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A table of contents for the *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* can be found here:

The Prospects for Mother Tongue Theological Education in Western Kenya

by Jim Harries

Abstract

Beginning with a short background to the Luo people in Western Kenya, the author outlines how explorations into the nature of language in use (especially pragmatics), point to the importance of the use of MTs (Mother Tongues). While for many reasons the Luo people are in favour of the use of English-medium education, this is not as a means towards self-understanding, but of linking with lucrative international networks. Because the use of English in theological (and other) education does not result in workable relevant local comprehension, the church as well as society in general is oriented to 'mysterious' wealth generating processes. (That is, dependence on the West that is facilitated by appearing to follow Western directives and thinking through imitation of patterns of Western language use, in combination with orientation to prosperity through cleansing from malevolent spirits.) Three barriers identified to the use of MTs in education are government policy, the philosophy underlying the language (the fact that the Luo language is implicitly monistic in outlook and so not sensitive to the kinds of dualistic thinking that seem to lead to development), and its association with poverty and traditional taboos. Only through the use of MTs (or at least languages such as Kiswahili that are not dualistic or dominated by Europeans) in theological education can reality on the ground begin to be incorporated into discussion about the role of God and of the Church in society.

Introduction

This article evaluates an approach to promoting MT (Mother Tongue) education amongst a rural African people. The author sets the scene for his own 22 years of ministry in rural Africa by looking especially at the linguistic situation in Western Kenya. He goes on to identify barriers to the adoption of MTs. He advocates steps that can be taken by Westerners to promote MT education in Africa.

1. Setting the Scene

1.1 Personal Background

I am a single male in his forties. I have remained single so as to be able to live closely to the African people, more specifically the Luo people of Western Kenya. I have lived in Africa since 1988, having originated in the UK. For the last 17 years I have lived in one African village in Western Kenya. This has been the base from which I have gone out to engage in MT theological education. I am also rearing between 10 and 12 local children, mostly

orphans, in my home. My home language is *Dholuo* (and sometimes *Kiswahili*). Our extension Bible teaching programmes are interdenominational with a special emphasis on reaching indigenous churches. Travel between classes is by bicycle, on foot, or occasionally by bus. Our classes run for two hours and attendance is typically between one and seven people. I am also engaged in other church ministry including teaching and preaching in church meetings/gatherings, almost all of which is either in *Kiswahili* (trade language) or *Dholuo* (a true 'mother-tongue'). I teach two days weekly at a local American-run undergraduate theological seminary.

1.2 Luoland Background

The Luo of Western Kenya are related ethnically and linguistically to other groups in Tanzania, Uganda, Sudan, Congo, Ethiopia and beyond. They are known as Nilotes as they are considered to have migrated along the Nile in ancient history. They began to enter Kenya about 500 years ago, and have since occupied land that had previously been populated by Bantu peoples. The occupation was by a combination of conquest, expulsion and assimilation.[1]

From having a reputation for intellectual excellence[2] and for imitating the White colonialists,[3] the Luo have recently become known developmentally and educationally as falling behind the rest of Kenya.[4] The capital city of the Luo region Kisumu is alongside Lake Victoria, and the third city in Kenya. The area the Luo occupy is around the Eastern end of the lake, mostly in relatively dry areas in which fishing and cattle-keeping are major economic activities. They are a strongly patrilineal people. Their 'traditions' have been recorded primarily by their own people, such as *Ker* Paul Mboya.[5] They number over three million in Kenya. A large number now live outside of their traditional homelands, especially in Nairobi, but many of them retain close links with the rural areas.

1.3 Vulnerable Mission Approach

YTC (Yala Theological Centre, 1994) and later STC (Siaya Theological Centre, 2004) were both founded within Luo areas by committees of local pastors. It became clear later that the pastors' interest centred in part on their hope that the presence of such teaching centres would draw in outside funds. I was in both cases the outsider/missionary who played a key role in prompting the setting up of the programmes. Very often local interest was short-lived

[1] Bethwell A. Ogot, *A History of the Luo Speaking Peoples of Eastern Africa*. Kisumu: Anyange Press, 2009, pp. 477-572.

