ajuoga continues further to find out if the problem can be solved and the disc again sticks it means that he can help his client. The consultation continues until the client is satisfied. Ajuoga then proceeds to the next step, treatment. If the treatment or solution needed involves the skill which ajuoga doesn't possess, the client may be advised to seek help elsewhere.

The divination board is often used after either the gourd or pebbles have been consulted in a situation where ajuoga uses two different tools for divination. It is used to confirm what he has found on the alternative technique.

The board while being used is not sacred and anybody can handle it. Therefore it is not surprising that when the disc sticks during consultation, the client is invited by ajuoga to try and move it. A task which is not often possible, proving that the person named is the cause of the client's problem. However the preparation of the instrument involves religious ritual which only a professional person can perform. (See the picture of divination board and the disc p.89 ). Whoever makes the board should have strong protective herbal-medicine

Photo: 4 THE PHOTOGRAPH OF AJUOGA TRYING TO PUSH THE DISC WHICH HAS STUCK PROVING THAT AJUOGA HAS IDENTIFIED THE CAUSE OF HIS CLIENT'S PROBLEM.





bilo which prevents the ghosts of the people who were drowned from the boat to haunt him after handling the piece of wood from the boat. The same measure should be taken by the person who makes divination board from the tree where someone committed suicide. Whoever touches the tree should be ritually prepared before touching even the leaves of that tree leave alone the branches. This comes from the Luo belief that any object which comes in contact with a body of a person who committed suicide is unclean and his spirit is destructive.

The researcher came across one ajuoga who is very proud of his divination board because he got it from a boat which had killed over ten people including a pregnant woman. He further remarks that ajuoke nowadays use any piece of wood they find on their way. Such boards do not give accurate information.<sup>70</sup>

The tendency to deviate from using the traditionally accepted material for making divination board to the use of the ordinary material

shows the western tendency of freedom to be innovative which has crept slowly but surely into the traditional way of life. As such, some people do not see any good reason for not substituting the traditional material with the ordinary one.

3.11 The divination by using pebbles and shells (goyo gaji or ajua).

There are many objects used for divination in this method other than pebbles. The word pebbles is used for lack of appropriate English word which would describe all the objects used. The same problem also arises when Dholuo word goyo gaji is used. Gagi is shells in Dholuo. They form the majority of the articles used by ajuke who carry out divination with "pebbles". It might have been that originally the Luo used only gagi (shells) in this type of divination. Other articles might have been incorporated later. More research needs to be carried on divination to provide a solution to this problem.

The objects used for divination in this method include pebbles, various types of shells from water-animals, nuts, bones, bird's claws, bits of wood, white quartz, old-coins smoked pieces of glass and other objects (see the picture of gagi in p.94

Photo: 5 PHOTOGRAPH OF DIVINATION  
PEBBLES (GAGI).



The number of articles used for divination is roughly over twenty but less than a hundred. Some ajuoke have more "pebbles" than others depending on the number he/she received from his sponsor and how innovative he has been. The field, observation showed that the longer one has stayed in the divining profession the more articles of divination one acquires. This trend has also been observed among some societies such as the Kikuyu, Leakey says, "the younger men of the divining profession often had fewer divination objects (mbugua) than the older ones".<sup>71</sup>

When a client goes for consultation he presents his problem to ajuoga. The client then throws consultation or divination fee on the floor or skin prepared for throwing the "pebbles" on. The payment ranges from two shillings to twenty even a hundred shillings.<sup>72</sup> Ajuoga observes position and the side the money put by the client lands on the floor. From this ajuoga would say wheather his client is or will be a prosperous person. In the pre-colonial period, the fee was paid in kind which made it not easy to examine the socio-economic background of someone in this manner. However even in the present situation ajuoga tells his client what he has forseen in the consultation fee such as the case cited below.

ajuoga. You are a prosperous man. I can see you are blessed with a big family. Some of your children are working some are still at school and you have also quite a number of domestic animals.

client. Not so much like that. In fact I am a poor man that is why I have come to you to seek advice.

ajuoga. Ah, just give me all you have today so that I may also eat it too.

client. I have a lot of problems with my children and my domestic animals which you have seen are not going well as they used to be.

ajuoga. My friend let me hear your problems and see how much I can help you.<sup>73</sup>

The above is a typical conversation which would arise when the ajuoga examines the background of his client using the consultation fee.

However in a situation where a client's problem is due to inability to be as prosperous as his kinsmen or friend, there would be no joke during the consultation session. Loise the ajuoga already mentioned recalled in an interview how one day an elderly man and his five sons went to her for consultation. They wanted to find out why the

Photo: 6 PHOTOGRAPH OF AREMO AJUOGA AND  
A CLIENT AT DIVINATION SESSION.



sons this man were unable to secure permanent jobs and how to overcome the problem. Loise diagnosed that her clients' problem was caused by spiritual beings. She asked her clients to carry out some rituals to appease one of their ancestors who was causing the problem. Loise stated that she is always able to interpret the pattern made by "pebbles" with the aid of her juogi and muguruhwa spirits.<sup>74</sup>

The process of carrying out consultation or divination by pebbles runs like this: First the ajuoga shakes the pebbles (gagi) in his hands while praising his ancestors particularly those who used to be ajuoke, then he throws them on the floor. The interpretation of this divination technique is based on the geometric configuration which the items make when they are cast. This technique is comprehended through particular explicit rules known only to ajuoke. There is no doubt that the ajuoga who also utilises this method uses his psychic or mystical ability to interpret the meaning of the position of the pebbles. It is something which an ordinary person would not do. The clients relies on the ajuoke's interpretation.

Ajuoga who uses the pebbles for divination depends a lot on the information given to him by his clients to assist him identify the cause of a problem clearly. For example if he has "seen" in

the geometrical pattern produced by the pebbles that the problem of his client is caused by a short, black elderly person. Ajuoga will inquire for his client if there is somebody who fits that description. But, ajuoga who possessed by juogi will get the necessary information from his juogi.

The Luo like other people have Seers in the society. Mbiti describes Seers as:

people who are said to have natural power by means of which they 'see' certain things not easily known to other people ... They are people with sharp capacity for both foresight and insight into things. It is also possible that some of them receive revelations through visions and dreams in addition to being able to use their intuition.<sup>75</sup>

The Luo Seers fit well in the description of Mbiti. The difference between seers and ajuoke who use divination objects is that seers are not stimulated but pass the message as it comes to them. They usually talk of the events to come. At a personal level, they would tell one of his past. An interesting case is reported by Shorter as:

In 1902 two missionaries from Galula Mission in Southern Tanzania, one a Flemish-speaking Belgian and one a Dutchman visited a village. While they were talking with the villagers, an old woman joins them and addressed one



of the missionaries in a pure Flemish accent about his past deeds. . . . The Belgian was shaken and both left the place immediately.<sup>76</sup>

This episode of Shorter is not very different from one mentioned above where one reads the Bible when possessed by her juogi spirits yet she is illiterate. (See pp.76-77 ). In both cases mystical power aided the two old ladies. The Tanzanian lady was able to speak a language she has not learnt and Loise was able to read yet she is illiterate.

During the pre-colonial Luo society, some seers and ajooke foretold the coming of the Europeans. Ogot has the following to say about them:

The coming of marvellous 'red strangers', who were supposed to emerge from the sea, had been foretold by them, and the people were advised against showing any hostility to the intruders lest they incur the wrath of the ancestors. Hence, the Luo people welcomed the Europeans cordially, cooperated with the administration in all possible ways, and generally expected great things of the white.<sup>77</sup>

At present people still believe strongly in what they are told by the seers as true. At times the people make a reality what they have been told.<sup>78</sup> This only means that revealed messages from seers and ajooke fulfilled some felt needs of the Luo. The results of divination leads the inquirer to take appropriate action. This is true especially among the Luo where diseases and misfortunes are

believed to be caused by the fellow human-beings secretly. Whoever is affected is anxious to know the cause of his problem. It leads the victim to take appropriate action.

The changes which have occurred in the three methods of divination under discussion are observable. Some obvious changes in the divination pebbles are the inclusion of pieces of glass marbles and coins. They have a symbolic meaning in the divination skill. Glass reflects objects. The image produced is believed to have all the attributes of the individual whose reflection is seen in the glass. Ajuoga uses his esoteric knowledge to find out his client's problem in the image produced in the glass. This follows the traditional belief that when one looks in the glass at night he might see an evil spirit instead of his image. So, glass can be manipulated to produce the desired image. Marbles too might have found their way into divination pebbles because of their transparent quality which would be taken to aid in revealing the unknown. Most of the pebbles and bones used in divination are believed to help the ajuoga to forecast accurately the unknown. However, coins which are included in the divination pebbles

are believed to attract more customers so that the ajuoga gets more income. There are some objects which are included in the divination pebbles for the sake of attracting more clients to a particular ajuoga for consultation.<sup>79</sup> This is another example of homoeopathic magic theory expounded by Frazer. It works on principle that like produces like. In Africa, Parrinder points that one can quote endless examples from African life. He says:

"In rain-making rites water is spewed into the air to make rain fall by imitation or clouds of smoke are made to rise to help the clouds gather round".<sup>80</sup>

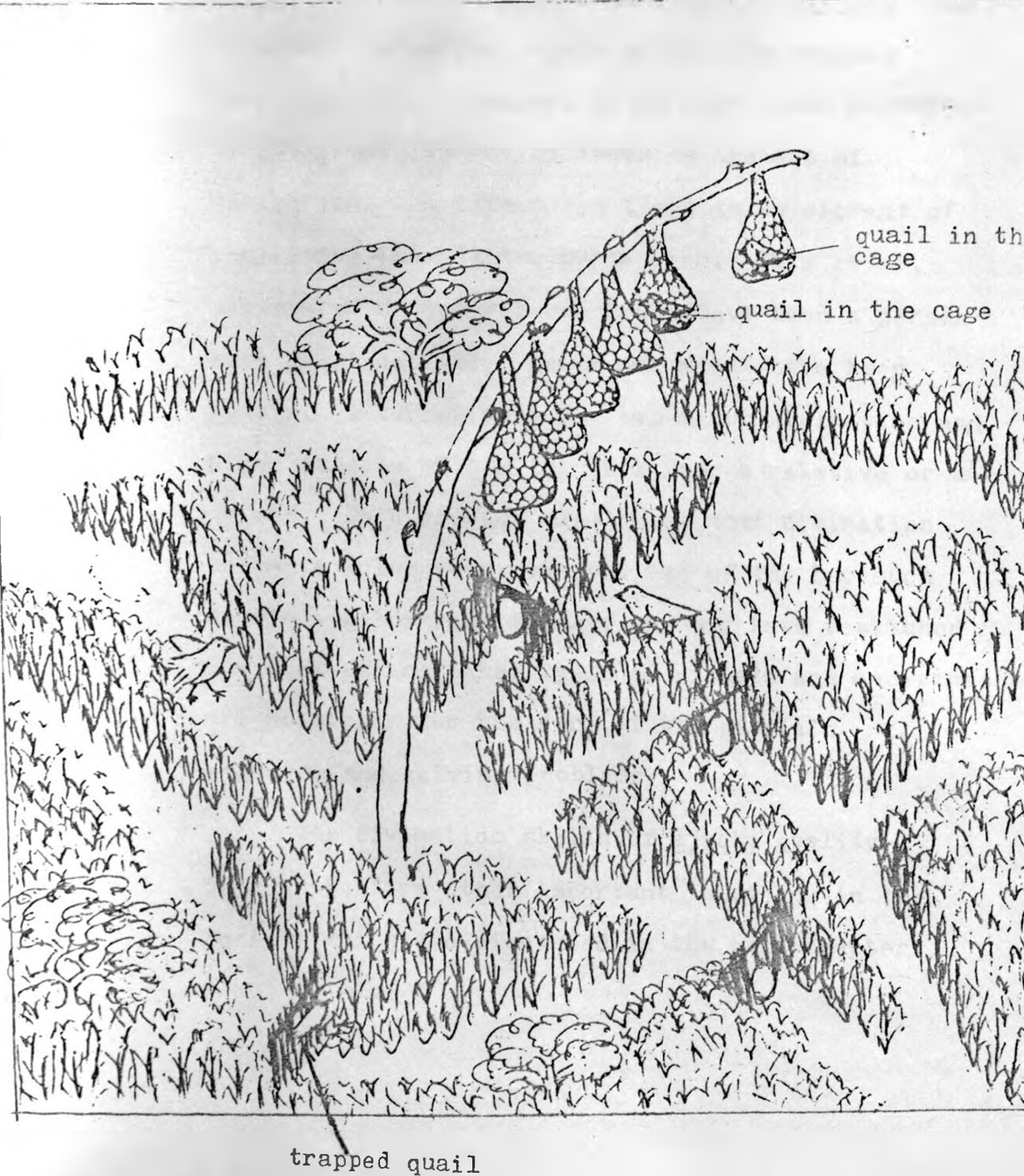
The economic aspect of divination skills is not a new element among the Luo. During the pre-colonial period, the ajuoke became prosperous people as a result of the payment they got from the services rendered to their clients<sup>81</sup> and patients.<sup>82</sup> Obondo Mumbo, a famous Luo ajuoga at the beginning of this century died a rich person from the wealth he got in healing work. Mayor says:

he (Obondo) had many cattle, sheep and a lot of money (Ng'atni ne omeu ahinya gi dhok, rombe to molojo).<sup>83</sup>

At present time more than in the pre-colonial period in the Luo society, some ajuoke consider their healing profession which includes divining as an economic asset more than a vocation to ease the suffering of people. This idea was expressed

Fig.4. DIAGRAM OF QUAILS' TRAPS.

The diagram illustrates how the ajuoga attracts clients as the birds in the cage sing to attract others. See footnote 79, p.113.



by Oloo a practising ajuoga who stated that there is no way he could support his big family when he leaves divination work.<sup>84</sup>

In this chapter, description has been given of the divination methods used by ajuoga. The process of acquiring these divination methods have also been discussed as through being possessed by juogi spirits and by learning the art of divination. In both cases there is an element of inheriting the healing profession. This is so, because in a family there could have been a person with juogi spirits. He or she might have been ajuoga. Alternatively one can learn divination and other aspects of healing work from a relative or a friend. This chapter also shows that divination helps to solve everyday problems of the Luo such as finding the lost things, who may have bewitched the sick person, what types of rituals and medicines are necessary for the cure of the people's sickness and solving problems.

The divination skills of ajuoke qualify them to perform other important functions in the society which are discussed in the next chapter.

Footnotes:

1. E.S. Bucke (ed) et al. The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible. N.Y. Abingnon Press Nashville. 1962 p.856.
2. J. Hastings (ed) Encyclopeadia of Religion and Ethics Vol. IV. T. & T. Clark Edinburg. 1911 p.775.
3. J.S. Mbiti, Introduction to African Religion. Heinemann, London. 1975 p.156.
4. Ibid.
5. Prophecy is the revealed message of the deity or supernatural powers.
6. The client was John Okoth and his wife Aloo. The ajuoga was Masiana Athieno interview, February 25, 1986.
7. Rwiro. It is the art of removing witchcraft from the victim's possession intended to cause harm.
8. J. Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya. The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu. Heinemann Educational Books, Nairobi, 1968 p.160.
9. L.S.B. Leakey, The Southern Kikuyu Before 1903. Vol. III. Academic Press, London N.Y. 1977 p.1146.
10. J.S. Mbiti, 1975 op cit. p.156.
11. E.G. Parrinder, African Traditional Religion. Sheldon Press, London. 1962 pp.119-120.
12. Among the twelve ajuoke interviewed only one uses water as a tool for divination.

13. Interview, Patrick Ngwawe, ajuoga, Ambira, Siaya, November 2, 1985.
14. J.S. Mbiti, 1969 op cit. p.166.
15. Interview, Murunga Owiny Sigoma Manga Village, November 20, 1985. During the conversation, Murunga stressed that, the Luo believe that when one possesses magico-medicine bilo, it prevents the growth of the family. Most children of the owner of bilo may die or the women may run away before giving birth to many children.
16. The ancestral spirits are dead members of the living who died in old age when they had raised a family.
17. Ancestral spirits can be offended and their action becomes violent when they are not appeased frequently or when they were not accorded descendent burial according to the prescribed norms.
18. G.E.M. Ogutu, "An Historical Analysis of the Luo Idea of God". University of Nairobi M.A. Thesis 1974 p.119.
19. H.O. Anyumba, "The Historical Dimension of Life Crises Ritual : Change and Mechanism of juogi experience". Paper presented to the University of Nairobi, October, 1973.
20. The Luo calls the Kalenjin group of people which include the Nandi, Kipsigis mentioned here Lang'o, hence the name Lang'o spirit possession instead of Nandi.

