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African Independent Churches in Zambia (Lusaka)



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### ABSTRACT

The African Independent churches (AICs) in Zambia, as elsewhere in Africa, from their very beginning formed a protest movement against the cultural imperialism undertaken by the missionary representatives of the historic mission churches and also played an important role in the anti-colonial political struggles. In Zambia, the early AICs were closely related to witchcraft eradication movements such as the Mchape, or socially and politically oriented prophet-healing churches such as The Lumpa church of Alice Lenshina. Since the 1970s and in particular in the 1990s the Christianity in Zambia has been significantly marked by the proliferation of the African Independent Churches – both of Pentecostal and prophet-healing type. These churches that started mushrooming particularly in urban settings became part of the strengthening charismatic movement, particularly within Protestantism. A typical feature of AICs is focus on spiritual healing and religious syncretism - the local traditional customs and beliefs in dangerous ghosts, ancestral spirits, or witches are placed within the biblical religious framework where the Holy Spirit (Muzimu Oyela) is considered to be the only source of healing whereas other 'inferior spirits' are labelled as demons. The traditional methods of healing are creatively combined with Christian healing by means of prayers, spiritual blessings, laying on of hands on patients and demon exorcism – it is believed that only a body rid of bad spirits can receive the Holy Spirit, and thus be healed. The paper draws on both secondary literature concerning African Independent Churches and primary data issued from fieldwork in Lusaka (2008-2009).

**KEY WORDS:** African Independent Churches, spiritual healing, prophet-healing churches, Pentecostalism, anti-witchcraft movement.

## Introduction

Diverse church associations represent important socio-structural components of Lusaka's compounds.<sup>1</sup> In every compound, besides Catholic and Protestant denomination, several African independent churches may be found. As the majority of Zambians are strong believers, belonging to a church community is a fundamental part of their social life. Christianity which has flexibly adapted on the African world view, as well as to urban living conditions, offers meaningful substitute for 'old values' and provides new moral frameworks for living. A typical feature of these churches is their strong sense of community, i.e. a 'common conscience' which is periodically reinforced during the church services charged with the 'collective effervescence'<sup>2</sup> (DURKHEIM 1965). In particular Sunday church meetings represent one of the most important social events in a week. It is not only the worship of God that makes people to gather in the church, but their concern for maintenance for social solidarity in the sense of Durkheim's term. Meeting kin, neighbours and friends, strengthening old and establishing new contacts, exchanging information with church fellows helps to extend the social networks and gain social capital. Church associations represent an alternative solidarity network substituting for the nowadays fragmented traditional kinsfolk's networks. In this sense play an important role in the process of the collective identification and social reproduction. African independent churches as an important component of the medical culture in Lusaka also significantly help to the solution to the current health crises.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Compounds' are townships, low-income housing and squatter settlements where approximately 80% of Lusaka's residents live (HANSEN 2008, MULENGA 2003). Lusaka population counts 1, 2millions with average age 16, 8 years. Compound, a term common throughout the southern African region, first came into use for the housing institution adopted on the gold and diamond mines in South Africa in the late 1980s. In postcolonial Zambia, the semantic field of the term has come to encompass all low-income areas (HANSEN 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Collective effervescence is the term of Emile Durkheim (1965) referring to emotional collective experience during the sacred rites which enable to overcome the division among individuals and subgroups and thus reinforces social cohesion. The church members in Lusaka who experience spirit possession (trance) feel the loss of their individuality and the unity with God whom Durkheim equals to a social group. Such an experience of collective effervescence forges collective identity that sustains members of society during period of dispersion into routine, i.e. profane activities that follow. This force is experienced both mentally and bodily and binds people to the ideals valued by their social group.

<sup>3</sup> The health crises in Lusaka have been caused by AIDS pandemic and increased incidence of fatal diseases such as malaria, or TB. It is estimated that 16.5% of the total population is afflicted by HIV/AIDS, whilst in Lusaka the rate is much higher (HULEC-OLŠA 2008). The average age of Zambia dwellers is 16.8 years (HULEC-OLŠA 2008) while life expectancy is low (38.4 years).

