

**The Role of Religion in Social Transformational Disharmony:  
A Case Study of the Integration of the Sinai Church and the  
Bahai Faith in Ipapa, Tanzania 1972- 2005**

**BY: MWANGI PAUL NGANGA**

**A Thesis submitted in the fulfillment of the degree of  
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**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGIOUS  
STUDIES**

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## DECLARATION

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

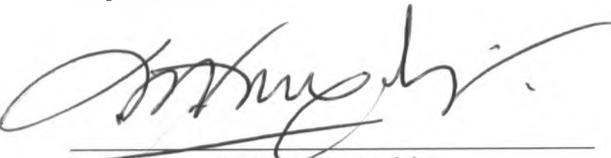


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Mwangi Paul Ng'ang'a

21/08/08

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Date

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as University Supervisors



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Prof. Jesse N.K. Mugambi

24 Aug 2008

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



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Dr. Nahashon W. Ndungu

28/08/08

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Date

## **DEDICATION**

To my mother and father who gave me a love of learning

To Mary who has given me a learning of love

To all my teachers and mentors who taught me to learn when learning was very  
challenging

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research could not have been completed without the assistance, encouragement of many people and contributions of many people and organisations. To all of them, I offer my thanks and appreciation.

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I am indebted to John Kagira who brought my attention and curiosity to the Ipapa community. Grateful acknowledgement to the Bahai Secretariat at Nairobi for facilitating my itinerary to Dar es Salaam. I will always remember the goodwill and friendship of Shabban Seffu of the Bahai Secretariat of Dar es Salaam for hosting me in his house and facilitating my itinerary to the interior of Tanzania with a lot of ease. I never felt a stranger among the Tanzanians. Thanks also to all the respondents who shared their experiences with me making it possible for this document to attain its current shape.

I deeply appreciate the moral support of my parents and my dear wife Mary Ng'ang'a for the concern on the progress of this project. Their encouragement has enabled me to work against all odds. The patience of my dear wife was a candid encouragement.

## ABSTRACT

Southern Tanzania is a home of various religious orientations. In the early 1970s, the Sinai Church was started in Ipapa, southern Tanzania. The Sinai Church was added to the number of religious orientations in the region all in the process of social change. Yet, after a period of about twenty years, the members of Sinai Church embraced the Bahai Faith. At the heart of the study is the role of religion in social transformational disharmony. The study set out to investigate the factors, meaning in the integration of the Sinai Church and the Bahai Faith in Ipapa, southern Tanzania. Three protagonists can be identified in this meeting and integration. On the one hand is the political establishment in Tanzania that was established on socialist policies immediately after independence in the 1960s. The nationalization process was to be achieved along the socialist lines thereby promising a new Tanzania through inward-looking self-reliance that shunned anything from outside the borders of the country. The other protagonist is the Ipapa community members who by their own initiative evolved a mechanism to cope with the alienation and desperation that colonialism and later the nationalization process produced in southern Tanzania.

The formation of the Sinai Church was an attempt to find meaning in this situation and also provide hope to the people. The third protagonist is the Bahai Faith a missionary religion that began in Iran in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and has continued to claim following outside Iran. With the teaching and believe in progressive revelation, the Bahai Faith holds that Bahauallah is the promised fulfilment of all religions. Bahauallah has come to bring an age of fulfilment to all people. Bahais endeavour at all costs to take the message of Bahauallah to all the inhabitants of the world. The message of Bahauallah is believed to be the panacea to solve all the religious, political, economic, and social problems of contemporary humanity. It is in this endeavour that Bahais in Tanzania identified the receptivity of the Ipapa people and endeavoured to teach them the Bahai Faith. The central hypothesis is that the meeting and confrontation of internal and external forces of change contributed to the formation of the Sinai Church and later its integration to the Bahai Faith.

The meeting and integration of the Sinai Church and the Bahai Faith is treated alongside other theories, the functional analysis theory, the socio-cultural theory and the transformational matrix. The transformational matrix recognises that social change occurs through the interaction of three actors namely the individual, the institution and the community. The interaction of these three actors is factored into the events, patterns, trends and processes of transformation that mark a society yearning for change. The Supreme Being is also recognised as an actor in the matrix. This gives the investigation a foothold in theological reflection to add to the religious reflections that the other theories provide. A theological reflection appreciates the Supreme Being as the author of divine revelation while religious reflections mainly focus on religion as a human creation.

The study employed the purposive sampling technique to identify key respondents from among the relevant individuals, institutions and communities. These include individual members of the Sinai Church, individual Bahais, National Bahai Secretariat of Tanzania, Regional Bahai Council of Southern Tanzania, The Bahai National Institute Board, the Auxiliary Board Members in Mbozi, the Local Spiritual Assemblies in Ipapa and its neighbourhood. The field research entailed conducting interviews among key respondents, administering questionnaires and participating in various activities of the core respondents. The researcher used a still camera to capture the various events he participated in and observed. The sample size is 150. The questionnaire, interviews and observations rendered into narrative form. In some cases the results were presented in tables of frequency distribution and percentages.

The study showed that the state-guided nationalism in Tanzania was counter-productive. Feelings of alienation and desperation cropped up especially among the individuals and communities that did not experience the wellbeing that the state promised. It is established in this study that the Ipapa community evolved a solution to their predicaments by founding a religious community that grants meaning to their existence. However, in the institutionalization of these endeavours the community

invited the Bahais into the scene and in this way the members of the Sinai Church en masse embraced the Bahai Faith.

The acceptance of the Bahai Faith by the Sinaists would have meant that the feelings of alienation and desperation would be replaced by feelings of fulfilment and belonging. Yet as the study found the learning was only a one-way process. The context of the Sinai Church was not taken into consideration during the integration. Consequently feelings of betrayal and inequity abound among many of the Bahais that were initially members of the Sinai Church. The Institute Process as conducted by the Bahais has not achieved a vibrant Bahai community in Ipapa.

The study indicates that if the Bahai ideal is to be realized in Ipapa particularly and in Tanzania in general, the three social actors (individual, institutions and community) must be integrated into the process. Moreover the experiences and the expectations of the Sinai Church must be included in the transformational matrix. In addition, a dialogue and an exchange between the actors must be encouraged intentionally. The Bahai institutions in Tanzania are well placed to advance such dialogue. At a wider scale, the Bahai Faith invites more research into its claims of fulfilment and achievements. Such research would benefit all missionary-oriented religions and social engineers. Music and ritual dance informed a great deal the formation of the Sinai Church. In this regard, more research in the relationship between music and healing is worthwhile. There is also a need for fresh appreciation, of the models of social reconstruction transformation as championed by the Bahai Faith. This can be done by including Bahai studies in academic institutions. A situation of the Bahai Faith being accepted by the people of the world may not arise, however, its ideals will influence many.

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## **Operational Definitions of Terms**

- Ipapa Bahai Community** –The combination of the members of the Sinai Church and others who were not part of the Church all of whom embraced the Bahai Faith.
- Service Staff** – The stick given to the Sinaists to differentiate the service that each member offered to the community
- Home Front Pioneers** – Local Bahai missionaries
- Kanisa La Sinai** – The Swahili rendering of the Sinai Church
- Sinai Community** – The exclusive members of the Sinai Church
- Sinaists** – The adherents of the Sinai Church
- Tablet** - Divinely revealed scripture. In Bahai Faith the term is used to denote the writings revealed by Bahauallah, the Bab, and Abdul-Baha.
- Ujamaaism** – The socialist political ideology that was advocated and practiced by Tanzania immediately after independence

## Maps

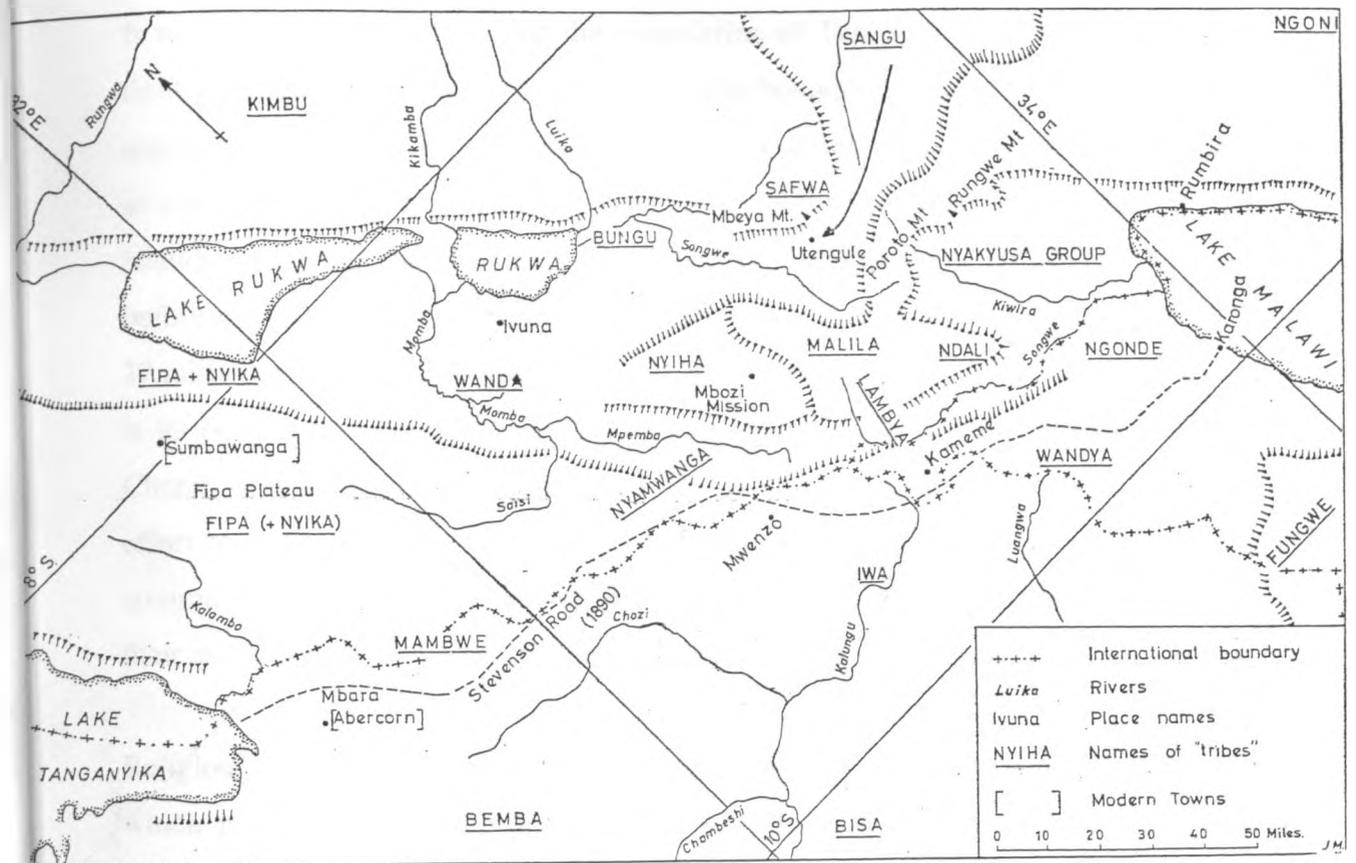
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Map 1: The map of Tanzania showing the main towns. From [www.wikipedia.Tanzania.map](http://www.wikipedia.Tanzania.map)



Map 2: The map of Tanzania showing the regions. From [www.wikipedia.Tanzania.map.Regions](http://www.wikipedia.Tanzania.map.Regions)



Map 3: The location of the Nyiha between L. Malawi, Tanganyika and L. Rukwa.  
 Source: Roberts, A. ed. *Tanzania Before 1900*, (Nairobi: EAPH, 1968), 60.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

#### 1.0 Introduction

It was not until the 1880s that the boundaries of Tanganyika began to take shape through the European partition of Africa.<sup>1</sup> The boundaries were to affect the hitherto segregated communities under the auspices of a united nation. Tanzania was created in 1964 by the union of mainland Tanganyika (former German East Africa) and the Islands of Pemba and Zanzibar, which was an Oman colony for several centuries before the British government made it a protectorate. The population is estimated at 37 million, and grows annually at a rate of around three percent.<sup>2</sup> Tanzania's best asset is its people: friendly, welcoming, unassumingly proud and yet reserved. The Sinai Church is located in southern Tanzania. The beauty of a people lies in their conscious effort to utilize their environment towards the well-being of the individual and the community. Culture is the product of this effort. The endeavour of people to manage their environment is very significant in their progress and actualization.

Religion as an aspect of culture gives people a worldview on which and through which progress and actualization are linked. Thus, religion inspires its adherents' endeavours greatly as they strive to override their obstacles for a more fulfilling life. Hence, the significance of religious consciousness in shaping the character of social life is unquestionable. At one level, religion deals with the inner realities of its members, which are vital in bringing any conspicuous change in their situations. At another level, people's experiences and aspirations for a better life condition their inner realities that in turn influence religious choices in view of experience and expression. Given a chance, a person makes choices concerning what is available and needed. Religion is not isolated from choices as it reflects the inner realities of persons who staff the community. To this effect religious orientations keep shifting from one focus to another as was the case with the founders of the Sinai Church in Ipapa, Tanzania. In shifting, every effort should be exerted by missionary faiths to adopt a combination of all possible measures to raise up their 'scriptural teachings', increase

the number of believers, promote the faith and exalt it and make it victorious over other faiths.<sup>3</sup>

The growth of the Sinai Church and later its encounter with the Bahai Faith in Ipapa is the concern of this study. The members of the Sinai Church were not exerting effort to promote their faith but rather they were eager to join another faith. The Bahai Faith is a missionary religion and theirs was an opportunity to evangelize. The Sinai Church must have had reasons to expect to join another faith. This researcher knew of the Ipapa community when he was doing his MA Thesis.<sup>4</sup> In this connection, it would be appropriate to examine how the Sinai Church was formed and on what basis it embraced the Bahai Faith. The researcher desired to understand the Sinai Church and what it portends along the stream of social change.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

During the 1960s, two men, Yohannes Simbowe and Petero Simbeye in Ipapa Tanzania through mystical command and conscious efforts, started a community of Faith.<sup>5</sup> Before founding the community of Faith, both Petero and Yohannes had gone through various mystical experiences that culminated in dreams and visions.<sup>6</sup> Through the dreams and visions, the two men were commanded through a mystical voice to found a religious community. The command at first came to each of them independently. Later when they teamed together, the command would come to them simultaneously. The religious community was to be grounded on the culture and customs of the Wanyiha (the local inhabitants of the region) people. Petero and Yohannes used to meet in a forested dome-shaped ridge (photo 3). During their meetings on the ridge, they would hear a mysterious voice. The voice was identified to be that of the Divine or his agents. Petero would record what the voice uttered. It was through the directives of the voice that the ridge was named and the name of the faith community revealed. The ridge became "*Mlima Sinai*" (Mount Sinai). The name of the faith was to be "*Kanisa la Sinai - Dini ya Mila na Utamaduni*" (The Church of Sinai - A religion of Culture and Traditions). The Sinai Church was an African

Instituted Church. The value of culture and the dreams in shaping the Sinai community are going to be analyzed.

Before *Kanisa la Sinai* had taken shape Petero and Yohannes continued to meet on the ridge (*Mlima Sinai*). When on the mountain they would hear the voice address them on what to teach and do for those that would join them. Luckily, they put down on paper what they heard.<sup>7</sup> Also they recorded the dreams and visions that they received. In 1972 four individuals joined Petero and Yohannes. From then the community grew rapidly. The four claimed to be led in visions and dreams to Yohannes and Petero for religious leadership and guidance. As the community grew, dreams and visions continued to be received but this time projecting the *Sinai community* into a different religion that would have a worldwide appeal.

*Kanisa la Sinai* incorporated traditional rituals including dancing for therapeutic purposes.<sup>8</sup> The ritualistic aspect gave the Sinai community (and later the Bahai Community that thrived from it) an African character so integrated that it appears natural. This is an integration that scholars of religion advocate for when talking of owning a faith. The study attempts to investigate how the dynamic blending happened.

In 1993 the Tanzanian Bahais arranged a teaching campaign in Ipapa. It was at this time that the Sinaists and the Bahais met one another. The Sinaists were very receptive to the Bahai teachings.<sup>9</sup> After consulting amongst themselves (without the presence of the Bahais) the Sinaists agreed to embrace the Bahai Faith. The Sinaists wrote a letter to the national administrative body of the Bahais' of Tanzania known as National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of Tanzania (NSABT) requesting for membership into the Bahai Faith.<sup>10</sup> The Sinaists saw the fulfillment of their dreams and visions in the Bahai Faith. The Bahais saw a receptive mission field.

After the NSABT received the letter, a program of activities was initiated in order to make the receptive Sinai community a Bahai one. The growth of the Ipapa Bahai

community poses a problem that needs to be solved. The main questions to be answered are:

- What facilitated the formation and growth of the Sinai community?
- Why did African culture and traditions feature in the Sinai community?
- What are the underlying factors that contributed to the exodus *en mass* of the Sinaists to the Bahai Faith?
- To what extent does traditional African worship and practices influence the Ipapa Bahai community?
- Have the Tanzanian Bahais learnt anything from the Sinai community or has the learning been one way?

No research and documentation has been done to answer the above questions. This is the problem that the current research addresses. The exploration of these questions will help to explain the role of religion in a society yearning for change. The central hypothesis is that the meeting and confrontation of internal and external forces of change contributed to the formation of the Sinai Church and later its integration to the Bahai Faith. Religion has a vital role in a changing society. In the process of change there is the meeting and confrontation of various internal and external forces. However, after change has taken place some aspects continue unchanged in the new context. What is that reality in the case of the Ipapa Bahai Community? The study on the community at Ipapa will focus on the dynamics of change and continuity in a society with particular reference to religion.

## **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

The study intended to achieve the following:

- (a). To investigate and analyze the formation and the growth of the Sinai community in Ipapa
- (b). To identify the teachings and practices of the Sinai community
- (c). To identify the factors that influenced the Sinaists to embrace the Bahai Faith and the resultant religious experience and expression.

### 1.3 Rationale of the Study

The founding of the Sinai Church and the shift to Bahai Faith poses some sociological plus functional challenges to the relationship of social structures and social processes. The main question is: Why should a community shift from a traditional African set-up and embrace some Christian principles and then after twenty years embrace a third faith that is without missionary roots in the area? Local, regional, national and international aspirations are represented in the observable changes at Ipapa. The founding of the Sinai Church in some sense represents local aspirations. The Christian aspects in the Sinai Church are regional related aspirations. In embracing the Bahai Faith, the Ipapa community demonstrates national and international aspirations. The study will help to identify the dynamics that enhanced these aspirations and their relationships.

Jesse Mugambi in his Inaugural Lecture (delivered at the University of Nairobi on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1996) on '*Religion and Social Construction of reality*', describes religion at its best as a facilitator of social engineering. He suggests that in all cultures the majority of people are searching for "lighthouses" in the troubled ocean of life. People who accept to become converts tolerate the religions in which they have been brought up, or adhere to the faith with the conviction that these faiths are like "lighthouses".<sup>11</sup> Mugambi appears to be interested in how people become converts and how their faiths help them towards better living. Individual wellbeing is also connected to the stability of the society as a whole. Hardly does he touch on when the faiths merge or blend with others. The researcher was keen to document the information on how a faith blends into and in another. The changes that the Ipapa community went through are a pointer to the relationship between faith and social stability. The research therefore aims at analyzing the internal structures, developments, and functional problems and dilemmas of religious organizations and institutions as agents of social change with the Ipapa Sinaists as a case study.

The origin and the development of the Ipapa Bahai community in Tanzania illustrate the conversion of a religious community into a different one. The factors and

circumstances that facilitated this conversion motivated the researcher to investigate the phenomenon. The religious orientations that existed in the area prior to the acceptance of the Bahai Faith are also identified. By so doing the extent to which these orientations affected and still affect the community under study are also analyzed. Culture is a complex phenomenon which affects all the social and technological structures that depend on it. Culture has six pillars namely; ethical, political, religion, aesthetics, kinship and economics.<sup>12</sup> Hence in analyzing a people's cultural expectations any of the pillars is a justified point of reference. The research hopes to establish how the dynamics of culture are reflected on any offshoot in the pillars. The religious pillar of culture is taken as case in point.

The study will help to determine the relationship between the Bahai Faith and other faiths. Bahai Faith advocates for the unity of the world in all aspects. The Bahai teaching on divine civilization demonstrates the commitment to this unity, (Appendix IV). However, the practice and expression of the Bahai Faith appears to negate other religions. Bahais teach their faith to people of other faiths in order to get converts. What is the case at Ipapa where more than five religious orientations have found themselves in one community, (Table 2.1) The research will demonstrate how the failure of the Bahai Faith to affirm the Sinaists resulted to feelings of frustration.

Southern Tanzania was evangelized by different Christian groups; the Moravians, the Last Church of God, the Roman Catholics and some Pentecostal churches. The research documents the implications of this unbridled missionary enterprise in southern Tanzania. To this religious geography, traditionalists, the Sinai Church and the Bahai Faith are added. The proportion of Ipapa Bahais in comparison with Ipapa Christians and traditionalists was also investigated, (photo 6). Bearing in mind what Bahai Faith stands for it was worthwhile to investigate how the Ipapa people came to terms with the Bahai Faith and what happened to their former beliefs.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What contributed to the founding and growth of the Sinai Church?
2. Why did the Ipapa Sinai community accept the Bahai Faith?
3. What does the success and the future of the Bahai Faith in Ipapa depend on?

## **1.5 Scope and Limitation**

The Ipapa Bahai community is found in the Mbozi region of Mbeya District in Tanzania. The Ipapa Bahai community has various sub-communities which in Bahai Faith are called Local Spiritual Assemblies (LSA). In Ipapa area there are five Local Spiritual Assemblies, which are the focus of this research. The sub-communities are so well developed that their Local Spiritual Assemblies of nine people each are active in Bahai terms – they meet regularly on Bahai designated holidays and on Sundays to look into the matters of the Faith.

The study has also focused on the sociological factors that contributed to the changes in the religious orientations of the Ipapa people. Their traditions and customs are described and analyzed. The community was chosen because of its mystical trends in the acceptance of the Bahai Faith. The study also explores how African culture and Christianity have been integrated into the Bahai Faith among the Ipapa community.