21. P. Abuso, "The Luo-Nandi relations in the 19th century". University of Nairobi, March, 1972 p.35-37, has described in details some of the battles between the Nandi and the Luo at the beginning of this century, especially the Apondo incident where nearly all the Nandi warriors were killed. The warriors were using spears, shields, bows and arrows which appear in the vision to the Lang'o spirit possessed victims.
22. A.C. Hollis, The Nandi. Oxford, 1909 p.50.
23. H.O. Anyumba, 1973 op cit.
24. The Luo believed that the dead haunts immediate family members if it is not given a descent burial.
25. Personal observation.
26. B.A. Ogot, History of the Southern Luo, Nairobi 1967, pp.93-96.  
He observes that the Sewe people might have been either of Maasai people who belong to the Plain Nilotes or the Nandi who are Highland Nilotes.
27. Ibid.
28. G.E.M. Ogutu, op cit. p.120.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ochieng' and Ogot, Mumboism, Anti-Colonial Movement in B.A. Ogot (ed) War and Society, London, 1972 p.164.
32. H.O. Anyumba, "Spirit possession among the



- Luo of Central Nyanza". Kenya Mimeo 1955  
Makerere Institute of Research Library No.196/  
9b quoted by Ogot and Ochieng' in War and  
Society in Africa, p.176. "That Mumbo spirit  
possession dates back to the settlement of the  
Luo in Nyanza Province."
33. The Luo believe that evil spirits can be  
exorcised from somebody. When the water which  
has been used for cleansing the possessed is  
poured on the way, the first person to walk  
over that spot will be possessed by the same  
evil spirits.
34. G.E.M. Ogotu, 1974 op cit. p.118.
35. G. Whisson, "The Will of God and the Wills of  
Men". E.A.I.S.R. 1962 p.13.
36. Onyango-Ogotu, Keep my Words, Nairobi. 1974  
p.16.
37. Interview, Loise Ooko, N. Sakwa, February 16,  
1986.
38. Interview, Brigita Nande, Uhembo Siaya,  
February 20, 1986.
39. J. Burtux, Religion and healing in Mandari,  
Oxford 1973 p.277.
40. G.E.M. Ogotu, 1974 op cit. p.120.
41. Interview, Aloo Odwaro, Hawinga, Siaya,  
February 22, 1986. She recalled how she gave away  
all the pots which had been used for cooking mutton  
since she could not stand their smell.
42. The Luo believe that the people who are possessed  
with healing spirits shows dislike for mutton.

43. Interview, Patrick Ofwona, a practising ajuoga with Lang'o healing spirits. He first saw a vision of a Nandi woman as first sign of being possessed, February 23, 1986.
44. Interview, Ngwawe, practising ajuoga. He is possessed by Lang'o healing spirits. He first became very sick. While he was sick, he saw a Nandi woman carrying a sword during the time he was sick.
45. G.E.M. Ogutu, 1974 op cit. p.121. The writer has more information about Lang'o spirit possession.
46. A.W. Mayor, Thuond Luo (Luo Herores), Anyange Press, 1984 p.27.
47. A. Van Gennep, Rites of Passage, London, 1960 p.107. He observed that the rites of passage follow a definite pattern starting with the rites of separation transition and incorporation.
48. Interview, Amolo Nyamlag, Boro, Siaya, February 3, 1985. She recalls that, she went to the jajuogi specialist home and immediately, she saw the specialist, she started talking in tongues.
49. Interview, Michael Mumbo, a practising ajuoga with Mumbo juogi, N. Sakwa, Siaya, February 16, 1986.
50. Payment of the treatment and initiating a person into ajuoga profession is not fixed.
51. The minimum charge I came across by February, 1986 is a bull worth about 2000/=, three goats worth 450/= and many other unrecorded gifts given to the specialist by family of the novice.
52. White is a sign of purity or holiness. Juogi are culturally accepted as gift from God.

They are beneficial to man. That is why they are represented by white colour.

53. O.p'Bitek, Religion of the Central Luo. E.A.L.B., Nairobi, 1971 p.115.
54. J. Beattie (ed) Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa. London, 1969 pp.X-XI.
55. The Luo believe that herbs for medical purposes lose their potency when collected by a grown-up person.
56. Socialization of the Luo tends to be done in sex-line such that men teach boys male work and females teach girls domestic work.  
  
If the ajuoga is a man he will be inclined naturally to train a boy, the same will happen to the female ajuoga. In some cases a male ajuoga might train a girl as an assistant and eventually teach her to become ajuoga. A female ajuoga might also train a boy.
57. The ajuoga with juogi spirits is controlled with his healing spirits most of the time. He would not go against his spirits wishes.
58. See footnote 12 of this chapter.
59. L.S.B. Leakey, The Southern Kikuyu Before 1903, Vol.III Academic Press London 1977 p.1124.
60. Juogi spirits are believed to be more active and accurate in divining in the morning and late in the evening. Interview, Loise Aoko, practising ajuoga, Sakwa, Siaya, op cit.
61. This follows the Luo customs that the owner of the house always sits on the lower side of

- the house and visitors on the upper side.
62. Consultation fee varies from one ajuoga to another. The minimum I came across is twenty shillings by February, 1986.
  63. In reality, the words come from the mouth of the ajuoga.
  64. The Luo believe that women who whistle are evil and want to kill their husbands or fathers in the case of young unmarried girls.
  65. See W.A. Lessa and E.Z. Vogt, Reader in Comparative Religion. An Anthropological Approach. (Fourth Edition) Harper & Row N.Y. pp.338-340. The writer outlines Frazer's theory of magic. Frazer made distinction between imitative and contagious magic. Homeopathic magic principles falls on the former. He argues that the homeopathic or imitative magic works on the principles that things act on each other at a distance through "a secret sympathy". According to Frazer this theory is based on the belief the image of man has his attributes. Divination could as well be done by looking at the shadow of the man instead of the person.
  66. Ventriloquisitism is making sounds that seem not to come from the lips but from the belly.
  67. The argument was presented by a group of people from the ajuoga with whom I was walking after a visit from a famous ajuoga. This ajuoga sought anonymity.
  68. Interview, Odak op cit.

69. G.E.M. Ogutu, M.A. Thesis, July, 1975 p.54.
70. Ibid. Personal interview with the ajuoga who sought anonymity because he is registered as a herbalist and not as one with mystical power.
71. J.S.B. Leakey, 1977 op cit. p.1191.
72. Interview, Barack Obara, Rang'ala, Siaya, February 18, 1986. He is a practising ajuoga who charges 100/= for consultation fee.
73. Nyagode, M.A. "Some Religious belief system among the Luo of Siaya". University of Nairobi, Department of Religious Studies, Vacational Research assignment March, 1982. A summary of the dialogue given here took place between Ngwawe, the ajuoga and Mr. Gabriel Onyango, my father, Ambira, Siaya, in 1982. See also photograph on p.97 of this study.
74. Interview, Loise Ooko op cit. February 16, 1986. She didn't disclose to me the name of the clients.
75. J.S. Mbiti, 1975 op cit. p.157.
76. A. Shorter, 1985 op cit. p.183.
77. B.A. Ogot, "British Administration in the Nyanza district of Kenya, 1900-1960" in Journal of African History, IV, 2 (1963) pp.249-273.
78. In 1984, after the end of my under-graduate studies. I asked a friend why she was not anxious about looking for employment like others. She told me that a certain seer met her on the way after her sixth form examinations and told her that she would one day be a teacher. She was therefore not in a hurry to get a job.

because there is always vacancy in teaching profession.

79. A practising ajuoga is a business person whose major aim is to get as much income as possible from his profession. The ajuoga uses the cultural means of advertising his or her services. An illustration would make this clear. It works like what the quail keepers do. They put quails in cages and raise them up in the air with a pole (see fig.4 on p.103) as the quails sing in the cages those ones in the bush are attracted by the sounds of the ones in the cages. They are eventually caught in the trap on the ground as they try to find companion. So when the ajuoga throws the pebbles down, the coins attracts other customers to bring more money.
80. E.G. Parrinder, 1962 op cit. pp.113-114.
81. Clients refer to those people who go to the ajuoga to seek solutions to their social problems.
82. Patients refer to the people who visit the ajuoga because they are sick physically and need treatment.
83. A.W. Mayor, 1938 op cit. p.28.
84. Interview, John Okello and Oloo op cit. February 19, 1986. John Okello narrated to me how his effort to help John Okello to be a full member of the Catholic church was hampered by the economic gains Oloo derived from divination work. Oloo also expressed the same views to me which he stated that he is leading a honest life recommended by christianity by earning his living from healing worl

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 FUNCTIONS OF AJUOGA IN THE LUO SOCIETY.

Ajuoga had other roles to play in the pre-colonial Luo society besides carrying out divination and treating the sick. For convenience, we shall discuss these roles under socio-political, economic and social factors. In practice these factors are related. Jassie-Marie supports this view when she says:

The Luo do not have needs that are religious without being at the same time social, economic and cultural and any answer to one of these takes into consideration all others.<sup>1</sup>

Here, we shall discuss each function of ajuoga in relation to the social organization of the Luo.

4.1 Socio-political functions of ajuoga.

As would be expected, the socio-political functions of ajuoga were closely associated with the administration machinery of the pre-colonial Luo society. An outline of the socio-political organization is necessary before the discussion of political work of ajuoga can make sense in this study.

In the pre-colonial period the Luo society was divided into large segments known as ogendini<sup>2</sup> (plural). Each oganda (singular) was headed by a leader (ruoth).

He was a jural-political leader.<sup>3</sup> In some cases, he was supposed to be ajuoga. Each oganda was further sub-divided into small administrative segments. "Each Ruoth had a council consisting of clan elders, peace-maker (ogaye) and the tribal war leader (Osumba Mirwayi).<sup>4</sup> The council dealt with matters affecting the whole oganda such as famine, rain, war, tribal sacrifices and prayers for peace. It also acted as the final court of appeal for the whole oganda. Many "prophets" (ajuoke) presided in the chief's council as counsellors.<sup>5</sup> Since ajuoke were influential in the pre-colonial period, their decision in many cases had great impact in the final say in any important undertaking which affected various segments of the Luo society.<sup>6</sup>

It was ajuoke who foretold the coming of the Europeans and warned the Luo against showing hostility to the strangers. As a result, "the Luo offered no armed resistance to the new-comers".<sup>7</sup> The coming of Europeans was an important event which was forecast by "prophets" in various societies in Kenya. Among the Iteso of Kenya, Ekeya says, "at the village of Aturet there was the (emurwon) Omunyongole lo-adwari - who prophesized. He saw Europeans come as butterflies".<sup>8</sup>



At times ajuoga would advise the warriors not to carry out the planned raid when he felt that there was very little chance of success.<sup>13</sup>

Ajuoga's political roles extended to the family level too. The great influence he wielded among his people enabled him to solve conflicts with much more ease than ordinary person would do.

When ajuoga was asked to solve a conflict or to stop a feud.

he intervened in a fight by dragging his Leopard skin along the ground between the two sides involved in a fight especially in feud cases.<sup>14</sup>

When ajuoga carried out this ritual, the two sides had no option but to stop fighting without any question. If the issue was serious both parties would migrate to different places.

This role of ajuoga was very important because the Luo being an acephalous society had no one figure to dispense justice. The judicial power as well as administration was shared among many personalities. That is why the Luo ruoth is referred to here as a leader but not a ruler.

The presence of the famous ajuoke also fostered cultural cooperation with their neighbours. As Ochieng' observes:

many Gusii people visited the family of Gor Mahia for herbs and magical charms, and the "prophet" Sakawa of Gusii was often consulted by the Luo and the Maasai delegations.<sup>15</sup>

And so, the socio-political roles of ajuoga in pre-colonial Luo society was not only confined to the family, clan and oganda level but it was felt beyond the Luo community's border. The socio-political roles of ajuoga in the present generation is discussed in chapter five of this study.

#### 4.2 The Socio-economic functions of ajuoga.

The socio-economic activities in the Luo cultural context are supposed to generate domestic income and general prosperity of the family. Some of these activities are good harvest, more domestic animals, large families particularly with more male offspring. Other factors related to the economy of the Luo community are peace and stability. The ideal family is thought to have enough to eat and to lead a peaceful life. This is expressed in one of the common sayings always uttered by the Luo elders whenever a member of the family fails to provide material needs that, "A healthy and peaceful life is better than riches. Ngima kende ema ilawo".

The two principle sources of income are cattle and land. The socio-economic functions of ajuoga revolves around promoting the fertility of the land, cattle, enhancing large families and promoting peace and stability in the home. The roles of the ajuoga can be understood in the socio-economic set up of the Luo.

Oganda is still the largest division in the Luo society.<sup>16</sup> When there was famine in the pre-colonial period the leader of oganda summoned clan elders and famous ajuoke for advice as to what action to be taken. Rain makers were also called to "bring" rain when they felt that it was ritually safe to do so.<sup>17</sup> Ajuoke were consulted constantly to identify the cause of famine. When there was no ajuoga in the community who could offer an answer, the elders look for better ajuoke in the neighbouring community. Some of the famines still remembered by the Luo were Otonglo, Abonyo which took place in 1933, Nyangweso and many others.<sup>18</sup> The advice of ajuoga is respected and carried out however painful it may be. A fictitious episode by Grace Ogot would illustrate this situation. Chief Labong'o was told by Ndithi the medicine-man (ajuoga) that:

Podho the ancestor of the Luo, appeared to me in a dream last night, and he asked me to speak to the chief and the people. A young woman who has not known a man must die so that the country may have rain. While Podho was still talking to me, I saw a young woman standing at the lake side, her hands raised, above her head. She wore a gold ring on her left ear, and a glittering brass chain around her waist .... Podho told me, 'out of all the women in this land we have chosen this one. Let her offer herself as a sacrifice to the lake monster. And on that day, the rain will come down in torrents.'<sup>19</sup>

The young woman who fitted the ajuoga's description was the only daughter of Chief Labong'o. The Chief had no option but to give away his daughter so that his people may get rain and survive. Grace Ogot puts it that, after sun set on the day Uganda was supposed to be swallowed by a water monster, "thunder roared and the rain came down in torrents".<sup>20</sup> Thus Chief Labong'o yielded to the painful wishes of his ancestors in order to fulfill his socio-economic role as a chief when he ensured that his people got rain at all cost.

The famine threatened the existence of people in pre-colonial times more than at present time because of low production of food at that time. The trade carried between communities could not sustain the area affected by famine for along time because the level of material accumulation was not as high as it is now.

Among the Abaluyia of Bunyala in Kakamega district, who are neighbours of the Luo, a leader lost his office because he failed to fulfill his socio-economic role. The episode runs:

There was a prolonged drought in the 18th century in Bunyala division of Kakamega district during the reign of Chief Nasokho. He could not intercede for his people with the Gods for rain. The subject claimed that

he failed to perform his power as a ritual leader so when Masiribayi a Maasai leader promised people of Bunyala rain and it came; They recognised him as their leader instead of Nasokho.<sup>20</sup>

The above episode illustrates how the functions of a traditional leader were interwoven. He was expected to fulfill them all.

Most of the economic activities carried at clan and lineage level than at oganda in the pre-colonial Luo society such as sharing the land. Ancestral sacrifice was also offered at clan level. Ajuoke officiated in thanks-giving ceremonies in some clans annually after harvesting season. They were conducted by the senior lineage of families in each clan.<sup>22</sup> The most recent one was done late in 1970s by the lineage members of Owiny Sigoma.<sup>23</sup> Each elder of the lineage (keyo) used to produce a bull to be offered to Owiny Sigoma at the shrine. The ritual used to be performed by Kochieng's family who are still the keepers of the ancestral shrine of Owiny Sigoma upto the present time. During each ceremony they gave thanks to their ancestor for the food, family and other basic needs they had got throughout the year. They asked him to continue giving them his blessing.

At family<sup>24</sup> level, the senior male member does everything possible to foster economic prosperity. The ajuoga is consulted on how best to achieve the economic goals. His roles in the prosperity of the home features much when building a homestead upto the present time. He is consulted to give assurance that all would be well in the new home. The people and the animals would multiply in the new home. A wish which is demonstrated by taking a boy and animals to the building sight. They represent the producing agents of a Luo home.

Ajuoga is often called to identify any evil influence which might interfere with the prosperity of the home especially when a man fails to consummate the marriage. The ajuoga identifies the cause and advise the elders on what to do. At individual level ajuoga still ensures success before one undertakes a hazardous enterprise such as hunting, wrestling, business, and for the general welfare of the household. Some of the ajuoke in pre-colonial time were known to have herbal "insecticides" to control pests.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, ajuoga is very much involved in enhancing prosperity of his/her clients in the Luo society.

