

The Struggle for School: John Owalo and the Rise of the First African Independent Schools

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Abstract: European imperialism and eventual process of colonization of Africa was largely characterised by arbitrary attack on African political and social structures. The consequence of this action was the rise of African independent movements. These movements whether militia, religious (churches) or educational (schools) were founded by charismatic personalities who attracted followers through their lifestyle, preaching and healing, attributed to the power of the Holy Spirit. This study provides a critical appraisal of the life and the educational role played by John Owalo in the establishment of the first independent schools and church movement in colonial Africa the Nomiya Luo Mission.

Keywords: Education, Colonization, Politics, Religion, Development, Growth.

INTRODUCTION

The Nomiya Luo Mission church and schools arose out of a situation plagued with the effects of Westernism namely; the impacts of colonial government, Christian missionary activities and the white settlers, who were continuously instrumental in influencing the political, religious, economic and social issues which had strong repercussions on the lives of the native Africans, this was inevitable for the rise of John Owalo's movement. Western education was the tool and the foundation of Western religion and culture. Adoption of European customs seemed indispensable to a true understanding of Christianity.

To Owalo he acquired both western education and Christianity and used the two as his arsenals against the oppression of his people.

The Rise of Charismatic Political Educator John Owalo

The founder of the Nomiya Luo Mission, Mwalimu prophet John Owalo was born in the former Nyanza Province, Siaya district now Siaya County, Asembo Location, Marang'inya sub location [1]. Rev J J Willis in an undated manuscript described Owalo's home area as Anyoro Asembo, Anyoro seeming to be the name of the headman for the area. However in an oral interview with Keneth Otweyo Omuga a distant relative to John Owalo he seems to agree with Opwapo [1] and describes John Owalo's area of birth as Oboch or an area close to Oboch where the remains of the late prophet Owalo was laid to rest [2]. The birth of Mwalimu prophet John Owalo was surrounded by mystic events, it is said that Odimo his Mother never experienced severe labour pain, something further happened at his birth, which was taken as a sign of his future political and religious prominence, it is stated that a man had died in the next home to that of Mr Abor (Owalo's Father), after the burial, a bull with long sharp horns went to the grave and dug up the earth on the grave with its horns and suddenly roused along

rattle snake which remained hanging and wriggling on the bulls head. With the snake on its horn the bull walked straight to the hut of Owalo's Mother where Owalo was being born at the time [2, 1]. According to the Luo elders interviewed the above events were indicators that the newly born Owalo would yield both political and social power.

Mwalimu John Owalo was therefore the third born child of his Father Mr Abor the son of Mzee Otonde, his mother was a second wife to his father and the daughter of Mzee Odimo from the neighbouring Kisoro village. Mr Abor had two wives namely Tado (the first wife) who had two sons Philip Obado and Mark Ojode while the second wife gave birth to Methusela Nyunja, Okech Samson and the third born was John Owalo [1] this fact was clearly brought out by Mr Oyugi oral testimonies. The question of the exact date of Owalo's birth is a puzzle however Ogut [3] puts it to be in august 1871. It should be understood that none of the respondents was able to clearly point out when exactly Owalo was born. The date put forward by Ogut [3] as indicated above is questionable because at this time the native Luo's did not know how to read and write, and at the same time there is no recorded phenomenon or event historically that can be used to approximate his age, so how Ogut arrived at this date is

not known. It's recorded that he died in 1920, one participant saw him when he was young and approximates his age at the time of his death to be between 40years and 50years. This assertion is supported by Opwapo [1].

'It can be estimated from available evidence that Owalo was born towards the close of the 19th century, people who saw him claim that by the time of his death, he was in his late forties. One is inclined to conclude that if he was able to start a mission in 1912, then he was the age mate of chief Daniel Odindo and Shadrack Adem who were about 40years of age by 1912' [1].

However in an oral interview one participant, contrary to a number of participants, pointed out that Owalo might have died at his late thirties and that his life and ministry can be equated to that of Jesus Christ. Mwalimu John Owalo was born in a humble background; Owalo's father was a farmer he kept a few indigenous cattle, chicken and goats and also practiced subsistence farming. It's noted that Mr Abor was never aggressive to amass wealth like his peers; he never did fishing nor participated in active trade which was a common economic activity to the people of Asembo. His family depended solemnly on the little that he gathered together with his wives. Even the little assets that he had, after his death attracted serious family disputes between the wives and the sons, though Owalo was not interested [1]. However it should be noted that most participants were not able to give a full description of Owalo family background. Mwalimu John Owalo's physical description is not clear, however:-

'Those who saw him claim that he was short tempered; he neither liked defeat nor critics; but he was quiet and hospitable. Physically, he was short in stature, bow legged, with a big flat head and a wide mouth. By any standard Owalo was not a handsome man' [1].