The history of the Ipapa Bahai community goes back to the formation of the Sinai Church in 1972. Before 1972, the leaders of the church, Petero Simbeye and Yohannes Simbowe, had their religious experiences that led to the founding of the church. Then in 1993 the ‘church’ members shifted to Bahai Faith en mass. The study covers the period before and after the formation of the Sinai church, from 1972 till 2005. The stream of change is analyzed by getting the contributions of each agent of change to the community and how each change is linked to the other(s).

The study mainly covers Mbozi district in Mbeya region in southern Tanzania. It covers the Sinai Church and how the Bahai Faith was accepted. The individuals that were involved in the founding and practice of the Sinai Church and the acceptance of

the Bahai Faith are the target of the research. Reference has been made to the Dar es Salaam Bahai community because it was instrumental in the acceptance of the Bahai Faith in Ipapa. In addition, Dar es Salaam is the seat of the national secretariat of the Bahais of Tanzania.

The Sinai Church is not the only religious orientations in the area. Other orientations include the Moravians, Roman Catholics, The Last Church of God and African Religion. However, the current study focuses on the formation of the Sinai Church and the shift to Bahai Faith. However, in dealing with the influence of the religious background of the respondents, reference has been made to the other religious orientations in the area. The history of the cultural base on which the Sinai Church was founded inform the research. The investigation helps in drawing the links between the various religious orientations that had an influence in the area and more so the acceptance of the Bahai Faith en mass.

One of the limitations was the lack of written documents to verify what the respondents were saying. The task is enormous to reconstruct through oral sources the events that led to the formation of the Sinai Church. The dreams and visions of the two founders encouraged both of them to record their mystic experiences in Kiswahili (Appendix VI). The original manuscript was in the possession of the founder of the Sinai Church. Its contents have helped the researcher to reconstruct the story of change and continuity in Mbeya. The religious experiences that the respondents went through as they warmed to the formation of the Sinai Church are instrumental to the study. From an objective point of view, it is hard to verify dreams. The religious matrix of transformation engages with this kind of religious phenomenon, its expression and meaning.

It was often hard as an outsider to distinguish between indispensable essential convictions and other real but contingent convictions. In view of this consideration the researcher took residence in the community for eleven weeks in three blocks. This residential stay helped the researcher to understand and appreciate the community's

way of life and religious convictions. The researcher desired to immerse himself into the context of the respondents. To this end the researcher engaged the services of seven research assistants to facilitate the collection and interpretation of data.

The researcher had to transcend the conventional Christian approach to other faiths which is in itself apologetic. An apologetic approach would bring a lot of value judgment to the Ipapa religious expression and practice. The remedy of this limitation was a deliberate move to start from a general religious perspective and to particularize it in Ipapa. The phenomenological and historical approaches were helpful in this endeavour. Employing a historical approach assisted the researcher towards objectivity. Phenomenologically the study of the Ipapa community demanded that the researcher does not make value judgments but allow the respondents to describe their own experiences. The challenge of one's own belief and value system being imposed upon the research had to be overcome always for objectivity to be realized.

## **1.6 Research Methodology**

Both secondary and primary sources of data were consulted. For secondary sources, the researcher used Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library at the University of Nairobi, the National Bahai Library of Kenya – at the Nairobi Bahai Centre, and the Carlile College School of Theology library. The National Bahai Library of Tanzania was also used. Most of secondary sources were found in these libraries. From the secondary sources, data on the background of the Ipapa community and the teachings of the Bahai Faith were obtained from the secondary sources. The secondary sources augment the primary sources for an objective documentation of the findings of the research.

The field research took eleven weeks – (one week of 1999 at Ipapa, two weeks April 2001 at Dar es Salaam, two weeks 2002 at Dar es Salaam, six weeks of June and July 2005 at Ipapa. The field study was located at Ipapa area of Mbeya region, Mbozi District in southern Tanzania. During the first trip to Dar es Salaam and Ipapa the researcher accompanied a group of seven Kenyan Bahais who were on a teaching visit

to Ipapa. During the trip the researcher conducted a pilot survey. Significant contacts were identified. Afterwards contacts were arranged through the National Office of the Bahais of Tanzania at Dar es Salaam. In the selection of respondents, stratified and purposive sampling techniques were used to select specific Local Spiritual Assemblies (LSA) that would in turn provide individuals for sampling. Five of the eight Bahai Local Spiritual Assemblies that form the Ipapa community were sampled. These LSA are Halungu, Ipanzia, Ipunga, Tunduma, and Ipapa. The five were significant in the formation of the Ipapa Bahai community.

From each Local Spiritual Assembly composed of nine members, three were sampled. The three include the chairperson, secretary and the treasurer. As the nine are the leaders of the community, snowball sampling was used to sample the congregation based on age. The oldest in the Faith were given priority, especially those that were originally members of the Sinai Church. Bahais who were not former members of the Sinai Church but know about the Church were also sampled. During the field research in June and July 2005 it was noted that some Bahai members who were from the Sinai Church had joined other faiths. These were also interviewed to identify any “push” factors.

In the area under study, there is a person who represents the Continental Bahai Councilors as an Auxiliary Board Member – Sarah Otieno. She was interviewed. She assisted the researcher to identify more respondents who belonged to the Sinai Church.

The Ipapa Bahais who were *Sinaists* have cordial relations with the few members of the Sinai Church who did not convert to Bahai Faith. Efforts were made to interview the *Sinaists* who are not yet Bahais. In a visit to the area in July 1998, the researcher found out that the Bahais at times come together in the rituals conducted by the *Sinaists*. The rituals entail therapeutic dances. Such episodes were observed and the persons involved interviewed.

The two leaders of the Sinai Church (Petero Simbeye and Yohannes Simbowe) who initiated the community and later led them to accept the Bahai Faith were also interviewed. Of interest to the researcher were those members who started the Sinai church and the first four persons who followed them.

Seven Research assistants were instrumental in data collection. In Dar es Salaam, the secretary to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of Tanzania was very instrumental in mapping the area of study. In Iringa the Deputy Principal (Peter Juma) of Ruaha Bahai International school and his wife were of great help in bringing together the personalities who were behind the formation of the Sinai Bahai Community. Some of the personalities are teaching at the school were students from Ipapa community study. At Mbeya Mr. Herbert Sikombe was the link person to the people of Halungu. Muhingo was the assistant at Halungu. At Ipapa Yohannes Simbowe was very helpful to the researcher. He made it possible for the researcher to be in touch with the community and with the individuals concerned. The researcher had two separate visits to him. On those visits, detailed interviews were conducted. Zawadi Aly was also very useful as a research assistant. He introduced and acquainted the researcher with the history and the people who formed the Sinai Church. He has the advantage of being more educated than anybody else is in the area under investigation. He has served at Haifa Bahai World Centre in Israel for eighteen months, and is one of the opinion leaders in Ipapa.

Various methods of data collection have been used: Participant observation was used in trying to get 'inside' the society under study at various levels. It involved joyfully joining in the hymn singing, in meals and other convivial opportunities (photo 1). The researcher conducted focused group discussions after such activities. On several occasions, the researcher interacted with the Bahai youths in this method. The limitation of this method is that language barriers hinder understanding and interpretation of the religious life and attitudes of people. Nevertheless, the community members understand and speak Kiswahili very well. English is also used sometimes. The researcher is not acquainted with the local language (Kinyiha).

Sometimes the respondents would switch to Kinyiha. The researcher would however, get the gist because Kinyiha is one of the Bantu languages. The research assistants were instrumental in interpreting the conversations and the reason to switch into the local language. This helped in the classification and accuracy of recording.



Photo 1: The researcher at times would join the respondents in their religious activities. In this photo he is at Dar es Salaam Bahai Center. *Photo by the researcher.*

In-depth interviews with the leaders of the 'Sinai church' who converted to the Bahai Faith were very insightful. The researcher spent about two hours with Yohannes Simbowe every day for two weeks plus informal conversations as Simbowe accompanied the researcher to other respondents. During the interviews the researcher took note of every conversation and often decided not to interrupt the respondent. Questions arising from a response would later be asked and more information would be provided. Yohannes Simbowe was very co-operative in providing information pertinent to the research. His availability and ability to connect the researcher with more respondents greatly facilitated the research. Other key respondents such as Auxiliary Board Members, Office bearers at the national and continental levels were interviewed by the researcher himself.

To the majority of respondents, the researcher used the questionnaire (Appendix I). Respondents were supplied each with a copy. The questionnaire was initially in English but sensitivity to language made the researcher to render it in Kiswahili (Appendix II). Each respondent in this category was briefed on what was expected in filling the questionnaire and the researcher would collect it. One hundred copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the five localities under study, twenty in each locality. Out of the one hundred, seventy six respondents filled their copies and the researcher received them. Twelve respondents did not answer all questions. Twelve more copies of the questionnaire were not returned to the researcher by the time he concluded the field study in the month of July 2005. In total, the sample size was 150 respondents, including the group interviews that the researcher conducted (Appendix III).

Table 1.1 Communities from which the respondents were selected

Name of Community	No. of Respondents
Tunduma	21
Ipanzia	20
Ipapa & Ipunga	45
Halungu	33
Mwanjelwa	2
Iringa	11
Dar es Salaam	8
Nairobi	10
Total	150

Table 1.2 Details on activities that the researcher observed and participated in while in the field:

Community	Activity	No. of Participants	Date
Nairobi	Bahai Fellowship	65	15 <sup>th</sup> March 2002
Dar es Salaam	19 Day Feast	120	28 <sup>th</sup> April 2002
Iringa	Martyrdom of Bab	135	9 <sup>th</sup> July 2005
Ipanzia	Ruhi Course Book 3	28	26 <sup>th</sup> June 2005
Ipapa	19 Day Feast	87	24 <sup>th</sup> June 2005
Ipunga	Singing and Trance	20	25 <sup>th</sup> June 2005
Ipapa	Bahais teaching non Bahais	6	24 <sup>th</sup> June 2005
Halungu	Consultation on the history of the Ipapa Bahai community	45	20 <sup>th</sup> June 2005
Iringa	Bahai Prayer meeting	11	15 <sup>th</sup> June 2005
Ipapa	Ritual dance	56	16 <sup>th</sup> June 1999

The researcher also used a still camera to take photographs of vital persons, occasions, and places. Some of the photos that the researcher took are included in the current document. A notebook and a pen were always in the researcher's possession. This made it easy for the researcher to collect each detail whenever necessary. The researcher also maintained a journal through out the field research. The journal was to keep a record of the researcher's impressions and feelings as he went about the research. Every evening while in the field the researcher reviewed the events of the day by generally reflecting on observations appreciating the emotions evoked by the entire research.

Throughout the fieldwork, the researcher identified himself as a researcher-cum "seeker". Openness is always met with openness especially in making observations and conducting interviews in a foreign country. The researcher was given access to vital records of the Sinai Church. It was easy for the researcher wherever and

whenever to take notes in the presence of the respondents and to be a participant in the activities of the community under investigation. To augment the information obtained from the Bahais the researcher also focused on other religious groups in the area. The perceptions of these religious groups towards the Bahai members were investigated. This aspect of research helped in analyzing the Ipapa Bahai community from the perspective of local outsiders. This group of respondents and other non-Bahai community leaders was also sampled and interviews conducted.

Using the methods described above the researcher managed to gather enough data that made it possible to answer the research questions. In total a hundred and fifty respondents were sampled in a population of over five hundred. Chapter two focuses on the literature review and the conceptual framework. Chapter three outlines the history of the Sinai Church. The chapter documents the teachings, the expression, and world-view of the Sinai Church. Chapter four describes the encounter with the Bahai Faith. The chapter explains the reasons why a drastic move was taken by the Sinai Church to embrace a faith that seems alien not only to Tanzania but also to Africa. (It should be noted that the Bahai Faith originated in Iran). Chapter five analyses the aftermath and meaning of this encounter between the Ipapa community and the Bahai Faith. Chapter six deals with the challenges of establishing the Bahai ideal in Ipapa. Chapter seven describes the Bahai re-interpretation of Christianity. The chapter covers the future of the changes championed by the Bahai Faith in this region. In all the chapters the analysis is worked out against the social change agenda in Tanzania since independence. Chapter eight contains the conclusion and recommendations. As a whole, the research raises new questions and topics for further research and deliberation with regard to interfaith relations in rural Africa and the role of religion in social change.

## Notes

1. I. N. Kimambo, *et al. A History of Tanzania*, (Nairobi: East African Publishers, 1969), 1.
2. J. Finke, *The Rough Guide to Tanzania*, (New York: Rough Guides, 2006), 8.
3. Abdul-Baha, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, (Wilmette: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1975), 41.
4. P.N. Mwangi. "The Origins and spread of the Bahai Faith in Kenya with reference to Bahai Communities Nairobi and Vihiga 1950-199" MA Thesis, University of Nairobi. 2000.
5. Yohannes Simbowe, Interview, Ipapa Bahai Centre, Tanzania, 15<sup>th</sup> June 1999.
6. Ibid.
7. The researcher obtained hand written materials on the Sinai Church. The founders of the Church wrote the materials (Appendix VI).
8. Yohannes Simbowe, Interview, Ipapa Bahai Centre, Tanzania, 15<sup>th</sup> June, 1999.
9. Shaban Sefu, Interview, at his home Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, 20<sup>th</sup> June 1999
10. The original copy of the letter is with researcher (Appendix VI p.18).
11. J.N.K. Mugambi, *Religion and Social Construction of Reality*, (University of Nairobi, inaugural lecture, 1996), 45.
12. Ibid.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter has two sections. The first section deals with literature review while the second one deals with conceptual framework. The literature review and the conceptual framework form the platform for the explanation, description, and prediction of the case at hand. The case at hand is the integration of the Sinai Church and the Bahai Faith in Ipapa Tanzania. In the integration, social reconstruction, and transformation ideals are the focus. The consulted literature, throws light into the subject matter while the conceptual framework gives the study the *modus operandi*.

#### 2.1.0 Literature Review

Various works have been consulted in this study. Such literature can be divided into six categories; (i) General literature on religion; (ii) Literature on religion and change; (iii) Literature on phenomenology of religion; (iv) Literature on African religion; (v) Literature on the acceptance of Christianity and the growth of African Instituted Churches (vi) Literature on Bahai Faith.

#### 2.1.1 Religious Mythology and Leadership

In the book *Myths Dreams and Mysteries* (1960), Mircea Eliade deals with the perennial meaning and destiny of humanity as presented in religious mythologies. According to Eliade, humanity is in search of mythologies that are a continuity of the primordial condition of the human race – paradisaical state. Having de-secularized the world the human race yearns for the myths from which it has disassociated itself. In this regard, Eliade sees continuity from traditional religions into Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The paradisiacal state that humanity seeks is kept alive and revived through dreams and myths. To Eliade a traditional religion should either grow into Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, however the Ipapa phenomenon challenges that position. It appears that the paradisaical state that humanity yearns for is not fully revealed in the three religions that Eliade focuses on. The walk to the paradisaical state should be the focus and not the attainment of that state. Religion at its best should help

its adherents to focus on the walk and therefore enable them to engage with their context. In this engagement, the horizons of knowledge are enlarged. At the practical level, one is bound to investigate what the Bahai Faith has that is in line with the paradisiacal state that Eliade talks about. What makes the Bahai Faith appealing to the Ipapa community given their religious orientation as Christians with a bias on African Religion? It appears that as peoples' horizons of knowledge are enlarged new ideas and beliefs evolve to give shape to any changing community. The Ipapa community is thus a case in point illustrating how the enlarged horizons affect the being and becoming of a community.

In the book *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (1964), Mircea Eliade deals with Shamanism as an office within the traditional (archaic) religious orientation of humanity. He analyses shamanism from the perspective of history of religions. From this perspective (history of religions), Eliade explores in detail on the various ways of becoming and making a shaman, qualities and activities of a shaman, and the place of shamans in religious traditions. To Eliade, the office of the Shaman is very crucial in times of crisis since the Shaman controls the spirits that aid him in diagnosing any malady (social, bodily, environmental) and in prescribing specific remedies. Eliade observes;

A Shamanistic session generally consist of the following items, first, an appeal to the auxiliary spirits, drum-playing and a dance, preparatory to the mystic journey; and thirdly, the trance (real or stimulated) during which the Shaman's soul is believed to have left his body. The objective of the Shamanistic session is to obtain the ecstasy, for it is only in ecstasy that the Shaman can fly through the air or descend into Hell, that is fulfill his mission of curing illness and shepherding souls.<sup>1</sup>

The religious experience of the Bahais in Ipapa can be identified with Shamanism. The Shamans Yohannes Simbowe and Petero Simbeye took the lead and formed a Christian Church – “*Kanisa la Sinai; Dini ya Mila na Utamaduni*”. However, the leadership of the Church was spontaneous in that, nobody initiated the leaders into the form of Shamanism that led to the formation of the Church. This aspect of spontaneity contradicts Eliade's view that a Shaman is a child of a certain religious tradition thus

there arises a need to study the factors that enshrined the formation of the Sinai Church. Also the fact that, in Eliade's view, the office of a Shaman entails a society in crisis needs investigation in the Ipapa situation during the growth of the Sinai Church. Bahai Faith has no clergy so one asks how the Bahais of Ipapa dealt with the founders of the 'Sinai Church'. Are they still revered as during the time they were in the Sinai Church? The insights thereof will guide the research into the conclusions on the role of leadership in any community, a leadership that is trained especially after charismatic leadership is over. It might be that in the past the Ipapa Community had not yet had any religious leadership that they could rely upon. Thus in search of a leader the community followed Petero and Yohannes but paradoxically the two pointed the community to another leader-The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of Tanzania.

In the light of Eliade's perspective on Shamanism, only in archaic societies can one find such a phenomenon. However, one asks, how archaic is the Ipapa Community? What is the nature of their existence? Such are the questions that the research seeks to answer using Eliade's inspirations. Humanity, archaic or modern, must have a place of leadership and related institutions. Leadership entails order and the way social influence is channeled. Thus, there must be a leader and people to lead. Shamanism as a form of leadership can also be found in modern societies that lack any other organized leadership.

### **2.1.2 Religion and Change**

D.L. Edwards in the book *Religion and Change* (1969) considers the challenges of religion in the late twentieth century. For Edwards the changes in the late twentieth century have made it the secular century where people draw the conclusion that religion is doomed to disappear. For religion to have a future and continue serving its adherents it must adapt the changes of its time. Secularization is one of the challenges of religion that brings about flexibility and adaptability of religious orientations. Science and technology are seen to be ushering humanity into a unified world or single stream of history into which the peoples of the world are being drawn into a

single stream of questions and not answers. What unites people is their common experience that their societies are breaking up. Thus, ecumenism will come as a necessity.

Edwards' book focuses on Christianity and on how the Christian faith should respond to the changes of the twentieth century. This research into the formation of the Ipapa Bahai community builds on the ideas of Edwards in investigating to what extent the old religious traditions in Ipapa failed and why the Bahai Faith had to replace them. What is the justification for the formation of the Sinai Church and the subsequent acceptance of the Bahai Faith en mass? In the light of change the Bahai Faith might be seen as a religious innovation. In this regard, it may be that the religion of the Ipapa community before the founding of the *Kanisa la Sinai* never opened up for change. It is through change that religion brings about civilization and refinement of character.<sup>2</sup>

In the book, *The New Religious Consciousness* (1976), C.Y Glock and R.N. Bellah have documented their findings on the American Youth Culture in the 1960s. The book also analyses the subsequent development of the American youth culture from a religious dimension. According to Glock and Bellah, religion is a strategic entry point into such a study because it is potentially the most profound aspect of social change. Their investigations were located in the San Francisco Bay Area, whose preeminence as a harbinger of the new consciousness and whose cosmopolitan character proved to be instructive and illustrative.

The authors observe out that while belief in a personal God was on the decline, a new self – awareness and spiritual sensitivity was finding expression in the lives of large numbers of people, especially among the young. The new consciousness came to fill the place of emptiness brought about by the civilization of the day. In such a situation everybody seeks for inner tranquility, peace with nature. This was a powerful reaction to values and ways of living that contemporary civilization has ceased to satisfy, and inspire. Thus the new religious consciousness was a reaction against the cultural trends and circumstances that did not cater for the people's religious concerns.

Glock and Bellah focus on a society under the influence of civilization, unlike Eliade on Shamanism in archaic societies. However, the issue of religion and change comes strongly on both cases. The Ipapa community is in one way investigated using both of these insights. The investigation is based on religious shifting and reconstruction among the Ipapa of Tanzania from 1972 to 2005. Inspired by the insights of Glock and Bellah this research on Ipapa religiosity differs from their study in that Ipapa religiosity had not declined, but the form and content, changed at both the individual and the communal levels. The research investigates the details of this shift and change, their implications for the social reconstruction of reality in the area. From the analysis of Glock and Bellah it seems that spiritual consciousness is latent in all human beings. The Ipapa community points to the fact that, religious consciousness is not rigid and it can be shaped and influenced by both internal and external forces and factors.

### **2.1.3 Phenomenology of Religion**

In the book *Dimensions of the sacred* (1996), Ninian Smart studies the various world faiths on a template of eight dimensions. The dimensions that concern Smart are; Doctrinal, Ritual, Mythical, Experiential, Ethical, Social, Material, and Political. In analyzing these eight dimensions Smart in a phenomenological approach documents the various religions of the world. In his analysis of the current influence of politics on religion Smart suggests that globalization brings about the close juxtaposition of differing traditions and their exponents.<sup>3</sup> According to Smart, there has never been such a period in world history. The late twentieth and early twenty first century rivals are more powerful, they not only exhibit within them alternatives but their flexibility and power represent a formidable array. To the extent that it becomes evident that people can be eclectic. At this point religious expression is used to influence the social environment.

In this regard the smaller scale faith, such as the coterminous religions of ethnic groups and the diasporas of lesser religions or ethnic groups in big cities when

combined with one another represent a significant slice of the global population. In view of these insights by Smart, an understanding of the Bahai Faith in Tanzania as accepted and practiced by the Ipapa community illustrates the growth of religious pluralism and the development of a conterminous faith. The study shows how the various dimensions of religion are articulated and blended in a rural community. The Ipapa Bahai community illustrates that though religious pluralism is often associated with urban modernity, rural communities also appreciate pluralism as a means of expanding their consciousness. When this is hard or impossible to achieve, a community may opt to be incorporated into another one considered to be more promising than the one already accepted and dominant.