#### 4.3 Social life and the work of ajuoga.

Social life here refers to the activities carried out each day to make life more meaningful

and comfortable. It includes all the economic, political and religious undertakings. They are carried out communally for the benefit of all involved.

Social life in the pre-colonial time and at present is a struggle with the complexities of the environment. It is an environment full of conflicts characterised by tension, anxiety, fear, suspicion leading to the struggle of what is available. So, when one fails to achieve his objectives in any undertakings he blames his associates for his failures. One's associates in Luo society are mainly his kinsmen. **They share land, residential compound and other facilities.** In the victim's effort to achieve his goals he seeks guidance from ajuoga. He or she uses mystical power to identify the client's problem. The client is more interested to know, "who caused his/her problems and when it was done".<sup>26</sup> The answer to these questions of how, who and why create many roles for ajuoga in everyday life. He has to be a healer, a judge, educator and a counsellor. First and foremost ajuoga is a healer. He does not only "diagnose" the cause of a disease but also cures it using herbal medicine. The methods he uses for treatment are acceptable to the people

because they conform to their world view.

The Luo world view is made up of beneficial and evil supernatural beings. The evil supernatural beings such as evil spirits, violent reaction of ancestral spirits cause diseases. Other causes of diseases are magic, sorcery, witchcraft and broken taboos whose agents act on evil influences. Ajuoga uses various methods to cure diseases. When it has been confirmed that the person's disease is caused by evil-eyes, the ajuoga specialised in the treatment of diseases caused by evil-eyes is consulted. When the patient's sickness is believed to be caused by witchcraft, ajuoga specialised in removing witchcraft (rwiro) carries out the treatment. When a person is tormented by evil-spirits or he is mentally disturbed a specialist for mental diseases treats him.

Ajuoga not only offers treatment, but he or she also provides "protective measures in addition, to assuring the sufferer that the trouble will not come again".<sup>27</sup> For the Luo, it is not enough to give treatment without identifying the cause of the problem. Perhaps for this reason more than anything else, the function of ajuoga



as a healer will last longer than expected.

Ajuoga also treats domestic animals when they are sick.

Ajuoga also plays educational roles in his or her social life. Education here refers to a process of transmitting accumulative values of culture with a view to facilitating the adjustment of the new generation to contemporary life.<sup>28</sup> The traditional Luo society stressed conformity to the cultural values. An individual therefore needs constant advice and counselling to adhere to the educational values and to cope with the changing society and for his survival. Ajuoga uses instruction method to help his clients cope with the problems of everyday life. His guidance and counselling is necessary as nobody expected any single person to master all the norms of the community. This expressed in the Luo saying as:

Dhano ipuonjo nyaka thone. Which means, there is no end of education.

Moreover Luo system of education puts emphasis on mastering the practices and conformity to them.<sup>29</sup> One had to inquire about how to handle a situation which one has not encountered before.

In the course of field work, the researcher, observed two similar cases being handled by two different ajuoke which would illustrate the

education role of ajuoga. In the first case a man went to ajuoga to find out what makes his children die at infant stage.<sup>30</sup> A second case was a woman client, who went to another ajuoga to find out why her children have died except the one she got before marriage.<sup>31</sup>

In the first case, the man was advised that next time they get a baby, they should perform the ritual usually done to a child who is born after the death of two or more other children. The child would be named Aloo if she is a girl or Oloo in the case of a male baby. The second person was told to do the same by a different ajuoga she consulted. In both cases the clients were told to perform the same rituals but the procedures of the rituals were not the same. The advice of the two ajuoke to the two clients are known by anybody who had been brought up in the Luo social environment. Both the clients were expecting such suggestions. Presumably, they did not know how to perform the ritual and the herbal-medicine and objects to use. They also wanted to know what caused the death of their children. Third, they needed protective measures. Ajuoga's role of a teacher is shown in the two cases when each of ajuoga explained to their clients how t

perform the ritual of the birth of a child born after the death of other children. The transcendental explanation and protective measures which followed the advice makes ajuoga's teaching psychologically satisfying.

At this moment it is necessary to emphasize that the educational role of ajuoke come from the fact that they are highly respected members of their segment of the community. The skills of divination demands thorough knowledge of traditional beliefs hence ajuoke are considered very knowledgeable people. Their educational role is related to their skills in divination and solving problems. They always provide solutions to their clients' problems, which enhance peace and stability. For one thing most ajuoke would not advise their clients to fight their enemies physically. Instead they provide magico-medicine to neutralise evil influence and they advise their clients to remain peaceful. The reason for maintaining peace is that noise interferes with the positive effect of herbal-medicine. In the process of remaining peaceful one's anger dies down and a positive solution might be found and peace and stability returns to the family. Ajuoga also integrates deviant people in the society. When one violates

a taboo, it is ajuoga who through divination finds out the effect of the taboo and suggests the procedure to be followed to normalise the situation. An extreme example would illustrate this point. In a situation where there is an incest between a brother and a sister, a baby who is born after that union is killed, and a ritual is done to normalise the situation. It is a painful experience which both parties would not forget easily. In this way, ajuoga do not only teach but also enforces morals of the society.

Ajuoga also plays the role of a ritual leader. In the old days, he used to lead people during oganda, clan and at family sacrifices. He cleansed people after being involved in the activities which made them unclean such as committing murder and killing certain animals in the Luo community. At present time, his role as a ritual leader is confined to officiating at the family sacrifices. During such occasion, ajuoga is expected to appease the ancestors by offering to them prayers and performing rituals. Ritual activities are very important in the religious life of the Luo. Ajuoga is well versed in the procedures of performing the rituals connected various sacrifices. So, he often leads the party concerned in performing rituals.

Ajuoga played the role of a priest too in the pre-colonial time. He led people in thanksgiving prayers which usually accompanied the ritual at various levels. He has been the only specialist one upto the present time with the means to communicate with the ancestors and the supernatural beings such as spirits in the Luo society. The two types of supernatural beings have great impact on everyday life of a Luo. It is only ajuoga who can interpret to the ordinary person the wishes of supernatural beings. The Luo are anxious to know the wishes of these supernaturals upto the present time so that their evil influence could be controlled and the good ones utilised. Indeed, the need to monitor the activities of the supernatural and ancestors in order to promote various aspects of life such as those mentioned in this chapter has perpetuated some roles of ajuoga in the Luo society upto the present time.

In this chapter we have shown that ajuoga in the Luo village life is an important person. He was and is still consulted on many occasions in life. He is the "medicine-man" since he deals in drugs, most of which, however gave magical rather than a pharmaceutical value. He diagnoses the spiritual cause of diseases. By means of divination he reveals the past, predicts the future and finds

lost articles. He is the wiseman of the village. In the next chapter we shall discuss how the missionaries reacted to ajuoga's functions in the Luo society.

Footnotes.

1. M.F. Perrin-Jarsy, Basic Community in the African Churches. Orbis Books Maryknoll, N.Y. 1973 p.25.
2. B.A. Ogot, "British Administration in Central Nyanza district of Kenya, 1900-1960 in the Journal of African History," IV 2 (1963) p.252. Ogot estimates that oganda comprise of 10,000 to 70,000 persons in pre-colonial Luo Society.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. B.J.M. Ekeya, "The Emurwon-Diviner/Prophet in the Religion of the Iteso." Ph.D. Thesis, University of Nairobi, June 1984 p.181.
9. Oganda is the largest segment in the Luo Society. It is made up of many clans. See also footnote 2 in this chapter.
10. Clans are economic independent units in the Luo Society. Each one of them is exogamous.
11. A.W. Mayor, 1938 op cit. pp.8-9.
12. P. Mboya, 1938 op cit. p.30.
13. Ibid. p.31.
14. J.J. Ongong'a, 1983 op cit. p.14.
15. W.R. Ochieng', An Outline History of Nyanza upto 1914 EALB, Nairobi, 1974 pp.69-70.
16. See footnote 2 above.

17. It is believed that when a rain-maker attempts to make rain when the possibility of making it is not feasible, then he might become very sick.
18. Famine sometimes affected different regions occupied by a community. The famine of Abonyo is well remembered in the Western part of the region occupied by the Luo. This is mainly in Siaya district. Otonglo is remembered in Eastern part of Siaya and mainly in Kisumu district.
19. G. Ogot, Land Without Thunder. EAPH, Nairobi 1968 pp.163-164.
20. Ibid.
21. G.S. Were, "Maasai and Kalenjin factor in the settlement of Western Kenya. A study of ethnic interaction and evolution". Seminar paper presented at the University of Nairobi in February 1972.
22. G.E.M. Ogutu, M.A. Thesis, June 1975 op cit. p.59. He observes, "that in cases of heavy harvest sacrifices were offered before the people started eating the new crops" in some Luo lineages during the pre-colonial period.
23. Owiny was the founder of Karuoth clan in West Alego location of Siaya district. His son Owiny Sigoma from whom the present village of Sigoma Manga derived its name founded the lineage. The lineage consists of about six extended families tracing their founder three generations back.  
  
Interview, Obuka Odak op cit. in 1982.



24. Family here refers to the extended family concept.
25. Interview, Ngwawe op cit. February 28, 1986, asserts that Owuor Mugenya ajuoga during the early days of colonial rule had medicine which when sprayed on the crops, would make all the pest die and make the crops healthy.
26. J.S. Mbiti, 1975 op cit. p.166.
27. Ibid. p.152.
28. N.A. Othieno-Ochieng', Education and Culture Change in Kenya 1844-1925. Equatorial Publishers, Nairobi, 1965 p.7.
29. Ibid.
30. Interview, Ngwawe, ajuoga was attending to one of his clients who allowed me to observe and take note of the consultation, Ambira February 2, 1986.
31. Interview, Loise Ooko, ajuoga told me the advice she had just given to one of her clients whom I found still seated.  
  
The interview took place at Bondo, N. Sakwa, Siaya, February 16, 1986.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 THE CHANGING SOCIETY OF THE LUO OF WESTERN KENYA.

The Luo community had interacted with other people throughout their history, as such they had experienced changes in all aspect of their life. However, the Luo started experiencing drastic changes with the introduction of Western culture by the Europeans in their society as shown by the activities of the Catholic Missionaries below.

5.1 The coming of the Missionaries to Luoland.

The pioneer Missionary work in Nyanza Province was done by the Mill Hill Fathers and the Church Missionary Society Congregations. Both of them had been working in Uganda before moving to Western Kenya. The activities of the Catholic Missionaries in particular was brought to Western Kenya when the Vacariate of the Upper-Nile was created in 1894 under Bishop Hanlon. It covered Eastern Buganda, Busoga, Bukedi, Teso and the whole of Western Kenya. It was administered by the Mill Hill Fathers (hereafter referred to as MHF) whose headquarter was in England.

Early activities of the Catholic Missionaries as well as the Protestant Missionaries were concentrated in Eastern Uganda spreading from Busoga, Bukedi, Teso then to Western Kenya in 1903.<sup>1</sup> The British government did not show much interest in the present Kenya before the Uganda Railway reached Kisumu on the shores of L. Victoria in 1901. As Lonsdale noted:

until 1900 if not later the administration of Nyanza was subordinate to the main interest of the British presence in Buganda.<sup>2</sup>

Prior to this date, the caravan going to Buganda used to camp at Mumias in the present Western Province for more supplies and preparation for their journey to the Buganda Kingdom. It was from this centre that Hobley, one of the first British administrators in Nyanza, surveyed some parts of Kisumu district such as Kano and Seme locations. He also visited Asembo, Uyoma, Sakwa and Alego locations in the present Siaya district around 1894-5. His journeys in Nyanza Province mentioned here prepared the way for British administration.<sup>3</sup> Coy took over from Hobley as a sub-commissioner "His task was to occupy, pacify and open up Kavirondo as the province was called by then".<sup>4</sup> Between 1895 and 1900 he was primarily concerned

with organizing punitive expeditions against the Kitosh, Kakalewa, Nandi, Kakamega and Uyoma.<sup>5</sup>

The latter is in the present Siaya district while the rest of the places mentioned are in Western Province. Ogot tells us that;

the Luo of Central Nyanza offered no armed resistance to the administration due to the influence of ajoke in the pre-colonial period who advised the community against showing hostility to the 'red strangers' from the sea lest they incur the wrath of the ancestors. Hence most Luos welcomed the Europeans cordially and expected great things from them.<sup>6</sup>

Effective supervision of Siaya and Kisumu district was started when the administrative headquarters moved from Mumias to Kisumu in 1899 in preparation of the approaching Uganda Railway line. In the following year the first Roman Catholic Fathers led by Fr. Van den Bergh began regular work in Kisumu to minister to some Catholic Church members from Uganda who had settled at Kisumu and the Goans working on the railway line. From Kisumu the MHF attempted to reach the Luo living outside the town but it was not possible so a station was built in 1902 a short distance outside Kisumu town at Ojola.<sup>7</sup> Gale confirms this point when he says:

... at Kisumu it was not possible to get in touch with the real inhabitants of Kavirondo and indeed the first Catechumens at Kisumu Mission were all young men who were personal 'boys' or servants of railway officials.<sup>8</sup>

The simultaneous establishment of administrative post at Kisumu and a Mission at Ojola brought confusion to the Luo who thought that Ojola Mission was an extension of the British port at Kisumu for collecting tax.<sup>9</sup> Mzee A. Obong'o remarks:

As a result most people who joined Ojola Mission were outsiders mainly people from Siaya district. This created a need to build a Mission in the area where most people who joined the Ojola Mission came from. It led to the building of Aluor Mission in 1913 within the present Siaya district.<sup>10</sup>

The above observation points to the fact that the Missionaries entered Nyanza Province after the establishment of the Imperial Control. Missionary work gained momentum when British rule was well established by the beginning of the world war I in 1914. Already the MHF had established two Missions in the present Siaya and Kisumu districts alone and at least one each in Kakamega, Busia and South Nyanza. Protestant Missionaries were also busy building Missions and carrying on evangelization work.

The religious conflict which the Imperial British East Africa Company administration witnessed in Buganda

made the colonial administrators impose the rule in Kenya that no two Mission stations of different denominations be allowed to build a Mission within 10 miles (sixteen kilometres) from each other.<sup>11</sup> Although the administration aimed at reducing conflict by this order, it generated a scramble for building Missions. The first denomination to start,

naturally selected a populous centre and those coming afterwards were pushed to the outskirts of the tribe where there were fewer people.<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, it was a timely directive because as soon as the railhead touched Kisumu, there was an unprecedented Missionary influx into Western Kenya. This influx meant stiff competition between the MHF and the Protestant Missions.

In Siaya and Kisumu districts competition of Missionaries for converts was between the Church Missionary Society (here after referred to as CMS) and MHF. The main centre of CMS was at Maseno spreading to various parts of Kisumu district and Siaya district. The Catholic Church headquarters was transferred from Uganda to Kakamega. "MHF were ahead of their rival the CMS by developing a chain of stations slowly across the region so that they had a station in each strategic point in the

region".<sup>13</sup> After building Aluor Mission in 1913, hardly seven years passed before the MHF build another Mission in the present Siaya district. This was at Rang'ala which lies West of Aluor Mission. It is situated in the present South Ugenya location. It was built in 1921.

The MHF expanded numerically and by the outbreak of world war I, the Upper Nile Vicariate was boasting of having a Roman Catholic population of 26,695 adults and 13,872 children in their schools.<sup>14</sup> There was a total of 480 converts within the Luo community.<sup>15</sup> One factor which contributed to the numerical strength of the church was its identical aim with the administration. As Sir Charles Elliot Commissioner declares:

the opening of new station should be seen to be generally as efficacious for the extension of European influence as the opening of a government station.<sup>16</sup>

The view expressed by Sir Elliot is correct in so far as both Missionaries and administration strived to "civilize" the Africans. The Luo on the other hand assumed that the Missionaries and colonial officers were brothers assigned to different tasks, of spreading christianity and public administration.

We have already noted that the Catholic

Church had a number of adult converts and pupils in schools. This shows that evangelization work went hand in hand with promotion of education. Schools were a useful source of converts. It is a model which both the CMS and MHF had tested in Uganda where schools were used as means of evangelising areas which were not responding fast to Christianity. A medical missionary in Uganda supports this idea of using schools as sources of converts when he says, "difficult areas needed schools and health care services".<sup>17</sup>

The MHF's engagement in formal education led to the development of Yala. Later girls' schools were built by them at Rang'ala, Lwak and Asumbi to uplift the educational standard of women.