[2] Lesa B. Morrison, 'The Nature of Decline: distinguishing myth from reality in the case of the Luo of Kenya.' *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 45/1, 2007, pp. 117-142, p. 118.

[3] David William Cohen, and Odhiambo, E.S. Atieno, *Siaya: the historical anthropology of an African landscape.* London: James Currey, 1989, 113.

[4] Morrison, 'The Nature of Decline", p. 118.

[5] Paul Mboya, *Luo Kitgi gi Timbegi.* Kisumu: Anyange Press Ltd., 1983.

when outside moneys did not become available. Both centres continue to run at a basic level to date.

My initial time in Africa (Zambia, 1988 to 1991) gave me a basis of experience which governed my approach to Kenya in 1993. In essence in coming to Kenya I was determined to stay close to the people in my life and ministry. I also determined that to be lasting and relevant my ministry should be carried out using local languages and local resources. I therefore began learning *Kiswahili* in 1993 and then *Dholuo* in 1995. I am now fluent in both these languages. Having a Westerner come to work with them but not wanting to invest outside funds into his 'project' was too difficult a concept for some to cope with. I handed over some funds on a regular basis to Yala Theological Centre from a local American-run Bible college where I taught part-time, between the years 1996 and 2006. (The expectation is very high that Westerners coming to work in this part of the world will come with financial backup to generously support whatever project they engage in.)

Linguistic battles rage in this part of Kenya, as in many places in Africa and beyond. The contending languages are English (Kenya's official language), *Kiswahili* (Kenya's national language) and *Dholuo* (MT). In general oral use in Luoland *Dholuo* is by far the dominant language, followed by *Kiswahili* often mixed with *Dholuo*. For official purposes, almost all formal education and literacy, English is preferred.

1.4 The Course of My Research

My early background having been in science (agriculture), I did not have a serious interest in languages until I began to learn the Kaonde language in Zambia in 1988. Through conviction regarding the importance of the use of local languages, I went on to learn *Dholuo* and *Kiswahili* in Kenya from 1993.

In the early days I imagined that once I had a grasp of these languages, teaching theology to the Luo people would be easy and they would flock to my classes. I realised subsequently that it was not going to be so straightforward; even though I may be able to speak in *Dholuo*, my reasoning being very Western could still easily make my teaching appear irrelevant to local contexts. 'Knowing' the language was only one step in the direction of 'being relevant' to the local context, I discovered.

As for many Westerners, it was difficult for me to comprehend and cope with the way of life and the ways of communication of many of my African colleagues. The reality of their lives frequently failed to meet the expectations that they gave through their use of English. Having realised that I must be misunderstanding something about the language I was hearing, I set out to explore linguistics in more detail from about 2001. Reading about pragmatics

helped me get my bearings.[6] I have since understood that language meaning cannot be derived from words alone without careful consideration of the contexts of their use; in every sense of the word 'context'.

With this realisation, I also had to recognize that even though two people (for example a Luo of Kenya and a British native) could be using the same language (English), they could be using it in very different ways. The intended and actual impacts of words they use are of necessity as different as the cultures and ways of life of the people concerned. It followed from this that 'forcing' Luo people to use English in the way it is used in the native-English speaking community (especially by Americans and Brits), as is happening increasingly in the globalised world, is forcing them onto unfamiliar territory. This is because patterns of word usage that 'fit' with Western contexts cannot be accurate in the guiding of many African/Luo contexts. This realisation has further confirmed my view that it is essential for the development of African communities that folk come to use their own language(s) in the education and governance of their own people.