Ninian Smart observes that it is hard to write a monograph on any religion.<sup>4</sup> The external forces bring with them alternative beliefs, norms and practices. The tangible effects of modern communications and other technologies also have a contribution towards religious diversity and innovation. It is significant how small-scale cultures come to terms with invading forces. The Bahai Faith was introduced to the Ipapa people who valued their traditions and customs. It is remarkable that en masse the Ipapa people accepted the Bahai Faith. The Ipapa Bahai community can thus be seen as a mingled religious movement. The research goes beyond the formation of the Sinai community to analyze the religious traditions and that were operative in Ipapa. The analysis points to the factors that facilitated the change from the traditional religious orientation to the formation of the Sinai Church. The acceptance of the Bahai Faith in the same context is a concern of the research. When a tradition is effortlessly operative, its practice and expression is spontaneous. It does not need decision, it is the way things are done.<sup>5</sup> But once the spirit in a culture occurs there has to be reasons for staying traditional.<sup>6</sup>

In the book, *Cults, Coverts and Charisma* (1988), Thomas Robbins assesses various works on new religious movements. Robbins concentrates on research on movements in the U.S.A and Western Europe thereby analyzing the theories relating the growth of new religions to social-cultural changes, the dynamics of conversion to and defection

from movements, patterns of organization and institutionalization. The observations and suggestions Robbins offers are relevant for the research on the growth and development of the Sinai Church and on the shifting of the Sinaists to the Bahai Faith. This research is based in southern Tanzania where the impact of secularization is observable. The integration at the practical level of African religiosity in the Ipapa practice of Bahai Faith is interesting and complex. The Ipapa Bahai community members emphasize that although change is common in religious orientations, the practice and the expression of a faith is greatly affected by the existential circumstances of the adherents.

In the book, *A Blueprint for Mankind* (1998), M. Zander challenges the peoples of the world to return to the basics of divine creation especially with regard to the purpose of creation and ultimate destiny. 'Turn again to the beautiful teachings of the religion of your choice, for this is not the message of a new religion' rather, it is the divine message of Truth – Universal Truth.<sup>7</sup> Zander further suggests that Africa can benefit from the basics of creation. He urges for collective insights towards social transformation, for spiritual fulfillment that can only be achieved when human beings begin to understand the tenets of faith which have been lost to all but the most spiritually advanced. The Ipapa phenomenon illustrates a spiritual and social transformation on a futuristic perspective different from Zander's view of a golden past. However, the insights of reconstruction that M. Zander offers on the basis of spiritual life are of importance in analyzing the acceptance and practice of the Bahai Faith by the Sinai community of Ipapa in Tanzania. The "golden past" that Zander describes is the future vision of the Bahai Faith. Unity is stressed and positive social transformation will be the reward. These two are aspirations that preoccupy human beings in history. The Ipapa Bahai community thus illustrates the quest of humanity the search for meaning under the inspiration of religion.

#### **2.1.4 African Religion**

John S. Mbiti in the book *Introduction to African Religion* (1991) observes that every African people have a set of beliefs and customs. Beliefs are an essential part of religion. Not all customs are religious, but most customs are religiously contextualized. Religion helps to strengthen and perpetuate some of the customs and in turn the customs do the same to religion.<sup>8</sup> This research has applied Mbiti's ideas in order to understand and appreciate the African beliefs and customs that were presupposed in the Sinai Church and the Bahai Faith.

In the same book, Mbiti further discusses the interaction of African Religion with other religions. The other religions that concern Mbiti are Islam and Christianity though he recognizes the presence in Africa of other religions such as Judaism, Hinduism, Shikhism, and Jainism. The presence of the Bahai Faith in Africa is pertinent to this research. In his reference to Bahai Faith in Africa, Mbiti highlights the origins of the Faith and the dates when it was introduced in the continent. He suggests that the headquarters of Bahai Faith are in Kampala, Uganda, on the basis of the Bahai Mother Temple for Africa on Kikaya hills near Kampala (photo 2). According to Bahai leaders, however, there is no continental headquarters although there are Continental Councilors. There are only national Bahai headquarters linked together through the international headquarters in Haifa, Israel. Mbiti also observes that lack of ceremonies and a formal order of leadership in the Bahai Faith are an alien element in African tradition.<sup>9</sup> The study is an attempt to investigate this observation.



Photo 2: The Bahai Mother Temple in Kikaya Hill in Kampala Uganda. *Photo obtained from Nairobi Bahai Centre*

Mbiti does not mention the relationship between music, song and dance on one hand and healing on the other to the lives of the Africans. Music is very much part of Tanzanian life and with 129 officially recognized tribes and an open attitude to foreign influences, the country presents an extremely broad and rich panorama.<sup>10</sup> *Ngoma* or traditional music, can still be heard. Music, song and dance play a vital role in traditional Tanzanian culture, not least in providing a sense of continuity from the past to the present, as can be seen in the *ngoma ya kiasili* (music of the ancestors). *Ngoma ya kiasili* is also a cohesive social force: *ngoma* involve everyone present, whether as singers, dancers, instrumentalists or in combination.<sup>11</sup> *Ngoma* is often drum based (the word also means drum), and tends to keep to its roots, hence giving each tribe's musical output a distinctive sound. The research appreciates the impact of *ngoma ya kiasili* in the formation of the Sinai Church.

Describing the religious geography of Tanzania, Jens Finke calls it indigenous religion. He states that indigenous religion is mostly based around the idea of supreme God and intercession between the living and the spirit worlds by deceased ancestors. This kind of religion survives in the more mountainous and otherwise remote terrain, as well as among the pastoralists like the Maasai and Barbaig. Finke seems to celebrate the destruction of African religion. He notes that African religion in Tanzania is under threat from Christian missionaries. In his view, much of the cumulative wisdom, customs, and traditional music of neighbouring Kenya has already been destroyed through the missionary enterprise.<sup>12</sup> The formation of the Sinai Church is an attempt to maintain the cultural identity of the Wanyiha in spite of the external threats to the African identity in Tanzania in general and in Ipapa in particular. The resilience of African religion in southern Tanzania is a concern for the study. This resilience is made intricate by the acceptance of the Bahai Faith.

R. J. Gehman, in the book, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective* (1993), observes that, the cultures of Africa today are no more what they used to be. In so many areas the traditional customs are changing – technologically, educationally, politically, culturally and to some extent religiously.<sup>13</sup> However, it is the superficial customs that change easily unlike the deep core worldview beliefs that are very persistent. In the formation of the Sinai Church, there is an underlying current of traditional values that the study analyses. In order to interpret and understand the actions and words of the Wanyiha in the formation of the Sinai Church and the integration to the Bahai Faith, the understanding of their traditional religious worldview is important.

### **2.1.5 African Christianity**

B.G.M. Sundkler, in the book, *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists* (1976), traces the origins of the Zionist Christian movements in South Africa. He argues that not only do Independent Churches emerge and flourish – something which all applaud – but also that some of them disappear and die, something which few have noticed.<sup>14</sup> Sundkler asserts that, the strait-jacket of European worship did not suit the Africans. New

forms for the new faith (Christianity) had to be invented. Some African converts looked for a place where they “feel at home” and where African rhythms and convictions could be expressed freely, convincingly and worthily. Sundkler attempts to understand and interpret the life and faith of the Zulu Zion Christian Church on the basis of the conviction that the Independent Churches have much to contribute to the Church Universal.

From Sundkler’s book, one notes that the quest for liberation based on black consciousness is central to the growth and development of Independent churches. The norm, however, is that after liberation, the institutionalization of the Independent Churches takes place. However, why should some of these Independent Churches disappear and die? For Sundkler, political independence was at the core of the formation of those churches, so, after gaining their ultimate concern, some of the Churches became irrelevant. The factors that Sundkler highlights are of importance in the investigation of the establishment and growth of the Sinai Church in Ipapa Tanzania. However, while Sundkler deals with pre-independent times, the study of Ipapa community focuses on post-independent and post-cold war period of the Church.

Through the centuries, Christian missionary enterprises have undergone considerable transformation. In the book *Transforming Mission*, David J. Bosch articulates the various paradigm shifts in the theology of mission. Of importance to the current study, is the influence of the Enlightenment humanism to the theology of mission. The foundational Enlightenment belief in the assured victory of progress was recognized in the practice of the Christian missionary enterprise. In theory and practice the ability of the Christians from Europe and America to offer a cure-all for the ills of the world was unchallenged.<sup>15</sup> The Christians from Europe and America had the conviction that they would solve the ills of the entire world, by planting Western-type churches in all parts of the world.<sup>16</sup> Denominational (Lutheran, Moravian, Presbyterian, Anglican and others) mission agencies planted denominational churches around the world. The “advance of the gospel” was measured by counting tangible things such as the number

of baptisms, confessions, and communions, and the opening of new mission stations or outposts.<sup>17</sup> The missionaries had a limited knowledge of the cultures and religions of the people to whom they went. The expansion of the missionary enterprise in Africa amidst such limitations contributed to the founding of the African Initiated Churches.<sup>18</sup>

David B. Barrett and T. John Padwick in their book *Rise Up and Walk*, concerns themselves with the origin, rise and fortunes of a remarkable and indeed unique feature of the global Christian scene; the rise of indigenous conciliarism in Africa for over 100 years.<sup>19</sup> The authors identify and describe four different aspects of ecclesiastical conciliarism and the evolution of an indigenous conciliarism: a) the evolution of global cociliarism b) attempts by the African Instituted Churches to co-operate with the mainline churches c) attempts by the mainline churches to control the expansion of the AICs by denying them admission to their councils or by selectively admitting a handful under restrictive conditions d) attempts by the AICs themselves to bypass the historical churches' lukewarm welcome in this respect and to evolve instead their own indigenous council of churches at local, national, regional levels and eventually continental level.<sup>20</sup> The four aspects of conciliarism demonstrate the AICs fascination with Egypt and Ethiopia. However, the Coptic and Ethiopian Churches ignored the attempts by the AICs for co-operation, while the mainline churches spurned them. The current research has attempted to analyze how conciliarism led the Sinai Church to embrace the Bahai Faith.

In the book *The Biblical Basis for Evangelization*, Jesse N. K. Mugambi articulates the idea that, the failure of modern missionary enterprise (as a movement) to identify its activities with anti-colonial struggles led many committed African Christians to break away from missionary Christianity and establish movements which are compatible with the aspirations towards total liberation.<sup>21</sup> Christian mission entails the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus, wagering on a future that verifiable experience seems to belie. It is the good news of God's love, incarnated in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world.<sup>22</sup> The rise of African

Instituted Churches is viewed as a logical consequence of the failure of the modern missionary enterprise to support the aspirations of the African people. However, he points out that such churches are to be found in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Kenya. The Sinai Church is an African Instituted Church in Tanzania and the visions of the founders started from the 1950s. The current study sought to investigate the factors behind the formation of the Sinai Church an African Instituted Church in southern Tanzania.

The context of Ipapa Bahai community appears to be an antithesis of the Kenyan Bahai community.<sup>23</sup> In Ipapa there is a quality of spontaneity and randomness that creates a paradox -a mystic design that when cultivated the community thrives and when sidelined the community appears to wither away. At first, the Ipapa community was very enthusiastic about the Sinai Church. Later the enthusiasm was translated to the Bahai Faith. Forces beyond the natural are attributed to the formation of the Sinai Church and the subsequent acceptance of the Bahai Faith. The challenge of the Ipapa community is to maintain the enthusiasm and the spontaneity of its religious orientation even after the changes that occurred. The mystic affinity governs the Ipapa community while intellectual affinity governs the Kenyan Bahai community. As the study demonstrates, the concepts of despair and alienation are at the background of the formation of the Ipapa community. Thus there is a yearning for newness and belongingness. This can be said to be the plight of modern man in old dress.<sup>24</sup> This study sought to establish how the spontaneity and randomness of the Ipapa Bahai community have been demonstrated through time.

In the play *Waiting for Godot*, Samuel Beckett analyses the plight of humanity "in the condition of waiting". The condition of waiting is depicted as a condition of bondage since the "fall of humanity" in the Garden of Eden.<sup>25</sup> Due to this "fallen" condition, humanity desires to be free from the chances and changes of this earthly life. Beckett demonstrates this urge through the soliloquy by Lucky - one of the characters in the play:

Given the existence... of a personal God... outside time without extension... loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown... are plunged in torment plunged in fire... say blast hell to heaven... result of the labours left unfinished crowded by the Academy ....<sup>26</sup>

In the predicament of waiting, people seek experiences out of the normal. Such experiences are used to escape the torment and labours of existence. In so doing humanity finds itself in complementary tensions of social history where there is getting and spending, ruling and being ruled, rising and falling in the rhythm of social cultural change.<sup>27</sup> In the process of change, becoming is better than being, but the catalyst of that process is the desire to be outside the drama of mutability. In the drama of mutability the gods do not keep their appointment as per human expectations. The formation of the Sinai Church and the shift to Bahai Faith seems to be a chapter in the drama of mutability. It is as if humans are at intersection points between great forces that are beyond control. What becomes evident is the manifestation of these forces where the game cannot be played without human beings as pawns. Individuals become partakers of mysteries they cannot even understand. The paradox is that these same individuals portend to be very much in control. The research into the Ipapa Bahai community will trace the factors behind the paradox and find out to what extent they are in control of their situations and contexts.

L.M. Njoroge in the book, *A Century of Catholic Endeavour* (1999), has written a detailed account of Roman Catholic Christianity, in Kenya for a hundred years. He traces the Christian - Muslim conflicts at the East Coast of Africa and the ineffectiveness of the Portuguese to make converts at the coast while Islam remained strong. Njoroge outlines some theories of people adopting a different religious stance, namely: Invitation; commonality of beliefs and traditions; open nature of religion, and use of force and civilizing aspect of religion; and use of force or sword. Njoroge gives credit to the missionaries who came to Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to found Christianity and traces the methods the missionaries used in winning Africans to their denominations. It seems that the humanitarian aspect of the missionaries influenced the Africans to identify with Christ and his teachings though preached by different

foreign groups. To win the Africans, the missionaries had to learn the African language and understand their way of life. But what is the role of the would-be convert in the conversion process? This study addresses this question. It appears that even before any contact with the faith to be embraced the would-be converts have specific needs that yearn to be met - a vacuum. The convert seeks to fill the vacuum with anything that is in line with his or her expectations. For the Sinaists the need to identify with the world and the benefits of exposure influenced the acceptance of the Bahai Faith.

In the theory of African hospitality or the open nature of the Africans, Njoroge seems to suggest that the African had no idea of choice, that everything and anything is acceptable to the African. Ontologically this is questionable since there are those internal factors that lead a person to accept a new faith and drop the old one. On this line, Njoroge argues that, a literate religious tradition possessing holy writ, a common founder and an ambitious world mission has clear advantage over tribal religions without a sacred text and with interests that do not go beyond their ethnic confines.<sup>28</sup> African religion is here described as tribal religion which is not as important as a literate religion. If this view is correct, why didn't the people of Ipapa remain in Christianity, which is a world-oriented religion, and with a common founder? This is one of the questions explored in this research. It pursues the following questions: What brings about openness and hospitality in a people? What have conversion to do with this?

A.J. Hughes in the book, *East Africa, Tanzania, Uganda* (1966), observes that colonial rule, the long half-hidden sequence of migration and settlement, culture and its destruction that went before, are what make the different shapes of Africa, the particular shape that was known for a short while as British East Africa.<sup>29</sup> Under the leadership of the late Julius K. Nyerere, Tanzania adopted a socialist economy. This was done through the creation of communal tenure and settlements though later abandoned due to lack of popular support. However, freehold tenure on land has been largely abolished, and leasehold ownership is being encouraged.<sup>30</sup> In socialist

Tanzania, the future and destiny of Tanzania was not on individual hands but on the state. When the power of the state is exaggerated at the expense of the citizens, the latter often find ways and means out of the situation. Charismatic leadership becomes vital where people's emotions have been denied a chance of expression.

Hughes considers the missionary and the colonial enterprises as the two major external factors that have shaped Africa greatly. Though such external factors have a major impact, the internal factors can also shape a people's pattern of life. It may be emphasised that the changes that Tanzania went through have created a situation that warrants groups of people to come together and voice their grievances. However, in a situation where political pluralism is not encouraged the religious pillar of culture is easily manipulated. The religious authority is often not to be questioned thus total obedience is required. At this point only seasoned experience and reason can check any abuse. The pillar can be used as a tool against the established system of ruler-ship. It is this situation that the research will attempt to ascertain its validity.

Gideon S. Were describes the Dini Ya Msambwa (DYM) in a paper entitled '*Dini Ya Msambwa: A re-assessment.*' In the paper, the origins, aims, activities, achievements and the government's reaction to the movement are articulated. DYM was started by Elijah Masinde as a religious movement to protest against religious, political, social and economic grievances. The author observes that, as a religious movement, DYM would seem to have been the response of the local people to the hypocrisy of the missionaries. This hypocrisy was notable in a number of areas; the fleecing of the poor, intolerance and lack of understanding of, and sympathy for the African way of life— particularly African customs — and, more immediately, the excommunication of a large proportion of the more advanced and christianized Africans on grounds of polygamy.<sup>31</sup> It appears that the conflict in the Kenyan society in the 1930s and 40s forced the people to voice the cry and a religious movement was the tool. Though some of the issues (like intolerance and lack of understanding and sympathy for the African way of life) in DYM are similar to those in Sinai community in Tanzania the political aspect is not vocal in Ipapa Tanzania. This research attempts to establish the

relationship of the Ipapa people with the Tanzanian Government before and after the formation of the Ipapa Bahai community.

F.B. Welbourn in his book *East African Rebels* (1985) suggests that African converts had to adjust their culture to the new faith and the culture of the missionaries, settlers and administrators. Adjustment is rarely made without strain, and it is not illegitimate to suggest that the Independent Churches are intermediate attempts to institutionalize its solution- just as modern nationalism are attempts though at the same time more radical and final.<sup>32</sup> Welbourn demonstrates that when there is any imbalance in a culture, the tension breeds sectarian movements that seek to bring about harmony and order. Other scholars with the same views include R.M. Githige, P. Njeri, N.W. Ndungu and A. Wipper. These scholars discuss what can be called protest movements both religious and political. The movements that they analyze include: Bairu and Rwenzururu movements in Uganda; Mau Mau, Akorino, Africa Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa (AIPCA) and Dini ya Msambwa in Kenya.

The protest movements that are listed above resulted from European invasion and occupation of Africa. They were a reaction against European domination and alienation of Africans in all spheres of life. The circumstances and the reactions of specific movements depended on their unique circumstances. Colonial administration banned any African movement that was overtly critical. Such movements include Bairu, Rwenzururu, DYM, and Mau Mau. The colonial government and later the African government brought to naught the activities of these movements through coercion and deportation. Movements that were and are labeled religious were seen as not harmful and were not hindered from growth. Such include, *Akorino* and AIPCA. Independent Churches are the religious movements that reacted against religious domination and alienation that was in the missionary churches. Social-political and economic factors led to the protest movements.

The current study establishes that when a community is dominated economically, politically and religiously it invents various means to counter the domination and in

turn assert its identity and integrity. Such a hypothesis is applicable in the formation of the Sinai Church. However, what explanation can account for a movement which embraces a foreign religion? The research into the Ipapa Bahai community will offer the best explanation in such a situation. The Independent Churches have been thought to fill the vacuum that European missionaries left in their endeavour to preach the good news. The situation in Ipapa challenges that kind of opinion.

### 2.1.6 Bahai Faith

What is in the Bahai Faith that attracted the Ipapa community? Literature on the Bahai Faith is vital for this research. In a booklet entitled *The Promise of World Peace - A statement of the Universal House of Justice* (1985), the Bahai Faith is presented as a calling for a wider loyalty, for a larger aspiration than any other call that has animated the human race.<sup>33</sup> The Bahai Faith insists upon the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world.<sup>34</sup> The Bahai teachings on social reconstruction of reality are based on the inner transformations of individuals. The teachings appear to rhyme with the hopes and aspirations of the Sinai Church. Heeding to the call of the Bahai Faith, the members of the Sinai Church must have realized something in the Bahai Faith. There is a congruence of practice and vision between *Kanisa la Sinai* and the Bahai Faith. This congruence influenced the acceptance of the Faith by the Ipapa community.

H. M Balyuzi in the book, *Abdul – Baha* (1963), quotes Gertrude Atherton's view of the Bahai Revelation:

The Bahai Revelation makes it appeal to the brain, to the advanced thinker, to those that feel the need of a religion, but have long since outgrown all the silly old dogmas, with their battles and sentimentalities, primarily intended for the ignorant.... All the best principles of the religions are incorporated in this, all the barriers between them razed, and all the nonsense and narrow mindedness left out.<sup>35</sup>

The assumption in this quotation is that, in the Bahai Faith all religions can find a place. However, not all who encounter the Bahai Faith accept it. But *Kanisa la Sinai* en mass accented to the Faith! Does this phenomenon ascertain the claims of the

Bahai Faith? This research sought to establish how this claim impinged on the teaching and acceptance of the Bahai Faith in Ipapa.

In the book *God Passes By* (1944), Shoghi Effendi reviews the salient features of the birth and rise of the Bahai Faith, the establishment of its administrative institutions, and the series of crises which have propelled it. In the book, Shoghi Effendi outlines the panorama of events, which he summarizes thus:

... the revolution of a hundred years.... Has enrolled before our eyes.... And lifted the curtain on the opening acts what he asserted was one indivisible, stupendous and sublime drama, whose mystery no intellect can fathom, whose climax no eye can even dimly perceive, whose conclusion no mind can adequately foreshadow.<sup>36</sup>

The Bahai Faith portrays humanity as the apogee of God's creation, evolving towards the consummation of its development, which is the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

In such a book (*God Passes By*) one cannot go into the details that lay behind the principle and afford to cover the entire globe. Though specific cases are highlighted, there is need for detailed report on the growth of each community as the communities' staff the Bahai World. The research into the Ipapa Bahai community is therefore a contribution to the chapter on specific communities in the Bahai history. However the research deviates from edification and devotional tone that *God Passes By* adopts. The research has therefore developed a monograph on the growth and development of the Bahai Faith in Tanzania.