By 1916 there were 85 locational councils in Nyanza able to employ clerks<sup>18</sup> who were products of Mission education. The locational boundaries laid down by the administration coincided with the former boundaries between clans<sup>19</sup> such that in each former location a government chief from the dominant lineage was appointed and he was responsible to the District Officer.<sup>20</sup> The chiefs were empowered to keep law and order, collecting taxes to public works.<sup>21</sup> The colonial government and the



Missionaries encouraged chiefs to take their sons to school to produce future literate chiefs. Some colonial administrators such as Ainsworth played a leading role in encouraging chiefs to take their sons to schools particularly the ones who were to succeed them as chiefs. Thus, "the first students at Maseno were chief's sons such as Onduso, Odindo and others in 1906".<sup>22</sup> Fr. Frandsma of MHF also took five sons of Gusii chiefs to Kakamega school to prepare them to be future educated chiefs.<sup>23</sup>

The response to education was quite fast such that by 1915 the District Commissioner at Kisumu feared the reaction of the literate members of the Luo community when hut-tax was increased. The DC's remark that, "the raising of hut-tax would cause agitation amongst the literate Luo"<sup>24</sup> shows that there was a recognised elite class in Nyanza within ten years of Missionary work. This group of people were not only literate but they were Christians. They were taught Christianity and got their education in Missionary schools, a fact which shows how the impact of Missionary activities was fast taking root in Nyanza.

The administration expected Missionaries to uplift the moral stands of the Africans by encouraging them to adopt Christian morals. So any cultural activity which the Missionaries felt was not in conformity with Christianity was discouraged. It followed therefore that both CMS and MHP had no difficulties in convincing the administration that night dances for the youth was immoral. Chiefs such as Muganda of Ugenya, Amoth of Alego and Odera Ulalo of Gem were asked by the administration to minimise them because the Missionaries felt that the youth were engaged in immoral activities during the dancing time.<sup>25</sup>

The Missionaries did everything possible to gain more converts. They not only allied with the colonial administration but also with the local Luo chiefs to let them evangelized the local people. Some local chiefs on the other hand advanced their power by gaining favours from the Missionaries. This was the case of chief Ogada and Ogola of Kisumu locations who allowed both the CMS and MHP to open Mission Stations in their locations. "Ogada not to be outdone gave an enthusiastic reception to three American Missions who followed soon after MHP and CMS".<sup>26</sup>

However Missionary contempt for Africans

customs and religion reinforced by the white man's superiority as had been demonstrated by the administration and Missionaries soon led to two religious movements which challenged westernism in the two districts. In 1907 John Owalo who was first a member of the Roman Catholic Church, then joined the Scottish Mission, later went to join CMS at Maseno was convinced that he had been called by God to start a Church.<sup>27</sup> Although this movement of Owalo was more connected with the influence from CMS, Catholicism also had a share in it since the founder was at one time a Roman Catholic.

Within a period of six years after the formation of Owalo's church, another movement came up. It started from Alego location in Siaya district. It was called Mumbo and was more radical than the one started by Owalo. Onyango Dunde the founder of this movement was a member of Seje clan. One evening as he sat in his hut a gigantic snake appeared and swallowed him up. The snake was so long that as it stood on Lake Victoria, its head touched the clouds. Immediately the snake regurgitated Onyango back into his hut, unharmed but he looked worried. The revelation of the snake to Onyango was as follows:

I am the God of Mumbo whose two homes are in the sun and in the lake. I have chosen you to be my mouth-piece. Go out and tell all Africans, and more especially the people of Alego that from henceforth I am their God. Those whom I chose personally and also those who acknowledge me, will live for ever in plenty ... The Christian religion is rotten (mbovu) and so is its practice of making its believers wear clothes ... All Europeans are your enemies, but the time is shortly coming when they will disappear from your country ...<sup>28</sup>

After this revelation Onyango Dunde gathered considerable followers. The psychological outburst of Onyango revealed it all that the cult of Mumbo as it came to be known was a protest movement against Westernism expressed in religious idioms. A direct movement from the Catholic Church had to wait until 1960 when Legio Maria Church was started by a former member of the Catholic Church. It was also a protest against Western culture and religion as presented to the Luo by the whites.

The above mentioned challenges to the white administration and religion demonstrated that African resented the way the whites presented to them the foreign religion and administration.

5.2 The evangelistic approaches of the Mill Hill Fathers.

The MHF used three methods to evangelized the Luo. These were preaching, education and medical services. We shall discuss evangelism by education and preaching together since both went hand in hand.

The MHF operated from their Missions which were at Kisumu, Ojola, Aluor, Rang'ala, Yala, Mbagha, Segha and Lwak. Each Mission had a number of out-stations which were used as catechumenates. These out-stations were under Catechists but supervised by Priests from the main Missions.

The teaching of catechism formed an important part of the evangelistic work of the MHF. It is from the catechism where the Catholic Church's tradition and doctrine were taught. It is only after knowing the catechism that one was baptised and then later confirmed a full member of the church. The success of the evangelistic work was realised when the catechumens and full members of the church put into practice what they were taught. It was a difficult task for the Missionaries working among the Luo because they felt:

the Luo were the most primitive people they had ever come across, and in their state of spiritual destitution they had never thought of christianity.

The Luo social environment was not suitable for the gospel according to the Missionaries. The L.HF

Confined some of their catechumens in the Missions so as to protect them from heathen surroundings Fr. Grogan of Ojola Mission made this point clear when he stated that:

It would never do in Kavirondo to let them (catechumens) return to their old sinful surroundings, at least until they have finished their course of instruction which may last two to four years.<sup>30</sup>

The reasons for teaching the catechumens for a long period has been explained by Tanner as:

The long period of instruction was viewed by priest as a test of constancy and devotion as the Church did not view conversion merely as memorising of essential prayers and answers in catechism.<sup>31</sup>

Whisson explained how the four years were spent at the Mission, that the first:

Two years were devoted to the eradication of superstition, evil habits and vices' that is the catechumens would not attend 'heathen' dances or 'orgies' or indulge in plurality of wives, cruelty or revenge.<sup>32</sup>

It appears that the first two years of catechetical teaching was devoted to make catechumens acquire Western habits such as being gentle as opposed to aggressiveness of the "savages". The catechumens were also expected to realize the need of monogamous marriage a practice whose root is found in the Western culture. Whisson continues:

The next two years were devoted to the instruction on the Ten Commandments and Sacraments. After this, the

catechumens came and lived for a month to six weeks in the mission compound where the priest examined them closely on what they had learned. The catechumen who failed to answer questions thrown at him was sent back for another three months.<sup>33</sup>

It is the third and fourth year that catechism proper was taught. In the course of learning it a Luo catechumen became aware that it is sinful to consult ajuoga. This idea is found in the church's teaching concerning the first Commandment of God which states, "worship no God but me."<sup>34</sup> The Roman Catholic Church further states that one way of breaking this Commandment is, "if we believe in the activities of ajuoga."<sup>35</sup> And so whenever a Luo christian visits ajuoga for consultation, he breaks first Commandment of God.

The catechumens upto the present time are taught prayers. A Christian is supposed to say these prayers every morning and evening. The Ten Commandments are included in these prayers. So whenever a Luo Christian recites them, he also recalls that when he visits ajuoga, he breaks the first Commandment of God.

Saying prayers helps Christians to maintain the church's teaching. Each evening at prayer time a christian would recall the sins he had committed during the day. The following morning he would seek God's guidance in the days undertaking to avoid committing any sin again.

The guilt which a Christian feels after committing a sin as defined by the church would lead him to go for confessions and avoid committing the same sin in future. To some extent it is easier for the Roman Catholic Church to assess the impact of the church's teaching on the adherents than the Protestant Churches. This is because during confessions, a priest is able to know the Commandment which the Christians are finding difficult to keep. It is an assurance that the Christians were aware of their shortcomings and they are striving to overcome them. Alternatively it shows that the most frequent committed sin perhaps met the felt need for the people and the church had not provided an alternative acceptable means to the adherents.

During the Missionary era, the teaching of catechism dominated the teaching in the Catholic schools. This point has been observed by many researchers such as Ndege who says:

The village schools developed mainly as catechuminate centres where little secular education was provided. Since in most cases the teachers were unqualified, nothing more than the very elements of religion, reading, writing and arithmetic were taught.<sup>36</sup>

Ogututu has also observed the same point when he says that "the teaching in the Catholic schools was based on catechism to prepare the catechumens for baptism..."<sup>37</sup> Whisson explained how religious instruction was used in conjunction with secular education that:

the letters were nailed to the wall,  
to be sung out in rotation by each



of the scholars; and repeated by his companions. The pupils were trained to read and the constant repetition of the letter was aimed at impressing on their minds some important religions truth.<sup>38</sup>

As time passed, the Catholic system of education improved and by 1965, they were offering education upto high school level in Nyanza Province.

Secondary school education was offered in boarding schools which were at Yala, Rang'ala, and Lwak Missions. Boarding schools offered a situation where the parents would not be able to take their children from school to ajuoga when they were sick. The boarding school environment helped the Missionaries to achieve their evangelical goal of conversion and civilizing mission. The work of ajuoga was viewed as not only unchristian since it involved "black magic", but it also represented a primitive institution.<sup>39</sup>

In schools, the pupils had no alternative but to adhere to the teaching of the Missionaries that it was sinful to visit ajuoga as it amounted to relying on other power different from God's power. Jesus died to save us from such beliefs. All that one should do was to believe in him and he shall be saved. When one was sick he should go to the hospital for treatment. Herbal medicines could be used so long as they were not "blessed" by ajuoga where hospital treatment was not possible.

In boarding schools more than anywhere else, the students learned to use modern health institutions such as hospitals, clinics, and dispensaries which offered services equivalent to those of ajuoga. It is not surprising that every mission had a dispensary. In some cases a room in the priest's house was used as a dispensary. But, the first proper hospital by Western standards was built by the CMS at Maseno in 1922.<sup>40</sup> The MHF built their first medical clinic in Nyanza province at Rang'ala in 1936. In both cases the missionaries state that their aim of providing the medical services was to promote the welfare of the local people. Rang'ala was started as a centre for treating lepers. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that first and fore-most, the duty of the Missionaries, was to convert the heathens to Christianity therefore everything they did was geared towards achieving this objective. So, while people were receiving treatment, they also received the word of God. "The effectiveness of this new treatment at the dispensary or hospital became a means of attracting possible converts."<sup>41</sup> Sr. St. Anne, a nursing sister who came in the third lot of the white sisters to Rang'ala recalled that when she introduced the use of penincillin antibiotic at Rang'ala,

Mission hospitals many diseases responded well to it. Those who brought their patients at critical stages of sickness marvelled at the white woman's magic. She remembered vividly a case of a woman patient who was very sick. The people who brought her had travelled for more than two days. When they reached Rang'ala Mission they told Sr. St. Anne that even if she could not treat the patient, she should baptise her so that she dies a Christian. After a week, the patient got well. She went home as a Christian. Sr. St. Anne recalled that by 1944 many patients left the hospital and went straight to the Mission to begin "reading" and to become Christians. She further recalled that there were many serious maternity cases which the hospital handled more effectively than the local people. This is a point which most informants accept. Sr. St. Anne observed that:

the local people had no sense of cleanliness when handling wounds. Patients would go to the hospital with burns covered with cow-dung so that on admission, the first thing to be done was to wash it off and clean the wound and other medications would follow. Worm treatment was essential for all patients. Sometimes all that one needed was to keep the wound clean and dressed. That is why women were taught simple hygiene rules and nutrition at Rang'ala Mission."<sup>42</sup>

A remark like this from a Missionary personnel points to the fact that:

the modern medical work as introduced by the missionaries was also seen in terms of civilization, in a sense that the new methods of treatment were presented as being superior to the traditional methods of healing."<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps all one needed was to go to the hospital when one was sick instead of going to ajuoga.

Some Missionaries to the present time have expressed the sentiments that a mission meets both the spiritual and physical needs of a Christian. This is because in a mission there is a hospital where diseases can be treated, a Church and a school for the intellectual spiritual development of the Catholic Christians.<sup>44</sup>

The work done by the Missionaries had lasting effects on the Luo way of life.

Footnotes:

1. G.E.M. Ogotu, "The Origin and Growth of the Roman Church in Western Kenya, 1895-1952". Ph.D. Thesis, 1981, University of Nairobi, p.xi.
2. J.M. Lonsdale, "A Politixal History of Nyanza 1883-1945". Ph.D. Thesis, Trinity College, June, 1964, p.87.
3. G.E.M. Ogotu, "British Occupation of Western Kenya being a survey of the role of C.W. Hobley in the period of Ascendancy 1895-1897". Historical Association of Kenya, Annual Conference, 1978.
4. B.A. Ogot, in journal of African History Vol. iv. 2 (1963) pp.249-273.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. See Erick Barker, Short History of Nyanza 1961, pp.25-26. Also see H.P. Gale op. cit. p.266.
8. Ibid. p.267.
9. G.E.M. Ogotu, Ph.D. Thesis, 1981, p.94.
10. Interview, A. Obong'o, Nyahera, Kisumu, February 3, 1985.
11. H.P. Gale, op. cit. p.291. Also see Secretariat Circular No.97/1911. Copy in NPA 40/1.
12. H.P. Gale, op. cit. p.295.
13. M.G. Whisson, Change and Challenge 1964, p.142.

14. H.P. Gale, op. cit. p.266.
15. M.H.F. Spiritual returns 1910-1925 in G.E.M. Ogutu, Ph.D. Thesis, 1981, p.176.
16. J.M. Lonsdale, 1964, op. cit. p.139.
17. W.D. Forster, The Church Missionary Society and the Medicine in Uganda, New Haven Press, G.B. 1978. The life of Sr. Albert Cook. 1870-1951, p.62.
18. J.M. Lonsdale, 1964, op. cit. p.139.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., also see Nyanza Province special report 1909 section (h).
21. Ibid.
22. H.P. Gale, 1959, op. cit. p.252.
23. KNA/DC. CN PC 21 September, 1915 CNA CN/1.
24. Education offered in Mission schools was supposed to produce submissive Africans who should obey and carry orders not those who question the administrative as Luo elites did in 1915 at Kisumu.
25. KNA/DC/CN 7/1 Native affairs 1908-1922.
26. J.M. Lonsdale, 1964, op. cit. p.176.
27. B.A. Ogot, British Administration in Central Nyanza District of Kenya 1900-1960. Journal of African History, iv. 2, 1963, p.522.
28. Nyangweso, "The Cult of Mumbo in Central and South Kavirondo" in the journal of East Africa and Uganda Natural Society No.38-39 pp.13-17. Also appears in Nyanza political records

PC/NZ, 2/659.

29. H.P. Gale, 1959 op. cit. p.266. See also G.E.M. Ogutu, Ph.D. Thesi, 1981 op. cit. p.82.
30. H.P. Gale, 1959 op. cit. p.306.
31. R.E.S. Tanner, Transition in African Beliefs Mary Knowll, N.Y.? 1967, p.90.
32. G.M. Whisson, "The Present Day School in the Present Day Luo Society". Ph.D. Thesis, 1963.
33. Ibid.
34. Ex. 20:3.
35. Mill Hill Fathers, Catechism Mkwongo gi Mar Sakrament. Diocese of Kisumu, 1965, p.131.
36. P.O. Ndege, "Socio-political analysis of Missionary activities in South Nyanza district 1906-1957" Makerere University, Kampala. B.A. dissertation, February, 1975, p.90.
37. G.E.M. Ogutu, Ph.D. Thesis, 1981, op. cit. p.138.
38. G.M. Whisson, 1963, op. cit. p.73.
39. The idea that African cultural heritage is primitive has its roots in social evolutionary theory. See footnote 20 above.
40. Missions built by Church Mission Society are now referred to as Churches belonging to the Church Province of Kenya.

41. J.N.K. Mugambi, M.A. Thesis, 1977, op. cit.  
p.43.
42. Interview, Sr. St. Anne, Rang'ala Mission,  
November 26, 1985, February, 1985.
43. J.N.K. Mugambi, M.A. Thesis, 1977, op. cit.  
p.43.
44. Interview, Fr. Closey, op. cit.



CHAPTER SIX

6.0 THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY ON  
DIVINATION AND THE ROLES OF AJUOGA.

6.1 The changes brought by Missionary work on  
the Luo way of life.

The term change is used in the same way as social change. Social change refers to changes which occur in any given community when new ideas come from outside it or evolve within the system. The confronting problem is how much of the pre-existing body of custom is discarded, how much modified and how much is retained. These changes are not uniformly distributed in a society because people respond to them differently. Whatever people take from the new ideas they add to their accumulated experience without necessarily substituting the new with the old. This is what Bascom and Herskovits mean when they say that "cultural change is selective and the selection is often additive and not necessarily substitutive."<sup>1</sup>

The evangelistic work of the Missionaries brought changes in the Luo way of life. This was as a result of the revolutionary teaching of Christianity. It demanded a change from the Luo way of life to the Western one. People were converted to Christianity as individuals. This is shown at the major rites which incorporate one in the church such as baptism, receiving first Holy

Communion and Confirmation. The main participants in these rites upto the present time are catechumens and the priests, while the rest of the family members are observers whose presence are not so important.