The growing popularity of African Independent Churches in Zambia results from their orientation towards spiritual healing – healing through the power of the Holy Spirit – which promises a solution to the problems that urban African dwellers encounter. Stress is put on the rejection of both modernity<sup>4</sup> and medico-religious ‘traditions’, the fight against poverty, unemployment, the high divorce rate and diseases. The preachers promote the idea that the origin of human suffering lies in the world of invisible powers such as demons, witches and fallen angels. A devotee is thus incited to ‘be strong in belief and prayers’ to overcome devilish wiles. The preaching aimed at demonology is reflected in the arrangement of so called ‘deliverance services’ focused on the praxis of exorcism. The African Independent Churches are particularly popular amongst women as they can find relief from their economical and marital insecurity there.

### Historical Context

African Independent Churches (AICs) from their very beginning formed a protest movement “against the verbal and cerebral form of Western Christianity and they represented a cultural renaissance in response to the cultural imperialism undertaken by the missionary representatives of the historic mission churches in Africa” (BOURGESS 2006:16–17). The AICs in Zambia, as elsewhere in Africa, played an important role in the anti-colonial political struggles in the past and were closely related to witchcraft eradication movements such as the *Mchape* that combined the traditional witch-finding methods such as a divination through magical mirrors, *kusamba* (ritual cleansing) with Christian practices, such as prayers, sermons and beliefs in the founder’s a Christ-like resurrection and his future ‘second coming’. The witchcraft eradication movements represented a typical syncretic medico-religious social protest movement. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the proliferation of local trials with witches and increasing power of *ngan’gas* (traditional healers) was felt as a threat to peace in the colony by the British colonial administrators.

As a result they decided to take away the chief’s authority to bring witches to courts and put them on trial (HINFELAAR 2004) and assume a specific legal form imposed as the

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<sup>4</sup> Preachers in the African Independent Churches discourage the church members from attaching to money, attending discothèques or clubs (modern forms of entertainment), or wearing modern cloths (trousers for women).

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Witchcraft Ordinance (1914).<sup>5</sup> This law, which was also put in practice in neighbouring British colonies, prohibited any involvement in both witchcraft and traditional healing. However, the local population saw these restrictions as a British's attempt to protect witches, as a proof of their cooperation. As a protest, the several anti-witchcraft eradication movements appeared. In spite of the ban on the *mwavi* poison ordeal<sup>6</sup>, the witch-finders continued their practice and replaced *mwavi* with a non poisonous concoction called *mchape*.<sup>7</sup>

The name of this medicine gave rise to the famous witchcraft eradication movement that originated in Malawi in the 1930s from where it spread quickly to the Northern Rhodesia (today Zambia) as well as to neighbouring the Southern Rhodesia (today Zimbabwe), southern Tanganyika (today Tanzania) and the Belgian Congo (today the Democratic Republic of Congo). The *Mchape* adherents (witch-finders and their helpers) were mostly young men, returned urban migrants dressed in western clothes claiming to be followers of a mythical leader Kamwende (RICHARDS 1935, MARWICK 1950) that died and was resurrected to carry out the mission concerning final eradication of the pervasive witchcraft from Africa. The witch-finders travelled from village to village on request of the local chiefs<sup>8</sup> in order to detect, neutralise and destroy witchcraft through use of the special magical mirrors, and to cleanse all village dwellers by means of special non-poisonous

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<sup>5</sup> The witchcraft Ordinance of 1914 was renamed in 1967 as the Witchcraft Act. This version of the Witchcraft Act is amended. The last revision of the Witchcraft act occurred in 1995 (Republic of Zambia, Witchcraft Act, Chapter 145 of the Laws of Zambia, Government Printers, Lusaka).

<sup>6</sup> In the past, *mwavi* was used as an 'ordeal poison' to detect witches. This practice was documented not only in Zambia but also in Malawi, Tanzania, Congo and parts of Mozambique. *Mwavi* was commonly controlled by political leaders (chiefs, kings) in the region. Prior to the legislation the British colonial regime in 1900 made an effort to prohibit the traditional witchcraft trials by outlawing the 'poison ordeal.' *Mwavi* is a drink obtained from Sassy bark (erythrophloeum guineense), it produces following effects: feeling of constriction in the fauces, attended by prickling, and followed by numbness, with, after a toxic dose, stricture across the brow, severe pain in the head, coma, and death. [www.henriettesherbal.com/eclectic/usdisp/erythrophloeum.html](http://www.henriettesherbal.com/eclectic/usdisp/erythrophloeum.html) (retrieved October 20th, 2014)