The book, *Writings of Bahauallah: A compilation* (1994) contains selected writings of Bahauallah, published by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of India. The collection includes 'Seven Valleys'. This text refers to the "spiritual valleys" that a soul encounters on the journey towards God. The first valley is "the Valley of Search" characterised by patience. The second is the "Valley of Love" characterised by ecstasy and yearning. The third is "Valley of Knowledge" characterised by certitude with the decree of God. The fourth is "the valley of unity" in which the sojourner drinks from

the cup of the absolute, and gazes on the Manifestations of Oneness.<sup>37</sup> The fifth is the “Valley of Contentment” where the wayfarers eat of the endless bounties of inner significance. The Sixth valley is the ‘Valley of Wonderment’ in which the traveler is tossed in the oceans of grandeur and every moment the wonder of the traveler grows. In this valley, one may experience dreams, which are said to be part of the created phenomena. The last of the valleys is the Valley of True Poverty and Absolute Nothingness characterised by dying from self and living in God. In describing the dreams in the “Valley of Wonderment”, Bahauallah states:

Behold how many secrets are deposited there in (dreams), how many wisdoms treasured up, how many worlds concealed. Observe how thou at sleep in a dwelling, and its doors are barred; on a sudden thou findest thyself in a far – off city, which thou enterest without moving thy feet or wearing thy body; without using thine eyes, thou seest; without taxing thine ears, thou hearest; without a tongue, thou speakest. And perchance when ten years are gone, thou wilt witness in the outer world the very things thou has dreamed tonight.<sup>38</sup>

The goal of this experience, as Bahauallah asserts, is to the end that philosophers may not deny mysteries of the life beyond nor belittle that which has been promised them.<sup>39</sup> The leaders of the Sinai Church experienced dreams that culminated in their acceptance of the Bahai Faith. This study has assessed the contents of their dreams. The study has also evaluated the circumstances in which the dreams occurred. Through their dreams the Ipapa Bahais consider themselves as authentic Bahais, in their view the dreams revealed to them the Bahai revelation. Thus the leaders’ acceptance of the Bahai Faith was entwined with their experiences of mystical forces beyond human control. If this is the case, how is the supernatural to be investigated? How can the claims of divine guidance be authenticated and validated? The theoretical framework at some point addresses these questions.

In the book, *Aspects of Traditional African Culture*, the Universal House of Justice guides Bahais from Africa on how to express the Bahai Faith in the diverse African cultural context. The Universal House of Justice appreciates the cultural diversity of the African continent. Bahais are encouraged to preserve their inherited cultural identities and practices, so long as the activities involved do not contravene the

principles of the Bahai Faith. Bahais are required by the Universal House of Justice to avoid needless disassociation from cultural observances and continued practice of abrogated observances which will undermine the independence of the Bahai Faith. The idea is to develop a Bahai culture.<sup>40</sup> The book outlines various aspects of traditional African culture and gives a Bahai perspective. There is the risk of the Bahais pioneers teaching in Africa being prejudiced against the various aspects of African culture. The current research sought to investigate how the Bahai pioneers treated the aspects of African culture among the Ipapa community after embracing the Bahai Faith.

In the book *Christ and Bahauallah*, Townshend develops the idea that Christians need to consider Bahauallah as the promised one who would unite all humankind so that they will have one shepherd, Bahauallah himself. The author demonstrates how men and women have twisted and overthrown the genius of men such as Moses, Jesus and Mohamed. The ideals of these men did not last a generation but were down by those who too after them [Peter would have gone the same road were it not of Paul]. In re-interpreting Christian teachings and practices, the author employs a hermeneutic that shows that traditional Christian interpretation is based on certain readings of the scriptures that are not necessarily right. The Christian largely employs the socio-historical and grammatical method while Townshend shows a leaning towards midrashic interpretation which relies not on history but on the other scriptures to interpret others.<sup>41</sup> The catechism of the Sinai Church shows a popular reading of the scripture where texts of the scripture are directly (Appendix VI) applied to the context of the reader or the audience. The current research sought to investigate why the Sinai Church embraced the Bahai reinterpretation of Christian teachings and practices.

In his study titled "The origins and spread of the Bahai Faith in Kenya", the present author documents a situation where men mostly accept Bahai Faith in Kenya and most of them had no strong religious sentiments before they accepted the Bahai Faith.<sup>42</sup> This makes the Bahai Faith in Kenya seem to be a faith of people who are anti-religious prior to their conversion. Among the Ipapa community the quality of

spontaneity and randomness in conversion shaped the initial stages of both the Sinai Church and the Ipapa Bahai community. This study focuses on the community itself and the changes that have resulted from its acceptance of the Bahai Faith en mass.

## 2.1 Conceptual Framework

This research into the Ipapa Bahai community is based on a phenomenological approach. The approach is an attempt through informed empathy to present people's experiences and beliefs from their point of view.<sup>43</sup> As noted earlier (see p. 21) Ninian Smart observes that, a phenomenological approach aids one on what to reflect or theorize upon. In the book *Dimensions of the Sacred* (1989), Smart has propounded on this approach where he focuses on eight dimensions of religion: mythological, doctrinal, ritual, social, ethical material, political and experiential. He uses various religious orientations and their brands to illustrate his approach. This research on the Ipapa Bahai community is based on Smart's phenomenological method. A phenomenological approach to religion probes the social structures of a religion, religious symbols, religious rites and religious doctrines.<sup>44</sup> The approach is instrumental in the attempt to understand the Ipapa Bahai community. The phenomenological aptitude gives way to historical analysis. One complements and clarifies the other; taken together they have enhanced valuable findings. The challenge to these approaches is the level of self-transcendence and detachment required for objectivity to be achieved.

In the study of religion and society, there are questions that must be raised and probable or factual answers obtained in one way or another: What are the ingredients of an ideal society? What is the effect of the interplay between permanence and change, being and becoming? Historically, in the study of religion and society these questions have been raised and answered differently. For instance the theological task for the medieval writer, under dictates of the relationship between sacred and profane, was to affirm the intrinsic goodness and propriety of the subordinate reality in full recognition of the fact that its status could only be concerned in contrast to what was acknowledged to be primary. The normative exposition of this relationship was

offered by Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430) in his book *City of God*. According to Augustine the temporal order is constructed in the likeness of the eternal order and yet accorded intrinsic positive status.

The interdependence between the temporal and the sacred according to Augustine is possible only because God (the seat of all permanence) allows things to take shape for a specific purpose. Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1275) affirmed the compatibility between heavenly and earthly realms and also between ecclesiastical and civil orders. At the time of the European/Protestant Reformation Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) developed the doctrine of “two kingdoms”, so that both temporary and permanent obligations and services could be distinguished and properly ordered. The historical approach entails appreciation of the insight that each period in history has its own concerns although at the center of each concern is the question: “What is that which always is and has no becoming, and what is that which is always becoming and never is?”<sup>45</sup>

This study is interdisciplinary in nature, therefore it is difficult to use one theory to effectively cover its entire component. Subsequently, three theoretical components have been integrated to come up with a conceptual framework. The functional theory and analysis has been employed a great deal.<sup>46</sup> Functional analytical theory deals with human societies from a systems point of view. The social institutions are designed to fulfill specific functions. The functions are as a result of normative consensus. Some questions arise when one uses the functional analysis theory to describe, explain and predict any social phenomenon, namely:

- What is the contribution of each part, each institutional complex or aspect thereof, to maintenance of the structure as a whole?
- What is the reciprocal relationship between the parts themselves and between them and the whole?

Functional analysis recognizes the existence of many parts in the whole social organism and explains how these component parts relate with each other in a

systematic or random way to offer a frame of reference for the members. The following assumptions underlie the functional theory:

- People must act in practical manner to ensure group survival
- Human action must be instrumental or adaptive to some degree
- People have expressive needs, needs to act out emotions and to enter relationships
- As they solve existential problems people express basic needs and characteristics.<sup>47</sup>

There are two applications of the functional analysis theory. Firstly, it formulates and makes explicit specific fundamental characteristics of the relation of religion to society – religion as concerned with the sacred, as a relational mode of orientation, as a transcendent phenomenon made functional in the limit situation, as providing an answer to the problem of meaning and a mode of adjustment for frustration and sacralizing norms and legitimizing institutions.<sup>48</sup> Secondly, on the other hand, the theory provides the basis on which more sophisticated models of analysis are built. The functional analysis theory helps the current study to determine the functional significance of the changes in Ipapa.

Although religion has empirical aspects in it, there are many aspects of it which transcend the empirical manifestations. Religion includes motivations to relationships and orientations towards the ultimate. The functional analysis theory approaches religion as an observable human activity, thereby employing explicit concepts and propositions in the analysis of observable empirical data. The theological part of the theory goes beyond the observable reality and touches on the subjective. This is a major limitation of the theory. Another theory then is needed that recognizes the sociological aspect.

The sociological aspect gives the study a frame of reference. Jesse N. K. Mugambi has propounded on the social cultural theory which will be adopted.<sup>49</sup> The theory has also been analyzed by Thomas Robbins.<sup>50</sup> In the book *Religion and social Construction of*

*Reality*, Mugambi defines culture as the visible achievement of human beings in their endeavour to improve on their modification of the natural and social environment across generations.<sup>51</sup> At another level Mugambi observes that religion is a social phenomenon which is always to be found fully blended with the way of life of individuals and communities. It is impossible to find an individual who practices religion in isolation of culture.<sup>52</sup> Mugambi identifies six pillars of culture (see p. 5 above). A culture is manifested through the cumulative interrelationships of these pillars, over generations and in physical space. Religion as a pillar is the synthesis of perspectives to produce a plausible world view, binding on and relevant to the whole community. At the personal level religion is how you sum up your being in the world.<sup>53</sup>

As Mugambi puts it, every culture has a characteristic social structure which is most clearly manifested in the religious pillar of culture. Thus any religion displays the organizational character of the culture of its origin. For instance the Roman Catholic church retains the organizational structure of imperial Rome; the church of England retains the hierarchical structure of monarchical England and the church of Scotland retains the Presbyterian structure of Scottish Assembly. In this regard one asks what culture traits the Ipapa Bahai community displays given the fact that outsiders took the Faith to Ipapa. As pointed out earlier the religious experience of the Ipapa people directed them to the Bahai Faith. It may be that, Bahai Faith is culturally adaptable hence it is acceptable in many cultures without losing its essence, and without becoming burdensome to new cultures in which it is accepted. The research into the formation of the Ipapa Bahai community uses the socio-cultural theory in an attempt to describe and explain the changes that the Ipapa community has experienced.

Using the socio-cultural theory Thomas Robbins analyzes the formation of New Religious Movements in Western Europe and North America.<sup>54</sup> In so doing Robbins notes that spiritual ferment in any region is an indicator of fundamental social and cultural change. In the religious sphere change may entail enhanced religious diversity and innovation. The diversity and innovation is championed by a social attitude where

some experiential people see things in general are going wrong. As a promising way of putting them right people innovate or join highly intelligible social groupings that act as signposts to the future.<sup>55</sup> Robbins' assumption is that religion is a vital lead indicator of imminent revolutionary upheaval. Hence, social strains are to be evident when religious diversity and innovation are evident. With regard to social strains this research begins at the period before the formation of the Sinai church. What social strains championed the change and shift in worldviews?

When social strains force people to join or innovate a worldview that is conducive to their progress, there must be a functional and integrative role of the worldviews. Robbins tries to identify the reasons why people willingly identify themselves with a certain social group. He observes:

Modern cultures are complex while no movement is likely to grow unless it has a cultural base, which is congruent with some cultural expectations, it is hardly surprising that given movements might reflect some cultural norms while simultaneously repudiating others.<sup>56</sup>

Robbins thus focuses on cultural continuity in religious diversity and innovation. However as he puts it, socio-cultural theory requires systematic empirical analysis for its validation. The current research contributes that kind of validation. The study of Robbins presupposes individualistic context, whereas the current research is investigating a community which converted en mass to a foreign religion.

The socio-cultural theory deals with social transformation from within the societies involved. The study of religious innovation and diversity should take into consideration the globalist influences. What in essence influenced the people of Ipapa in a location away from any urban center to identify with a universalistic movement? The research on the Ipapa community borrows from the documentation of Thomas Robbins.

The other theory that the study utilizes in a bid to describe, explain and predict the Ipapa phenomenon is the developmental theory. Max Weber investigated the role of

religion in social change, and in the development of societies. He considered religious experience and religious thought as the spheres in which individuals entered into more rational, more profound and more adequate appreciation of the human situation. He observed that the charismatic leader and the prophet are very important at the initial stages of a religion. After some time a routine develops and institutionalization follows.<sup>57</sup>

Weber viewed religion as a factor in economic development. He suggested that each economic class has its experience and expression of the ultimate reality: the lower classes show a tendency to embrace religious doctrines promising salvation, whereas ruling and successful classes' desire doctrines legitimizing their functions and justifying their status. For the lower middle class, especially artisans, he saw that they tend to develop rational ethical religion whereas peasants and warriors show much greater affinity for magical phenomena. He also observed that the development of a rational religion must wait as it is necessary, though not necessarily it is sufficient, condition the development of a priesthood enjoying a status apart from the laity. He also anticipated the secularization of culture, socialism and nationalism as religious substitutes. It means that at the base of any religious orientation the economic factor is at work. This research proposes that the economy is one of the factors that contributed to the changes in Ipapa. The study uses the developmental theory to explain the conversion of the Ipapa community and to predict how the changes in economic power might affect religion in this community in particular and any others in general.

In combining the three theories (functional, socio-cultural and developmental theory) the current research proposes a matrix of transformation. The matrix of transformation is the sum total of all the dynamics that appear to inform and influence social change. At the heart of the matrix are people with their attitudes, fears, aspirations and hopes towards life. This gives way to thought patterns and systems that yield into actions, which in turn capitulate to events, trends, patterns and processes that are embraced by institutions and later by the society or community. In the growth and consolidation of any religion, specific personalities occupy a central

place. It is through individual initiative that actions build up to bring about events which yield into trends and patterns of growth and consolidation. Eventually these patterns develop into observable processes. It is at this point that the institutions and the society join the process of change.

Through time the dynamics of social change nurture experience and knowledge needed for continued transformation. The turning point for any process of change is human knowledge and experience coupled with the interpretation thereof. But for religious transformation the place of divine revelation must be underlined. If one may take into account any moment of social change one will note that at a particular time and period human beings decided to think and act in a particular way to the extent that forces of change were activated to the point of what a physicist may call "critical mass." The "critical mass" is the point where transformative (latent force of social change) forces exceed the conservative ones and the momentum of social change is triggered. In the reaction and counter-reaction that is generated a new trend takes shape.

Ultimate Reality

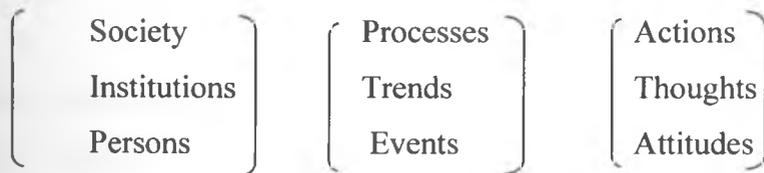


Diagram 1

For transformation to take place, the status quo at each of the moulds is acted upon by new knowledge and experience. God or the Ultimate reality gives fresh thoughts to particular individuals at a specific period in time. It is in this line that the matrix of transformation has been articulated so that the frame of reference for social change from a religious point of view now becomes the revelation of God. The process of revelation and how it is experienced and expressed animates the entire matrix.

Therefore the content of religious belief is important in understanding the process of social transformation. The main social actors in the process of social change are; individuals, institutions and the wider community. The basic assumptions here are:

- People live in localities
- Existentially people act on their environment
- The desire for the best in life is a major drive among human beings given chance they will go for what they think is best to them
- Religion provides the best catalyst for change in any society
- God is the author of religion and the transformation thereof

The research has applied a comparative and cross-cultural approach to the study of religion. Christianity, African Religion and Bahai Faith are the core actors at Ipapa. The phenomenological approach coupled with the historical approach has aided in the description of the situation at Ipapa. Historical and comparative depths were vital in the analysis. In explaining the shift from the Sinai Church to the Bahai Faith, the functional theory of religion has been very instrumental. However, the transformational matrix enabled the analysis of the various components that were involved in the process of integration.

Any theory that one attempts has its own limitations in describing, explaining, and predicting the religious experience and expression at Ipapa. However, the transformational matrix has proved to be multipurpose in that the inner convictions of individuals and communities as the driving force in human behaviour are given recognition. The Ultimate reality is incorporated in the analysis. It is the inclusion of the Ultimate reality that makes the model (transformational matrix) a valuable tool in the current analysis. It is in this dimension that the revealed nature of the faiths concerned is authenticated. This is the main departure between the transformational matrix and the other theories.

In summary, the practice of religion involves inner experiences and sentiments such as feelings of God guiding the life of the devotee. Individual experience is subjective and

the intention of the research was to present the experiences of the Ipapa Bahai community. While doing this the researcher had to invoke the inner, individual side of the Ipapa religiosity, which is not observable in any way. The research has accommodated a dialectical between participant observation and dialogical relationship with the adherents of the Bahai Faith. The approach could only be possible within the transformational matrix. The research hence recommends the inclusion of the Ultimate reality as subject in religious research if that research is to go to the roots of the faith in question. The major challenge of this approach is the subjectivity accorded to the Ultimate reality. Reason and experience are the main validation that are accorded to the Ultimate reality.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### THE ORIGINS AND THE SPREAD OF THE SINAI CHURCH

#### 3.0 Introduction

Tanzania was created in 1964 by the union of mainland Tanganyika (former German East Africa) and Zanzibar, which was an Omani colony for several centuries before the British made it a protectorate.<sup>1</sup> Tanzania has 26 administrative provinces. Mbeya and Iringa provinces are in the southern Tanzania. The current study is located in Mbozi district of Mbeya province. Mbozi district is divided into 26 administrative wards. Ihanda, Tunduma and Halungu are the wards where the Sinai Church had influence. Southern Tanzania is mountainous and bushy. The major towns in southern Tanzania are Iringa, Mbeya, Tukuyu, Kyela, Njombe, Tunduru, Songea, and Tunduma. There are two national parks in the region namely Ruaha National Park and Kitulo National Park. South of Tukuyu straddling the border with Malawi and Mozambique, the eastern and western branches of the Rift Valley converge to form Lake Nyasa, a stunning deep-water trough flanked to its east by the soaring Livingstone Mountains.<sup>2</sup> There are three main routes into southern Tanzania: the Tanzam highway from Dar es Salaam to Lusaka; the TAZARA Line Railway, which follows much the same route; and from western Tanzania via Sumbawanga. Ipapa is at the fringes of southern Tanzania near the Tanzania Zambia border, four hours walk west of the Tanzam highway. Southern Tanzania is also the corridor of land between Lakes Tanganyika and Malawi.

There are several clusters of people called Wanyiha living in southern Tanzania. Traditional Wanyiha were organized on chiefdoms. The Wanyiha believed in the independence and equivalence of each chiefdom, and the desire to assert priority for one's own line.<sup>3</sup> The geographical position of the Wanyiha has exposed them to many outside influences. Southern Tanzania lies on the raised highland block between two branches of the Rukwa rift valley. For many centuries the narrow corridor has been a major communication route between East and Central Africa. The topography in many parts of the corridor is rugged, and one of the least difficult routes through it crosses the Mbozi highland, drops down into Songwe valley, then goes through the gap

between Mbeya mountain and Poroto hills (Map 3).<sup>4</sup> This is the route of present Great North Road, which seems to follow closely an Arab slave traders' route that was in use at least one hundred fifty years ago. The influence of Christianity followed the same route.

Before the introduction of Christianity in southern Tanzania, the people in the region were practitioners of African Religion. African Religion is communitarian. Each community has its own specific aspects of African religion. The African Religion practiced in Ipapa was very ritualistic in drumming and dancing. Ritualistic dancing brought the community together, by forging important ties in life, among the living, and between the living and the dead. The belief in witchcraft was strong among the Wanyiha people. After the Berlin Conference of 1884/5, Germany took control of Tanganyika, while Britain gained Kenya, Uganda and Zanzibar.<sup>5</sup> To consolidate her grip on Tanganyika, Germany took its colonial war machine into the interior through the slave and ivory-carrying caravan routes that passed through southern Tanzania. Any form of resistance was met with military force. For instance, Chief Mkwawa of the Hehe in southern Tanzania committed suicide in 1898 when he could not resist the Germans in guerrilla war. Part of the German legacy in Tanzania is the construction of the railway from Dar es Salaam to Kigoma port on Lake Tanganyika. After World War I in 1919, the British were given control over Tanganyika up to 1961 when Tanganyika attained her independence.

The years from 1907 to 1947 were the period when improvement was the central theme in Tanzanian history. The chief source of change for the country as a whole was founded on the experiences that the country had gone through and the future that was anticipated.<sup>6</sup> During the 1950s Tanzanians decided on the sort of unity they wanted. They chose territorial or national unity, the unity of all men and women living within the colony which the British ruled as Tanganyika.<sup>7</sup> Tanzanians were organizing themselves in preparation for an independent nation. At the local level, the waves of unity were surging. Unity required the individual to abandon the exclusive loyalty to his or her ethnic group, and be in contact with some institution or organization that

was territorial in scope. The dreams of the founders of the Sinai Church owes its roots to this period only that the waves of change arrived late in Ipapa. For integral transformation to take place the three social actors must be engaged.