Owalo's background is shrouded in mystery, however during his youthful age and also being close to chief Odhola of Asembo, together with his friend's chief Odhola's son Odindo, Shadrack Adem and himself were taken to study at Friends Kaimosi Missionary School and later Maseno School. It was because of the good relationship between Chief Odhola, his friend Chief Odera Ulalo of Gem with the Church Missionary Society Rev J.J Willis that they were given a chance to admit the three young men to school. It's also because the colonial government at that time wanted the sons of chiefs to be educated in preparation for white collar jobs and future leadership into the colonial government structure. This was the beginning of a revolutionary journey in the life of Owalo and later his followers and students who attended NLM schools.

It should be understood that a number of participants interviewed gave mixed responses as to

whether Owalo joined Friends Kaimosi School directly or Maseno Church Missionary Society School or Kisumu Kibuye Roman Catholic Mission School or attended both. Willis notes that Owalo was a frequent visitor in Kisumu and probably during one of his visits in 1904 he met students of Kaimosi Boys School led by Daudi Okwato who impressed him and made him stay in Kisumu and joined Kibuye Roman Catholic Mission School [4]. According to the above source the idea of Owalo attending different missionary schools sparked in him the need to know more about the white man's education.

Enough evidence points to the fact that in 1905 Owalo was a student at Kibuye Roman Catholic Mission School where he was a student for four months and also worked as a mission boy for four months. It was during this time that he was baptised John (Johannes) Owalo in June 1906. Shortly after he left Kisumu to work as a houseboy for a court judge called Sir Alexander Morrison in Mombasa for one year and left when Morrison was transferred to Nairobi [4, 5]. It should be understood that due to the friendly nature of Owalo he befriended Sir Morrison when he was a court judge in Kisumu and even on several occasions he was his translator and even taught him the dholuo language [6]. Further the relationship with Sir Morrison enabled the 'tactful' Owalo to familiarise himself with the colonial laws. Later this experience will enable him develop a movement that will for some time with a hidden agenda operate within the confines of the colonial laws.

This move was a great political stance in the life of a phenomenon in the name of John Owalo. While in the mission station at Ojola, it's noted that Owalo led a silent political rebellion that was even captured in the Roman Catholic Church Kibuye Report in Kavirondo 1904-1925 as noted :-

'Ojola mission promised a glorious future.....it was customary to begin and end the instructions with 'our father' and 'Hail Mary' and 'the glory'. Sometime after the priest had begun to notice that catechumen did not answer 'Hail Mary'. He questioned the catechists and to his surprise learnt, the first and only Christian among the Nilotic Kavirondo was a rank protestant who threw aside our lady and the intercession of the saints [7].'

This kind of rebellion may have emanated from the teachings he received from Judge Morrison about the history of the Roman Catholic Church and Protestantism. And secondly from the treatment he received from the catholic priest at Ojola church and thirdly he wanted to conserve some indigenous cultural practices [8] at the same time it should be understood that Mwalimu Owalo had contact with radical African Muslims in Kisumu, but initially he had contact with

the Arabs at the coast, who probably circumcised him before he joined the CMS School in Nairobi in 1908 as a sign of obedience to God's call. It's noted that he asked Zakayo Ojwang of Asembo who was one of his close friends to circumcise him, since Ojwang had never circumcised he advised him to talk to one of the friends Yakobo Okeyo of Kisumu Karateng who suggested to him the idea of seeking help from the Muslims of Kisumu.... He joined Islamic religion where he was circumcised and named Omari [1] several respondents agreed to this assertion. His contact with Muslims and his partial conversion was very significant. Islamic religion and its school system of Madrasa may have influenced Owalo to establish a religious outfit with similar structures,

However Rev JJ Willis in his manuscripts asserts that, Owalo was circumcised by a Roman Catholic Luo Boy [9]. According to several respondents interviewed none of them agreed with Willis ideas, this view seems fallacious simply because the Luo did not have the knowledge of circumcision and at the same time all the participant in this research denied the above assumption and backed the idea of Islamic circumcision. In this case information obtained by Mr Ochola seems to agree with the information given by [9]. In 1908, Owalo married his first wife called Elizabeth Alila. She is described as a medium sized African lady endowed with beauty and brains. Elizabeth was a graduate of Ojola Catholic Mission School. In agreement with the above Judge Morrison's letter to Dr Scott notes that Owalo who was now called Omari had a wife and a child and therefore was in need of a private shelter and food in the mission [10].