As a Christian, one is expected to keep the Ten Commandments of God and the Sacraments<sup>2</sup> of the church. The Sacraments spelt out what one should not do as an individual. When one goes for Confession,<sup>3</sup> one is alone with the priest as the representative of God on earth. At school individualistic elements are again expressed in the system of education. Examinations are geared towards promoting individualism. A student is judged by how well he performs. All these are opposed to the communal life of the Luo, where one is expected to act as an integral part of the community. In the traditional environment most social functions are done collectively such as prayers, offering sacrifices, marriage transactions and ceremonies. Funeral rites and others which includes visiting ajuoga are done with the knowledge of the rest of the family members.

Christians are expected not to participate in traditional prayers to the ancestors, offering sacrifices, certain aspects of funeral rites such as levirate marriage and visiting ajuoga. At the same time the society expects the Christians to participate in the functions related to the religious life of the Luo. It was not easy to adhere to the Luo way of life and at the same time remain true to the rigid rules of the Missionary Church.

The Roman Catholic Church for a long time until Vatican II in 1965, had been emphatic on the unity of the church as a community and it ignored diversity of the peoples cultural background. This trend made it possible for any member of the Catholic

Church to participate in the Church's services in any part of the world before the Vatican II Council. But when a problem arises which needs to be solved in a cultural way, a Luo Christian would secretly consult ajuoga or attend healing sessions in Independent Churches. In this way one's felt religious needs are met. The other option is to join Independent Churches where cultural practises are acceptable.

Some independent movements in the Luo society are the Nomiya Luo Church. It was the first to have an appreciable number of followers. The one which separated directly from the Catholic Church is Legio Maria movement now being referred to as Legio Maira Church of Africa.

The factors which contributed to the emergence of the Legio Maria sect ranged from economic, political and religious ones.<sup>4</sup> The religious reasons point to the fact that the Catholic Church as an institution was too alien and remote to fulfill the religious aspirations of the Luo before the formation of the Legio Maria Church. This situation was created by the negative approaches which the Missionaries used to propagate the gospel. In the words of Mugambi:

they followed the prejudiced approach of proclaiming the irrelevance of the African philosophical religious and cultural backgrounds' to the Christian faith and to the Western civilization of which Missionaries were propagators.<sup>5</sup>

As a result the divination was equated to witchcraft and ajuoga with a witch, an attitude which has persisted upto the present time. The ajooke were and are still denied church membership unless they denounced their profession. What were then the consequences of the negative reaction of the Missionaries to the Luo divination methods?

#### 6.2 The effect of evangelistic work on the Luo divination.

The impact of the evangelical missionary work on the Luo divination could be examined in the various stages one passes in the Luo environment, such as birth, initiation marriage and death.<sup>6</sup> At birth a baby is named after an ancestor or close relative who had died. The persistent cry of a baby is a sign that it wants to be named. Elderly members of the family call various names of the ancestors. If the baby continues to cry for a long time then there comes a need to seek help from ajuoga as he is the only one with supernatural ability to solve this problem. It is strongly believed that as soon as the right name of the ancestor who wants to be named is called, the baby stops crying. The medical explanation shows that it is the accumulated air which a baby takes in during feeding which causes a lot of pain and

makes it cry. Unfortunately, such an explanation was hardly given to mothers who managed to take their babies to hospital during the colonial period upto very recently. As such their going to hospitals hardly lessened their traditional belief. Even when a scientific explanation is given, illiterate and less educated mothers would still ignore the advise with a clear conscience that the hospital way of explaining the causes of diseases is different from the Luo way. One lady informant remarked that ancestors which make the babies to cry are in air form so the hospital explanation is not wrong.<sup>7</sup>

In a situation where members of the same family hold different views due to the influence of Christian teaching their traditional beliefs and educational background, it creates a tension. This tension when caused by, for example, the issue of naming, could be lessened by incorporating ideas from both parties. And so, ajuoga will be consulted to identify the person who wants to be named at the same time the baby could be taken to the hospital. The tendency to combine both African and the Western ideas has been observed by Hastings when he says: "Africans welcomed Western medicine as an extension or improvement upon their own physical medicine."<sup>8</sup>

Alternatively it could be argued that the normlessness created by Christianity and Western culture which has left Africans with no firm cultural foundation make them try both new and traditional methods with the hope of finding security in one of them. The Roman Catholic Church in particular does condemn naming the infants in the traditional way but it is against consulting ajuoga for divination purposes. However as the number of educated people is increasing, some people have realized that it is not the action of the ancestors which makes a baby to cry. As a result some people do not go to ajuoga to find out the ancestors who want to be named. They give the child a name which shows the time he/she was born.<sup>9</sup> In some cases when a close relative such as grandparents hears of the birth of a baby, one of them takes the initiative to find out what the name of the child should be from ajuoga. The message is then conveyed to the parents of the baby if they are away from the rural environment. The inconsistency of visiting ajuoga to identify the name of the new born baby shows the impact of christianity and western education on the Luo divination methods. It explains that the Luo society like most African societies is still in transitional period where

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they are trying to combine the old and the new ideas. Therefore many factors other than Christianity determine how one reacts to the cultural issues that lead to consulting ajuoga.

During youth the Luo undergoes an initiation rite. It involves removing the four lower incisors and the two canine teeth. It is a ritual which tests the bravery of the initiate, for both girls and boys more than intergrating one to the next stage in life. The services of ajuoga is not necessary unless excessive bleeding occurs.

However, during marriage ceremonies, many rituals are performed, which aims at integrating the bride in her new family and to ensure the continuity of the family. The bride and to some extent the bride-groom have to examine certain regulations such as consummating the marriage. If this fails, ajuoga is consulted to identify the cause and to provide a solution. This is so because the hope and the welfare of the extended family is conceived collectively and not individually. Moreover in a homestead there could be Catholic and Protestant people and some who have not been going to any particular church. The latter feels no guilt which Christians have internalized from the church's teaching against the visiting ajuoga.

At the present time, the above issue of marriage might not be a problem which needs a solution from ajuoga. One reason is that the problem might not be revealed by the bride and bridegroom. In most cases the couple had known each other well and have learnt to solve their own problems. Secondly, the society's mechanism of detecting whether the marriage is consummated is no longer effective. Moreover other services such as psychological and medical services are preferred because they offer more secrecy than going to ajuoga as a family. The embarrassment would be lessened when alternative methods are used other than going to ajuoga. How satisfying the other methods depend on the nature of the problem and on the people's concerned conviction on the modern and the Luo ways of solving problems.

The religiosity of a Luo is expressed more in the death rituals than in either of the rituals discussed above. Serious illness or sudden death is believed to be caused by spiritual beings such as ancestral spirits or by the fellow human-being through application of witchcraft. In such a situation, Western medical explanation is welcomed but not taken seriously in the Luo traditional environment. Ajuoga is consulted to diagnose



the cause of the disease or death. Certain events which had preceded the sickness or death points to the cause of death or serious illness. For example when two kinsmen had a dispute over a piece of land, when one of them fell sick or dies, people always suspect the opponent to be the agent of death or sickness. However ajuoga may be consulted to identify the cause. The action one takes after the revelation of ajuoga is a personal matter.

When one dies and the funeral rites are not performed properly according to the cultural procedures, ajuoga might be asked to identify how to minimize the reaction of the taboos which has been violated. A very common case among the Luo at present is the refusal of some widows to observe regulation pertaining to general rites such as avoiding contact with people outside ones nuclear family. When a widow does not observe this regulation it forces her family members to look for herbal medicine (manyasi) to minimize the effect of the taboo which has been violated. Most people do not know specific herbs used as manyasi, so ajuoga is consulted to find the effect of the taboo broken on the family members concerned and how its effect could be lessened. Indeed, there is no social problem affecting the welfare of the

Luo for which divination does not offer a solution. Even when one had a bad dream whose meaning puzzles the dreamer, ajuoga would be consulted to interpret it. For example Mr. Y once dreamt that he saw a person drowning in a big lake. The person was calling Mr. Y for help but the waves carried him away before he was rescued. After sometimes, Mr. Y had almost a similar dream. He suspected that his father who died during the World War I and was thrown in the Indian Ocean might be trying to communicate with him. Mr. Y then consulted Ngawawe ajuoga already mentioned in this study.<sup>10</sup> Ngawawe found out that Mr. Y's father wanted to be offered to a sacrifice. Divination therefore offers solutions to most puzzling problems in the Luo community.

In the course of identifying the social causes of problems, ajuoga also offers protective measures against other social evils especially witchcraft, the greatest fear of the ordinary man. All the twelve ajuoke interviewed confirmed that Christians who are faced with cultural problems such as witchcraft seek help from them, and at the same time they continue to be active members of their Churches.

6.3 The process of choosing which course to take when one is confronted with a social problem.

The process of choosing which course to take in time of crisis is determined by many factors such as ones conviction the Church and the segments of the society he belongs to.

Christianity to some extent required people to leave some aspects of the Luo culture and to adopt a western way of life. However one was free either to adhere to the Mission rules or not unless one was living within the Mission compound. Back sliding in the Church practices upto now is not punishable by death nor rigorous ritual cleansing as in the case of one who has broken a taboo in the Luo community. And so when one is faced with a problem, his free will based on his background helps him to either consult ajuoga or solve it in a manner acceptable to the Christian Churches. More important is how much one's family attaches importance to the divination work of ajuoga. The overall perception of the family is important in decision making since a crisis among the Luo is not a one man issue. The decision of one man can be overruled by the rest of the family members especially elders. In the course of solving a problem both views from the Christians or Western and the Luo way are utilised. An illustration

below will make it clear.

Mr. X who was a catechist from 1940 to 1969 recalled how in 1961 one of his daughters had a psychosomatic problem. He took her to ajuoga with the hope that the cause of her problem would be identified and a solution found. One of his sons who had just graduated from abroad in Veterinary Science came back home and removed the girl from ajuoga. She was taken to a mental hospital. Most family members felt that the action of Mr. X's son was not proper and they recommended that the girl should be taken back to ajuoga when she completed the western treatment. According to Mr. X, the girl returned home from the hospital in a stable mind but not completely cured. She was still under treatment. Mr. X called the ajuoga in his home to complete the treatment of the girl.<sup>11</sup> Steps taken by Mr. X and his educated son reflects the western and Luo values held by them. It also shows the emerging trends in African Christianity which is the interplay between the forces and values of African heritage and hristianity. This is a trend which enables the Luo to solve their problems in the traditional way yet they remain Christians in spite of the ideal requirement of the Church.

The changing nature of ajuoga's clients

from purely Luo in pre-Christian period to the Luo Christians in the present time necessitated many changes from the clients and the practitioners alike. The way of visiting ajuoga is changing. It has been observed that Christians consult ajuoga mainly as individuals but not as a family representative. This trend of carrying consultation as individuals has contributed to the weakening of the family and community solidarity. It leads people to take unreasonable decisions after consulting ajuoga. In the pre-Christian period when ajuoga advised an individual over a serious matter which involved taking someone's life, the family members would often discourage the idea and alternative method was sought to solve the problem. Such a situation could occur when for example a married woman failed to get a child for along period. Ajuoga would advise her to kill a youth using witchcraft so that she may conceive. It is believed that terminating the life of a youth or a person who has not given birth may lead to the death of most youthful members of the same sex as the one killed. The reason given is that the ghost of a person who has not given birth would not allow his or her age mates getting children since he/she died without leaving behind children to continue of his lineage. So while the lady concerned may give birth to children the losses incurred by the entire family could be greater than the gains. But an individual

in a bid to overcome her problem might not consider the sociological outcome of such an action but would go ahead to fulfil her selfish desire.

The nature of consultation is changing also to suit the needs created by the current situation where a visit to ajuoga for consultation is kept secret to avoid being called heathen. It forces ajuoga to minimize the noise made by divination instruments when invited to a client's home. The sound made by divination instruments such as divination gourds, and various types of drums used by ajuoga are familiar. They cannot be mistaken for other purposes than divination. Ajuoga with juogi spirits also has to lower his voice when carrying out divination.

The presence of ajuoga is made as private as possible. This lessens the chances of being called "heathen". Christians are called people of God.<sup>12</sup> They are not expected to invite ajuoga for consultation purposes as that is a heathen practice. However even in pre-Christian period the Luo used to consult ajuoga privately. The outcome of consultation was kept secret because the Luo believed that close relatives were often the agents of witchcraft unless the course of the problem was varified by ajuoga. When the suspicion was

confirmed, the affected person became cautious in his dealings with the alleged agent of witchcraft. The finding was not disclosed but the cautious reaction towards the suspect showed that all was not well between them.

A new pattern of consulting ajuoga is emerging as observed by some ajuoke. Some Christians tend to consult ajuoga as the last resort in time of crisis such as illness. It is taking place mainly among the well-educated people who spend most of their time in urban centres. They are in a position to utilise hospitals and the related services. Such people sometimes seek help from ajuoga for fear of being blamed that had they done so in time the situation might have changed. Such fear leads some Christians who strongly disapprove of ajuoga's divination work to go for consultation. The hesitant element found among the educated Christians, a group which some priests would consider nominal Christians has contributed to the negative attitudes of the Church towards the Luo and other cultural heritage. The Western type of education which favours the treatment offered by modern physician as opposed to ajuoga's work has also contributed to the trend of utilising traditional ideas as a last attempt of solving problems.

6.4 Impact of the Missionary evangelistic work on the other roles of ajuoga.

In chapter four, we discussed how ajuoga played the roles of a healer, a teacher, a judge, and a counsellor, sometimes he was the leader of his community in the pre-colonial times. These roles he played in the social environment of the Luoland have been affected by changes brought by the missionary work and the colonial administration.

The colonial government introduced a compartmentalized system of government where each aspect of life was operated by different groups of skilled people such that judicial functions of some elders including ajuoga were taken by Native Courts. Political matters were moved to the legislative council. Improvement of agricultural production was in the hands of agricultural extension workers at the local level, missionaries were to care for the spiritual needs of Africans and hospitals provided treatment for the sick. At the superficial level one would conclude that ajuoga's work was bound to die a natural death because most of his roles were taken over by the modern system. The above is not practicable unless the agent of change is a type of revolution, but even this would not change peoples mind so quickly. Cultural change is gradual and



accommodative.<sup>13</sup> What we expect in this case too is the transformation of the roles of ajuoga during the process of change in the Luo culture.

In the socio-political functions of ajuoga we find that they were transformed by the bureaucratic type of Western government. It replaced the elders council. Those who presided in the council known as buch piny among the Luo in the pre-colonial period saw themselves as equals and they unanimously agreed on a point. Seniority and other leadership qualities such as having charismatic quality of power was also taken in consideration when making a decision. Consequently when a counsellor who was also ajuoga felt that it was not safe to wage a war against their enemies, the rest had to respect his views because of his supernatural insight.

The British colonial rule introduced great changes in the Luo socio-political system. The chosen leaders derived their power from British authority. Such a leader became a civil servant instead of being the custodian of customs whether he was ajuoga or not. All that mattered was that he obeyed and carried out the orders of the colonial administration which he became part of by virtue of being a chief. The supernatural power

element in pre-colonial leadership was no longer necessary. This removed completely religious function of ajuoga in political arena. His function in judicial matter was also taken by police-force and African Court. It was no longer necessary for him to arbitrate between the warring groups as there was police-force and courts to do that. Ajuoga would only preside over such a matter in his capacity as an elder not a ritual leader.

With the help of the police-force, raids between clans was checked and institution of warriors died out. As such it reached a time when there were no warriors for ajuoga to bless.

Africans in Kenya were not allowed to participate in political discussions until 1940's when Eliud Mathu was nominated to the legislative assembly. Before that Africans interests were entrusted in the hands of Missionary representative. So for a long time Africans themselves never participated directly in the debates which were taking place in the august house. However political agitation was felt in Nyanza Province as early as in 1920's when the Luo elites started complaining of increasing taxation and compulsory labour of women and children as well as men. They aired their

grievances through an organisation which came to be known as Piny Owacho which means the country says. At that time the work of ajuoga was not observable in political arena. It became clear when the colonial government granted Kenya self independence in 1963. Various politicians fought each other to represent their people in parliament. Ngwawe, a well known ajuoga in South Ugenya claims that various politicians consulted him. They wanted to know whether they would succeed or not in the parliamentary election. During parliamentary election, success in campaign came as a result of the ascriptive nature of political status. In the pre-colonial period political posts were confine to certain clans and families so there was no competition. The dissatisfied party would move and form other clans. Now that the political posts are open to more candidates, there is a need to seek religious assurance from ajuoga. It is a common phenomenon in the wider, society. It is not only confined to Luoland that after general elections the unsuccessful candidates accuse each other of having used supernatural powers to win various national elections. The observation during the field work revealed that the socio-economic roles of ajuoga are increasing instead of decreasing in some ways

as the case is with the socio-political ones discussed above. Ajuoga's work has been intensified by the materialistic needs introduced in our society by the western civilization. As such the work of ajuoga revolves around identifying possibility of whether one who sets out to look for a job would get it or not. It includes too predicting the outcome of the examination and how one can get promotion quickly. His socio-economic roles includes promoting all economic undertakings. It follows that businessmen seek assurance from ajuoga that all will be well in their undertakings. Interestingly enough in spite of all these assurance from ajuoga one has to work hard to attain his goals and to remain true to his reference group. These could be his fellow Christians, prosperous businessmen if he is one or aspiring to be one. So, really what one requires from ajuoga is the religious assurance not the physical one in terms of economic benefits.