<sup>7</sup> *Mchape* or *mcape* (local variations *mcapi*, *mucapi*) is a chiNyanja word referring to a special non-poisonous medicine of red colour and soapy appearance - that served as a poison ordeal to detect witches. It was believed that *mchape* would cause that any witch who returned to his evil practice to die (Marwick 1950a). My informants defined *mchape* as "a medicine prepared by a witch-finder which is given to patient to drink to prove if he is a witch or not. It is believed that if a person drinks it, the spirit enters his body and makes him speak and explains what he has done wrong".

medicinal herbs *mchape*<sup>9</sup> that cause that an alleged witch who returned to his evil practice will die (MARWICK 1950). This method was used together with the therapeutic techniques of body purification as well as detection and destroying magical objects.

As Richards (1935) showed the emergence of the *Mchape* movement coincided with the rise of the world economic crises that impacted the entire world in the 1930s. As a result, massive return migration occurred in the Northern Rhodesia as well as in the neighbouring countries at that time. The return of the young, independent and ambitious migrants back to their native villages brought numerous problems along. The returnees were pulled back in the traditional system of labour and social obligations which produced tensions in the distribution of power in the village. This manifested in terms of generational (old versus young) and gender (young men versus old women) conflicts.

According to Marwick (1950), this movement played an important role in the anti-colonial political struggles for three basic reasons. Firstly, witch-finders defied Europeans ban on *mwavi* poison ordeal by giving their patients drink *mchape*. Secondly, by using magical mirrors, they made direct accusations of witchcraft, which again was bound to conflict with the requirements of European administrations whose main concern was to keep the peace in their colonies. Finally, they sold medicines and charms, a step that rendered them liable to prosecution for fraudulent dealing (MARWICK 1950).

The witchcraft eradication movements are not phenomenon of the past. We can still find them in many parts of Zambia, although today they are not collectively organised as Mark Auslander (1993) documented on the case of Ngoni movement in Eastern Zambia in 1988-89 where young men, witch-finders accused seniors of blocking the womb of their women and thus causing their sterility. Nowadays, the ritual of “cleansing villages” (of witchcraft) is usually carried out by individual witch-finders who are officially invited by a chief for this purpose.

The history of AICs in Zambia has been significantly marked by famous the *Lumpa Church of Alice Lenshina*.<sup>10</sup> This originally a religious social movement arose in the 1950s in Chinsali from where it spread quickly throughout the north-eastern Zambia and the

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<sup>9</sup> My informants defined *mchape* as “a medicine prepared by a witch-finder which is given to patient to drink to prove if he is a witch or not. It is believed that if a person drinks it, the spirit enters his body and makes him speak and explains what he has done wrong”.

<sup>10</sup> For general information about the *Lumpa church of Alice Lenshina*, see HUDSON 1999, ROBERTS 1970, VAN BINSBERGEN 1981.

Copperbelt. Lenshina, the spiritual leader of the movement, with the help of her husband established a viable independent church operating largely in rural areas with a strong hierarchy of priests (VAN BINSBERGEN 1981). The religious doctrine of Lumpa Church of Alice Lenshina, revealed to her through the Holy Spirit after experiencing a typical 'prophet syndrome', was based on baptism, spiritual healing, witchcraft eradication and the rejection of traditional religious practices and beliefs. According to Binsbergen (1981), the emergence of *the Lumpa Church of Alice Lenshina* was a part of a much wider process of religious change in Zambia at that time. The religious scene in Zambia before independence was characterised by the growth of prophet-healing churches, cults of affliction, the witchcraft eradication movement and by Watch Tower millenarianism. All these movement were politically and socially oriented. *The Lumpa Church* actively engaged in political actions against the colonial or post-colonial authorities. Violent confrontations of *the Lumpa church* devotees with the dominant nationalist party – the United National Independence Party (UNIP) of Kenneth Kaunda – led just after the independence (1964) to many massacres<sup>11</sup>, the ensuing exodus of many church members to neighbouring Congo. Consequently the church was banned by the Zambian government.