Owalo moved to Nairobi with his wife searching for his friend Judge Morrison. He resumed his duties as a house boy and later joined the newly established C.M.S school as a teacher under the headship of Rev Canon George Burns. He didn't work in the school for long because of doctrinal differences with the school authorities. Later, he joined the Church of Scotland in Kikuyu by 1909 with the help of Judge Morrison who introduced him to Rev Dr Scott who later played a wider role in the establishment of Alliance boy's school. A number of sources support the above assertion such as KNA: JUDICIAL/ 1/297, KNA: JUDICIAL/ 1/474/11 and P.C.E.A Archives, microfilm of 1909.

According to KNA: JUDICIAL/ 1/297, KNA: JUDICIAL/ 1/474/11 John Owalo taught at Thogoto in Kikuyu however burglary incident took place at the mission center where he was considered a suspect, he was detained at Dagoretti command Prisons under Sir Lyford, assistant District Superintendent of prisons as the chief suspect but later released. The move to arrest Owalo was considered as political to silence and instill fear in him to change his radical views about the

government and generally Christianity as propagated by the missionaries. At Thogoto he taught and politically radicalised Kenya's first president Jomo Kenyatta and other nationalist the above information is contained in a source KNA: JUDICIAL/ 1/474/11. As a brilliant student and teacher, he learnt and taught typewriting and Carpentry. In October 1910, he became a teacher at Maseno School where he taught reading, writing and Kiswahili however Rev Willis noted that Owalo was not a satisfactory teacher [9] he refused to worship with other Christians and therefore his controversial beliefs contradicted the Christian faith and thus led to his expulsion in 1912 [1]. Owalo was vehemently accused of teaching and indoctrinating students with 'resistant' ideology. Both Opwapo [1] and Willis [9] seem to confirm the information given by all respondents concerning the matter.

In 1912 Owalo left for Oboch Maranginya village in Asembo with the sole aim of establishing the NLC. No doubt Owalo's actions were anchored on politics. When educators actively seek the legitimization and subsequent adoption of changes in educational policies, it seems reasonable to expect that educational leaders interested in changing the schools should become good politicians [11]. The case of Mwalimu John Owalo represents a radical educator and a clergy who was determined to develop both a school and a church anchored in his own right, wisdom and beliefs. J M Lonsdale and A Wipper suggest that Owalo utilised the movement as a vehicle for interclan politics, since he belonged to the clan traditionally opposed to the chiefly clan. Oginga Odinga says that the movement was apolitical protest and when Owalo was called to be questioned by the district commissioner in a public baraza he said 'leave me to preach'. 'I am preaching to Africans and not whites'. B.A Ogot describes Owalo as the first Christian rebel in Nyanza who on discovering the hypocrisy of westernism decided to be a Christian in his own terms [1].

Just like Gen Mathenge among the Agikuyu, Koitalel arap Samoei among the Nandi, Elijah Masinde among the Bukusu, John Owalo was fighting for a particular course and was determined to struggle and fight for his beliefs, the only difference with the rest is that Owalo decided to use the school and the church as tools to fight colonial practices and injustices. This is clear and evident right from the time he claimed to have received a vision from God. In Kitabu Lamor [12] authored by Owalo himself, he clearly shows dissatisfaction with foreigners including Europeans, Indian Banyans and the Goans when he said that they were not allowed in heaven. Owalo had no better alternative of sending his political statement directly to Europeans other than through his religion. Similarly Opwapo [1] notes that Owalo was witty because he read the times very well, around this time the colonial government was actively against all African political

movements and uprisings especially from 1913 to 1915 several political movements and cults such as the cult of Mumbo was crushed to death and mercilessly dealt with. In Malawi the Chilembwe uprising was also dealt with hence Owalo decided to use a political statement rather than to be seen political.