The fortunes of YTC and STC have been profoundly influenced by the nature of the Luo community in which I live and work. I have found that power-relations are important in people's approach to these schools. Many African people prefer to work with organisations that are offering ladders 'up' the international career system. They less frequently consider the value of being helped by a foreigner to achieve better self-understanding. 'Formal' activities people engage in are sometimes those oriented to making money through a link with people outside of Africa, for the benefit of their own community. My own realisation that for a 'school' to be locally sustainable and to speak meaningfully into the local context it must operate using a local language, does not seem to be of much gravity to Luo people in my home community. I have observed that the lack of 'independence' that the use of English constantly implies, is less of a problem than the prospect of losing the lucrative links with the West that English seems to offer.

Presumably because the formal educational system in Kenya is in English, I have noted a number of times that even when 'schooling' is presented in *Dholuo*, students who write notes do so using English. Mother-tongue Luo speakers, even if they have minimum formal education, will very rarely write in *Dholuo*. *Dholuo*, while preferred for oral use, has a very small literature.

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[6] Some of the key texts that I read were Ruth. M. Kempson, *Semantic Theory. Cambridge Textbooks In Linguistics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977; Geoffrey H. Leech, *Principles of Pragmatics.* London and New York: Longman, 1983; Stephen C. Levinson, *Pragmatics: Cambridge text books in linguistics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; Dan Sperber and Deidre Wilson, *Relevance: communication and cognition.* Second edition, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, and Jan Blommaert and Jef Verschueren, *Debating Diversity: analysing the discourse of tolerance.* London: Routledge, 1998.

Because these Luo speakers' English use tends to follow the pattern of the use of *Dholuo* in the local community, that would seem to some to present relatively little problem, (i.e. it is relatively easy to translate between such written English and spoken or written *Dholuo.*) On the other hand, the capacity of locally written materials to engage meaningfully with the local context must be limited in this process by the lack of vocabulary in English.

Many Luo people, even though they may have attended primary and secondary schools for many years (taught in English), are only partially literate in terms of their own very dominant social, cultural, religious etc. concerns. Much of the functioning of Luo society remains oral. This orientation to 'orality' has, ironically, been aided by new technology – such as the recent wide spread availability of mobile phones that have largely replaced hand-written letters, telegrams, etc.

There are very many good reasons why education should be carried out in MTs, including many that I have not even alluded to above. These are widely recorded in the literature.[7] In practice however there are also many barriers to such being implemented, which I discuss below.

2. Barriers to the Use of MTs in Education in Western Kenya

Barriers to the effective use of MTs in theological education in rural Africa include the following:

2.1 Government Policy

Kenyan government policy is to encourage the use of the official languages, English and Kiswahili. There is little or no formal encouragement for the use of MTs in education.

Recent post-election violence has heightened levels of in-country awareness of tribalism. Tribalism is considered by many people to be one of Kenya's most serious problems and one of the main enemies of progress for the nation. We recently heard that the international community was discouraging Kenya from asking for information on someone's 'tribe' in the national census. The authorities in Kenya however decided to keep the question, demonstrating the importance of tribal identity within Kenya.

'Tribe' and MT are closely related, tribal identities being linked to MT knowledge. Ogot argues that the Luo have in their history assimilated people of many different genetic/ethnic backgrounds. What now makes them Luo is

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[7] For example see Adams Bodomo, On Language and Development in Africa: The Case of Ghana. *Nordic Journal of African Studies.* 5/2, 1996, pp. 31-51, and Wayne P. Thomas and Virginia P. Collier, A National Study of School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students' Long-Term Academic Achievement. Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence, 2002.
http://escholarship.org/uc/item/65j213pt#page-1 (accessed August 23, 2010).

that the MT of the assimilated people has become *Dholuo*. In order to be functional in Kenya, the Luo people, as other tribes, really need to know at least three languages: English, Kiswahili and their MT (in this case *Dholuo*).