The political and social protest typical for early AICs was replaced by general enthusiasm after the independence which brought about the boom of AICs churches. Since the 1970s and in particular in the 1990s under the influence of President Chiluba's declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation<sup>12</sup>, Christianity in Zambia has been significantly marked by the proliferation of African Independent Churches. These became part of the strengthening charismatic movement<sup>13</sup>, particularly within Protestantism.<sup>14</sup> At the beginning it was inspired by external models coming particularly from Nigeria and the United States, experiencing a boom in Pentecostalism. The Pentecostal doctrine thus

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<sup>11</sup> For more information about the insider's story of the 1964 massacre of the *Lumpa Church* communities by the Zambian military forces see KAMPAMPA 1998.

<sup>12</sup> President Frederic Chiluba declared Zambia as a Christian nation in 1991, two month after his election.

<sup>13</sup> The charismatic movement is one of the most significant religious developments in recent church history. In this respect the past century is sometimes called as 'the century of the Holy Spirit'. The charismatic movement brings along a spiritual renewal in the classical Anglican, Catholic and Protestant churches, it also includes independent Pentecostal ministries (BOURGESS 2006).

<sup>14</sup> Although the charismatic movement in Zambia includes mainly Protestant Churches, there has been also a significant charismatic renewal of the Roman Catholic Church in Zambia in the 1970s, embodied by Mr. Emanuel Milingo.

became “a vehicle for the expression of indigenous spirituality, as shown by its strong emphasis on healing, wealth and power” (OJO 1988).

From 1960 to 1970 is related to the coming of Scripture Union<sup>15</sup> to the Copperbelt district in Zambia and to the visit of Billy Graham, the famous American evangelist who has conducted many evangelical crusades since 1948 all around the world. The 1970s and 1980s is generally considered to be a decade of Christian growth in Zambia. By 1980, Christianity constituted 72% of the total population whereas the average in the other states of Sub-Saharan Africa was 53% (CHEYEKA 2008). It is also the decade of the ‘Pentecostal explosion’ (Gifford 1998) represented by the formation of many prominent Pentecostal fellowships in Lusaka, such as the Bread of Life Church International (1975)<sup>16</sup>, the World of Life church (1980), the Pentecostal Assembly of God (1971) and others. In the same period the charismatic movement, which had been gradually strengthening, began to face opposition from the main established churches and its influence began to infiltrate into the Roman Catholic Church. This was particularly under the leadership of Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo who gained an excellent reputation as a Christian spiritual healer in whole Zambia, especially in Lusaka where he was operating. Milingo was convinced that God had given him the gift of healing people through the power of the Holy Spirit. In the 1970s he held public healing séances during which he exorcised evil spirits (ancestral spirits *mashabe*), healed the sick by touch and gave them blessings. His controversial healing ministry, which did not conform to the Roman Catholic doctrine, became a thorn in the Vatican’s side. Consequently in 1982 he was summoned to the Vatican, and in 1983 he was asked to step down from his position of Archbishop of Lusaka which he had held since 1969 (HAAR-ELLIS 1988). After the ban imposed on Milingo’s healing ministry, people continued to write him letters as they believed that he was capable of healing the sick by correspondence in the same way as by laying on off hands (HAAR-ELLIS 1988). The rise of the phenomenon of spiritual healing resulted from increasing poverty which struck the urban population in the 1980s due to the huge economical regression in Zambia. Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo who continues visiting Zambia time to time is considered (as well as Chikanga) to be the best and most famous healer in Zambia.

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<sup>15</sup> The Scripture Union is an international, inter-denominational evangelical Christian movement. It was founded in 1867, and works in partnership with individuals and churches across the world.

<sup>16</sup> The Bread of Life Church, one of the biggest Pentecostal churches in Lusaka, it has five branches in Lusaka district.

In the 1990's the major Charismatic leaders became involved in Zambian politics due to the politics of Frederic Chiluba and his Movement for Multiparty Democracy – MMD party – which was also strongly religiously oriented. The development of AICs in Zambia (1990s up to now) was in token of the new boom of Pentecostal oriented churches labelled in recent literature as Neo-Pentecostalism (ANDERSON 1993), Neo-Charismatic (BOURGESS 2006) or Born-Again Churches (VAN DIJK 1995). The outstanding feature of these churches is that they have no connection to the classical Pentecostal churches and mingle closely together with the charismatic streams of Christianity. Neo-Charismatics are defined as “Christian bodies with Pentecostal-like experiences that have no traditional Pentecostal or charismatic denominational connections, and sometimes only very slender – if any – historical connections” (BOURGESS 2006:231). Whereas the Pentecostals of the earlier period were predominantly marginalized in the new, urban and industrial social order, Neo-Pentecostals, in contrast, are represented by people fully westernised, urban and well educated of a middle socioeconomic status.