To hide his political description Owalo had to seek refuge in the church and western education as a perfect means to drive his political agenda. He had to convince the District Commissioner that his was not a political movement like the others resistant movements by reporting the activities of his movement to the District Commissioner and Nyanza Provincial Commissioner Mr John Ainsworth KNA: DC/CN/1/5/2 this information was fully supported by a number of oral sources. This move was a diversionary tactic to keep the colonial government from close watch. As earlier noted Owalo had been exposed to the colonial laws by his friend sir Morris who supported his actions and also ensured that they are anchored by law. As apolitical figure he served as the sub headman of his Kochieng clan, Bryan [13] seems to agree with the above facts. Coming from a poor background Owalo could have thought that by establishing an independent church and school, it would help to liberate his people from poverty. The schools were to be instruments for both political and economic liberation.

NLM schools were to be used as a yardstick for development having been exposed to western education and beliefs and the resultant effort thereof. The church was to liberate his people from the pangs of colonialism and imperialism. The above oral information is evident from the citation by Opwapo below:-

'Culture clash or acculturation seems to be a strong case for the rise of the NLC The alien government introduced new administration that was different from political organization to which the Luo were used. Christian missions introduced new religious beliefs and practices many of which were unknown to the Luo; formal education in schools whereby reading, writing and arithmetic were taught, Europeans settlers who, having decided to make Kenya their home were continuously instrumental in influencing political issues and affairs which had repercussions on the lives of the people; migrant labour and taxation [1].

With colonialism in Luo Nyanza Africans who were accustomed to liberal social dynamism policies were now under capitalism from socialism. From independent political structures to structured colonial administrative structures. Africans who wanted their children to acquire western formal education had to work as migrant labourers to get school fees and also had to be converted to Christianity and abandon their traditional practices against their wish [14]. This kind of

colonial oppression greatly affected John Owalo to an extent that made him establish the Nomiya Luo Church and the Nomiya Luo Mission schools. NLM was to provide emotional and practical solutions to the political, social and economic challenges the Luo were facing. Just Bryan [13] argues that the desire behind the formation of the NLC was that of a church with a Luo hero, a saviour of the people.

The spread of Nomiya Luo Mission ideology

NLM was like a bang in Luo Nyanza, the movement was seen as a solution to the problems the locals were facing. This can be affirmed from the submission Richards [15] clearly notes that the Minister of Community Development noted in 1956 that the Church in Nyanza was facing a major split as a result of the establishment and recognition of the Nomiya Luo Mission locally known as Jokowalo after the founder. For a period of time Mwalimu John Owalo worked as a migrant labourer in Kisumu but later travelled to Mombasa to work for a colonial court judge, Sir Alexander Morrison. This was a turning point in his life as noted by Opwapo, while in Mombasa; he had several visions and revelations that convinced him of God's call upon his life, this view is supported by Opwapo [1]. According to Ndeda,

The most spectacular one that completely transformed him came in March 1, 1907 when he was taken to the first, second and third heaven by the spirit. He saw various revelations in these heavens. He noted that the first heaven, the abode of men was a remarkable place. All races of the world were attracted to it but the angels Raphael and Gabriel secured the gates Ndeda [2].

At the time he was serving Judge Morrison, he saw a vision which directed him to start a similar political movement that will later transform the lives of thousands of Africans. He saw the first vision in 1st march 1907 [16]. Owalo heard a voice saying; 'If you accept Gods commission then you will be Gods follower forever'. Astounded by the voice, Owalo asked, 'who? The voice answered 'you', Sir Morrison was present; others said that two men from Kisumu location were also with him. In his vision Owalo was taken to heaven where he saw two roads. The one on the right hand led to heaven and the one on the left hand which was pampered led to hell, on reaching the first heaven, it was a beautiful place, and all the nations of the earth wanted to enter in but the angels closed the gate of heaven, the angels let the Jews in first, followed by the Arabs, after them went in John Owalo and angels Gabriel and Raphael, all three entering together. Then the Europeans, the Goans and the Indian Banyans attempted to enter but the angels closed the gates and chased them away; kicking them [17]. The above information is supported by oral testimony of NLM Archbishop Obego and Ndeda [2].