Ajuoga's role in maintaining good health has not changed to an appreciable extent. Instead, it has increased a great deal. This has come about as a result of the competition for social and economic gains generated by the capitalistic mode of production which was introduced in our society

by the colonial government. People tend to accumulate wealth without distributing them as used to happen in the pre-colonial Luo society. The result is that the less prosperous people tend to blame others for their failure. The prosperous ones are compelled to guard themselves against the envious reaction of the poor lot. Ajuoga assists such clients to identify their enemies who might have intention to cause harm. It is obvious that when one is sick, he will not be able to work well. A state which could lead in the decline of production. At times ill-health inflicted on the owner of property by means of witchcraft would affect the economic assets such as business and the lives of the livestock. So far, it is only ajuoga who is specialised to identify the cause for both human suffering and animals in the course of a single treatment. The independent churches such as Legio Maria claim to have the power to diagnose the causes of diseases affecting animals and human but their work is superficial to the spiritual needs of the Luo. So ajuoga is still the master of maintaining intergral social health of the Luo. The main established Churches such as the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches have not come out officially to solve problems created by fear

of witchcraft in the Luo society. So the more these problems increase as it is the case now the more the work of ajuoga in solving problems increases.

Ajuoga is still the master of identifying the sickness caused by spiritual beings such as juogi. The modern medicine so far has not identified the illness caused by good spirits (juogi) or bad ones which may lead into mental disorder. The ajuoga is the only specialist who can do this through the divination tools and offer cultural explanation to the Luo. And so ajuoga's expertise in diagnosing spiritual illness is increasing instead of decreasing. The people seek help from ajuoga inspite of the objection of the established churches because these churches do not offer solutions to the cultural oriented problems and sickness. These churches have not incorporated the African spirituality in their teaching. The MHF too did not relate the church's teaching to the traditional Luo religion. Unfortunately little has been done to incorporate the religious belief system of the Luo in the church's practices by the Roman Catholic Church although it is not a recognised problem. And so, the Luo christian has no alternative but to turn to ajuoga to get satisfactory religious

explanation while at the same time he remains a christian.

What is emerging is the dualism between the Luo way of life and the ideals of the church. So ajuoga continues to be a healer side by side with modern physicians. Ajuoga still continues to be a counsellor side by side with the judiciary and other counselling bodies.

The type of problem which ajuoga handles now are not the same as those he used to deal with in pre-Christian period. They reflect the problems of modern society such as higher aspiration in life. He is still the village teacher in cultural issues and one is free to utilise his services. It would not be a surprise to find him being consulted to promote higher yield at the same time technical advice is sought from agricultural extension workers.

We would therefore say that the evangelical work of the Missionaries which was presented to the Luo in Western culture has only transformed the roles of ajuoga in the Luo society but has not eradicated them. Christianity has failed to eliminate the divination role of ajuoga.

The reason being that divination provides a hope in life when it solves the everyday problems.

Without divination work of ajuoga the Luo would have no means of communicating with supernatural beings and to identify agents of

witchcraft, the greatest threat to the ordinary person. The Luo would be left entirely at nature's mercy.

Since divination fulfils a felt religious need of the Luo, the ordinary person does not take it as a threat to the Church's teaching. The problem it creates is a pastoral one and a challenge to the established Churches to make Christianity fulfil the religious needs of the Luo which ajuoga has been doing with the aid of various divination tools he/she uses.



Footnotes:

1. W.R. Bascom & M.J. Herskovits, Change and Continuity in African Cultures. University of Chicago Press, 1959, p.2.
2. Sacraments are rites or practices designed to procure or to develop grace in those who perform them. See F.M. Marie-Jassie, 1973, op. cit. p.181
3. Confession is a rite of penance in the Catholic Church which the members of the church are expected to undergo. During this rite a christian is expected to confess his sins to the priest as a sign that he is sorry for having committed them. He gets forgiveness from God through the priest.
4. Marie - France Perrin - Jassy, 1973 op. cit. pp.70-86. She explains that "there was a general feeling of insecurity due to the rapture of the traditional solidarity in the period preceding the formation of the Legio Maria Sect. As a result the Luo felt impotent in the face of a destiny which eluded them at every level."
5. J.N.K. Mugambi, 1977 op. cit. p.13.
6. See footnote 53, chapter three of this work.
7. Interview, Paskalia Nyadenge, op. cit. Mbaga Mission Hospital, February 14, 1986.
8. A. Hastings, 1976, op. cit. p.69.
9. There are two methods of naming babies in the Luo society. The name of the child may reflect the time he or she was born. If a

boy is born in the evening, he would be called Odhiambo for a boy and Adhiambo for a girl. This type of naming is not sacred. The other one is the ancestral name given to a child when he cries. The ancestor wishing to be named may appear in a dream or ajuoga can identify himself.

10. Interview, Gabriel Onyango, op. cit.  
Ambira, Siaya district.
11. The researcher observed this incident. The same incident was again narrated to her by a relative of Mr. X. She chose to remain anonymous.
12. Being christian is sometimes equated to belonging to a more civilized social group.
13. See footnote 1 above.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

The study sets out to find the divination methods and the roles of ajuoga in the changing Luo society. The information obtained from the field study chapters (three to six) and the available literature demonstrates that the Luo use three main methods of divination. There are divination gourd (ajawu) divining board (mbofua) and pebble (gagi). As a rule ajuoga with juogi spirits uses divination gourd and any other instrument of divination mentioned above. The Luo have also seers who predict events without the aid of objects.

These divination methods are based on the religious system of the Luo. It is a world view which conceives God (Nyasaye) as the sustainer and the giver of life. He is followed by ancestral spirits (kwere) who have greater impact on their living relatives than Nyasaye. They are benevolent when they give healing power to their living relatives and evil when they cause misfortune to their relatives. The Luo also believe in evil spirits. Ajuoga, through divination, is able to check the violent reactions of the ancestors. Ajuoga is also able to detect anti-social motives of the living towards their fellow beings.

In this way he/she keeps people aware of the evil-forces around them. However, some ajuoke through divination may identify means of causing harm to to other people if, they are requested to do so by their clients.<sup>1</sup>

The study has shown that the need to control one's fate has led the divination work of ajuoga to last longer than expected by the Missionaries and Western scholars. The reason being that the function of divination in the Luo society has not been replaced by any of the modern services such as medicine Ajuoga uses socio-cultural approach to solve problems while the modern doctor uses germ theory which is unfathomable to the Luo. The germ theory does not offer the cultural explanation of the cause of sickness and misfortunes to the Luo.

It has also been pointed out in the study that failure to relate the scientific explanation to the cultural understanding of the indigenous people have led most of the Luo to utilise both modern and the Luo traditional healing methods with a hope of getting a better solution. Hasting has observed that it is a common phenomenon in Africa when he says:

Africans welcomed western medicine as an extention or improvement upon their own physical medicine.<sup>2</sup>

The study also highlights other functions of

ajuoga in the Luo society other than carrying out divination. They have been discussed under socio-political, economic and social functions of ajuoga. These functions of ajuoga are related such that for instance when he/she blesses a home of a Luo, it entails also ensuring high yields, high productivity in domestic animals as well as enhancing the fertility of the members of the family.

In the socio-political functions of ajuoga, during pre-colonial times, he enhanced success to the warriors and cleansed them after they returned from the battle field. In this case he was a promoter of success as well as a ritual leader. He also acted and still arbitrates in disputes. Some famous ajuoke were also rulers of their people such as Gor Mahia.<sup>3</sup> Above all the ajuoga is still a healer. It is difficult to imagine how the Luo would have survived without the services of ajuoga.

The British colonial rule and the evangelistic work of the Missionaries brought changes which disrupted the traditional Luo way of life. This was so because the Missionaries saw their Mission as a vehicle of western civilization in its encounter with the African way of life. The British administration assisted the Missionaries to gain loyalty from the people. The converts to Roman

Catholicism were required to observe all the regulatory ordinances of the universal Church. These included Church disciplines such as rejection of various traditional customs which included visiting ajuoga. The breaches to them were punishable by denying the offenders who are members of the Church Sacraments.

The field study and written sources show that there were differences between what the Missionaries sought to achieve and often believed they achieved and what actually occurred. The Missionaries condemned most of the Luo traditions in the hope of eradicating them by providing alternative services. Contrary to their expectation, the Luo utilised the new services and also maintained their traditional methods. This point becomes clear when we refer specifically to the evangelistic work of the Catholic Missionaries. Their main objective was to mould a universal Church where everybody should worship God in the same way. In order to achieve this objective the Mill Hill Fathers removed the catechumens from their social environment to the Mission. Once inside the Mission and Mission schools they were subjected to intensive teaching of Christian principles, doctrines and practices. With regard to those catechumens who did not attend school,

the missionaries insisted on lengthy catechumanate. They were to observe all the Church's regulations such as keeping away from 'heathen' practices like consulting the ajuoga. Such practices were driven underground but resurfaced when the catechumen went back to his traditional environment where he could visit the ajuoga when the need arose.

Perhaps the Missionaries were not aware that the Luo practices such as visiting the ajuoga are based on their religious system. And so the practices could not be easily abandoned after the catechumanate period had expired. The Luo religious beliefs are lived and not learnt as Christianity. The outcome of the encounter of the traditions and Christianity is the most Luo continue upto the present time to visit ajuoga in time of crisis. However, the divination methods have been transformed to meet the needs of the modern society. More new material objects have been incorporated in the divination pebbles to reflect modernity. Due to the drastic social changes which have been brought by the Western civilization, the need to seek the supernatural guidance to help people cope with modern life is increasing hence the continuing work of ajuoga.

The dualism of utilising both the work of the ajuoga and at the same time they retain membership in the Christian Churches continues unchecked. It is a fact which the clergy have recognized.<sup>4</sup> It remains only a pastoral problem to the Church's leadership and not a big issue to the laity.

The other functions of the ajuoga in the Luo society also continue with modification to meet the needs of the changing society. At the village level, the ajuoga continues to be a healer, a counsellor and technical advisor in other aspects of life. At national level, the ajuoga features very much in promoting success to aspiring parliamentary and civic candidates.

The study recommends that more studies in various aspects on the African Religions systems such as this one should be carried. Such studies would lead to a better understanding of the work of the ajuoga. Indeed, this should not be of difficult understanding in Kenya as the government has already taken a lead in similar projects. The Ministry of Education has incorporated African Traditional Religion in the school curriculum. It is also being taught upto university level. The Ministry of Culture and Social Services has also



encouraged the public to rediscover their cultural values particularly those which met their felt needs by organising cultural festivals at provincial level. It is important to note that the work of the ajuoga was given prominence in the Nyanza Provincial Cultural Show held in Kisumu town. The reason for this publicity was that the activities of the ajuoga had been undermined for so long yet it still meets the religious needs of the people. The interest in the African values has also been shown by the Ministry of Health. Recently, it launched a project to find out the medicinal values of herbal medicines used by the traditional healers. It is a challenge to the Christian Churches and the students of religion to find out the religious felt needs which African Christians derived from certain aspects of their traditional religion such as divination: then utilise them to make Christianity more meaningful to the people. The Vatican declared its stand on other religious belief system when it passed a resolution saying:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions. She looks with sincere respect upon these ways of conduct and of life, those rules and teachings which though differing in many particulars from what she holds and sets forth nevertheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men.<sup>5</sup>

Since the Vatican II passed this resolution in 1965 and gave various episcopals a go ahead to implement inculturation process, it is encouraging to note that in the Kisumu Catholic Diocese the mass is now conducted in Dholuo and Kiswahili languages. Material culture such as drums are being utilised to make hymns and prayers more meaningful. Besides liturgical adaptation there is need for a systematic knowledge of the functions of the ajuoga in the Luo society by the Roman Catholic Church. Three steps are proposed below towards achieving this goal.

#### 7.1 A need for a dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and ajuoga.

A dialogue is an exchange between two parties through which "both sides are able to learn from each other".<sup>6</sup> Ongong'a further noted that:

a dialogue helps to clear away the preconceived ideas, feeling and prejudices that curtail free and mature conversation.<sup>7</sup>

The need for a dialogue arises from the fact that despite the effort by the missionaries to replace the work of the ajuoga in the Luo society with modern services, his/her work has survived beyond missionary era. It implies that there is a crucial social function the ajuoga plays in the Luo society. The only means of finding out this is to come to

terms with him. Moltmann proposes approaches to successful dialogue as:

... it involves clear knowledge about the identity of one's own faith on the other hand: but on the other it required a feeling of one's own incompleteness and a real sense of need for fellowship with the other.<sup>8</sup>

Both sides should consider each other as mature and equal to enable positive results in the dialogue.

Most Missionaries showed incompetence and ignorance in their approach to the healers and diviners in Africa; which led even those who taught the Luo catechism to call ajuoga a devil (jachien).<sup>9</sup> The continued utilization of the work of the ajuoga in the face of drastic change calls for a systematic re-examination of the place of divination in the religious need in the Luo society. So that the church "can identify what is true and holy"<sup>10</sup> in the work of the ajuoga which although differing in some ways in what she holds and sets forth, nevertheless reflects a ray of truth in the minds of the Luo. Such a study involves careful study of the Luo religious system and the social environment which had shaped it. Such a study involves interdisciplinary research methods and participation at all levels in the diocese and the universal Church. Unfortunately the greatest

obstacles to this proposal in the Roman Catholic Church is that her history has shown that experimentation has not been completely favoured.<sup>11</sup> Shorter observes that, "without experiment, a successful dialogue between faith and culture is impossible".<sup>12</sup> However, it is an undertaking worth attempting now "while the present positive response by the Roman Catholic Church made possible appraisal of African traditional religion".<sup>13</sup>

## 7.2 Re-examination of the healing apostolate of Jesus Christ.

It is being suggested here that there is need to re-examine and understand the healing ministry of Jesus in the Hebrew cultural background. Shorter has showed that:

Jesus conformed to the healer-exorcist of his own day in rural Palestine. We do not see him giving the sick medicine but we see him use saliva, touch the tongue of deaf-mute having spat on the finger Mk. 7:34. He certainly told his followers to use oil in healing Mk. 6:62-13, lay hands upon the sick. They were all methods used by healer-exorcists of his time.<sup>14</sup>

Shorter further observed that:

Jesus too possessed mysterious knowledge about the condition of the people he healed. He knew that the woman with haemorrhage had touched his clothes. Mk. 2:5. He knew that the sick man of Bethsaida had waited

for a long time to be cured. John 5:5, and Lazarus was already dead before he reached Bethany (John 11:11-15).<sup>15</sup>

According to Shorter, "Jesus revealed as well as healed and that activities were interrelated in his ministry."<sup>16</sup> Basically this is what ajuoga does in the Luo society. He devines the social cause of a problem and then provides a solution.

At the end of exploring the work of the ajuoga and re-examining Jesus' healing ministry the party concerned might realize that the healing work of Jesus in his native land was not different from the work of the ajuoga. Both are healer and diviner. It might also dawn to the Church that the ajuoga's gift of healing is from the Deity. It is a rare gift and is therefore highly priced. Those who have it are highly honoured. It is used foster the well-being of the community. When this is realized, the ajuoga would perhaps be allowed to receive the Sacraments. Ajuoga in each parish would reduce the fear of witchcraft accusation when they identify the witches and sorcerers. There would be no need to turn to other religious sects such as Legio Maria to solve social problems in time of crisis. The Roman Catholic Church would be a place for the Luo to feel at home in time of crisis since ajuoga,

the solver of the problems would be within the Church.<sup>17</sup>

When the Roman Catholic Church recognises the work of the ajuoga then people like Bishop Milingo of Zambia would be easily accepted by the leadership of the Church in his own country. I feel his services are more needed at home than abroad where he is staying at the moment.<sup>18</sup> He would not need to defend himself that he is not a "witchdoctor".<sup>19</sup>

In the area of study, there is an indication too that the Roman Catholic Church has lost some of her gifted members because it is not yet ready to accommodate these people with spiritual gifts. The authority fears that such people might create schism in the Roman Catholic Church. One should also not forget that all ajuoke are left outside the Church because of their healing and spiritual gifts.