Kenyan government policy is strikingly different from that of the European Union, even though the social contexts of both seem to have many similarities, including a bringing together of peoples of different ethnic backgrounds and origins into political and economic union. 'Ethnicity' in Europe is encouraged. Vast amounts of money are spent on encouraging the ongoing use of MTs. Political leadership is regularly and carefully spread between different ethnic groups. Political union is not forced onto people, but they are permitted to opt for or against such union. Kenya is very different. Ethnic groups are known as 'tribes'. Major formal efforts are made to try to conceal 'tribal' identities. No tribal language has official status, and instead of translating formal texts, one foreign language (English) is used for the purposes of all official business and almost all literacy. Kenyans are expected to struggle amongst themselves to make choices regarding the ethnicity of key political office bearers in the country.

As a result of all the above, MT education not only is not encouraged in Kenya, but can be seen to be a harbinger of division, violence, hatred, and even bloodshed.

2.2 Western Languages as an Implicit Asset

The view that to suppress MTs is part of the fight for national unity is not only found in Kenya. It is common in much of the continent of Africa. Very few African countries (exceptions perhaps being Ethiopia and Somalia) are governed through the use of MTs. European languages have been preferred for various reasons almost across the board.[8]

This history should not be passed over lightly. There are many reasons why European languages have acquired pre-eminence.[9] In a sense, it has been an inevitable outcome arising from the colonial era and the nature of the transition into independence that swept the continent. It seems that deeper questions regarding the capacity of African languages to govern 'modern' states are rarely considered.

When languages are understood (as I think they must be) as integrally linked to 'cultures', then I suggest that differences in culture result in inter-

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[8] Neville Alexander, *English Unassailable but Unattainable: the dilemma of language policy in South African education*. Paper presented at the Biennial Conference of the International Federation for the Teaching of English at the University of Warwick, England, UK, July 7-10, 1999.
http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/recordDetail?accno=ED444151 (accessed August 28, 2008), pp. 5-6.

[9] Alexander, *English Unassailable but Unattainable*, p. 5.

linguistic incompatibility, i.e. untranslatability. Centuries of close contact and interchange between European nations has made translation between their languages relatively straightforward. The same can be said of neighbouring African languages, or even African languages as a whole (when referring to Africa,[10] I am focusing on sub-Saharan Africa). But it quite likely cannot be said about the interchange between African and European languages, which evolved in almost total separation for many centuries until very recent times.

Examples of apparent incompatibility are numerous. The word *witchcraft* is a classic case of being a very poor translation of many of the 'troubles' besetting the African continent. There is no translation for *nature* in the African languages I am aware of because the holistic African worldview does not separate 'nature' from the impact of 'the divine' as do European languages. No English word can translate *luor* between wife and husband in *Dholuo,* as social economic conditions in the native-English speaking world do not produce the fear that an African wife has of the shame and poverty she might face by walking out on her husband. No *Dholuo* word can translate *dance* in English, as 'dance' in Luoland is frequently oriented to forging links with spirits or gods, a concept that would seem preposterous for many native English speakers. I have argued elsewhere[11] that no *Dholuo* word can really helpfully translate *God*, because Luo understandings of the divine are much more pragmatic than 'intellectual' English ones. No English word can translate *dala* in *Dholuo*, because English people do not know what it is to live in a homestead that is ruled by one's departed forefathers. So examples could continue to be cited, *ad infinitum, ad nauseam*.

Given the above, it is important to ask whether or not African MTs are capable of governing a modern state. Successful instances of such are hard to come by. A possible exception could seem to be Amharic in Ethiopia. Then we must also ask whether African languages can be used to successfully govern a modern school, bank, family, or even church?

If African languages cannot be used in the successful management of such institutions, then how can European languages be used by African people (who are still living within the 'African culture') to do so? The answer of course is that the adoption of a particular language does not in itself change the orientation of the heart, mind or intellect of a person. There is a sense then in which the use of a European language does not enable the running of a European institution. (Similarly, learning an African language would be an

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[10] "In recent times, most African scholars … now see African religion as one in its essence" explains Laurenti Magesa in *African Religion: the moral traditions of abundant life.* Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1997, p. 26.