The above discussion is clearly brought out by Ndeda [2] who notes that, the Nomiya Luo Mission Church allowed in the Arabs, the Jews and the Luo only because they had prophetic representatives. However, attempts by the Europeans (the Pope inclusive), the Goans or the Portuguese and the Indian Banyans were thwarted violently. They failed to meet the conditionality's [2]. The above analysis clearly indicates a political religious prophecy in the sense that the whites apart from the Jews were the ones who were denied entry to heaven; this is a pointer to the fact that Owalo was greatly against white domination and its elements of imperialism and colonialism. From oral testimonies, Owalo and angels Gabriel and Raphael reached the first heaven the first thing they enquired was the whereabouts of the Pope and the practices of the Catholic Church. The angel told him that the catholic church had no place in heaven since it's associated with idolatry, however Mary mother of Jesus Christ was among the women in heaven. The first heaven was an abode for men. The second heaven was a living place for angels and the third heaven was the living place for God and Jesus, this information is in conformity with Ndeda [2].

At this point he saw Jesus seated on the right hand of God. Leaving the company of angels behind, Owalo hurried to bow before Jesus. Jesus came forward and told him you must not do that I am your fellow servant; worship God only [1, 18]. In the third heaven Owalo got instructions to circumcise all male adherents, 'Go! Take a well-sharpened knife to circumcise all men. He who has an ear let him hear and adhere but leave the disobedient alone [2], he was provided with a long cord whose other end was held by Jesus in heaven, to take to the earth. Jesus himself confirmed to Owalo that he was not of the same substance as God and so Owalo was to serve God alone. Owalo was further instructed to take a long sharp sword and circumcise his adherents as a sign of distinction between his adherents and other Luo [18]. Opwapo [1] puts it clearly that, after his heavenly experience, Owalo was deterred by Sir Morrison from starting his movement until he had acquired adequate western formal education. It should be understood though a 'white', Sir Morrison was a close confidant of John Owalo. They read from the same script, Sir Morrison at most cases disliked colonial government practices and even made a landmark ruling against the government. Owalo was always keen to listen to the advice of his mentor in all spheres Sir Morrison [19].

After this experience, Owalo reported to Sir Morrison that he wanted to leave his employment because God had called him to start a religion for the Luo people. Since Owalo was semi illiterate Morrison advised him to get further education. Since the demand of education was increasing in Nyanza, Morrison felt that in future people will not accept religion without

education. He further argued that, if Owalo did not get any education, then he was going to be viewed by Europeans and educated Africans as insane [20, 19, 1] the NLC Prayer Book [18] seems to be having the same information. This educational challenge from Sir Morrison may have further influenced Owalo and his adherents to lay a foundation and start the Nomiya Luo Mission schools. Owalo in his own right and senses metamorphosis into a political figure and started a silent resistant movement against Christian practices especially as propagated by the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1907 Mwalimu John Owalo went to Ojola Catholic Mission with the view of getting the white man's education to its entirety. According to Ndeda [19], Owalo's avowed belief that Jesus was not of the same substance as God and his rejection of monogamy as basically a European idea and not a biblical one was the main idea behind his excommunication. He left Maseno to start his 'Mission to the Luo' but later in 1914 he renamed his movement the Nomiya Luo Mission as a formidable organization to fight Europeans religious, socio-economic and political beliefs. This was the first African Independent Church in Kenya, East Africa and among the earliest in the whole of Africa that later on established independent schools to advocate on its mission [19].

A number of scholars have argued for and linked colonial oppression and initial religious reactions to the formation of independent schools and churches, such scholars such as Blandier [21] and Lantenari [22] have brought out a strong link between the rise of African nationalism and the independent school movement. According to Lonsdale [23] four factors played a key role in Nyanza environment that greatly influenced the Nomiya Luo Mission Church. The first, related to the religious tug of war that existed in Nyanza. The European Missionaries seemed to be politically an auxiliary arm of the colonial government. This was seen on the way they supported and perpetuated European colonial practices through land alienation, taxation and forced labour.

Lonsdale [23] further argues that a political mutual understanding existed between the missionaries and the government so the Africans concluded that, although their methods were different, they had similar objectives. The second factor that determined the nature of the movements was the more immediate frictions and features of foreign / colonial rule, such as taxation, which forced people to go out far from home to labour. Third, the multiplicity of missions brought confusion to the people. Moreover, in Nyanza independence was not purely an African phenomenon. Willis Hotchkiss of the Friends African Industrial Mission, decided to pull out of the mission and establish an independent mission in Lumbwa. Multiplicity of missions was an invitation to

the indigenous religious heritage, which was interfered with, this was a reactionary act which created a very suitable background or setting for the rise of independent churches and schools [23]. The above seems to find a niche in NLC Prayer Book [18]. This background was perhaps the basis for the emergence and the rise of the Nomiya Luo Mission Church.