Some important statistics from the 2002 national census and 2006 estimates:<sup>8</sup>

Population of Tanzania 37,445,392

Population of Mbeya 2,070,046

Population of Mbozi 515,270

Population growth rate 1.8%

Christians (Mainland) 30%

Islam (Mainland) 35%

Islam (Zanzibar) 99%

Indigenous (Mainland) 35%

Bahai 0.5%

World War II was a major turning point in the history of Tanzania. Many Tanzanians had been conscripted as soldiers and porters for the British. These soldiers expected something in return. When nothing was forthcoming opposition to the colonial rule began. The world was pitted against two superpowers, the United States of America and the Soviet Union. To lead the independent movement in Tanganyika, the Tanganyika African Association was founded and in 1929 it became the Tanganyika National Union – TANU. From 1954, TANU was led by Julius Kambarage Nyerere. In December 9, 1961 Tanganyika became an independent country with Nyerere as the president. In 1967, he delivered a speech - the Arusha Declaration, in which he laid out his vision of self-reliant, non-Marxist “African socialism” for Tanzania. This was the birth of the *Ujamaa* system in Tanzania. By 1977 over thirteen million people, or about eighty per cent of the population, resided in some eight thousand *Ujamaa* villages.<sup>9</sup>

According to 2006 estimates, the population of Tanzania is estimated at 37.5 million, and grows annually at a rate of around three percent. Population density is generally thin, apart from the urban sprawl Dar es Salaam and around the shoreline of Lake

Victoria. Tanzania is among the world's poorest countries, with an average salary of \$50 a month.<sup>10</sup> It means that a third of the population live below the UN's dollar-a-day poverty line; over half lack access to safe water; one in seven children die before the age of five. These depressing figures do not paint the full picture or reflect traditional modes of life, many of which – such as subsistence agriculture and cattle herding – carry on outside the official economy. Since 1985 when Nyerere resigned as president, political and economic reforms have given hope for a better Tanzania. Nyerere's legacy in Tanzania is free and compulsory primary education for all, a peaceful sense of national identity, access to clean water, health care was greatly improved. These benefits were experienced in the Ujamaa villages. Kiswahili also became a national language. And with the G8 having announced debt relief package in 2005, things are definitely positive, and growth in Gross Domestic Product is expected to reach ten percent a year by the end of the decade.<sup>11</sup>

Christianity is a foreign religion in Tanzania. The Germans and British missionaries introduced Christianity in Tanzania. Johann Ludwig Krapf and Johannes Rebmann were the first German missionaries into the interior of Tanzania. Christian missionary enterprise was embedded in exploration. In 1848 Krapf was the first European to describe Mount Kilimanjaro. Hot on his heels came a train of explorers and missionaries, such as Sir Richard Francis Burton, James Augustus Grant, Joseph Thompson, Samuel White Baker, and John Hanning Speke. The most famous explorers to have graced Tanzania are a duo: the journalist-turned-adventurer Henry Morton Stanley, and the missionary-turned explorer Dr. David Livingstone. Their famous “Dr. Livingstone, I presume?” meeting took place in 1871 at Ujiji, on the shore of Lake Tanganyika in western Tanzania.

To the explorers Africa was a “Dark Continent and her people savage. To the missionaries the Africans were pagans, savages fallen, steeped in sin, living in darkness and the shadow of death”.<sup>12</sup> Christianity reached the interior of Tanzania at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the twentieth century. The missionaries found a people who had devised their own ways in relating with the

Supernatural. The majority of Christianity missionaries regarded as trivia all the African approaches to the Supernatural. This view was based on unreliable and inadequate sources and distorted views much influenced by the prevailing racial-cultural prejudices.

The missionary trivialization of African culture and its many aspects, needs, aspirations, hopes and fears led to a wide variety of reactions among the potential African converts. Some Africans accepted Christianity but were quick to identify the cultural alienation that the missionaries and the Europeans settlers championed. It is in this context that the Africans sought to express Christianity in their own terms and idioms. Three forms of this expression have been thoroughly documented - the Zionist, the Ethiopian, and the Messianic. Adrian Hastings observes that Zionism as a form of religiosity has dynamics based on prophet leaders, tribe, and language and it spreads naturally out-wards.<sup>13</sup> As a form of Christianity it represents a degree of independence and of Africanisation. This Africanisation was very threatening to most missionaries, particularly perhaps in its liberation from the missionary preoccupation with literacy, for which it had substituted a more grounded concern for healing.

The character of Zionist leaders are both prophetic and Pentecostalism. There is always a direct experience of spirit in visions, dreams, or other phenomena, the difference (of prophet and Pentecostalist) is not a great one. The Pentecostal's ministerial calling and experience may not begin with the paranormal impact of the spirit but that of the prophet must do so. The leaders of the Sinai Church fit well as prophets. The combination of healing power and revelation constitute the way the Sinai Church leaders authenticated their authority. The role of a messiah does not get spelt out in the Sinai Church. The kind of hope that they painted in their visions and dreams was that of a well organized religion with a worldwide appeal but not a specific individual saviour. As observed in chapter one, culture in its dimensions (political; religious; economics; social; material culture; ethical), informed the formation of the Sinai Church.

### 3.1 The Founders of the Sinai Church

The founding of the Sinai Church is traced to Yohannes Simbowe and Petero Simbeye in Ipapa Tanzania. Before the formation of the Sinai Church the two were known by different names; namely Gerishom Simbowe and Tenson Simbeye.<sup>14</sup> Through their conscious efforts they started a community of Faith. Gerishom Simbowe is presented and taken as the main character behind the formation of the Sinai Church. From his own account he also perceives himself as the key figure in the formation of this community. Simbowe was born in the early 1940s to a polygamous family. From 1958 while he was still a youth and not married he started having mystical experiences. For instance, he recalls that one night in his father's house at night he saw a vision of two people beside his bed. The pair wore white robes and with wings. When they were in the room, they radiated a lot of light to the extent that the entire room shone with light. The pair then knelt beside the bed and they told him in Kiswahili "*Inama tuombe*" (bow and we pray). Gerishom thought that his life was in danger so he did not comply with the request. However, the pair went on to pray for about ten minutes after which they went out through the door which was still closed. After they had gone he attempted to cry for help but to no avail. Even after the pair had gone, the room was still bright with dazzling light. He was seized by fear to the point that he was not in a position to inform his father or anybody of his strange experience.

After two days in this bewilderment, Gerishom went to Ipunga village two kilometers from his home. At Ipunga he shared his experience and feelings with Laiton Simbeye a renown Roman Catholic Christian whom he thought would assist him to come to terms with the strange experience that had left a lot of fear in him. After Laiton Simbeye heard the story, he replied, "If you were a Christian, I would say that those are angels, but you are not a Christian". Gerishom by this time had no strong religious affiliations but occasionally he would attend Sunday service in the Last Church of God. His father practiced the Wanyiha traditional religion. Gerishom went his way and after a year he had another strange experience in 1960. One night while he was lying on his bed he saw heaven and a person holding a sickle harvesting rice. After

this experience he became conscious that something was happening in his life. One evening on his way home from Tunduma town on the Tanzanian-Zambian border, about three kilometers to his fathers homestead at about seven in the evening he saw a sparkling figure in the form of a human heart. The heart-like figure was yellow in colour (*rangi ya jano*). He screamed for help and people came to check what was wrong with him. Since he was not drunk and people did not know him as a drunkard they wondered why he was screaming. The people decided to test his claim of a sparkling figure in the darkness. The people would throw small objects on the ground and Gerishom would pick the objects and give them back. After a while the heart-figure rose to the supernal sky. The people held Gerishom by the hands and took him to his home. After they arrived home he conducted Christian prayers and song after which he regained his normal consciousness.

In 1966 he had another dream. In this dream, he was informed that he was not mad but they (ancestral spirits) would use him to start a religious movement. The movement would involve many people possessed by spirits (*watu wa mizimwi*). Gerishom was informed that with the help of others they would bring the *Mizimwi* people together and from that initiative a religious movement would grow. After this dream his name was now to be Yohannes Simbowe and not Gerishom Simbowe. In the dream he was also given the name of the person who would assist him in preparing for the religious community. The name of this person was to be Petero, who was earlier known by the name Tenson Simbeye. Tenson hailed from the village of Isakamwela about ten kilometers from Ipapa. One time after this experience Tenson Simbeye paid Yohannes a visit. As they conversed, Yohannes informed Tenson of his new name. Coincidentally, Tenson also shared of his dream that had directed him to Yohannes. Tenson also communicated his new name to Yohannes. From this point they became inseparable and they continued to get dreams and visions. The pair would meet regularly at either of their homes to share their experiences.

In one of the dreams, they were commanded to be meeting at a ridge in the neighbourhood of Ipapa (photo 3). As they continued to meet on the ridge they would

record and analyze their dreams and the teachings they received through a mysterious voice. During one of the occasions on the ridge they were given Sinai as the name of the religious community that they would be caring for.<sup>15</sup> As they continued to meet they received the teachings and practices of the new religious community (Appendix VI).

In 1972 in a vision Yohannes was commanded to be baptized. As he wondered on how to go about baptism, he fell ill and was taken to a traditional healer (*Mganga wa Kienyenji*). While at the traditional healer's place he was informed through a mysterious voice "Go and be baptized". He was given the dates that he was to be baptized as 20<sup>th</sup> August 1972. After returning home he visited the pastor of the Last Church of God at Ipunga. The pastor's name was Captain Kalinga.<sup>16</sup> Yohannes shared with the pastor about his desire to be baptized. The Pastor informed Yohannes of the 7<sup>th</sup> of July 1972 baptism but Yohannes insisted to be baptized on the date he got through a dream. On the day of baptism (20<sup>th</sup> August 1972), he traveled to Zambia where the Last Church of God had convened for a baptism ceremony. When the Pastor saw him he was astonished how he had learnt about the date and the venue for this ceremony. After he was baptized Yohannes continued to educate himself on the word of God.



Photo 3: The view of Mlima Sinai where Yohannes Simbowe and Petero Simbeye used to meet.

*Photo by the researcher*

By 1975 two men Piores Nakapondia and Levinson Siwerwa had joined Yohannes and Petero. The two also testified to the revelation of the name Sinai and how they were to seek more information from Yohannes and Petero. Piores was from Isalalo village while Levenson came from Msamba village. By this time Yohannes was now married and was the secretary (*Katibu Mtendaji wa Kijiji*) of the Ipapa Location.

The four continued to meet on Mlima Sinai where they would share their dreams and visions. They all would wonder as to when the religious community would come into being. Through the dreams and visions they would be informed that the ancestral Spirits would bring the people. The religious community was to be grounded on the culture and customs of the Wanyiha (the local inhabitants of the region) people. The name of the faith was to be "*Kanisa la Sinai-Dini ya Mila na Utamaduni*" (Sinai Church - A Religion of Culture and Traditions). The name selected by this community is not alien to Christianity.

Christianity was introduced to southern Tanzania by the Moravians. Later the Last Church of God became a popular denomination in the region. The Last Church of God is an AIC that was founded in 1925 in Northern Malawi. Through its missionary ambitions, the Last Church of God was established in southern Tanzania in the 1930s. Southern Tanzania has never been the base for strong missionary and educational enterprises but represents rather the furthest limit of effective AICs energies in Tanzania.<sup>17</sup> A majority of the Sinai Church members were from the Last Church of God and Moravian denominations. Very few were from the Catholic Church which has a following in the region. In response to the question, which religion did you belong to before you joined the Sinai Church? The table below shows the response:

Catholic	4	3.5%
Last Church of God	50	43.9%
Moravian	30	26.1%
African Religion	30	26.1%
Total	114	100%

Table 2.1 The religious background of the Sinai respondents

In November 1987, a lady by the name Tatu Namonje (also called Lwitiho) visited Yohannes at night with a request: “*mjomba nimekuja hapa ili utufundishe yale unayo yaona na kufundishwa kwa ndoto* (Uncle! I have come so that you may teach us that which you have been taught through dreams and visions). According to Yohannes, Lwitiho came thrice and Yohannes was skeptical of what she was demanding. After the third time, Yohannes through a dream was told to respond to what Lwitiho and her team were demanding. Finally, he decided to visit them. Before November 1987 there was no meeting between Lwitiho and Yohannes although their activities were popular in the Ipapa area.

Tatu Namonje by this time had been married.<sup>18</sup> She had been ill on several occasions. Her husband had taken her to many traditional healers but she never improved. Early 1987 she was seriously ill and she was tired of visiting the traditional healers. Despite

her illness, she used to have dreams that were directing her to serve God at her parent's home by praying for the sick. As the illness intensified so did the influence of the dreams, until she returned to her parent's home. At her parental home she continued to have some para-normal experiences that would indicate to her that she should start to pray for the sick. In one of the experiences, she was informed that she would serve God together with four others, namely: Simoni Haonga; Musauye Mwamulima; Nessi Mwazembe; and Militab Namkondya. At one time she was directed to Mwamulima who was also ailing. The full name of the person was Aliko Mwamulima, but later the name was changed to Musauye Mwamulima. Musauye in Kinyiha means "I have chosen you" (*nimekuchagua mimi*). At Mwamulima's home she conducted prayers and Mwamulima felt convinced that he should follow Lwitiho. After a few days they were joined by Nessi Mwazembe who was also experiencing mental disturbances. The fourth person to join was Lezia Namkondya whose name was changed to Militab Namkondya. After the four came together all of whom were mentally and spiritually disturbed, they had to be taken care of by the parents of Lwitiho Namonje.

The four men were in a kind of seclusion for about one month during which Lwitiho Namonje coordinated their activities as directed by the spirits.<sup>19</sup> As a group, they continued to have dreams and visions about the ministry that they were to undertake. During that one month, they would pray for mentally disturbed people and they would be healed of their illnesses. It was in this practice that they gained followers. Those whom they prayed for would join them and the five leaders would initiate them into the community. Gradually, an amorphous religious community was forming.

Through dreams and visions, the community received the name of the religious community that they would found. The name was written on the wall of the house that they used for seclusion (photo 5 & 14). The name of the religious community was to be "*Kanisa La Sinai Dini ya Mila na Utamaduni*" (Sinai Church a Religion of Culture and Traditions). After one month Lwitiho Namonje had a dream directing the group to Yohannes Simbowe and Petero Simbeye so that the duo would take the leadership of

the growing community, buy for them religious books such as the Bible, Catechism, Rosary and also religious attire - *kanzu nyeupe* [(white cloaks) photo 4]. It is at this point that Lwitiho Namonje visited Yohannes at night.

Yohannes and Petero agreed however they were perplexed by Lwitiho and her companions.<sup>20</sup> During the one month in the house of seclusion, there was no personal grooming. All of them were in a pathetic condition. Yohannes and Petero decided to pray for the four who were the leaders of the group and those that had joined them. They also started to teach the group what they had received in their dreams. By the time Yohana and Petero were taking the leadership of the group the total number of the group was twenty.<sup>21</sup> On the day that they first visited the group, Yohannes and Petero were astonished to find on the wall the name of the religious community - *Kanisa la Sinai - Dini ya Mila na Utamaduni*. The inscription of the name on the wall required them to take the group seriously. The duo initiated a teaching program for the Sinai Church. Priority was given to the Ten Commandments as found in the Old Testament (Ex. 20:1-17), together with other teachings of the church as they had received and documented them while on *Mlima Sinai*. All the Sinai members were to be prepared for baptism. Gradually the religious community came to the attention of the public. The leadership of the new community was now in the hands of Yohannes Simbowe as the priest and administrator while spiritual authority was shared between him and Lwitiho Namonje.<sup>22</sup>

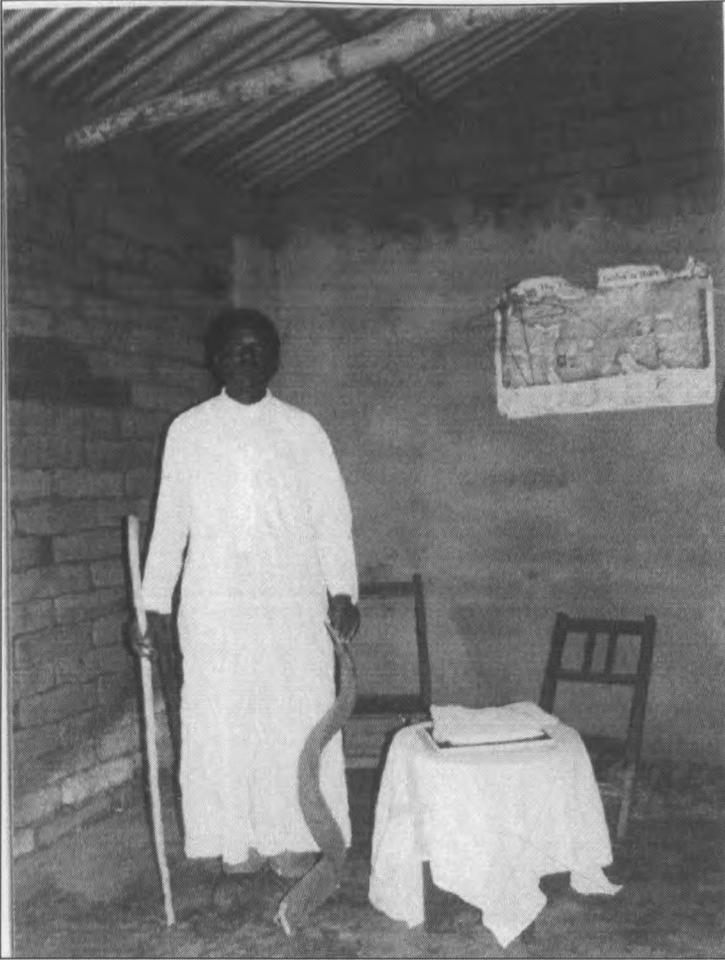


Photo 4: Yohannes Simbowe in the white robes that he used to wear when he conducted services for Sinai Church. He is holding the horn of the *Tandala* (Greater Kudu) that they killed to get the skin from which they made three drums. *Photo by the researcher*

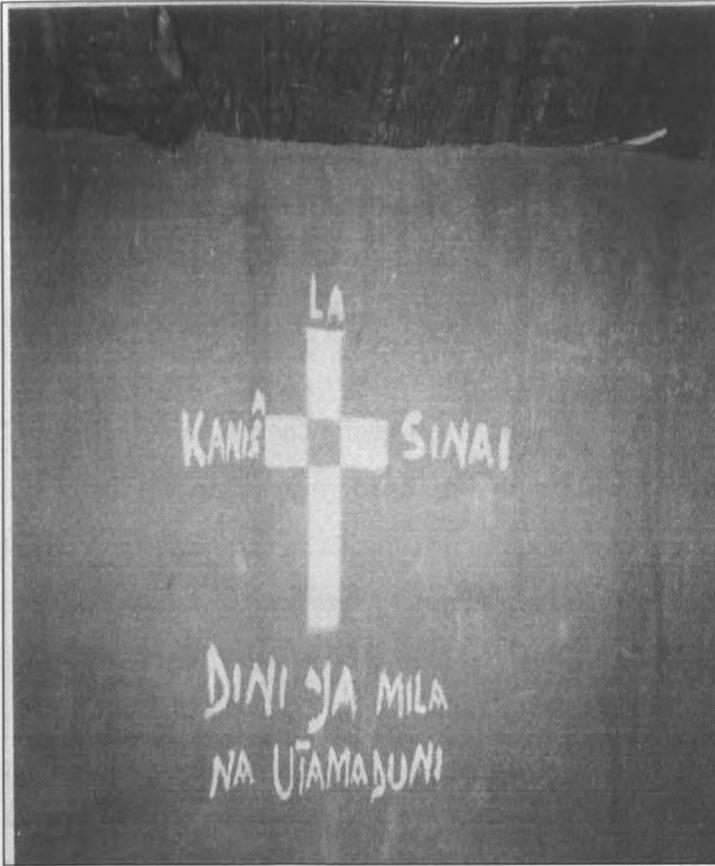


Photo 5: The Altar of the Sinai Church with the inscription of the name on it. *Photo by the researcher*

### 3.2 The Teachings and Practices of the Sinai Church

It has been noted earlier that, before *Kanisa la Sinai*, had taken shape, Petero and Yohannes used to meet on *Mlima Sinai*. While on the ridge they would hear a mysterious voice addressing them on what to teach and do for those that were to join them. Luckily, they put down on paper what they heard, (Appendix VI). In addition, they recorded the dreams and visions that they received. As indicated earlier, it was in 1987 when the Sinai Church grew rapidly. As the community grew, dreams and visions continued to be experienced. In the process, the Sinai community took shape.

The *Kanisa la Sinai* embraced a variety of rituals derived from the local culture. One ritual entailed traditional dancing for therapeutic purposes. As the Sinai community began to take shape, virtually all the initial adherents were mentally disturbed. The ritual of therapeutic dancing enabled them to be healed after which they would

become members. The key persons that formed the inner core of the community include Lezia Namkondya (Miltab), Tatu Namonje (Lwitiho), Aliko Mwamlima (Musauye) and Nessi Mwazembe.<sup>23</sup> When they met at Lwitiho's home, they would beat plastic containers as if they were beating drums. The four core members attributed their recovery to the way the plastic containers were tapped as if they were drums. As they danced to the rhythm of the plastic containers, the ancestral spirits would join in the rhythm and possess them.

One day in 1987 the members who had joined the Sinai community requested to have a band reminiscent of the Salvation Army band. In a dream it was communicated that on the following day, a *Tandala* (Greater Kudu) would pass by and they should kill it. The flesh of the animal would be used as food while the skin would be used to make three drums. *Tandala* is an impressively big antelope (up to 1.5m at shoulder) with very long spiral horns in the male; very localized; shy of humans and not often seen. Males are usually solitary while females are in small troops with young. The habitat for *Tandala* is semi-arid, hilly or undulating bush country; tolerant of drought.<sup>24</sup> At that formation of the Sinai Church, the Ipapa neighbourhood was forested and hilly. During this research, it was still under natural forest. To have a wild animal running across the village was not unusual. Many inhabitants of the region had on several occasions hunted wild animals from the bushes.

As the dream had indicated, at noon, the *Tandala* appeared from the bushes and Gibson Ujumbi shot it. Yohannes Simbowe informed the researcher that as a secretary to the Location (*Katibu Kata*) he had a gun and it is this gun that was used to kill the animal. The community had a celebration after the animal was killed. The skin was tanned traditionally and three drums were prepared as directed in the dream. In diameter the smallest drum was one foot, the medium one two feet and the biggest one meter. During the field research, the three drums were at Lwitiho's home. The drums were used in the healing services that the leaders organized and the community participated in them every Wednesday and Saturday evening at Lwitiho's home. Whenever the beating of the drums would commence the neighbourhood was in

frenzy as all the people who were mentally sick would assemble at Lwitiho's. Through the drumming the dancers would fall into trance and any mental ailment would be cured.<sup>25</sup> The drumming and the dancing was reminiscent of some of the African Instituted Churches in the area (photo 6).