[11] Jim Harries, "The Name of God in Africa' and related contemporary theological, development and linguistic concerns.' *Exchange, Journal of Missiological and Ecumenical Research.* 38/3, 2009, pp. 271-291.

insufficient means to equip a European to operate an institution in an African way.) What is a language after all, if not merely a way to express what is already in somebody's head?[12] But there are two (at least) important factors that need to be considered when evaluating the impact of the use of European languages in Africa. Firstly, European languages have habituated usages that are often put into writing and taught by visiting Europeans through books, radio etc. Repetition of such habitual uses of language can be fruitful.[13] Secondly, closely related to the above, is the fact that the use of European languages draws numerous rewards and subsidies from Western nations and multinational organisations - subsidies for books, free attendance at conferences, places at Western universities, enjoyment of international television, etc. In addition (ironically) the use by African states of European languages helps to blind the West to corrupt practices going on in these states. At least one reason for this is that Africans these days are typically the spokespeople representing their countries to Western nations, and they will often use English in such a way as to conceal certain practices on the continent. Such concealment would be more difficult if the dominant mode of international communication was Europeans learning African languages. The use of Western languages in Africa is in other words, amongst other things incredibly generative of unhealthy *dependency.*

One flip side of the way that the use of Western languages creates dependency is that doing away with the use of Western languages in Africa would threaten the benefits that come with dependency. In an age in which massive flows of aid and other subsidies of all kinds to Africa are lubricated by the use of European languages on the continent, a lot of powerful people stand to lose a great deal if MT use were to become widespread. The economic equation is so heavily in favour of European languages for the powerful elite that it is hard to expect them to change their positions.

My concern in this article is particularly with theology and the church. Outsiders to Africa often wonder how they can contextualise their teachings so as to make them relevant to the church in Africa. In my experience (heavily supported by Maranz[14]) some Africans can be more concerned about how they can continue to make money out of their foreign friends.

2.3 Association with Poverty While Taboos Remain Intact
Whether this is due to the misleading teaching of false hegemonies, or whether it be socio-economic reality, it has been my experience that many

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[12] I draw here on Sperber and Wilson's 'relevance theory'.

[13] In so far as they will encourage the Europeans concerned to believe that something familiar to them is being practiced, which can in turn encourage them to be generous in their support of the activity concerned.

[14] David Maranz, *African Friends and Money Matters: observations from Africa.* Dallas: SIL International, 2001, pp. 9, 54, 65 etc.

people in Western Kenya do not see a place for their MT in formal or written contexts. Popular wisdom says that European languages are good for writing and education, Kiswahili can be used for intra-African oral exchanges, whereas MTs are really of primary value only in the home and in intra-tribal oral communication.

I have suggested elsewhere that this is due, in part at least, to what I have referred to as a 'magical worldview'.[15] This is similar to the 'holistic view' that I have already referred to above. It can be very difficult for Europeans, who have over many centuries developed a mechanistic understanding of their context and history, to grasp that for other people one's fate and fortune are determined by pleasing gods (ancestors, spirits etc.). "Nothing is more foreign to the pre-capitalist economy than representation of the future … as a field of possibles to be explored and mastered by calculation" says Birth.[16] For these reasons amongst others, the nature of many Luo people's meeting with Western civilisation and all that it seems to offer has taught them that the best way to access what is available is through learning and making as much use as possible of Western languages. The thought that attention to their own languages may enable them also to achieve what the 'West' has achieved, is way off the radar screen of many African people.