Wipper [24] points out that possibly Owalo sought a movement to release the Luo, politically, socially, religiously, economically, and culturally, from colonial domination but realised that, given strong political overtones, his movement would experience severe reprimands from the colonial government which already responded violently to such movements. Examples of such responses like, the cult of Mumbo in South Nyanza dealt with mercilessly from 1913-1915 [24] and the Chilembwe uprising of 1915 in Malawi. The above argument in the context of NLM was affirmed in oral testimonies and supported by archival source [20]. Tactfully Owalo had to prove that his movement was not dissident by reporting regularly to Kisumu for a period of two years, a probationary period slapped on him by the Provincial Commissioner, Mr. John Ainsworth, before the movement could be registered. When it was evident that it was "not subversive to good order and morality", it was registered during which time he got a political appointment to serve as the sub-headman for Kochieng' clan [20]. According to Ndeda [2], Reconstruction of the history of the Nomiya Luo Mission Church reveals that a religious movement goes through several phases as it emerges and that its relations to a larger political context changes overtime.

Wipper [24], Ndeda [2] and Wilson [25] all agree that Yohana (John) Owalo life was greatly affected by colonial experience and due to his interaction with African and Indian nationalists from other parts of Kenya and he was aware of their responses to colonialism. Owalo, probably, longed for an African pattern of worship and a meaningful local community that formed a transition between the old and the new. As Muga [26] points out Owalo might have desired a church with a Luo hero, a saviour of the people. His attitude represented rejection of missionary paternalism and certain Western Christian values, such as monogamy, which were integrated in Christian teaching. A fact supported fully by Wilson [27], who claims that those who start their own religious movements are relatively deprived but it should be borne in mind that separation sometimes arises in schism from existing sects without operation of external causes. That Owalo was religiously dissatisfied can be inferred from his movement from one denomination to another and even from Christianity to Islam.

Unitarian Judge, Alexander Morrison, impacted on Owalo [28]. Since Owalo had an intimate

relationship with Alexander Morrison, it is possible that apart from working together on the study of Luo grammar, they discussed serious theological thoughts [1] this assertion is fully anchored by archival source (KNA: PC/ NZA/ 2/4) [29]. Owalo was not a weak and frivolous character but engaged in a most serious search for a more acceptable reality. With the magnitude of his experience and as a courageous person he noted a problem and sought a solution. When he had established what seemed relevant to a people who had to adjust to change, he started propagating it in 1912 (KNA: PC/ NZA/ 2/3) [29]. He was mainly concerned with his tribe, the Luo and this concern has continued to affect the development of the membership of the church. After the death of Owalo, Nomiya expansion continued.

The Rise of Nomiya Luo Mission Schools

Nlm efforts in combating ignorance among its people was its major strength, at the begin of the 19th century western education was a prerogative of christian missionaries however owalo brought in th

The idea of african direct involvement in the provision of their own education (kna: ed/312/1/4/87). As adeyemo [30] notes, the right to education arises out of democratic ideas, everybody should have a chance to become intelligent in this new age of science and innovation which is clearly brought out in unesco [31] that mentions improved education as essential to giving meaning to our national purpose and power. In further support to the above axim and mark [32] add that it requires skilled manpower and brain power to match the power of totalitarian discipline. Basically this is what owalo was struggling and fighting for through his nlm movement; john owalo wanted to use political means in order to establish schools to create political awareness among his people, to be able to fight the colonial political injustices and status quo.

All participants interviewed pointed out that, the colonial government had put it very clearly to the people of Nyanza that, if anybody wanted education he had to leave associating himself with NLM activities and join a Missionary Church. In support of the above Opwapo [1] states that NLM was not ready to lose its members to other missionary organizations and therefore saw the establishment of NLM schools in 1912 reaching its apex in 1938. Yohana Owalo started the NLM; he had both education and teaching experience which he had gained during his quest for truth from various missions. He was an ardent teacher, well grounded in theory and practice and he always wanted his teachers to teach with the same passion. John Owalo massive teaching experience in various mission schools provided him with fertile ground to establish strong educational institutions to compete with that of the missionaries.