Photo 6. Members of the *Ntumlwe Yesu – Mwana wa Maria: Umoja wa Waganga* church, an African Instituted Church in Ipapa who took after the religiosity of the Sinai Church. The drumming session is going on and already some members are in trance. *Photo by the researcher*

During the first visit to Ipapa area in 1998, the researcher witnessed the kind of drumming and dancing that would accompany healing sessions on Friday evening. The three drums in different sizes were drummed and for real their impact on the dancers was not faked. The researcher witnessed a patient being attended. The following morning she testified that she was well. For one to qualify for the dance, Lwitiho would examine the person and would determine how the drumming would go. As the drumming continued, the other members would join in chanting and the room would automatically be heightened for para-normal experiences and utterances. The rhythmical dancing would send the dancer into trance while still dancing. The chanting contained words beseeching the Almighty through the ancestors to quicken the healing of those that are sick. The drumming was taken into the entire region where people accepted to join the Sinai Church based on the therapeutic services it offered to the community. The drumming was used to enlist people into the Sinai

Church and many people responded positively. Such areas where the Sinai Church had followers include Isakamwela; Mponera; Isalalo; Chiwezi; Msamba; Hakunku; Ipanzia; Tunduma; Ipunga. Ipapa acted as the headquarters of the Sinai Church. The Ipapa area has several traditional religious communities that still mimic the drumming associated with the Sinai community.

The traditional music played by the Sinaists made use of tribal riddles, proverbs, and metaphoric language that would change according to the occasion. It was used to transmit all kinds of information that concerned the Sinaists from advising youngsters of their responsibilities to seeking the intervention of spirits of deceased to grant harmony in the social life of the Sinaists. The powerful hypnotic quality of the Sinaists is not merely aesthetic, but had its purpose: the ethereal rhythms and intricate harmonies of ritual dances aim to bring the living and the dead together to communicate together.<sup>26</sup> The underlying fact is the continuity from the past to the present. The Sinai Church was in this case a preservation of the traditional values of the Wanyiha.

Baptism was the other ritual that the Sinai community introduced. The adherents were baptized in either Mpembe or Mbengese rivers. Immersion baptism was practiced. The first baptism took place on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1988 and all those that had joined the Community were to be baptized, (Appendix VI). One hundred and twenty adherents were baptized. Yohannes was the one who conducted the baptism. Baptism was an indication that the baptized individuals were ready for a new religion that was anticipated to come into the area. The Sinai community was to be different from other surrounding communities. The Sinai community believed that they were waiting for a new religious movement that would link the Sinai Church with the entire world. The character of this community was to be shaped by the various teachings and also by the commitment of members to participate in the activities of the new faith. Each person in the Sinai Church had a role to serve. To identify and differentiate the various roles members were given a special stick that would designate one's service. For instance,

there were those who were to fetch water, those to pray for the sick, those to feed the sick and many more. Each kind of service had a different kind of “service staff”.

On Sundays, the Sinai community would meet at Yohannes’ home for worship where hymns and prayers were the main ingredients of the worship service. Also on Sunday, they would consult on the dreams and visions that they had earlier received. When a dream recurred among more than five people it was passed for public recognition and acceptance. The essence of the dream would then be embraced. The following are some of the main teachings of the Sinai Church:

- *Fedha ni adui mkubwa wa Kanisa la Sinai*- Money is the worst enemy of the Sinai Church.
- *Ni nani alikuumba akakuweka ulimwenguni?* – Who created you and put you in the world?
- *Mungu aliniumba na akaniweka ulimwenguni* - God created me and put me in the world
- *Je Mungu yuko wapi?* - Where does God stay?
- *Mungu yuko mbinguni na mahalipote* - God is in heaven and everywhere
- *Mungu ni nani?* – Who is God?
- *Mungu ni roho tupu kamili kabisa, muumba wa mbingu na ndunia na Bwana mkubwa wa vitu vyote* - God is pure spirit, the creator of the universe the Lord of everything
- *Je Mungu atujua sisi?* - Does God know us?
- *Ndiyo Mungu atujua sana. Hata mawazo ya mioyo yetu. Zaburi 139.* - Yes God knows us even our inner desires.

Once in a month Yohannes and the other leaders of the church would organize a party and they would have it on *Mlima Sinai*. Yohannes was economically stable as the *Katibu Kata*. He also had social influence over the people in the area. On *Mlima Sinai*, they would celebrate their unity and have more teachings and revelations about the future of the Community. *Mlima Sinai* was treated as a sacred shrine where God used to meet with them and give them directions. The researcher was taken to *Mlima*

*Sinai*. It is notable that at some stage one had to remove his or her shoes as a precondition for accessing the holy shrine. The cool environment on the ridge and the presence of trees and rocks makes the environment conducive for spiritual meditation. The community would gather there occasionally and after the teachings and the party, they would spend much time in individual and group prayer. Many people would even spend their nights there in deep meditation and others in trance. A case was cited when one person got lost in the ridge because of going there without the knowledge, consent and company of the leadership of the Sinai Church.

From a distance, the ridge appears small but while on the ridge, it is a forest and losing directions is very easy since there are no definite paths. Above all the spiritual significance attached to the ridge and the name given to it demonstrates a community in need of religious identity and cohesion. The entire community even non-members of the Sinai Church came to regard the ridge as a sacred shrine, which had to be preserved, and cutting of trees for firewood was not allowed.

It was reported that on many occasions when the Sinai community gathered on *Mlima Sinai*, an airplane would be seen to circumambulate the ridge. This was in the visions that characterised the religious experience of the community. The Sinaists believed that the ridge would be the future location of an international school that would offer religious courses plus other technical courses to the Ipapa community. The school would be served by communication networks that would connect the school with the outside world.

On Sundays, the community would gather at the church building that they had constructed at the homestead of Yohannes Simbowe. The building is the current Ipapa Bahai Centre. They would meet from ten o'clock in the morning until two in the afternoon. During the Sunday meeting they would be instructed on the main teachings of the Sinai Church and induct new adherents into the community. A mixture of traditional and Christian songs and dances were part of the Sunday liturgy based on the Roman Catholic catechism that Yohannes had purchased and the one

that they had prepared for *Kanisa la Sinai*. The liturgy was Roman Catholic service mixed with innovations introduced by the leaders of the *Kanisa la Sinai*. The traditional rituals of the Wanyiha such as drumming added flavour to the Sunday worship. One traditional line that featured during those meetings went thus: *Wailulira nalwinji malanda –Subiri/Jionee Mlango kwa hamu* (Wait patiently to see the door). The chanting of this line would continue for hours without end accompanied with drumming and ecstatic dancing. Some of the dancers would fall into trance. The researcher visited one of the African Instituted Churches in the area by the name *Ntumlwe Yesu- Mwana wa Maria: Umoja wa Waganga* (Messenger Jesus -Son of Mary: the Unity of Traditional Healers) (Photo no. 6) that was patterned like the Sinai Church. He suggested that the members sing the line “*Wailulira nalwinji malanda.*” The members were elated to hear that a Kenyan was aware of some of their songs. They were excited to see him singing with them. Some members of that Church also went into trance.<sup>27</sup>

Songs were a major ingredient in all the meetings that the Sinaists held. Mr. Samson Khalinga, one of the founders of African Instituted Church that the researcher visited emphasized that singing is part of the Wanyiha, Wandali and other communities in southern Tanzania. He also indicated that most of the songs are composed under the influence of the ancestral spirits. The songs echo the religious virtues that members should maintain.<sup>28</sup> The singing and dancing seemed to come upon the participants effortlessly and spontaneously wherever the researcher visited. It was reported that all over the region there are traditional singing groups that entertain people with such traditional tunes. The end of the harvest heralds the dance season. Dancing contests began in the nineteenth century when rival healers could not agree about which of them possessed the most powerful *dawa* (medicine). The format, which remains unchanged, is for the dance groups to perform at the same time, with the crowd being free to move between the two – the bigger the crowd the better the *dawa*.<sup>29</sup>



Photo 7: The researcher with Nessi Namwazembe on *Mlima Sinai*: One has to remove shoes when coming to the Shrine. *Photo by the researcher*

The 1980s were the climax of the Sinai Church in Mbozi district Mbeya region. Its influence was particularly in the following specific areas where Sinai communities were founded: Ipanzia; Ipunga; Tunduma; Isalalo; Mponera; Msamba; Chiwezi; Hakunku; Isakamwela; and Kombe. As the influence of the community continued to expand, the local government officers were concerned that the religious community had not been registered. The Sinai Church leaders did not want to register the church for they had been directed through dreams that they would join an international religious community. The local authorities had been concerned about the motives of the community. However, the community leaders had already taken care of that concern by presenting a sword to the traditional chief in the area. The sword symbolized their support for the government in fighting social ills.<sup>30</sup> The researcher during the first and the third visit was honoured to meet the chief who cooperated with the Sinai Church leaders and later with the Bahais.

The community evolved and became widely known in the context of healing various diseases. The healing was through therapeutic drumming, dancing, chanting, praying, and the use of traditional herbs obtained from *Mlima Sinai* which was considered

sacred (photo 7). The ritual of getting the right medicine for an ailment was conducted mainly in trance by either Lwitiho Namonje or Yohannes Simbowe. Health complications that the herbs and treated include; skin infections, stomach problems and any form of pain. The ailments that were commonly cured are mental and spiritual disturbance. The local people would refer to these ailments as *kichaa* (madness). One of the respondents had been cured of madness after he relocated to Ipapa from his home area in Tukuyu. He had no clothes when he came to Ipapa. After a while he was treated and has never returned to his home area (photo 8).

The catechism of the Sinai Church is formulated in the form of questions and answers. Yohannes Simbowe and Petero Simbeye were responsible for teaching the community, (Appendix VI). Religious beliefs and rituals are basic to any human response to the problem of meaning.<sup>31</sup> The question of the vindication of divinity in the face of evil (theodicy), is a necessary component of religion. Human existence is marked by critical stages in life such as birth, procreation, ageing, and death all of which demand appreciation and understanding. Giving meaning to these critical stages requires authenticity on the part of the leaders responsible for interpreting and teaching the society. The teachings of the Sinai community illustrate the need for a community to reinterpret its outlook on life after adopting a new religious orientation.



Photo 8: On the left is Noah Kamela from Tukuyu, he came to Ipapa in the 80s as a mad person but was healed through a therapeutic dance. With him is Violet Mtambo the wife of Bison Kawawa holding the Service Staff that she used to carry as a member of the Sinai Church. Both are now Bahais. *Photo by the researcher*

The teachings and practices of the Sinai community are expressed in traditional ritual that gives the Sinai community its own self-identity. The African heritage provides the basis for solving health problems through dancing to traditional tunes and rhythms. The teachings of the Sinai Church anticipate both traditional and foreign music and dances: *Vile vile kuna ndoto iliyo watokea kuwa kutakuwa na Bendi) NGOMA ambayo itapigwa kulingana na Bendi ya shule, ili baadaye kuwe na mapigo ya kwaya na kucheza mchezo utakaosaidia watu wagonjwa.* (“On the same note they received a dream that directed them to have a singing band or great choir directed as a school choir, when it plays those who are sick will dance and they will be cured, (Appendix VI)”.

The drumming is one aspect of the Sinai Church that facilitated ritual trance and thereby authenticating the religious experience as from God. The trance involved sensory bombardment – an increase in exteroceptive stimulation, this was done through singing, chanting, drumming, clapping, and monotonous dancing, inhaling air that has little oxygen, little light in the room where this used to happen. Sensual

deprivation may also have been used to induce trance. This involved ideation and perceptual restriction, isolation, fasting, and strict dietary restrictions. The presence of other members of the community heightened the spiritual possession or trance. The permissive atmosphere and the presence of the significant others mainly the religious founders facilitated falling into trance. In two visits, the researcher was in meetings where trance was induced. The first one was during the first visit in 1998 and the other was in the third visit at Khalinga's place.

The catechism of the Sinai Church includes both teachings and duties:

- *Kufanya kazi ya Mungu kwa bidii sana* - (to serve God with dedication)
- *Kuomba kila siku* - (praying every day)
- *Kuombea wagonjwa*- (praying for the sick)
- *Kutekeleza unabii*- (fulfilling prophesy)
- *Kumkemea au kummkana (kumchapa) shetani* - (rebuking satan or denying him)
- *Kutoa elimu ya dini kwa waumini* - (offering catechism to the believers)
- *Kufichua palipo na miujiza ya asili*- (revealing where there is traditional medicine)
- *Majengo ya kanisa yajulikane kwa usafi* - (the church buildings to have a reputation of cleanliness)

From a functional perspective, the rituals of the Sinai community can be explained as need for expressing innermost feelings and attitudes towards understanding and appreciating the divine in their midst. Through their rituals, the community re-asserts its norms and values that are essential to the wellbeing of the society. God is always involved in the day-to-day activities of the community. To help the community attain social and spiritual balance in their relationships, the spirits of the ancestors are invoked. The community has a dynamic outlook, inspired by expectations of a new religious orientation and the preparations necessary for that new orientation.

### 3.3 The Teachings on the Expectations of the Sinai Church

Since the inception of the Sinai Church, the community members under the leadership of Yohannes Simbowe, Petero Simbeye and Lwitiho Namonje were aware that they were waiting for a fuller revelation that would embrace the community and the world. From the stories that the respondents would tell about this expectation, nobody knew what this would be and even how it would take place.

The expectations were sandwiched in the dreams and visions. Some of them were recorded in anticipation of their being fulfilled. One of them dealt with syllables that the Sinaists could not comprehend. In Appendix VI p. 17 and 19 has the following letters and figures:

SALA BE SALAH NO 108421

The syllables inspired great anticipation for a long time.

In one of the recurrent dreams of the community, was the book of names, which they called in Swahili *Daftari La Watumishi wa Mungu* (*The book of the servants of God*). It was taught that as the community grew, the new religion would lead to complexity that would necessitate the entry of adherents in three categories:

*Daftari la mahudhurio kwa Mwaka* – The book of attendance per year

*Daftari la mahudhurio kwa mwezi* – The book of attendance per month

*Daftari la mahudhurio kwa wiki* – The book of attendance per week

The essence of the entry books (*Daftari La Watumishi wa Mungu*) is keeping records of the adherents as they attend the various occasions of the church. The entries were to be done on weekly, monthly and yearly registers or records. The following is a sample of the Record Card for members:

Namba Ya Kuanakishwa (Number of registration)	Jina Kamili La Mtumishi (Full name of the Servant)	Mahali pa Kuzaliwa (Place of Birth)	Umri (Age)	Darasa (Level of Education)	Alama (Signature)	Maelezo (Comments)

Table 2: A sample of the Daftari ya Watumizi wa Mungu

Other expectations include the following: (Appendix VI)

- *Vitabu vya nyimbo (tenzi)* - Books for religious instructions and hymns.
- *Mavazi meupe* - White robes
- *Ujenzi wa Kanisa* – Building of a place for worship -‘church’
- There will be a college on *Mlima Sinai*. The name of the college would be Bethlehem. When this dream was experienced and accepted by the Sinai community, one child was given the name Bethlehem as a reminder to the community of things to come. That child was Kawawa Bisson (photo 9).
- There will also be a secondary school on *Mlima Sinai*
- They will also have a communication center
- There will be a dispensary
- They would be taken to Dar es Salaam
- The Sinai community would receive many visitors from all Tanzania and the world
- The expectation of one religion in three persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- The community would host a team of twelve young men and women from twelve nations of the world

The foregoing list of expectations indicates, the role of religion in a community yearning for change. In the list, the integral needs of the Sinai community are spelt:

communal identity, functioning institutions, quality professional health care, reliable communication and transport network, education and means of livelihood. Religion goes beyond motivating the members, to providing a vision for the future. Three social actors work together in the process of change. The first actor is the individual who becomes animated by the vision for a better society. The vision is then transformed into a mission when new converts or adherents are convinced to identify with the vision. The adherents form the community - the second actor. The community after grappling with the mission comes to a level where order is needed so that the mission can be carried out systematically. The third actor is the institution that evolves while individuals, in the context of community, establish organizations for realization of their aspirations.

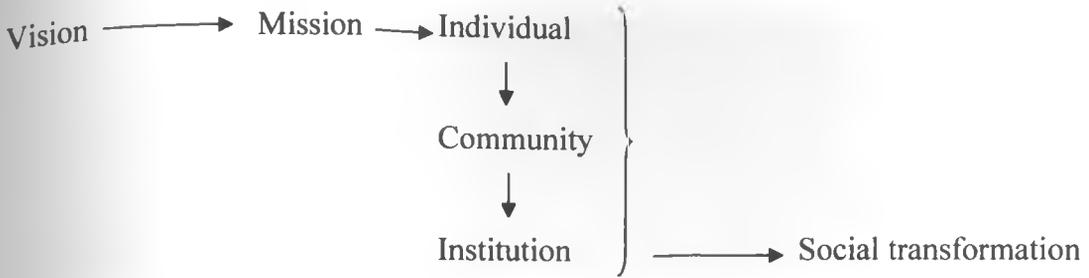


Diagram 2

The three founders (Yohannes, Petero and Lwitiho) were the most knowledgeable among the first adherents of the Sinai Church. To the factor being knowledgeable, one may point out that in spite of their attachment to the spiritual world, the source of their visions and dreams, their experiences in life are a factor to their paranormal experiences. For instance, Yohannes was the *Katibu Kata* of Ipapa village while Petero was his close confidant in their day to day activities. The social structures of their day did not promise any common good for Ipapa and the entire region. The situation disturbed them. Lwitiho had a mental illness that destabilized her and it affected her marriage and eventually triggered the search for meaning in her life. The founders of the Sinai Church and their followers had desired to carve themselves out places of prestige and wealth in the Ipapa society. The dreams and vision they had are symbolic representations of unconscious needs, wishes and conflicts.

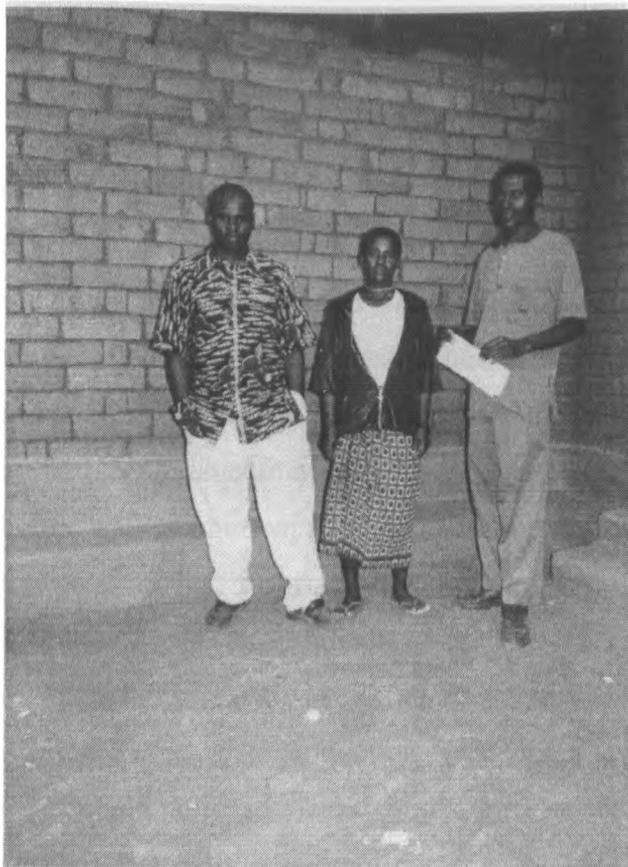


Photo 9: Kawawa Bisson, his wife Violet Mtambo and the researcher. Kawawa was also called Bethlehem as a sign of the technical institute that would come with the awaited religion. *Photo by the researcher*

The occasion of change in Ipapa gave the religious sentiments of the inhabitants the chance to tap from the authority that religious experience confers to the prophet or any other religious leader. The Ipapa community needed a channel to express their feelings and thoughts about their existential context. In the structure of awareness, the leaders of the Sinai Church had the knowledge of deterioration and decadence at individual, communal, and institutional levels. They saw and felt that they were below the best of what they felt to be their capacity. This experience in its spiritual, aesthetic, ethical and other forms is bound up with the principle of attraction and with a recurring consciousness or vision of some great worth, existence, and reality which can and must be attained.<sup>32</sup> The vision that the Sinai church adopted is a combination of religious, social, political and economic factors. The region was in dire need for social transformation yet the political, social, religious structures would not deliver this transformation. Religious sentiments thus became a vehicle of social

transformation. Religion is the conscience of the society and it is the first to give signs of change in any community that has respect for religion.

From the teachings of the Sinai Church, the kind of a community that they envisioned is notable. The Sinai church members were in search of institutional structures that would carry their dreams and visions to reality. To the Sinaists the socio-political structures of the day did not meet their expectations. Ipapa is about one thousand four hundred kilometers from Dar es Salaam the capital city of Tanzania. Transport and communication network is poor in the area. The Tazam highway is four hours walk from Ipapa. The community thrives on subsistence farming, where they grow maize, beans, groundnuts, and sweet potatoes. A few individuals plant coffee as a cash crop but the road network is poor for adequate transportation. The coffee industry is also not attractive to the small-scale farmers given the market prices and the cost of production. There are a few business men and women who help the community to obtain goods and services that they need. Tunduma and Mbeya are the main economic centers that neighbour Ipapa. For a majority Tunduma is more accessible for it takes a day.

The inward looking policies adopted by the socialist government did not encourage the Ipapa community to be innovative. Ipapa is a border region, therefore, dynamic human interaction cannot be avoided. The interaction exposes the people of the region to various social, political, and religious ideals. From the report of Yohannes Simbowe, he first received the para-normal experience when he was coming from Tunduma, a town at the border between Tanzania and Zambia. It is probable that his experiences were influenced by his vast travels and by his concern for the well-being of the region. However, it requires charisma and great skill in social organization for an individual to inculcate his vision to a community. Yohannes, having worked with the government had the skill and the ability to mobilize people for a given course. This he did with a lot of enthusiasm and agility.

At the individual level, the founders had to require the members to develop self-education and self-discipline. The time that Yohannes Simbowe and Petero Simbeye spent alone and the kind of seclusion that Lwitiho Namonje and her companions went through made it possible for their consciousness to be systematized to the point that their religious experiences were to be of help to themselves and to those that would later follow them. It may be argued that there are truths of which these individuals became conscious in their own individualistic, specific, temperamental manner, and according to their own development and that of their environment. The growth of individual consciousness among the Sinai leaders was directed to the concepts that had failed to inspire action and transformation in Ipapa. At this level, concepts were tested in the light of personal experience and expectations. It is a deeper self that criticizes the categories, terms, and thoughts of its environment, and all profound experience transcends them and commonly finds them inadequate. From this recollection a new vision and mission was nurtured and pursued. The individual as social actor requires new thought forms and patterns that will inspire social transformation at the communal level.