The evidence for the position outlined in the above paragraph seems overwhelming from within many Kenyan milieus: Those people who are confined to MTs remain stuck to the requirement to fulfil numerous taboos, complex practices to please ancestors, strictures of lifestyle, diet, housing, permitted agricultural management systems and so on and so forth. Their colleagues who master European languages can end up earning high salaries, driving cars, travelling internationally, and having an apparent immunity to the curses and taboos of 'village culture'. Telling someone that the 'way up' in life for them can be found in their MT can have you laughed out of town. The MT remains for those who have not been able to 'afford' to acquire more prestigious languages. Plus of course for use pertaining to essential 'maintenance' matters regarding home, family, relationships etc. 'Progress', however, is seen as very much tied in with non-MTs.[17]

At the same time as being faced with the above, linguists (and I am one of them) proclaim the advantages of MT use. I believe that the linguists are right.

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[15] Jim Harries, 'The Magical Worldview in the African Church: What Is Going On?' *Missiology: An International Review*. 28/4, 2000, pp. 487-502.

[16] Kevin Birth, 'The Creation of Coevalness and the Danger of Homochronism.' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. 14, 2008, pp. 3-20, p. 10.

[17] See also Adeyemi Adegoju, 'Empowering African Languages: rethinking the strategies.' *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3, March 2008, pp. 14-32. http://www.jpanafrican.com/docs/vol2no3/EmpoweringAfricanLanguages.pdf (accessed April 30, 2010), p. 21.

The current advantages gained by Luo and perhaps African people more generally through use (or 'abuse') of European languages is a not a mirage; it is very real. But, it is misleading and in the long run threatens widespread destruction on the back of increasing unhealthy dependence on the charitable whims of others. A constant heavy drawing on foreign languages for key national and local functions is preventing indigenous languages, including MTs, from developing. But the very foreign languages being used have such a poor fit to people's own life-orientation that the advantage in their use is enormously tilted towards outside subsidy. Increasing levels of globalisation are making it more and more difficult (if not impossible) for African communities to bend and adjust Western languages for their own purposes. Instead, their orientation to pleasing the West so as to continue to receive subsidies and grants pushes them more and more towards incompetence in the handling of their own affairs.

This misleading directing of whole peoples down a dead-end one-way road cannot, I don't think, be blamed on the Luo or African people themselves. They have found themselves to be victims of economic pressures and initiatives coming to them from outside of their boundaries. The state of foreign-dependence of African communities for sheer survival is increasingly reinforced by the 'global community'. So called 'independence' as may be found in Anglophone Africa, seems to be increasingly sought through wholesale transfer from the West. In educational terms, this means that the wholesale transportation of curricula designed in the West for Western people and contexts are preferred to contextualisation to local conditions. The basis of evaluation is very rarely 'fit to local conditions', and almost universally focused on 'compatibility with the international system'. Such refusal to engage with context, or to engage one's own critical faculties because of a preference for accepting foreign wisdom lock-stock-and-barrel, I consider to be extremely dangerous for the long-term prosperity of the African continent.

2.4 Language Choice in Theological Education

Experience of working within Luo-land in Western Kenya quickly reveals the basic unpopularity of MTs in theological education, as also in other fields. In a fundamental way in people's minds formal education has become associated with English and the learning of what is foreign. There is an apparent preference for the formal to be in a separate category to the indigenous on the part of both those who want to maintain the indigenous and those who want to undermine it. Those who want to maintain tradition seek to protect it from outside attacks such as that of rationalism. Those who want to undermine the indigenous do so in foreign terms and using foreign categories

as a means to avoid the strictures and means by which indigenous cultures otherwise maintain themselves.[18]

Many people's understanding of a 'bright future' is that it will best be achieved through the imitation of what is foreign. Because this does not mix well with local categories, it is best taken in as pure a form as possible. Formal theological education is taken as falling into this category.

I think that there is little doubt, if any at all, that communication in a language is aided by the use of that language in education. From personal experience it seems to be evident. It is extremely difficult for school-children to apply in depth what they have learned using English in the classroom to their daily life that is dominated by an African mother-tongue such as Dholuo.