The taproot of NLM schools stems from two adjacent villages of Oboch and Maranginya village in Asembo. At Marang'inya village famously known as Orenge he established a sub elementary school in 1914 and an elementary school at Oboch in 1912. The students came among the adherents of the NLC and especially in Nyanza. This was when John Owalo wrote a letter to the district commissioner Nyanza to start the schools and permission was granted. However these schools were short lived before they were re-established. The above information was supported by a number of participants interviewed.

In 1930 Yona Oyungu and Meshack Onyango wrote a letter to the district commissioner Nyanza requesting for the opening of NLM schools at Oboch, Sagam, Rapogi, and Holo. They were granted permission and the schools were opened amidst silent protest from the C.M.S and Catholic missionary groups that were dominant in Luo Nyanza. After being taken through the curriculum and were proven to be enlightened they were sent as preachers of the NLC to preach and teachers in NLM schools to teach. On record this schools were filled to brim. These schools employed its teachers from a pool of its adherents and especially interdicted or retired teachers from the missionary schools. Most of those teachers' certificates had been confiscated after they married second wives an act against Christian's values. The church and the community contributed funds to pay teachers. Students paid what they could afford there was no standard fee for students.

A miracle of the sought took place in 1931; the NLM Sagam School was the first one to receive grants from the colonial government which was now to be given annually. The inspector of schools in Nyanza carried out inspection work at Sagam School and in his report he noted that, the quality of education offered at Sagam was below per and could not qualify for grants in aid. However in 1939 Sagam became the first Nomiya Luo Mission School and indeed the first independent school to receive grants in aid (KNA: DC/CN/1/6/1). NLC was characterised with leadership wrangles especially after the death of John Owalo. This reached its apex in 1940s, the then bishop had little interest in education, and he was not willing to release funds to the schools to facilitate the payment of teachers and purchase of school facilities. During this time Oboch school in Asembo died the second death, Rapogi School in Seme and Holo School in Nyakach consequently died down completely. In 1948 colonial government in fear of the influence of the NLM and its activities took advantage of the leadership wrangles in the church to insight the leaders against each other. The church splited into two factions the original NLC and the Nomiya Sabato Church (NSC). It's at this point that the NLC realised the significance of its schools as a unifying factor. The same year Oboch School was

resurrected together with Alungo, Rapogi, Kijana and Holo (K.N.A/DC/CN/1/6/1).

These schools developed amidst great opposition from the colonial government. On 13th January 1953, NLM applied to the director of education for permission to manage their schools similarly to Christian missionary organizations such as the C.M.S, the mission had interest especially on its four big schools namely Holo School, Rapogi School, Alungo School and Sagam School. Their request was thrown aside and were advised to look for a known body to manage the schools or they be closed in April the following year. The school management and the church petitioned Mr R.K Stovold to intervene and accept the schools to be under the management of the CMS and the director of Nyanza CMS mission schools. Sir Stovold rejected NLMs request on the ground that their teachings contravened Christian teachings (K.N.A:ED/312/1/4/87). The district education board took over the management of NLM schools in 1954 and the church bishop G.C Owalo was admitted as a board member to represent the NLM schools. The district education officer Mr Harrigan became the chief inspector of the schools (K.N.A: DC/CNK/2/6). Narration given by all participants seems to be in agreement with the facts presented above.

The level of frustrations experienced by the NLM schools from the colonial authorities can be well explained through a letter written by Mr J Crukmer for Provincial commissioner Nyanza Province to the secretary Nomiya Luo Mission Educational committee 1950; dated 15th November 1950, referenced E.MISSN/NL/8. He notes that:-

Your committee is too large; a total of 12 members including the office bearers. The size of your school system does not justify the representation of your church on the D.E.B at present. Perhaps the ADC would consider appointing a suitable member of your committee as one of their representatives. Please give me a list of your schools and the location in which it's situated. Also the registration number of each of the date on which each was approved by the director of education. There will be no additional funds available in 1951 to pay a supervisor. No school committee are registered. Am prepared to discuss your schools with the chairman, secretary and treasurer only on 29th at 10am government time. I shall not see you if you are late. Answer this letter first (KNA: KSM/1/10/45/70).