### 7.3 A call for implementing African Christian theology.

A third step towards recognising the divination gift of the ajuoga in the Roman Catholic Church is to formulate and put in practice a theology which liberates the local Churches from the European and American bias in theological thinking. This

should be the most difficult part in the adaptation process because until very recently, there was a unified Theological training. We have no quarrel with the Western oriented training because until 1966, the Church stressed uniformity in all aspects of the Church's teachings. It will take time for the Church to emphasise diversity of the teaching of the Church instead of uniformity. The outcome of the Latinised oriented teaching has been that even the local priests are Romans in all aspects except perhaps their colour. Such people would use the Western theological thinking to down grade the work of ajuoga as nothing but superstitions and idolatry. That is why Bishop Milingo's healing work could not be accommodated in his own country where he was using familiar religious symbols to heal. The reason being that the Roman Catholic Church in Zambia was not yet ready to appreciate healing as integral part of the Church's apostolate.

Why do we need an African Christian Theology? We are living at a time when the church is getting more concerned with the needs of human race. One such need in Africa is a theology which reflects the African religious thinking. The Protestant Churches under the auspices of All African Churches of Conference held in Abidjan in 1959 proposed a

need for African theology. Cardinal Otunga recalls that:

... at the instigation of the All African Conference of Churches (AACC), a meeting of African theologians took place in Nigeria in 1969 which produced a publication entitled: 'For an African Theology'. Another publication followed in 1974 entitled 'The purpose of African theology' an outcome a debate in Kinshasha between 1959-1960.<sup>20</sup>

Otunga further observes that, one of the problems in Africa is the question about the manner of promoting a trully African Theology which he hoped would be examined at home here in Nairobi. At present the Catholic Church calls the process of making the teaching of the Church relevant to the needs of the local people as inculturation process. Waliggo defines inculturation as:

... the honest and serious attempt to make Christ and his message of salvation ever more understood by peoples of every culture, locality and time. It means the reformulation of christian life and doctrine into the very thought pattern of each people. It is the conviction that christ and his Good News are even dynamic and challenging to all times and cultures as they become better understood and lived by each people. It is the continuous endeavour to make christianity fully "feel at home" in the culture of each people.<sup>21</sup>

Inculturation as explained by Waliggo simply means a process of making the gospel more meaningful to the people's way of life. Pope John Paul II stated his desire to make the gospel more meaningful to Africans during his pastoral visit to Africa in



1980 when he says:

Not only is Christianity relevant to Africa, but Christ is himself an African.<sup>22</sup>

This implies that Christianity should reflect the African thinking. What we need is African Theology which is free from the moribund Latin culture and Western theological framework. The Luo religious thinking would not leave out the work of the ajuoga since he is very active in their religious lives.

Looking at the issue being discussed, a conservative school of thought would object to these ideas as syncretism. However critical analysis of religions and cultures show that syncretism is part and parcel of all religions. It is a way religion meets the new challenges by accommodating new ideas. Christianity survived in the first century because it was able to accommodate ideas outside Judaism. What is being advocated in this study is an interplay between the forces and values of the Luo values and Christianity to produce Luo Christianity broadly speaking or else African Christianity.

The theology of inculturation would not be complete in the present Kisumu Catholic Diocese which comprises of Kisumu and Siaya District in

Nyanza Province until a systematic knowledge of the Luo religious heritage is carried in order to form correct judgements about their beliefs and practices and determine their values for use in Christian worship. Once this is done we should be able to adopt the liturgy to encounter real human and social situations of the faithful. This will minimize the dichotomy of life which a good number of the faithful experiences. One point which will not escape the eyes of those entrusted with the duty of inculturation is "to incorporate the idea of ancestor veneration and the Christian Saints as one model of creative living worthy of honour and capable of intercession with God."<sup>23</sup> This point has already been raised in academic circles when Nyamiti refers to Jesus as our ancestor.<sup>24</sup> The need to equate our ancestors and Saints has been explained by Megesa as:

... accepting the Saints ... as in fact one's ancestors in the family of the church and it would do away with the two conflicting trends: the traditionalists and the well - intentioned but misguided christians who have come to take it that christianity can't go with any traditional stuff.<sup>25</sup>

It will be a break through in the church to recognise African values as not opposed to christianity when ancestors will share platform with Saints. Ajuoga's divination work would be no doubt recognized since he/she relies on the

ancestors and healing spirits which in fact are categories of ancestors. Until then Luo Christian might continue to turn to the Luo Religion to solve his problems and in time of joy he remains a "perfect" Christian.

In conclusion, it should be noted that both field study and written literature clearly show that divination fulfils the religious needs in the changing Luo society which Christianity and Western culture have not catered for. The importance of divination has been increased with problem caused by social changes brought by Western culture and innovation. The changes have encouraged materialism and individualistic attitude as opposed to communal life in the traditional society. As a result quite a number of people consult ajuoga to ensure that they will succeed in their undertakings and to cause the failure of others to ensure that they remain in the fore front.

At cultural level, one's success is often attributed to appeasing the ancestral spirits. The good conduct towards them can only be maintained by consulting ajuoga to identify their need. The information from ajuoga is believed to have come from mystical power and is highly respected.

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Ajuoke are regarded as people full of wisdom as such they often advise and counsel people on political, economic and social issues. Ajuoke have been able to maintain their roles in the changing Luo society by adapting to the present changes, meeting the felt religious needs of the people thus filling the Vacuum left by Christianity which was introduced in Western culture.

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Footnotes:

1. It is necessary to note that not all ajuoke possess magico-medicine (nawi) which is capable of killing. As a rule those ajuoke with juogi spirit possession do not possess nawi.
2. A. Hatings, 1975 op. cit. p.69.
3. A.W. Mayor, op. cit. pp.23. See also Daily Nation Newspaper No. 8287, Nairobi, Friday July 31, 1987. It is reported that a descendant of Gor who is the ajuoga (witchdoctor) administered 'medicine' to some people in order to identify a witch amongst them.
4. Interview, Fr. Closey op. cit. He observed that most Christians in his parish which is situated in Northern Ugenya location are nominal because they have visited the ajuoke several times. He remarked that, "as a priest he keeps on forgiving them because they are simple minded".
5. The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. Declaration of the Church to non-Christian religions (De Ecclesiac habitudine and Religious non-Christians) Catholic Truth Society London, 1966, p.4. See also J.M. Waliggo, 1986 op. cit. p.25.
6. J.J. Ongong'a, October, 1983 op. cit. p.1.
7. Ibid.

8. J. Moltmann, *The Church in the power of the spirit*, London, 1975, p.159 quoted in J.J. Ongong'a, *Spearhead* No.78, p.2.
9. Personal observation. It is common upto now to hear some Catholic clergy equate the divination work of ajuke with the influence of Satan, that is evil spirits.
10. See footnote 4 above.
11. J.M. Waliggo et el. Inculturation. Its meaning and urgency, 1986, pp.16-17. The article outlined the opposing views of inculturation from the Church's inception upto the present time.
12. A. Shorter, *African Traditional Religion and Inculturation in Wajibu*. *A Journal of Social and Religious concern* Vol.2, No.3, August/October, 1987.
13. Ibid.
14. A. Shorter, 1985 op. cit. p.10.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. According to Christianity, Jesus died to save mankind from sins, so whoever believes in him would receive everlasting life. Salvation in the Luo religion is acted and not psychological like the Christian already described here. As such it is superficial to ask a Luo to present his problems to Jesus and wait for the solution. That is why the Luo pray to God and seek immediate solution from the ajuoga.



18. See Weekly Review 1983 9th - 14th December.
19. AFER Vol.27, No.4, August, 1985, p.200.  
The author states that: "Milingo had to defend himself that he was not a "witchdoctor".
20. CHIEA: African Christian Studies. Occasional paper No.1, Faculty of Theology. December, 1984, pp.7-10.
21. J.M. Waliggo, 1986 op. cit. p.12.
22. AFER Vol.27, No.4, August, p.221.
23. Ibid.
24. C. Nyamiti, Jesus as our ancestor. Christology from an African perspective. Mambo Press, 1984. See especially the preface pp.7-11.
25. See T.P. Magesa, "Which Way Adaptation?" AFER Vol.II, No.2, 1969 pp.200 in D.R.K. Nkurunzinze AFER Vol.27, No.4, August, 1985, p.214.

GLOSSARY

African Christian theology. Theology is a reflection of God by human-beings. J.S. Ukpong has summarized the African Christian theology as: an attempt to give Africans expressions to the christian faith within a theological framework. It arises from a certain dissatisfaction with the traditional theological model which has proved unable to address some of the today's problems and also from the growing awareness that theological elaborations always address problems within a certain cultural context. The African christian theology being advocated here, when implemented in African church will no doubt be distinct from other theologies. As Bernard Lonergan states: a theology mediates between a cultural matrix and therefore be seen as an inseparable part of any theological system. Every culture possesses sets of values and ideals which are intangible and specific to it. It is those sets of values and ideals which are African that will identify this theology and make it distinct from other theologies.

Apostolate. It is the process of participating in the mission work of Christ. Both ordained and unordained workers aim to practice close imitation

of Christ.

Church. It refers to the community of christians. At times it refers to the building or a place of gathering where christians regularly offer prayers to their Deity.

Call to divine. It is the urge to become ajuoga. It is characterised by physical sickness which ends with ability to identify the unknown or cure diseases using herbal medicine.

Community. The word is used interchangeably with society. It refers to a group of people with the same cultural background.

Diviner-doctor. Refers to anybody specialised in curing diseases and solving social problems in the cultural way of the Luo community. He/she uses divination methods to "diagnose" the cause of social problems and diseases hence he is known as a diviner. He/she qualifies for the title of a doctor because he "prescribes" herbal medicines and other elements to alleviate the suffering of the sick. The term diviner-doctor shows the two important functions of the ajuoga, that is to divine and to offer treatment. However not all the ajuoke are able to divine and cure diseases effectively.

Most of them are efficient in one of the two functions. But, basically all of them attempt to divine before offering treatment in serious matters.

Missionary. Refers to the clergy and other workers of christian churches who came from outside Kenya to spread christianity. Most of them were white. It has been shown in this study that most of them would have liked the Luo to discard their culture so that christianity is planted on fresh ground.

Missionary Church. It is a period between 1904 to 1965 when the Catholic Church in Kisumu was predominantly administered by the clergymen from the western countries. It is also a period when the Roman Catholic Church favoured Western Christianity to the African brand of christianity.

Modern Society. Refers to the present time where western ideas, innovation and cultural traits are preferred to the traditional ones.

The traditional healing process. It is a method of healing which combines rituals and application of herbal medicine. However in minor ailments herbal medicine would be enough. But, in serious cases the treatment involves finding out the causative agents, treating the sick, and providing future protective

measures.

Traditional Luo Society. Refers to the structure, organisation and belief system of the Luo before the Western influence penetrated in their society. Since culture is dynamic, it is no longer viable to talk of the traditional society. What we have is the outcome of the cultural interaction between the Luo, its neighbours and the Western ideas. In the Luo rural environment basic material culture, organisation, belief system which the Luo have evolved over a long period of time and which they refer to as their cultural heritage is still observable. The study refers to the geographical area occupied by the Luo in large numbers in Nyanza Province.

Vatican II document. It is the outcome of the Church Council held within the Roman Catholic Church in the Vatican City between 1963 - 1965. Its resolutions which recognised the diversity of cultures and the need to localise the Roman Catholic Church is important to this study.

- jaduong' dala - He may be the owner of the homestead or the eldest male person who is in-charge of the home.
- jamrweri - A person specialised in removing witchcraft.
- jasihoho - A person who possesses strong megico-medicine. Such medicine may protect one against witchcraft.
- jini - A well known name of spirits by the Swahili speaking people at the Coastal region of East Africa.
- jodak - Non-land owners.
- joka - People of
- joka Opere - People of "Opere"
- jugi - Are spirits which may give someone power of divination.
- keyo - Lineage.
- kwere - Ancestors.
- kul - Cattle pen.
- ligala - The newly built homestead.
- manyasi - Herbal medicine used maily to minimise the effect of broken taboos.
- mbofua - Divination board used by some ajuoke (diviner-doctors).
- mikaye - The first wife.
- mugogo - A married woman is called mugogo in her maiden family.

- nawi - Witchcraft
- nyachira - Second wife
- nyamrerwa - Refers to a person specialised in herbal medicine but not divination. Sometimes it is used by patient's to refer to ajuoga who has been treating them.
- Nyasaye - God
- odheru - A traditional Luo "tray". It is round and made of sticks and smeared with cow-dug.
- oganda - A group of clan who traces their origin from one eponymous ancestor.
- rwiro - Luo healing method of removing witchcraft from the affected person.
- ruoth - A leader of oganda in the pre-colonial Luo society. It is equivalent to the present locational chief.
- simba - Sleeping quarters of the unmarried boys.
- wuon dala - Same as jaduong' dala, see above. But, it specifically refers to the owner of the homestead, while jaduong' dala may only refer to senior male member who might have taken the responsibility to lead in the absence of the wuon dala.



yago

- A tree with log big fruits.

yath

- Medicine. In the pre-colonial period it used to refer to herbal medicine alone. At present it includes the scientifically prepared drugs.

Abbreviations:

- |        |                                       |
|--------|---------------------------------------|
| A.I.C. | - The African Inland Church           |
| A.I.M. | - The African Inland Mission          |
| C.M.S. | - The Church Missionary Society       |
| C.P.K. | - The Church of the Province of Kenya |
| M.H.F. | - Mill Hill Fathers                   |
| R.C.C. | - The Roman Catholic Church           |
| S.D.A. | - Seventh Day Adventist.              |

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: List of Informants.

I. List of Diviners-Doctors (Ajuoke).

1. Abuto Naftali: Approximate age: 65 years. Status, married and has a large family, a village elder specialised in divination and has strong bilo. Place of interview: Rabour, Kano, Kisumu. Date of interview: 25.2.86.
2. Ataro wuod Sumba: Approximate age 70 years. Status, has large family, ajuoga, respected member of the village. Place of interview: Boro, East-Alego, Siaya. Date of interview: 23.2.86.
3. Bara Owuor: Approximate age: 65 years. Status, large family, Ajuoga, member of board of a secondary school, elder. Place of interview: near Rang'ala Mission. Dates of interview: 3.3.86, 4.3.86, 5.3.86.
4. Diana Athieno: Approximate age 55 years. Status, ajuoga at Ugunja, South Ugenya. Place of interview: Ambira, February 25, 86.
5. Muma Alexander: Approximate age: 70 years. Status, married with many children, Ajuoga. Place of interview: Rabuor, Kano, Kisumu. Date of interview: 23.3.86.
6. Mumbo Michael: Approximate age: 55 years. Status, married with two children. Place of interview: N. Sakwa. Date of interview: 16.2.86.
7. Ngwawe Patrick: Approximate age: 75 years. Status, married with grown up children, elder. Place of interview: S. Ugenya, Siaya. Dates of interview: 2.11.85, 27.2.86 and other occasion not recorded.

8. Ndeda Naftali: Approximate age: 70 years, status, married with children. Has grandchildren too. Place of interview: Boro, Siaya. Date of interview: 5.3.86.
9. Radol Ko-Oyoo. Aproximate age: 75 years, status, has large family, businessman. Specialised in bilo. He is also able to divine. Place of interview: Umagoya-Ugenya, Siaya. Date of interview: 2.2.86, 3.2.86.
10. Ofwona Patrick: Approximate age: 80 years, status, married, Ajuoga. Divines but more recommended in herbal medicine for children's diseases. Place of interview: S. Ugenya, Siaya. Date of interview: 23.2.86.
11. Ongewe Daniel: Approximate age: 65 years, status, married, Ajuoga. Date of interview: 21.4.86. Place of interview: Nzoia Market.
12. Ooko Loise: Approximate: 85 years, status, married, a widow with grandchildren. Diviner-doctor. Place of interview: N. Sakwa, date of interview: 16.2.86.

## II. Selected List of Christian Informants.

1. Abonyo Otieno Judith: Approximate age: 50 years, status, married woman with children, a teacher, belongs to CPK. Place of interview: Kisumu Town, date, several times.
2. Achieng' Marita: Approximate age: 53 years, status, married with children, social worker with Catholic Kisumu diocese. Has been in close contact with Catholic Missionaries. Place of



interview: Kisumu Town, Pandpieri. Date of interview: 13.2.86.