Although the literature concerning Zambian Christian profile since 1990 mentions only the neo-Pentecostal movement, the data I recorded in the Registrar of Societies have disclosed that also a great number of the prophet-healing churches have been newly registered since 1990(see schema below). This was influenced by two main factors. The first one was political – the proliferation of these churches broke out in the 1990s as a result of the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation by the president Frederic Chiluba. The second factor was bureaucratic – with the end of the Chiluba governance and the inauguration of Levy Mwanawasa (2002– 2008), the politics of restriction and of the uncontrolled mushrooming of Pentecostal churches by increasing the fees of registration was implemented.<sup>17</sup> The regulations in turn enabled the bloom of prophet-healing churches in this later period.

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<sup>17</sup> From 250 000 to 2 million Zambian Kwacha.



Year	Zambia	Lusaka	Missing records about a location of the church
1996	253	110	0
1997	497	175	0
1998	389	133	0
1999	129	42	0
2000	127	34	41
2001	150	63	16
2002	117	19	32
2003	141	27	38
2004	164	79	23
2005	148	36	29
2006	62	15	7
2007	161	47	23
2008	307	91	37

**Schema 1:** *The number of AICs registered in Zambia and Lusaka between years 1996 – 2008*<sup>18</sup>

### Main Features of the African Independent Churches in Lusaka

AICs since their beginnings have strived to make the Christian message, of which they were merely passive recipients during the colonial era, relevant to the African worldview and culture. Their religious activities have been primarily oriented at earthly life – at people's existential concerns – in order to obtain concrete benefits. In the same way as people in the past used to worship their divinities and ancestors and address them with demands for abundance of children, harvest, success in hunting, trading and good health, they started now to turn their prayers to the Jesus and Christian Saints.

<sup>18</sup>

My own research of archival data in the Registrar of Societies, Lusaka.

The religious syncretism which is one of the main features of AIC's is manifested particularly in an inter-mingling of indigenous medico-religious traditions and the Christian healing – healing through the power of the Holy Spirit (and by means of prayers, spiritual blessings, laying on of hands on patients, demon exorcism or speaking in tongues). The belief that the Holy Spirit is allowed to possess one, thereby removing the presence of undesirable spirits in him, is the core of spiritual healing. It is believed, that only a body rid of bad spirits can receive the Holy Spirit, and thus be healed. For this reason a spirit possession in the form of trance is provoked both on the side of patients and prophets during the healing sessions in these churches. One of the greatest attractions of the AICs is that they accept the ontological reality of witchcraft and evil spirits and offer protection from it.

The syncretic nature of the AICs manifests itself noticeably in the arrangement of liturgy. The AICs leaders promote African music and dance to ensure the authenticity of religious experience for all church attendees. As a result, the church choirs and dance group play an indispensable role in every church service. One can be easily impressed by the ambiance in these churches where people are singing in a circle, dancing and jumping, clapping hands or playing numerous instruments. Walking down the street in Lusaka Sunday morning, one can see how African people celebrate the message of Jesus Christ in freedom, joy and devotion. Sunday church meetings represent one of the most important social events in a week.

Numerous African Independent Churches in Lusaka vary in their religious doctrine, liturgy and ways of spiritual healing due to their different historical roots and the spiritual source they issue from. For analytic purposes we can distinguish two main types of AIC's in Lusaka – (1) 'Prophet-healing churches' (TURNER 1979), or 'spirit type churches' (DANEEL 1987) and (2) 'African Independent Pentecostal churches' (ANDERSON 1993).