Competition between the missionary groups and the NLM was at play. In 1956 NLM bishop ordered for the establishment of a school in Nyamira without the consent of the District Education Officer. The colonial government having been influenced by the missionary groups ordered for persecution of the church leaders, this was not done. In the same year they established

another school at Uradi and in 1957 they established Uthoche School in Uyoma and Kanyibok in Yimbo. These schools operated with unaided status however the government made special provision for them. The CMC under Rev Playdell and Miss Fanny Moller launched a complaint with the education officer about the status of those schools. Later Kanyabok School, Uthote and Uradi came under the management of the District education Board (KNA: DC/CN/1/2/10).

These schools continued facing opposition as noted below:-

In 1959 Mr Ombaka the assistant education officer was made in charge of the NLC schools. This was after G.C Owalo had been in the DEB for about three years. All the same the DEB recommended that some NLC schools should be closed or transferred to a recognised management. Othoche and Kanyibok were among some of the schools that were transferred or closed down [1].

Following the recommendations of the Ominde commission report that all schools be under the management of the central government, the government took over the running of NLC schools. All the missions responsible for the establishment of schools became sponsors; NLC became sponsor of the following schools in Siaya district Sagam, Oboth, Ujwanga, Othothe, Nyamira and Kanyobok. In Kisumu district, Rapogi, Alungo, Holo, Opande, Nyaundi, Gunu and Nyanginja [1], some of these schools have metamorphosis into secondary schools such as Nyamira Girls High school, St John's Oboch secondary school, Sagam High School, Rapogi High School and Holo High School, while other have been politically taken over by DEB and the mainstream churches.

It should be noted that up to 1964 the NLM schools were managed by the church under the education committee. The composition of the committee included 31 members of which six were serving as office bearers; such as chairman and his vice, secretary and his vice and treasurer and his vice. The members were elected from different locations in the province and from different church groups in the province where Nomiya Luo Schools existed. The committee was guided by three principles namely: to try to improve conditions and state of the schools and the mission, to appoint teachers working under the mission and to make a link between the Nomiya Luo Schools and the education authority (KNA: DC/KSM/1/10/45/71) [33]. The colonial authorities seemed to be at the center of NLM politics. They denied NLM main stream church funds to run its school but went ahead to fund arrival group with grants in aid to run their Sagam school. This political anecdote in education is evident in a letter written by Mr. T.A Watts the District Commissioner Central Nyanza to the

Provincial Commissioner Nyanza dated 31st July 1952. He notes that:-

You have all the correspondence on this matter particularly Mr Hunters letter ADM.11/6/50 of June 1950 addressed to Mr Ramogi your present correspondent. It's clear that no agreement has yet been reached between the rival factions'. I beg to recommend that you are not prepared to hold another vote as to who should be 'BISHOP' until 25th May 1955 i.e. five years after the vote before Mr Goodbody. There never will be agreement so long as the two rivals live. The Gem section is developing the school system and is now on grant aided list. If their educational system develops may be Asembo section will wish to take advantage of it. (KNA: KSM/1/10/45/77) [34].

After failed attempts by NLM to secure grants from the government they resolved to empower the educational committee to collect funds for the school from its followers in a meeting held on 16th march 1951 at Oboch primary school. The colonial government refused to acknowledge the membership of NLM education management committee. In a surprise or rather political move the provincial education officer in his letter referenced EDUC/ORD/GEN/267 dated 1st March 1954 instructed the district commissioner to make an immediate decision to close all the NLM schools or hand them over to the existing foreign missions (KNA: DC/KSM/1/10/45/86) [33]. To the surprise of Mr. W.F Parker the district Education Officer Central Nyanza in his correspondence to the District Commissioner Musoma Tanganyika about the Nomiya Luo Mission schools; he notes that Nomiya Luo Mission has two District Education Board allied schools and two unaided schools. The mission has shown capability of managing their schools to a comparable level with those of any other mission. (KNA: KSM/1/10/45/78) [34]. This was perhaps a full determination of NLM leaders and its adherents to proof to the colonial authorities and the resisting factions that they are capable of giving and providing the best educational opportunities to its people.

CONCLUSION

John Owalo's political stand against imperialism and colonialism was seen in his life and activities. It's evident enough that available literature on Yohana (John) Owalo shows political causes as the basic theory to explain the emergence of the Nomiya Luo Mission Church and schools. Owalo utilised the movement as a political protest vehicle against colonialism. Owalo as the first Christian rebel in Nyanza, who, on discovering the hypocrisy of "Westernism" decided to be a Christian but on his own terms. His legacy as an educator still stands through the existence of Nomiya Luo Mission sponsored schools.

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