The community as the second social actor was ready for mobilization owing to the various social-economic and political challenges that they faced. Having no secondary and technical schools, no dispensary or hospital in Ipapa coupled with poor communication network meant that the people would go for what seemed to work. They had attempted traditional medicine to no avail, institutions for instructions were not near and the vision that the government worked with did not inspire the efforts of the community to rally behind the government with commitment that would yield ownership. The situation seemed to favour the vision that Yohannes and Petero came with. Lwitiho provided the vision with the strategy to make it operational.

The community came to own and identify with the vision of Yohannes Simbowe, Petero Simbeye and Lwitiho Namonje. The best part of this was when Lwitiho Namonje and her companions recognized the spiritual authority and social influence

that Yohannes had and thereby invited them to offer leadership to the amorphous religious grouping that was evolving by the day. The instincts of survival for the community merged with individual instincts for social influence. During this phase the functional analysis theory becomes applicable for describing and explaining the religious experiences and expressions at Ipapa. From the inner want for meaning in their social environment, the Ipapa community found a way out through the Sinai Church.

The Sinai Church helped its adherents to deal with their situation and to ascribe meaning to their existence. It has been noted that if the questions raised by the impossibilities and uncertainty contexts are not answered meaningfully, the worth and value of human effort are rendered doubtful.<sup>33</sup> The region had experienced wanton frustrations and deprivations that demanded adjustments so that the society could realize its goals as well as continue to embrace its norms. In addition, southern Tanzania, Ipapa was not distinguished by the development of a supra-tribal Swahili society unlike in the coast and urban centers.<sup>34</sup> The Sinai Church offered the much needed answers and even pointed to a better future in a different religious orientation that would be more organized and with both national and international appeal. The deprivations and frustrations could be identified with the many people with mental breakdowns and how the Sinai Church appealed to them and even others that saw hope in its vision and mission.

The deprivations and frustrations put the people at the end of their elasticity. In this condition, the Sinai Church came to help them enter into a relationship with a sacred ground of existence and experience, where an empirical reality was developed in reference to the Sinai Church's experience and expression of the sacred. Security and meaning were the fruits of this empirical reality that the adherents identified with. Religion in the light of the above solves a fundamental functional problem for human societies by relating human beings to a supra-empirical sacred beyond. However, the sacred is conceived and conceptualized ... pointing to it as the highest common factor in the relation between religion and society.<sup>35</sup>

The Sinai Church came to maintain the social system in this region of Tanzania, by providing an answer to the problems, frustrations and deprivations that they experienced. The teachings and practices of the Sinai Church were there to justify socially accepted goals, by renewing communal solidarity through ritual and cultic practices. The drums and the various meetings were excellent in mobilizing a society that was falling apart to a focused vision. The drumming, singing, and long prayer sessions also provided an outlet for frustrations. The community would mobilize her resources to the realization of that vision.

Functionally, the Sinai Church provided meaning to a very hopeless situation and helped the people of the region to think beyond their frustrations and deprivations. However, in dealing with other institutions in the area and the government in particular the community needed an institution that was well defined in terms of membership and registration. It is probable that, this limitation explains why the members of the Sinai Church had dreams about the *Daftari la Watumishi wa Mungu*. Nevertheless, it suffices to point out that the third social actor of social transformation was missing in the Sinai Church and this would be the undoing of the creativity of this community. However, before that the developmental theory could explain more of what happened to facilitate the observable changes in Ipapa.

The developmental theory of religion views religion from the perspective of the development of societies.<sup>36</sup> At the lowest level of development, the charismatic leader and the prophet occupy a very significant office. Leaders endowed with charisma demonstrate unusualness, creativity, and spontaneity in specific ways. In their preaching or their mode of being, or both issue calls that attract followers and form the nuclear of religious community. The observation is reminiscent of the initial stages of the development of the Sinai Church. Yohannes, Petero and Lwitiho Namonje and her companions formed the nucleus of the Sinai Church.

The developmental theory presupposes that, a society will embrace a religion that is in line with its social development. It therefore implies that the Sinai Church was the religious orientation suitable for the region under study. However, there is the presence of other religious groups, mainly; Last Church of God, Moravian, and the Roman Catholic Church. The Sinai adherents who came from these religious communities gave various reasons as to why they changed faith. The main reason cited by virtually all the respondents is that the Sinai Church in its experience and expression resonated with the needs, hopes, aspirations and fears of the community. For instance, the practice of polygamy made Musa Muselema not to be accepted in the Catholic Church.<sup>37</sup> The researcher observed that polygamy is prevalent among those who embraced the Sinai Church. In the teachings and practices of the Sinai Church there is no direct teaching that touches on marriage and family life. The key figures of the Sinai Church had more than one wife or they came from polygamous families. African culture was accommodated in the Sinai Church. After a long illness, Lwitiho Namonje separated with her husband. The accommodation attracted many who wanted to practice Christianity and maintain their cultural identity. Cultural identity gave the Sinaists a sense of security.

The traditional rhythm, dance, and balance that accompanied the drumming appealed to many from Ipapa. The prayers for the sick and the use of traditional medicine attracted many to the Sinai Church. In general, the growth and consolidation of the Sinai Church was a challenge to religious communities that had failed to resonate with the needs, fears, aspirations and hopes of the people that they claimed to serve. Drumming and dancing is one of the cultural practices in the region. The three set drum is very common in the area especially with those who identify with the traditional mode of life. It is this cultural touch that was used by the founders of the Sinai Church to mobilize the community to the Sinai Church. The ritual dance gave the members of the Sinai Church a sense of prestige.

The initial leadership of the Sinai Church was more charismatic than institutional. Charisma in the pure state is inherently unstable. The requirements of continuity

demand the establishment of new social forms and new social institutions to replace charisma. The traditional Ipapa community was organized on chiefdoms that did not have political institutions for coordinated action. Shifting alliances among various chiefs were formed for a specific occasion, but they seldom lasted long and at no time included all the Wanyiha chiefs.<sup>38</sup> After the height of the charismatic leadership of Yohannes Simbowe and Lwitiho Namonje there developed, a routinization of charisma in which the charisma of status and office replaced the earlier unroutinized dynamic and amorphous forms. This transformation entails both a diminution and containment of the charisma with structured roles, rites and procedures.<sup>39</sup> The routinization of charisma may proceed in either a rational direction, giving rise to social structures or in a traditional direction characterized by more diffuse social organization. It may also develop in a way that combines both. These may be seen in the early church with its emphasis on both rationality and tradition. With time, the early church developed the three fold institutions of bishops, deacons, and elders.<sup>40</sup>

The need for a better organization arose as the Sinai Church continued to be embraced by many people. A following of more than five hundred needed a structure of leadership. The developmental phase of the Sinai Church that needed systematization is probably the one that invited the Bahai Faith though the dreams and visions of the community had already acquainted the adherents with an attitude that would embrace this kind of systematization. The institutionalization of the Sinai Church is of significance to this research.

From a psychological perspective, the breakdown of religious belief and practice evokes new problems for humanity and profound disturbances in people's relations to their environment and to one another. The socialist government in Tanzania had no regard for religion in its policies about nation building. Religion was systematically seen as a private domain that should be left to the individual person and, no way was it allowed to influence public policy. The Christian denominations that evangelized the Ipapa did not fully engage with the socio-political environment

of Ipapa. On the other hand, the denominations did not take African Religion as a starting point. Rather African Religion became a point of departure.

Whenever this happens, the view of reality for the people concerned may be warped. Historically, the immensity and intensity of the libido- the psychic energy- which our forebears, not many generations ago, have poured into or extracted from their religion, which they have given to their gods or attributed to them: the love the hate, the passion, the devotion, the wrath, the fear, the wonder, the beauty, the joy, the horror, the cruelty, the ecstasy, the self-denial, the inspiration, the thought, the intelligence, the power, the witness, the tears, the laughter, the guilt, the repentance....<sup>41</sup>

How much of this psychic energy found conscious and direct expression in the life of the Ipapa people, when their gods were no longer given the right recognition? One may suppose that none of this psychic energy was lost or annihilated. Even after Christian missionaries evangelized the people of southern Tanzania, their view of the world remained intact. Although the practice of African Religion was watered down by the interaction with the European cultures new manifestations were to come. Psychologists hold that the psychic forces which are not consciously accepted and directed will not on that account cease to exist or to be active. Such forces will become unconscious and affect thought and behaviour. They will form autonomous complexes of psychic contents, which, at times, will disturb the conscious attitudes and endeavour by introjections, or be projected on to the neighbours and the environment.<sup>42</sup> The dreams and visions of Yohannes Simbowe and Petero Simbeye and later their companions could partly be seen as an expression of pent up psychic forces.

To illustrate the point from a functional approach of religion, the Second World War suffices. Because of the war even the average citizen was aware of the fearful vengeance which is wreaked on earth when the human spirit clears the skies of its gods and the underworld of its demons.<sup>43</sup> Religious authority was in jeopardy and human reason was the ultimate. It is a fact of history that irrational forces were unleashed which were more antagonistic to sweet reasonableness, and even to utilitarian self-interests, than one can imagine. Humanity was taught the lesson that

immortality is the distinctive attribute of divinity - that though the gods could metamorphose or be replaced, they can never finally die. Religious life came to be taken seriously after a time when the thought trends of the day were advocating for reason and science as the ultimate realization of humanity and religion was equated to a means that had become obsolete. In mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, a new wave of evangelization gained momentum in Europe and in America. This is the wave that took Christianity to great heights in most parts of East Africa. Amidst all the motivations that the missionaries had, there was no intention to affirm African culture and its aspects.<sup>44</sup>

The wave of evangelization also meant that Africans were exposed to other cultures and had the knowledge of nationhood. This was more so because of the communist block in Europe and Russia. Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the communist regimes took sides in the scramble for Africa. The motivating factor was mainly the economic and political influence in the world. Africa was a battleground of these powers. Marxism in Russia and Eastern Europe was a vindication of religion particularly Christianity. In the late 1950s and early 1960s African leaders had a choice to make. The kind of economic and political block that they would identify with, defined the place of religion in the new regimes. Dr. Nyerere the late president of Tanzania aligned his country to the communist economic and political policies. However, he saw the contribution of African way of life to these policies. He therefore championed African socialism under the *Ujamaaism*. On this note the Tanzanian government saw religion as presented by the missionaries as an occasion that negates progress when it is entertained in the public life of a people.

At the heart of the Sinai teachings is the attempt to bring the Africans together based on their customs and challenging them to have a religion that affirms their traditions. The appeal to the Africans meant that African religiosity was accepted and endorsed. For twenty years, the attempt to attract Africans into the Sinai Church were successful given the various communities that were established. However, the government was strong on what kind of a society that Tanzania would become.

Away from Dar es Salaam, the capital city of Tanzania, by almost 1400km the influences of the government was mainly felt by default. The ideals of a socialist Tanzania were not being realized. By the time of this research there was no secondary school in the Ipapa and its neighbourhood, no dispensary, no technical school, no clean tap water, no tarmac roads and the weather roads were in poor condition, no land-line telephone services and no electricity. The experience of alienation led the founders of the Sinai Church to believe that their society was technically weaker than other Tanzanian communities. The leaders wanted to offer a solution which they believed made other communities strong. Southern Tanzania has not been influenced by the development of a supra-tribal Swahili society.<sup>45</sup>

The Ipapa community having started to reform their consciousness kept waiting for a political or institutional answer to the dilemma of change. The Ipapa community living in the border between Zambia and Tanzania felt neglected and betrayed by a government that was calling for socialism yet that kind of socialism was far from the realities of the times, namely the growing need of exposure and social and economic progress of the area. Alternatives had to be sought. The situation was worse for those who wanted to be faithful to their culture. The denominations that evangelized the area had no room for African culture. The dreams and visions that the community treasured were to the best of their abilities and capacities, the cries of frustration and a focus towards a different society. The Sinai Church was therefore an African Instituted Church that aimed at an alternative way of organizing society.

In conclusion, two individuals joined others to form the nucleus of the Sinai Church. The traditional African background of the Church, in experience and expression mobilized many into the new religious orientation in the area. The religious orientation resonated with the communitarian hopes and aspirations of the people to the point that in a few months the entire region was ablaze with the traditional drums the ritualistic symbols of the Sinai Church. In twenty years, the community had grown in great proportions. Through the years, the Sinai Church was not institutionally systematized, it was therefore capable of absorbing ideas from outside,

of reconciling its own beliefs and practices with those of other religious orientations. Institutions were needed, but the charismatic leadership was not equipped for this development. It is in this context that the Bahai Faith became an option. A new phase of the community was bound to be observed and experienced. In the new phase, the realization of the integral needs would mean a sense of well-being and belonging.

## Notes

1. J. Finke, *The Rough Guide to Tanzania*, (London: Rough Guides, 2006), 8.
2. Ibid., 575.
3. A. Roberts, *Tanzania Before 1900*, (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1968), 67.
4. Ibid., 61.
5. J. Finke, Ibid., 733.
6. I. N. Kimambo, et al. *A History of Tanzania*, (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969), 125.
7. Ibid., 152.
8. [http:// www.tanzania.go.tz](http://www.tanzania.go.tz) – population, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2007.
9. Op cit., 8.
10. Op cit.
11. Op cit.
12. Op cit., 728.
13. A. Hastings, *The Church in Africa*, (London: Fount Books 1987), 502.
14. The researcher spent two hours each day with Yohannes Simbowe. During this time the researcher gained a lot of insight into the origins and spread of the Sinai Church.
15. Yohannes Simbowe narrated to the researcher how him and Tenson Simbeye used to hear a voice that would demand them to write the name of the religious community that they would lead.
16. Any attempt by the researcher to reach him was without success. He had shifted to Mbeya by time of the research.
17. D. B. Barrett, *African Initiatives in Religion*, (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1971), 127.
18. Tatu (Lwitiho) Namonje, Interview, Ipapa, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2005.
19. Nessi Mwazembe, Interview, Ipapa, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2005.
20. Yohannes Simbowe, Interview, Ipapa, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2005
21. Ibid.
22. Mwasauye Mwamulima, Interview, Ipapa, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2005.

23. The researcher was privileged to meet and interview all the four all of whom apart from Militab are now Bahai members.
24. Ibid.
25. Yohannes Simbowe, Interview, Ipapa, 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2005.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. The researcher visited the African Independent Church and to his amazement, the members who were about twelve fell into trance. When the researcher enquired about their behaviour in trance, he was informed that they had failed to accord him and the research assistant the respect due them and therefore the spirits were punishing them. They were then commanded by the spirits to come and prostrate before the researcher, bow and then proceed to the leader and do like wise. It was a moving spectacle.
29. Samson Khalinga, Interview, Ipapa, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2005.
30. Ibid.
31. Chief Seruka, Interview, Ipanzia, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2005.
32. B. S. Turner, *Religion and Social Theory*, (London: Heinemann, 1983), 1.
33. C. Oden, *The Structure of Awareness*, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1969), 76.
34. D. B. Barrett, *African Initiatives in Religion*, (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1971), 136.
35. T. F. O'dea, 'Sociology of Religion,' in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XII (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 265.
36. Ibid. p. 265.
37. Musa Mselema, Interview, Ipunga, 27<sup>th</sup> June 2005.
38. A. Roberts, Ibid., 73.
39. T. F. O'dea, op cit. 265.
40. J. Foster *The First Advance*, (London: SCPC, 1997), 65.
41. S. Cain *et al.*, 'Study of Religion' in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* vol. 14 1987, 70, Eliade, M. ed. (New York: McMillan, 1987).
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.

44. D. J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 344.
45. D. B. Barrett, *African Initiatives in Religion*, (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1971), 136.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE INCEPTION AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE BAHAI FAITH IN IPAPA, TANZANIA

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter traces the sequence of events from the formation of Kanisa la Sinai till it joined the Bahai Faith. Kanisa la Sinai is an African Instituted Church. Its appeal in Ipapa was largely because of its emphasis on African rituals. The African cultural aspect is a symbol of identity and belonging. The Sinai Church gave its members a sense of belonging and affirmed their identity as Africans. It had a social function.

The transformational matrix identifies three social actors (the individual, community, and institutions) in the process of social change. The actors must be in place for the momentum of transformation to move from a single event and become a process that engulfs the society. As an African Instituted Church, the Sinai Church had a challenge of institutionalized leadership that would carry forward the idea of change. Change may entail joining a new and a more desirable social identity. In the history of many African Instituted Churches, there comes a time in history when they want authorization from outside. The validity of the authorization is a factor of mutual agreement. Adrian Hastings cites various examples of how this authorization is realized or not realized.<sup>1</sup> The Precious Stone Society in 1922 slipped out of the African Church in Nigeria, and briefly joined themselves to a small faith-healing church in Philadelphia called Faith Tabernacle, whose tracts they were reading. But when the American Faith Tabernacle fell apart a few years later the Nigerians severed their links but again tried to connect themselves to a Western Church. They succeeded for a while in submission to the British Apostolic Church a Pentecostal group, but found that they could not quite agree about healing. Hence from 1940, they ceased the search for overseas authorization and took their final name, the Christ Apostolic Church.

The African Instituted Churches as Adrian Hastings suggests, will seek validation from established denominations. The authorization has now been regarded as 'a

cover'.<sup>2</sup> Having 'a cover' implies that the AIC 'covered' is recognized by the government through the church that has given it 'cover'. The issue of authority and power is a serious one among the African Instituted Churches. Many are the leadership wrangles of the AICs. The main reason for the wrangles is the fact that many of them are a one person's or a given group's show. In this regard, the well-being of the members and the society in general is a factor of the kind of institutions that any AIC is founded on. This chapter attempts to describe how the Sinai Church was to handle this dilemma of leadership and social change.

#### 4.1 Bahai Faith a Historical Overview

The Bahai Faith, a new religion which emerged from the Shiite branch of Islam, sees itself as the latest but not the last appearances of the ancient faith of God.<sup>3</sup> As an offshoot of Shia Islam, the Bahai Faith shares in the Ismaili doctrine of the succession of the prophets. Each of the prophets gives a religious law suitable for his age. From the esoteric Shia sects mostly the Druses, there are two different subjects in the line of religious development. The superior is the Divine Essence itself – the supreme God, and the other is the Universal Intelligence. The Universal Intelligence takes the human form to manifest God on earth. Through the Universal Intelligence (Manifestation), one can know God and His plans for oneself. The Bahai Faith shares in these teachings due to the influence of the Islamic environment in which it sprouted.

In 1844, a young Persian named Sayyid Ali Muhammad (1819-1850) took the title 'the Bab' meaning the Gate'. The Bab announced the eminent appearance of a messenger (Manifestation) from God who would be the most recent of a long line which include Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus and Muhammad. The state of *babihood* meant that the Bab was the channel of grace from some great Person still behind the veil of glory, who was the possessor of countless and boundless perfections by whose will, he moved and to the bond of whose love he clung.<sup>4</sup> The Bab was according to Bahais the Imam Mahdi whose mission according to Shia doctrine was to dethrone the rulers of this world and establish the reign of righteousness. Unfortunately when the Shah refused his submission to this supreme authority, the

followers of the Bab drew the sword for a holy war. From this time the followers of the Bab – the Babis, started to be persecuted in Iran by the Islamic rulers. They were considered to be an obstacle to fulfillment of the expectations of the Imam Mahdi. The political motif of the Babis was a threat to the Shah government and the Islamic rulers (Mulahs). This persecution of the Babis continued leading to the formation of the Bahai Faith. The Bahais were forced out from Iran, thereby spreading their faith wherever they found asylum.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, social life in Iran was full of prejudice, hate, corruption, injustice and all manner of evil.<sup>5</sup> In these circumstances, the Bab admonished his followers to be distinct in brotherly love and courtesy. The Babis were also to engage in useful arts and crafts, the poor to be provided for out of the use of a common treasury. Begging was strictly forbidden, as in the use of intoxicating liquors for beverage purpose. Thus, the Bab was a reformer of the Shiite group of Islam to which he belonged. In this case, the parallels of the Babi movement with Islamic teachings are notable. For instance, caring for the needy, God is one and cannot incarnate his essence, praying facing the Qibra, and fasting for a month from sunrise to sunset. However, contrary to the Islamic teachings, the Bab allowed women to unveil their heads in the presence of men and even mix freely hence the celebrated teaching of equality of men and women among Bahais. This was against the common practice of the time.

The Bab identified true faith in God with moral purity and righteous deeds, thereby raising the spirit of hope. With time he got followers who identified with his teachings against the wish of Islamic teachers and leaders who were conservatives. The conservative forces clashed with the reformative forces. The conflict led to the killing of the Bab on 9<sup>th</sup> of July 1850 in a firing squad. The conflict escalated as more people joined the Babi movement, fueling more conflict. In his will, the Bab, had bequeathed the leadership of the Babi community to Mirza Yahya. Mirza Yahya was to lead the community until the 'One who God would make manifest' would appear.