### **Prophet-Healing Churches**

Since the 1970s and in particular in the 1980s, the boom of the so-called prophet-healing churches appeared in Zambia, particularly in the urban setting such as in Lusaka or Copperbelt. The most prominent prophet-healing churches operating in Lusaka having various branches are the Mutumwa<sup>19</sup>, Zion<sup>20</sup>, Apostolic, and so called 'Spiritual churches'

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<sup>19</sup> From my research in the Registrar of Societies in Lusaka it followed that there are five different denominations of the mutumwa-type church in Lusaka (with their respective number of branches

(*muzimu* church) such as the Muzimu church, Spiritual church of Zambia, Paradise church and others.

Medico-religious syncretism as the main feature of all prophet-healing churches in Lusaka is distinguished by the creative mix of traditional systems of belief and Biblical culture. Unlike the Pentecostal churches that draw predominantly on Christian healing, the prophet-healing churches adopt some of the elements of traditional spiritual healing such as spirit possession or use of the medicinal herbs (*mankhwala*). For an outsider, the greatest distinguishing feature of these churches is the use of uniforms for its members – white for Mutumwa and Spiritual churches, green and khaki for Zionists. The prophet-healing churches are situated in almost every poverty-stricken compound and their congregations count from 30 to 100 members, of which the majority is women. Their leaders and members are usually not educated, for this reason the sermons are carried out in local languages, mainly in Nyanja and Bemba.<sup>21</sup> They form small congregations, in comparison with huge spectacular Pentecostal churches and therefore their social impact is not as wide as of Pentecostals. One of their common features is an emphasis on spiritual healing through the power of the Holy Spirit. However, their methods of healing differ. As the name itself lucidly shows, the ‘prophet-healing churches’ focus on divine prophesying of patient’s problems through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Christian healers in the church are called ‘prophets’ (*propheti*) and it is believed that they were given the gift of prophecy and healing by Jesus Christ. Apart from prayers, blessing and driving out bad spirits, some

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registered in Lusaka). These are: the Evangelical Mutumwa Spiritual church of Zambia (five branches), the Apostolic Mutumwa Spirit church (seven branches), the Mutumwa Holy Spirit church (one branch), the New Jesus Disciple church (one branch) and the Spiritual church (three branches).

<sup>20</sup> From my research in the Registrar of Societies in Lusaka it followed that there are seven different denominations of the *Zion*-type church in Lusaka (with their respective year of registration and number of branches registered in Lusaka). These are: the Zion Spirit Church (registered in 1977, 12 branches); the Zion Christian Prophecy Church (registered in 1997, 3 branches); the Zion Prophecy Church of God (registered in 1974, eight branches); the Zion Christian Church (registered in 1983, three branches); the Zion Holy Spirit Church (registered in 1995, two branches); the *New Anointing Zion Church* (registered in 2007, one branch); and the *Zion International Church* (registered in 2007, one branch).

<sup>21</sup> Although the official language of the country is English, the majority of Lusaka dwellers speak chiNyanja that serves as a *lingua franca*. ChiNyanja is a Bantu language based largely on Chewa (spoken in Malawi) and Nsenga containing loan words from Bemba and English. Other languages commonly spoken in Lusaka are Bemba (15.5%), English (6.6%) and Tonga (4.6%). The majority of the Lusaka’s dwellers speak three and more local languages fluently and those who attended school master English at the basic communicative level.

prophets, in particular from the Zion churches, use various symbolic objects for healing such as holy water, anointing oil, ropes, sticks, clothes, herbs, ash and so on. The Bible on which their liturgy is based is also used as a ritual object in much the same way as the holy water. For example a healing in the *Mutumwa* churches consists of laying the Bible on the head or body of a patient while praying. On the other side, the Zion churches use the Bible as a divinatory tool for prophesying the patient's future. The patient is asked to open it randomly in front of the prophet who then offers the explanation of the patient's problem according to the respective chapter.

### **Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal Churches**

As indicated above, the number of African Independent Churches linked to the Pentecostal revival began to rise in Zambia in the period from 1970 to 1980. These churches have historical, theological and liturgical links with classical Pentecostalism of a western type.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, the neo-Pentecostal churches of a later period designated as 'Born-Again Churches' (VAN DIJK 1995) are mostly autonomous with no organizational links with Pentecostal denomination outside Africa and originate from Zambia. In Lusaka they vary from small independent churches based in the leader's house to rapidly growing, vast church organizations counting thousands of members, and having splendid churches based near the shopping centres such as the Bread of life, Pentecostal Assembly of God or the Potter House Christian Faith. In contrast to the prophets from the prophetic-healing churches, the founders of neo-Pentecostal churches are young and charismatic men who are relatively well educated. In order to promote their churches, they use mass Media<sup>23</sup>, door-to-door evangelism, or organise mass open-air evangelizing crusades.