When such communication is attempted, uncomfortable clashes can easily be revealed. For example, English language study of agriculture can reveal the desirability of early planting of maize, whereas Luo custom requires that maize be planted in order of people's seniority; constraining a younger sibling to delay planting until older relatives have done so, out of respect for them. While such can be countered theologically through reference to the ways in which Old Testament laws have been superseded by Christ's teaching, such theology has barely taken hold within indigenous circles of language use. While such challenges to traditional customs are happening, it is much easier to climb the ladder of achievement to recognised qualifications in theological education by ignoring such traditions than by trying to articulate or engage with them.

I am not aware of any trial carried out to measure 'pastoral effectiveness' amongst church leaders by comparing English with mother-tongue use in theological education. As mentioned above, it would seem to be self-evident that MT use is more effective. Except that is, where people's expectations in churches are already oriented to the fruits of English language education. Amongst these fruits are material rewards often available to churches whose leader is fluent in English and able to convince Western donors to part with funds. If potential donors are Christian, or even in some cases when they are not, it is familiarity with Western theological debates and ability to engage in them that is more likely to impress donors than is confusing (to the donors) explanations of indigenous concerns.

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[18] In a similar vein Hurteau explains that the world of orality cannot be refuted, one must simply "walk away from it" (Robert Hurteau, 'Navigating the Limitations of Western Approaches to the Intercultural Encounter: the works of Walter Ong and Henry Triandis.' *Missiology: an international review.* 34/2, 2006, pp. 201-218, p. 206). So it seems many people in Western Kenya perceive that they cannot defeat the worldview of MT languages from the inside, but one must 'walk away' from it by moving into other languages.

In many parts of Africa, and certainly Kenya is a case in point, the church seems to have 'moved on' from MTs in recent years. In a sense that is to say, that it has moved on from understanding-based-belief, to power-based or spirit-based faith. Evidence for this in Luoland is widespread, including the frequent use of the term 'miracle' in the names of churches. Unless miracles (or money) are on offer, one is unlikely to attract people to a crusade or other meeting, I have frequently been advised. This seems to be a revival in belief in magic.[19]

The economic equation in Luoland and presumably also other parts of the African continent is such that European languages continue to flourish while MTs face relative stagnation. Unfortunately their being rooted in unfamiliar contexts means that European languages cannot be understood at depth by most residents of Luoland. Because as a result people are required to engage in processes that they do not understand and that have little fit with local ways of life, this contributes to corruption. Often the use of European languages is effective because it is a way of drawing foreign subsidy; Westerners visiting Africa are much more likely to be impressed by and to subsidize something occurring in English than were it to be happening in some other (to them) indecipherable tongue. That Western subsidy is the 'actual' source of some African miracles.

There would seem to be no doubt at all that MT theological education is the best way to deepen cognitive skills, but much of the church in Luoland (and presumably beyond) is more interested in power and material prosperity than it is in the acquisition of such skills.

3. Advice for the Future

The debate on MT use in Luoland and Kenya is helpfully seen as a part of the wider discussion on dependency on the continent. The current level of outside-dependency results in a preference for non-MT languages. This choice is not made on the basis of maximising the acquisition of cognitive ability.

Conclusion

The use of MTs in education including theological education is in this article found to be essential for the future of the prosperity of the African continent. Much of Western policy in respect to Africa, both during and since colonial times, has unfortunately undermined MT usage. The local person in Western Kenya sees the balance tilted well in favour of a preference for English over MTs for very good reasons linked to the economic dependence of Africa on the West. Theological education in MTs could provide the 'depth' of

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[19] The way I here use the term 'magic' is outlined in more detail in another article. Harries, 'The Magical Worldview', *Missiology* 28/4, 2000.

understanding needed to counter such orientation to dependency. This requires interest by Westerners in MTs and a countering of the current false hegemony.

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