3. Acholla Jonathan: Approximate age, 65 years, status, married man, member of A.I.M., Chairman of Nyakach A.I.C. committee. Ex-teacher, place of interview: Nyakach Mission, date of inter: 19.2.86.
4. Adero Sabena: Approximate age, 51 years, status, married with children, social worker with Catholic Church. Place of interview: Pandpieri, Kisumu, date of interview: 19.2.86.
5. Afwande Benedete: Approximate age, 52 years, status, a mother, a teacher, brought up in the Mission. Place of interview: Rang'ala, Siaya, date of interview: 7.11.85, 8.11.85.
6. Agola Christina: Approximate age, 54 years, status, Catholic member, married with children. Place of interview: S. Ugenya, date of interview: several times.
7. Norbertus O. Ahawo Rev. Fr: Approximate age, 30 years. Status, a Catholic priest stationed at Nyabondo Catholic Mission. Date of interview: 20.2.86.
8. Pastor Ajujo Koga: Approximate age, 85 years, status, minister in A.I.M. Has grown up children. Place of interview: Nyabondo, Kisumu, date of interview: 18.2.86.
9. Amedo John: Approximate age, 65 years, status, member of A.I.M. Church, ex-government officer. Place of interview: Nyabondo, Kisumu, date of interview: 19.2.86.

10. Arombe Sebastian: Approximate age, 70 years, status, married, member of A.I.M., in committee of the parish. Place of interview: Nyabondo, Kisumu, date of interview: 19.2.86.
11. Rev. Sr. Mother Maria Aoko: Approximate age, 50 years, status, in-charge of the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph, a Catholic nun. Place of interview: Nairobi and Asumbi, dates of interview: 13.7.85, 12.12.85.
12. Asanda Raphael: Approximate age, 65 years, status, a father, married with grown up children, ex-headmaster, Catholic Church member, place of interview: Ligega, Siaya, date of interview: 13.12.85.
13. Sr. Athieno Augustine: Approximate age, 51 years, status, Catholic nun, social worker. Place of interview: Nairobi, date of interview: several times.
14. Awuor Martha: Approximate age, 55 years, status, married, Catholic, social worker with Catholic organisation. Place of interview: Pandpieri, Kisumu, date of interview: 14.2.86.
15. Mother Celestine: Approximate age, 85 years, status, retired Catholic nun. Place of interview: Kibuye Convent, date of interview: 30.6.85.
16. Rev. Fr. J. Closey: Approximate age, 60 years, status, Catholic Missionary Priest, in-charge of Rang'ala Mission. Came to Kenya in 1942 and has been at Rang'ala since 1951.

Place of interview: Rang'ala, Siaya, date of interview: 27.2.86.

17. Rev. Sr. Consolata: Approximate age, 80 years, status, Catholic nun-retired. A missionary. Place of interview: Rang'ala Annunciation Convent, date of interview: 1.7.86.
18. Sr. Jennipher: Approximate age, 52 years, status, a Catholic Missionary Nun, a teacher. Place of interview: Rang'ala, Siaya. Date of interview: 20.10.85, 21.10.85, 15.12.85.
19. Juma Gilbert: Approximate age, 51 years, status, married, Catechist, place of interview: Ukwala Mission, Siaya, date of interview: 8.11.85.
20. Fr. Kinuthia: Approximate age, 35 years, status, Catholic Clergy. Place of interview: Minor Basilica, Nairobi, date of interview: 20.11.86.
21. Sr. Linus: Approximate age, 50 years, status, Catholic nun, nursing sister. Place of interview: Barkorwa, Kisumu, date of interview: 24.2.86.
22. Sr. Dr. Marie-Luke: Approximate age, 51 years, status, a trained surgeon, social worker, a missionary from Philippine. Place of interview Kisumu Town, date of interview 13.2.86, 14.2.86, 15.2.86.
23. Fr. Maskula Merlinus: Approximate age, 54 years, status, Catholic Missionary Clergy, in-charge of Barkorwa Mission. Place of birth Kisumu, Barkorwa, date of interview: 13.2.86, 24.2.86.

24. Mary Osodo: Approximate age, 52 years, status, married, social worker with Catholic Church organisation. Place of interview: Rang'ala, date of interview: 20.11.85.
25. Margaret Mbanda: Approximate age, 50 years, status, married, teacher, active in church organisation, especially pastoral programme. Place of interview: Ukwala, date of interview: 15.2.85.
26. Sr. Mary Irene: Approximate age, 47 years, social status, Catholic Nun with Masters degree in Theology. Place of interview: Asumbi Mission. Date of interview: 11.12.85.
27. Miyumo Christine: Approximate age, 60 years, married with children, Pastors' wife in A.I.C. She had contact with the first converts. Place of interview Ogada, East Kisumu, date of interview: 18.2.86.
28. Pastor Samson Miyumo: Approximate age, 70 years, status, A.I.C. Pastor. East Kisumu, date of interview: 18.2.86.
29. Fr. Moy: Approximate age, 40 years, status, Priest in-charge of Sega Mission. Place of interview: Sega Mission, date of interview: 5.11.85.
30. Munwang Joseph: Approximate age, 70 years, status, married, ex-government officer. Place of interview: Rang'ala Mission, date of interview: 5.11.85.

31. Ndalo Alfred: Approximate age, 75 years, status, married, church elder in A.I.C. Place of interview: Nyakach Missio; date of interview: 19.2.86.
32. Nyam Iwang Carolus: Approximate age, 69 years, status, married, ex-teacher. Committee member of parish council. Place of interview: Rang'ala Mission, date of interview: 7.11.85.
33. Nyanginja Caleb: Approximate age, 72 years, status, married, church elder, place of interview: Nyakach Mission, date of interview: 7.11.85.
34. Obong'o Atony: Approximate age, 74 years, status, retired catechist, teacher. Leading member of Kibuye Parish. Place of interview Barkwasi, East Kisumu, date of interview: 17.2.86.
35. Odhiambo Boniface: Approximate age, 65 years, status, Catholic member of the church. Place of interview: Wuoroya, Siaya, date of interview: 3.4.85.
36. Odhiambo Leocadia: Approximate age, 60 years, status, married with children. Been working in Rang'ala Mission for most of the time. Place of interview: Rang'ala, date: several occasions.
37. Odiwuor Kizito: Approximate age, 50 years, status, married, catechist since 1960. Place of interview: Rang'ala Mission, date of interview: 27.2.86 and many times.

38. Okello John: Approximate age, 50 years, status, married, Catholic catechist. He worked in various parts of the Kisumu Catholic diocese. Place of interview: Nyabondo Mission, date of interview: 19.2.86.
39. Omega Stephen: Approximate age, 65 years, status, married church elder. Place of interview: Nyakach, date of interview: 18.2.86.
40. Onyango Gabriel: Approximate age, 68 years, status, married with grown up children, Catholic, ex-railway worker and a catechist. Place of interview: Sirunga, Siaya, date of interview: several times.
41. Onyango Jared: Approximate age, 60 years, status, married lay-worker in A.I.C. Place of interview: Ogada Mission, date of interview: 17.2.86.
42. Owuor Dominic: Approximate age, 70 years, status, Christian in A.I.C., married. Place of interview: Nyakach Mission, date of interview: 19.2.86.
43. Oyong Clara: Approximate age, 50 years, status, married but separated. Has grown up children, a nursing sister, social worker, with Anonymous Alcoholic. Place of interview, Rang'ala, date of interview: several times.
44. Oyoo Joseph: Approximate age, 55 years, status, married with children. Place of interview: Nyakach Mission, date of interview: 18.2.86.

45. Sewe Gaitano: Approximate age, 78 years, status, married with a large family. Catholic member of the church. Place of interview: Sirunga, date of interview: 4.2.86.
46. Sewe Philip: Approximate age, 84 years, status, married, village elder, a christian R.C. Place of interview: Nya-gara, Siaya, date of interview: 4.2.86.
47. Sr. Teresa: Approximate age; 80 years, status, retired Catholic nun. Place of interview: Mbage Mission, date of interview: 5.2.86.
48. Fr. Sulwe Silvester: Approximate age, 50 years, status, Catholic Luo priest. In-charge of Kibuye Mission. Place of interview, Kibuye Mission, Kisumu, date of interview: 13.2.86, 15.2.86, 25.2.86.

III. List of informants of Legio Maria  
Church members.

1. Mother Anyango Helida: Approximate age, 55 years, status, married with children, a healer, once a catholic member of the church. Place of interview: Nzoia, Siaya, date of interview: 9.4.86.
2. Mother Anyango Marsiana: Approximate age, 60 years, status, a widow, a healer, has grown up children. Place of interview: Nzoia, Siaya, date of interview: 9.4.86.
3. Ochanda Zakaria: Approximate age, 50 years, status, married, Chairman of Effeso Nzoia Parish of Legio Maria Church, once a catholic member. Place of interview: 9.4.86.

4. Olunya Lawrence: Approximate age, 56 years, status, married church elder. Place of interview: Boro, Siaya, date of interview: 20.4.86.
5. Oluoch Michael: Approximate age, 42 years, status, married church member of Legio Maria, a healer. Place of interview: Duha, date of interview: 20.4.86.
6. Miyawa Petro: Approximate age, 56 years, status, church leader, a healer, place of interview, Duha, Siaya, date of interview: 20.4.86.
7. Otieno Elias Romanus: Approximate age, 28 years, status single, a church elder (deacon). Place of interview, N. Sakwa, date of interview: 16.2.86.
8. Bishop Oyugi Joseph: Approximate age 65 years, status, church leader, married, once a Catholic. Place of interview: Ambira, date of interview: 9.4.86.

IV. Other informants with valuable informations.

1. Dr. Ocholla-Ayayo, A.B.C.: Approximate age 50 years, status, University lecturer, married, assisted in identifying various aspects of Luo culture. Place of interview: University of Nairobi, date, several times.
2. Rev. Ocholla-Ongombe: Approximate age, 45 years, status minister in C.P.K. church and administrator in Maseno North headquarters. Place of interview: Kisumu Town, date of interview: 9.2.86, 10.2.86.



3. Mzee Obuka Odak: Approximate age, 90 years, status, village elder, respected old man, has sound knowledge about Luo customs. Place of interview: W. Alego, date of interview: several times.
4. Dr. Ogutu G.E.M.: Approximate age, 45 years, status, married, University lecturer, assisted very much in identifying various aspects of Luo culture. Place of interview: University of Nairobi, date of interview: several times.
5. Mzee Magak Obande: Approximate age, 90 years, status, widower, village elder, renowned for his knowledge in cultural aspects. Place of interview: S. Ugenya, Siaya, date of interview: several times.
6. Murunga Owiny: Approximate age. he was over 90 years when he died early 1986. Status was village elder. The oldest member around by then. Place of interview: W. Alego, Siaya, date of interview: several times before his death in February, 1986.
7. Paskalia Nyadenge: Approximate age, 51 years, status, widow. She has valuable information related to Luo rites of passage. Place of interview: W. Alego, Siaya, date of interview: several times.

V. Background of some informants.

Missionary Priest: Fr. John Clohesy. He belongs to the Mill Hill Fathers order. He became a priest in 1942. He came to Kenya in

1951 and has spent most of his time among the Luo. At present, he is the priest in charge of Rang'ala Mission. He reckoned that most ajuke were like false prophets, and that is why missionaries never recognised them and they have not been recognised by the Catholic Church upto now.

African Luo Priest: Fr. Silvester Sulwe. He was the priest in-charge of Kibuye Church. He noted that before Christianity was brought to Africa,, the Luo had good reason to seek help from ajuke. With the coming of Christianity and other modern innovations, Africans should adopt to more universalistic religious guidance. He also observed that pioneer missionaries to Luoland were more tolerant to African customs than those who came afterwards. This is a point which needs further investigation.

Missionary Catholic Nun: Rev. Sr. St. Anne. She is a member of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of St. Joseph. She is a trained nurse who came to Kenya in 1930's. She recalls that by 1944 the Luo had started to appreciate hospital treatment. According to her, it was also around this time when more Luo joined the Catechetical classes to learn more about the loving God.

African Catholic Nun: Mother Celestine. She is pioneer Christians in Western Kenya. She attended Catechetical classes at Nangina Mission in the present Busia district and baptised at the age of 14 years. Fr. Bierman, one of the Mill Hill Fathers encouraged her to remain in the Mission and to learn how to read and write and to serve God for the rest of her life. She moved to

Rang'ala to wait for the Nuns but she got an opportunity in 1927 to go to Uganda to be trained as a Catholic Nun (mawes). In 1936, she left Uganda for Asumbi Mission. It took her over twenty years to be full professed Catholic nun of the order of Listle Sisters of St. Francis. She appreciates the devotion of the white missionaries to missionary work. Mother Celestine is well over seventy years.

Catholic Christian: Mr. Antony Obong'o. He lives in East Kisumu location. He was baptised in 1925 at Aluor Mission. Then later he attended Catechetical course at Rang'ala and a teacher training school at Yala from 1930-1932. Mzee Obong'o has been in the church over fifty years. The Vatican recognised his devotion to the church when they congratulated him at his silver jubilee. He has also gone to Rome twice for pastoral ministry. Although he is old, he is still active in church affairs and various development activities.

A Member of Protestant Church: Pastor Samson Miyumo Oliech. Like Mzee Obong'o, Miyumo too comes from Kisumu location. They are great friends. He was baptised in 1926 in A.I.M. at Ogada. He became a pastor (church elder) in 1946. He worked for twenty years as a lay-worker, what the Catholic Church calls Catechist.

Miyumo recalls that the Canadian Missionaries denounced all aspects of traditional life. As an example, he says, they preferred a bell to a drum or a horn. However, the attitudes of A.C. towards

African way of life has changed a lot after 1970's and now even the Missionaries appreciates some of the Africans customs as a foundation of stable life.

An invaluable informant in Luo traditional practices:

The late Mirunga Owiny. He was an elder in one of the villages of Karuoth clan. He died recently in 1986 at an advance age. Before his death he had clear memory of many past events. He was one of the old people who appreciates social change as an inevitable process in life, but he regrets what he called destructive innovations such as tendency to neglect ones kins. He will be more remembered for his extra-ordinary good memory which earned him a nickname of the village encyclopedia. Indeed the village of Owiny Sigoma has lost a historian. He appeared to have been born during the last decade of 19th century. His name "Mirunga" reflects a famine which took place at the close of 19th century.

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRES.

- A. Questionnaire interview for Christians and other informants in the Kisumu Catholic Diocese.

The effect:

Name:

Sex:

Age:

Marital Status: Married: Single: Widowed:

District:

Division:

Location:

Village:

Social Status:

I. Methods of the Luo divination.

- (i) What is divination?  
How many Luo divination methods do you know?
- (ii) How are they conducted?
- (iii) What are the origins of the divination you know of?
- (iv) Why do people consult ajuoga?

II. Other roles of the ajuoga.

- (i) What were the duties of the ajuoga in the pre-colonial time and at present time?
- (ii) State how the roles of the ajuoga have changed as far as you can remember.

III. Missionaries in Siaya and Kisumu Districts.

- (i) How did Catholicism reach Siaya and Kisumu District?
- (ii) What was the attitude of the Luo towards Christianity when it was first introduced in the area?
- (iii) Why do christians consult the ajuoga against the church's teaching?
- (iv) What is the impact of christianity on the Luo divination?
- (v) Briefly state the Roman Catholic teaching and activities which discourage the Luo against consulting the ajuoga.

IV. Evaluation.

- (i) What are your views about this research?
- (ii) Who can benefit from its findings?
- (iii) What are other aspects of this research that you consider have not been covered by this questionnaire?

5501

B. Questionnaire interview for the ajuoke  
(diviner-doctors).

Name:

Sex:

Age:

Marital Status:

District:

Division:

Location:

Village:

Social Status:

I. Ways of becoming ajuoga.

- (i) When did you become ajuoga?
- (ii) How did you acquire the skills of divination?
- (iii) What tools do you use when carrying out divination?
- (iv) How did you acquire these tools?
- (v) How have you improved your divination skills since you became the ajuoga?

II. Origin of spirit possession.

- (i) What are the origin of Sepe, Wagande and Mumbo spirit possession (juogi)?
- (ii) Are you possessed by any of the healing spirits?

- (iii) If so how did you acquire them and eventually become the ajuoga?

Divination Session

- (i) State briefly the stages of divination sessions.
- (ii) How much do you charge for divination and for initiating a spirit possessed person into healing profession?

III. Change in divination and roles of the ajuoga.

- (i) What are the new articles you have incorporated in your divination tools since you started practising?
- (ii) What is the significance of the articles you are using for divination?
- (iii) When and how did you acquire them?

Impact of christianity on the divination

- (i) How far has the christian teachings and activities affected your divination work?

IV. Evaluation

- (i) What are your views about this study?
- (ii) Do you have anything else to add to the discussion?