The neo-Pentecostal churches that have emerged in large numbers in urban centres, appeal primarily to the young generation of educated and wealthy Zambians who support them financially. The economic interests and clientelism of the neo-Pentecostal churches

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<sup>22</sup> The massive international crusades carried out by certain evangelists such as Reinhard Bonnke, Billy Graham and others took place in Zambia in this time period.

<sup>23</sup> The promotion of the Pentecostal churches through TV is called 'televangelizing'. The Bread of Life International Church provides live broadcastings of their church services on the ZNBC television. Furthermore, the radio 'Christian Voice' based in Lusaka broadcasts numerous programmes on religious themes.

grounded on the religious doctrine known as ‘Gospel of prosperity’<sup>24</sup> is often criticized. Their strategy based on the discourse about poverty and the battle against it ‘in the name of Jesus’ is particularly effective in towns, where the poor constitute the majority. The unprecedented proliferation of the neo-Pentecostal churches in the last two decades in Zambia (as elsewhere in Africa) should be viewed from the perspective of actual multi-crisis, i. e. socio-economical and health crisis in the country. Their growing popularity is linked to the problems of urban African dwellers. The stress is put on the fight against everyday problems such as unemployment, AIDS pandemic, high divorce rate and alcoholism. As Austin Cheyeka explains, “from the 80’s their message shifted from personal evangelism and baptism of the Holy Spirit to miracle, healing and prosperity. Inefficiency, corruption and mismanagement of the resources worsened this situation. In this context of daily survival many people began to construct their lives around the discourse of miracle, healing and prosperity” (CHEYEKA 2008:152).

The proliferation of Born Again Christians is not only a response to the multi-crisis, but also should be linked with the advent of market economy, development of entrepreneurship, and growing number of the middle class in Zambia. The contradictions of coexisting modernity and traditions are embodied in the idea of conversion as a way to being ‘reborn’ spiritually that represents a pillar of the religious doctrine of contemporary neo-Pentecostal churches. The promise of a reward in the afterlife is conditioned by the necessity of abandoning and condemning one’s past life and cultural traditions in order to ‘be born again’. According to van Dijk, “conversion by becoming born again signifies an act of healing that first deals with the past and then extends beyond the personal into wider circles of social interaction” (VAN DIJK 2006:106). The main aim of neo-Pentecostals is thus to persuade the believers to create a distance from their ‘sinful life’ before the conversion, whether it was linked to worshiping ancestral spirits<sup>25</sup>, abusing alcohol, or living in polygamy. The neo-Pentecostals believe that the success of healing a patient lies in his conversion. Being ‘born again’ represents the way how to get rid of all afflictions and regain health. For Pentecostals, the adherence to the traditional beliefs generally represents backwardness that leads to poverty and impedes progress towards modernity and prosperity

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<sup>24</sup> The ‘prosperity gospel’ is based on the belief that if people believe in Jesus Christ, he shall bless them with riches as a reward in the afterlife. For this reason the adherents are asked to give financial gifts to the church at being expected that this good deed will be repayed in the afterlife.

<sup>25</sup> Many of pastors I spoke to were convinced that traditional healers, whom they call ‘witchdoctors’, embody evil and witchcraft. As one of my informants said, “*ngangas put demons [afflict] on their own patients and then they heal them in order to gain money*”.

(MEYER 1993). As a result, the prominent preachers of neo-Pentecostal churches strongly promote internationalism and universalism.

The neo-Pentecostals emphasise the importance of 'charismatic gifts' such as *glosolalia* (speaking in tongues), enduring faith, persistent prayers and the observance of strict and religious ethics<sup>26</sup>. As for spiritual healing, I noted that in contrast to the prophet-healing churches, leaders of neo-Pentecostal churches do not practice the prophesying of their patients. The stress is laid on the power of persistent collective and individual prayers in the process of healing. One of the famous slogans promoted by the neo-Pentecostals in Lusaka is 'PUSH' – *Pray Until Something Happens*. In order to be healed, patients are recommended to follow the prescribed timetable of prayers to be done at home by a pastor, to fast and pray in the mountains, or to assist in the over-night prayers. Praying in combination with the laying hands on of the patient's head, the use of holy water<sup>27</sup> and anointing oil and exorcising the evil spirits represent the major healing practices in these churches.

The preaching is mainly based on the New Testament whereby the stress is laid on a dichotomous struggle between good and evil that is considered to be omnipresent and never-ending. The preachers often promote the idea that the origin of human suffering lies in the world of invisible powers such as demons, witches and fallen angels. A devotee is thus incited 'to be strong in belief and prayers' to overcome devilish wiles. The preaching aimed at demonology is reflected in the arrangement of so-called 'deliverance services' focused on the practice of exorcism. Unlike the traditional healing system that focuses on calming, settling down afflicting spirits in a possessed person, the Christian healing practices resort to their expulsion. Exorcism as a spiritual healing method generally refers to "the expulsion of an evil spirit(s) called demon(s) out of the person who is possessed or tormented and controlled by the spirit(s) inside" (BOURGESS 2006:189).<sup>28</sup> In Lusaka, unclean spirits are primarily associated with ancestral spirits (*mashabe*) and intrusive ghosts

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<sup>26</sup> Apart from the strict observance of Ten Commandments, it is strictly forbidden for church members to drink an alcohol, take drugs, smoke cigarettes and changing of sexual partners.

<sup>27</sup> The holy water is used as a protective medicine either by drinking or bathing. To protect a house against witches, the holy water is sprinkled into all four corners in a room.

<sup>28</sup> The believers draw on the Bible which mentions 'unclean' and 'evil' spirits causing various afflictions ranging from physical ailments to mental ailments and the continual fight against them. According to the Bible Jesus came to 'destroy the works of the devil' (1 John 3:8) and his healing ministry as well as of his disciples granted the same authority as him, was closely linked to the practise of exorcism - casting demons.

(*chivanda*). These are seen as a pure manifestation of Satan's destructive power. Involvement in occult practices, i.e. veneration of *mashabe* spirits, is considered by many Pentecostals as a main cause of demon possession, sometimes even equal as practicing witchcraft. Observation of the course of deliverance services in both Pentecostal and spirit-type churches in Lusaka, disclosed that there are two methods of deliverance prevailing. Firstly it is a praying over an afflicted person while using the name of Jesus. In this respect, Jesus is seen as a supreme healing entity to command demons and release the person. Secondly it is the use of anointing oil on the forehead of an afflicted patient in expectation that healing will occur. The anointing oil represents the healing power of the Holy Spirit. Its supernatural power is in fact discharged during the act of exorcism.

### Conclusion

The growing popularity of African Independent Churches mushrooming in the urban compounds since the Independence (1964) is based on their endeavour to solve the problems that contemporary urban dwellers encounter. As the state has failure to fulfil the needs of its citizen and do not provide certainties and assistance to them, the expectation of better future is laid on the Christian churches that promise the salvation already in this life. The preachers of these churches promote the idea that the origin of human suffering lies in the world of invisible powers such as demons, witches and fallen angels. A solution to diverse problems such as poverty, diseases, infertility, marital and familial conflicts is guaranteed if one is 'enough strong in belief and prayers' and undergo deliverance service to get rid of bad demons and ghosts. It is not only medical dimension of AICs that is often stressed, but also their socio-political role. The churches located in every Lusaka compounds represent a place where strong feelings of *being* (locality and identity) *belonging* (kin, reciprocity, the others) and *believing* (morality, agency) are constructed.<sup>29</sup> Zambia has a particular make-up that gives the church a special importance from the socio-political point of view. "The manufacturing sector is controlled by expatriates most of whom are South Africans while the trading sector is dominated by Asians. In this sense the only sector opened to Zambians is politics, the civil service and church" (GIFFORD 1998:220-221). As many Zambians living in the compounds lack the sufficient education and their social and economic capital is rather limited, the majority of them are also excluded on participation on politics or civil service. In this situation the African

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<sup>29</sup> See CHABAL 2009.

Independent Churches, remains the only socio-political field where ordinary Zambians can fulfil themselves in terms of gaining social prestige and authority.

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