The Bab is believed to have accomplished a two-fold mission. One is that his announcement (dispensation) brought to an end the cycle of prophesy, he is believed to have revealed the oneness of all the prophets that proceeded him. Secondly, he inaugurated a new cycle of reality in which the ancient assurances of faith were to be fulfilled in the unity of humanity. By so doing, he promised that soon 'the Promised One of all ages' would appear. Adib Taherzadeh asserts that:

With his (Bab) advent the Bab closed, on the one hand, the 'Prophetic Cycle', which began with Adam as the first Manifestation of God in recorded history and ended with the Dispensation of Islam, and on the other, he opened the Cycle of fulfillment, whose duration, according to the writings of Bahauallah and Abdul-Baha, will be at least five thousand centuries.<sup>6</sup>

Mirza Hussayn Ali Nur (1817-1892) a brother to Mirza Yahya was one of those followers of the Bab to be imprisoned and tortured. It is recorded in the annals of Bahai Faith that, during four months, chained in the notorious 'Black Pit' dungeon in Tehran; he experienced a revelation that he was the prophet foretold by the Bab. According to Adib Taherzadeh, the Most Great Spirit of God descended upon Mirza Hussayn Ali Nur as he breathed the foul air of a filthy and pestilential underground pit, chained and fettered in the appalling conditions and surrounded by criminals and assassins.<sup>7</sup> Bahauallah in his own words describes how the revelation of his mission came upon him:

While engulfed in tribulations I heard a most wondrous, a most sweet voice, calling above my head. Turning my face, I beheld a Maiden - the embodiment of the remembrance of the name of my Lord - suspended in the air before me. So rejoiced was her in her very soul that her countenance shone with the ornament of the good-pleasure of God...She addressed all who are in heaven and all who are on earth, saying: 'By God! This is the Best -Beloved of the worlds, yet ye comprehend not. This is the Beauty of God amongst you....This is the Mystery of God..., the Cause of God and his Glory unto all who are in the kingdoms of Revelation and of creation....'<sup>8</sup>

On his release from the dungeon, he was given no more than one month to recover from the debilitating effects of his confinement before being banished and exiled in neighbouring Iraq in the city of Baghdad. During his exile in Baghdad, he announced his mission in 1863. His followers came to know him as Bahauallah, meaning the

“Glory of God”. Most of the Babis followed him. The followers of Bahauallah came to be known as the people of Baha or Bahais. Baha means glory. After Mirza Hussayn Ali Nur (Bahauallah) declared himself as the one promised by the Bab, estrangement developed between him and Mirza Yahya his brother who would not accept the declaration. The estrangement tore the Babi community into two; those who followed Mirza Yahya – the Azalis and those who followed Mirza Hussayn Ali Nur – the Bahais. This conflict contributed to the exile of Mirza Hussayn Ali to Accre (Akka). Accre was by then in the Syrian coast but today it is in Israel. It was a penal colony of the Turkish Empire. Mirza Yahya and his group were exiled in Famogosta in Cyprus.

From Baghdad, Bahauallah was summoned by the Turkish authorities to Constantinople. He was then exiled to Adrianople, and in 1868, he was exiled to Accre (Akka) where he wrote a series of letters to the world rulers exhorting them to reconcile their differences and devote their energies in establishing world peace.<sup>9</sup> Throughout the life of Bahauallah his pen wrote many works. The works are part of the sacred writ of the Bahai Faith. For instance in Baghdad he wrote *The Book of Certainty – Kitab-i-Iqan* (1862) which is an exposition of Babi and Bahai doctrine and a demonstration of the mission of the Bab. The book that the Bab had written for his followers is called the Bayan. With the declaration of Bahauallah, the new dispensation required a new book of laws and Bahauallah gave his followers such guidance in the *Kitab-i-Aqdas – The Most Holy Book*. The book contains the laws of the new dispensation. Through his writings Bahauallah is seen by the Bahais as a “divine architect” for he drafted a “magnificent plan for the unity of humanity” thereby laying the foundation of “a sacred edifice” to which he selected the “necessary materials”. He envisioned a united humanity served by an administration that would be informed by his teachings.<sup>10</sup>

Bahauallah spent the last years of his life revealing on a wide range of spiritual and social matters and receiving visitors. In Bahai terminology Bahauallah left his human temple on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 1892 at the age of 75. Before he died he urged his followers to arise and further his cause and to exalt his word amongst the kindred of the world.

After the admonition he also gave a promise reminiscent of the challenge of Christ to his disciples.<sup>11</sup> "We are with you at all times, and shall strengthen you through the power of truth. Whoso has recognized me, will arise and serve me with such determination that the powers of earth and heaven shall be unable to defeat his purpose."<sup>12</sup> Through his writings, he inaugurated a different way of organizing society - the Bahai Administrative Order.

After the death of Bahauallah in 1892, leadership was taken over by his son Abbas Effendi also known as Abdul-Baha (servant of Glory) (1844-1921). Having been exiled with his father he had come to know more of the Bahai Faith from him. He remained a prisoner of the Ottoman Empire even after Bahauallah passed away. He was released in 1910 after the Young Turk revolution.<sup>13</sup> After his release he traveled widely to take forth the message of his father. The places he visited include North America, Europe, and North Africa. He died on 28<sup>th</sup> November, 1921 in Palestine. In his lifetime, he wrote many works concerning the teachings of his father. He wrote interpretations to his father's instructions. For the Bahais he is the perfect example of being a Bahai. After the death of Abdul-Baha, his grandson Shoghi Effendi Rabbani (1887-1957) took the leadership of the Bahai community. During his leadership the message of Bahauallah, was carried to many countries of the globe. He also devoted himself to rendering the writings of the Bahai Faith into English so that many people could be reached.

Shoghi Effendi initiated the formation and election of National and Local Spiritual Assemblies in the areas that the Faith had been accepted. To assist him were twenty seven Bahai leaders of good standing who were given the title "The Hands of the Cause of God". After the death of Shoghi Effendi nine of the Hands of the Cause remained in Palestine to oversee the activities of the Faith. Palestine was to become the World Centre of the Faith. The other Hands of the Cause traveled all over the world to execute a plan that Shoghi Effendi had developed. The plan was called the Ten Year Crusade (1953-1963) the completion of which brought forth the International Convention of the Bahais of the world in 1963. The convention elected

the International Governing Council also called the Universal House of Justice. The Bahai administration has taken time to develop. The needs of the Bahai community and the world at large inform the growth of the administration. At first, the leadership was inherited but after Shoghi Effendi leadership became institutionalized.

The primary aim of the Ten Year Crusade was to take the Bahai Faith to all corners of the globe. Guided by the Ten year Crusade, Bahais were to consider it a sacred obligation to participate in planting Bahai communities in virgin territories. Bahai Pioneers are the believers who take their faith to new places. They are expected to sacrifice their comfort, possessions and interests and scatter around the world. The main task of the pioneers is to extend the boundaries of Bahai Faith and consolidate its foundation. It is during the Ten Year Crusade that Bahai Faith was introduced in East Africa and specifically in Tanzania.

#### **4.2 Teachings and Practices of the Bahai Faith**

This section explores the nature of Bahai teachings and the practices. Pertinent to the section also are the structures that the core figures established and the framework of their activities. *The Most Holy Book (Kitab-i- Aqdas)* of the Bahais, opens with the following statement:

The first duty prescribed by God to His servants is the recognition of Him who is the Dayspring of His revelation and the Fountain of His Law, who representeth the Godhead in both the kingdom of His Cause and the world of His creation ... to observe every ordinance of Him who is the Desire of the world.<sup>14</sup>

This statement has three personalities, the relationship of which constitutes the core of Bahai theology and practice: God, His servants and the Dayspring of His revelation or the Manifestations of God. The main thrust of the teaching is to challenge humanity to recognize the Manifestations of God and to obey them. The two duties recognition and obedience are inseparable. The doctrine of God sending His Manifestation is that, God is transcendent and the human mind cannot fathom him. Since time immemorial God has been veiled in the transcendent sanctity of his exalted Self, and will everlastingly

continue to be wrapped in the impenetrable mystery of his unknowable essence. However, God wills and purposes that humanity may know him. It is for this reason that he appoints a “perfect soul” to be his mouth-piece or manifestation at different times and in different settings. He does this out of his transcendence and his love for humanity. Shoghi Effendi quotes the Prophet founder of the Bahai Faith:

And since there can be no tie of direct intercourse to bind the one true God with his creation, and no resemblance whatever can exist between the transient and eternal, the contingent and the absolute, he hath ordained that in every age and dispensation a pure and stainless soul be made manifest in the kingdom of earth and heaven.<sup>15</sup>

The two statements (note 14 and 15 above) are tied together with the short obligatory prayer that every Bahai must know and recite as he or she meditates on it between noon and sunset every day. The short obligatory prayer is:

I bear witness oh my God that thou have created me to know Thee and to worship Thee. I testify at this moment to my powerlessness and to Thy might, to my poverty and to Thy wealth.

There is no other God but thee, the help in peril the self-Subsisting.<sup>16</sup>

The teaching about Divine Revelation and the first duty prescribed by God to His Servants and the other teachings that go with it, make Bahai Faith a revealed religion. The dayspring or fountain for the revelation is Bahauallah himself. Bahais teach and believe that Bahauallah reveals the eternal religion of God – eternal in the past and eternal in the future. The eternality here makes the Bahais to believe and teach that God reveals his religion by sending Manifestations at different stages so that it is the same religion but at different level of social development. Going by this teaching is the belief that Bahauallah has revealed what humanity needs at this age. The teaching is a critic to other religions. The teaching states that the social values of all other religions apart from the Bahai Faith are outdated. Therefore, new social teachings should be availed to humanity at this age. The new social teachings are what the Bahai Faith boasts to give to the world.

The Covenant is the hinge that holds the teaching about God and his servants. To the Bahais, the creation of humanity in God's image means that human beings are in a position to know and worship God. There is the major Covenant that is between God and Humanity based on creation. The minor Covenant is between God and humanity through the Manifestation based on revelation.

The teachings and the belief about the Covenant imply "progressive revelation". The Bahai Faith teaches that God's revelation is progressive; It started with Adam, then was passed to Abraham, Moses, Krishna, Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ, Muhammad, Bab, and the Manifestation of this dispensation; Bahauallah. Bahais use the doctrine about progressive revelation to teach how God is out to renew each religion on earth. The teaching augurs well with those that are desperate for something that works in a religious system that does not deliver well-being to the society. To this lot the contemporary world systems seem not to work. The doctrine is that, Divinity in its infinite essence is unknowable to humankind and indescribable. In this case, Divinity can, however, communicate with people. The world religions are authentic messages and revelations from this Divine Source. Truth has revealed itself periodically, and will continue to do so, through great Teachers and Founders of religions; that the Bahai Faith is one of these periodic revelations, its purpose being to complete the messages and aims of all existing world religions and to bring to pass a universal and ideal civilization upon earth.<sup>17</sup>

Human beings and their progress have a central place in the Bahai Faith. From the teachings, human spirituality must be nurtured by cultivating the high nature, acquiring virtues, loving God by loving and serving humanity, and generally growing towards God. On the other hand enlightened by spiritual and social teachings of the Manifestations of the age, humanity must carry forward an ever-advancing civilization. Religion for the Bahais becomes the leaven of civilization. In this regard Bahauallah is seen to have inaugurated a new age. In the new age, the community of the human race will become the arena of action, moving towards a worldwide government. This is an age of fulfillment for the Bahais. The expectations of all earlier

religions are taught to have been realized in the revelation of God to humanity in Bahauallah. In the age of fulfillment, the maturity of human race is emphasized. The new civilization that Bahauallah informs and calls people to is, a new kind of people working for universal people and strongly against all forms of prejudice, persecution and conflict. Religious renewal in this regard aims at invading the social space by means of the promotion of local services.<sup>18</sup>

There are many other Bahai teachings and practices. The following in summary form should also be noted:

Each day Bahais must choose one of the three obligatory prayers. There are many other prayers for all occasions. In prayer, the names of God are used to invoke him.

Bahais consider it a spiritual duty and honour to make financial contributions to Bahai related activities. All Bahai contributions are voluntary and secret. Blessings come to those who sacrifice for the Faith. The funds are intended for the mission of Bahauallah and can only be done by those who subscribe to his teachings and believe that they are the main source for the fulfillment of Bahauallah's vision for the world. There are funds that are meant to serve various needs of the Faith: Continental Fund; International Fund; Local Fund; National Fund. Beside the willful contributions, there is what is called the right of God – Huququallah, which is 19% of one's net profits. Huququallah is calculated and paid annually. One is eligible to pay the Right of God when one's net profits are above 19 mithqals of gold, which when calculated to the dollar equals US\$666 and when calculated to Kenya shillings, equals Ksh. 53,280 when the US\$ equals Ksh. 80.00. 19% equals to Ksh. 10,123.<sup>19</sup>

On marriage, the Bahai law permits only one wife. Potential marriage partners must freely choose each other but must have the consent of the parents. Divorce is not approved but is possible under particular conditions. The marriage according to the Bahai Faith has both material and spiritual components. Both man and woman must become spiritually and physically united, so that they may possess eternal unity throughout all the divine worlds, and improve the spiritual life of each other.<sup>20</sup> From

this basic unit of the society, the Bahai Faith advocate for consultation as a dynamic process for finding truth and avoiding conflicts and solving problems when they arise. A moral life has a direct influence on people's spirituality, happiness and development. Marriage is thus regarded as a fortress of wellbeing if nurtured according to Bahai teachings.

It has been mentioned that a couple will enjoy eternal unity in all the divine words! For the Bahais, the soul continues to develop even after death. The worlds of God are many and there is no literal hell but the state of being far away from God. Heaven is nearness to God. There is no source of evil apart from the absence of good. The life that one leads here on earth is preparatory to the eternal life that one shall enjoy after death. It is in this life that Bahais prepare themselves by knowing God and doing his will in order for them to gain access to God in eternity.

The Bahai calendar (Appendix VII) is reported to have been 'revealed' by the Bab, it constitutes nineteen months each with nineteen days. The year starts on March 21<sup>st</sup>, which is the Bahai *Naw-Ruz* (New Year day). There are intercalary (days between two Bahai years) days (*Ayyami-ha*) which are from 26<sup>th</sup> of February to 1<sup>st</sup> of March. There are 9 Holy Days in the year when Bahais meet in memory of important events in Bahai history. The researcher participated in the remembrance of one of these days - the martyrdom of the Bab on July 9 at Iringa (photo 10). If possible Bahais should not work on either of these nine days:

March	21 Feast of Naw-Ruz (Bahai New Year)
April	21 First day of Ridvan-Declaration of Bahauallah (1863) at 3 p.m.
April	29 Ninth day of Ridvan
May	2 Twelfth day of Ridvan
May	23 Declaration of the Bab (1844) 2 hours after sunset on May 22
May	29 Ascension of Bahauallah (1850) at about 3 a.m.
July	9 Martyrdom of the Bab (1850) at about noon
October	20 Birthday of the Bab (1819)
November	12 Birthday of Bahauallah (1817)

The Bahais fast for nineteen days from sunrise to sunset. Fast days are 2<sup>nd</sup> March to 20<sup>th</sup> March. During the fast, the Bahais do not eat or drink from sunrise to sunset.

After every nineteen days, the Bahais meet together to celebrate the nineteen day feast. They are also expected to go for pilgrimage to Haifa, Israel, at least once in their lifetime. The pilgrimage lasts for nine days, the aim and purpose of the pilgrimage is to bring spiritual growth and refreshment as the believer visits the Holy Sites of the Faith and listens to talks from the Universal House of Justice. The sites mainly are the places where the core figures (The Bab, Bahauallah and Abdul-Baha) of the Bahai Faith are buried. The Holy places and Shrines should be circumambulated (going round the shrine) in an attitude of worship.

After signing a declaration of belief in Bahauallah, new Bahai converts should increase their knowledge of the faith, teach the Faith to others, live a Bahai life, and be active in Bahai service. The Bahai Faith has no priesthood form of worship. Each Local Spiritual Assembly organizes the community during the nineteen-day feast. The feast has three parts:-worship, community consultation, and socializing. Worship includes prayers and reading from the sacred scriptures of the Bahai Faith. The scriptures of other religions such as the Bible, the Koran, and the Gita are also welcome.<sup>21</sup>

Involvement in partisan politics is forbidden. However, the Bahais should obey the government in power.

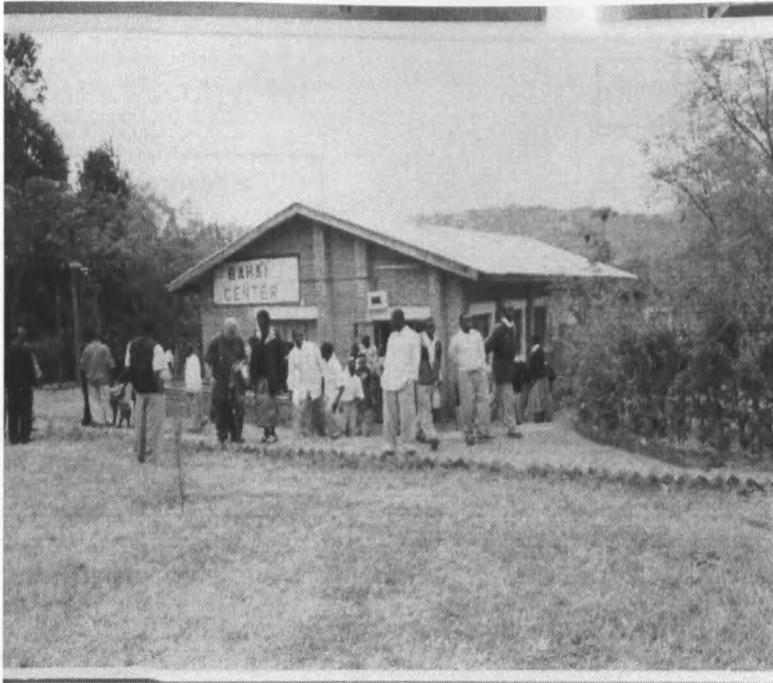
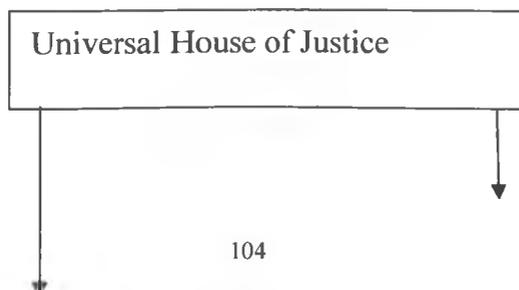


Photo 10: The Iringa Bahai Centre. Bahais had met to commemorate the Martyrdom of the Bab on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2005. *Photo by the researcher*

The governing structures of the Bahais – National Spiritual Assemblies and Local Spiritual Assemblies are elected by the Bahais themselves once every year on 21<sup>st</sup> April, the day Bahauallah declared his mission to the Babis. The International governing body (The Universal House of Justice) is elected by members of the National Spiritual Assemblies from among many international Counsellors. The Universal House of Justice (UHJ) also known as the “Sign of God on Earth” is elected every five years between late April and early May. The Bahai administration is divided into two categories; “the rulers” and “the learned”. The Spiritual Assemblies are “the rulers” while “the learned” are the international Counsellors, Continental Counsellors, and Auxiliary Board Members and their Assistants. The rulers are elected while the learned are appointed. The appointments happen downwards, each senior office appointing its immediate junior office.



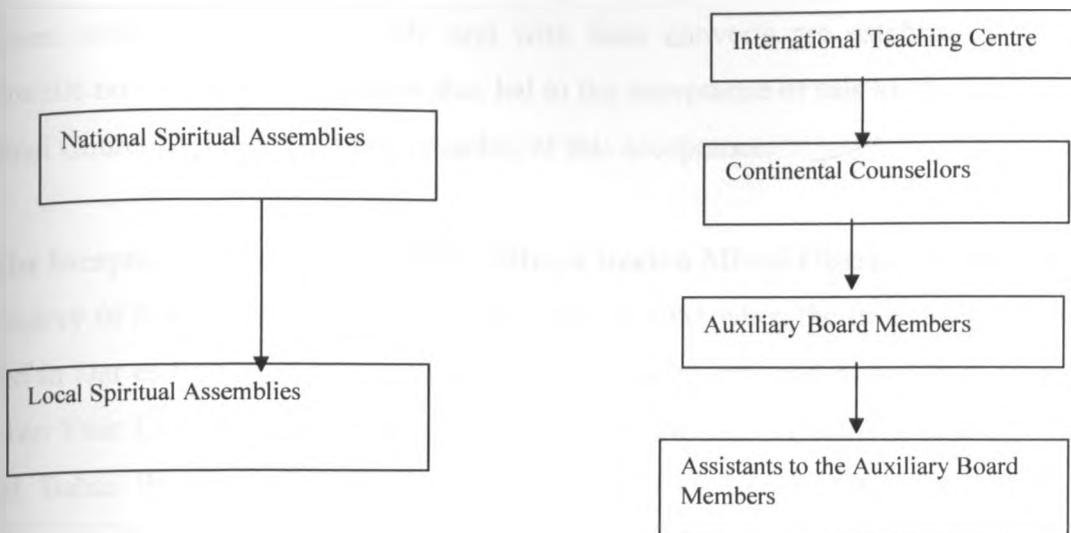


Diagram 3 showing the two arms of Bahai Administration -The arm of the Rulers and The arm of the Learned

Bahai teachings and practices serve the Bahais at individual, institutional and community level. At each level, the Bahais are expected to carry out the activities of the Faith in accordance with the sacred writings. Thus, the Bahai sacred writings form the basis for the institutional structure of the Bahai Faith. Hence, the writings are to be read regularly by the Bahai members especially in the mornings and evenings. Teachings and practices are all geared towards building an alternative way to organize society.<sup>22</sup>

Though the Bahai Faith rose within the matrix of Shia Islam and makes use of its eschatological themes including teachings on the Hidden Imam, it has evolved into a different faith. It has its own distinctive and modernizing characteristics.<sup>23</sup> In this regard the Bahai Faith advocates for a global state, a world culture and civilization which make the faith attractive to the reflective flock who are dissatisfied with the rivalry of the more traditional religions. In addition, it attracts those individuals and communities that are marginalized in any society. It is expected that its membership would increase in times of social strife and among societies that experience alienation and subjugation. Eschatological theories increase when social conditions become deplorable and degrading. Many people would feel at home with the many Bahai

doctrines of; unity of humanity, God is One, and religion is One. After the initial attraction, adherents are then made and with time converts are established. It is worthwhile now to turn to the events that led to the acceptance of this kind of faith by the Sinai Church and the result and meaning of this acceptance.

#### **4.3 The Inception of the Bahai Faith in Mbeya Region Mbozi District, Tanzania**

The history of Bahai Faith in Tanzania dates back to 1951 when the first two pioneers arrived in Dar es Salaam. The two were Mr. Jalal Nakhjavani and Miss Claire Gung. The Ten Year Crusade (1953-1963) accelerated the activities of the two. During this period Bahai Pioneers (Bahai missionaries) continued to visit the country and introduce the Bahai Faith to the Africans. The initial pioneers were; Mr. Aziz Yazd, Dr. Heshmat Farhoumand, Mr. M. Rouhollah Yazdani, and Dr. Manoutchehr Farhoumand all of them Iranians. The four initiated activities of the Bahai Faith in Tanzania. In the year 2000 the East African Bahais - Bahais of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania were celebrating their Jubilee (50 years). During the celebration, the researcher met and interviewed many Bahai members about the history of the Bahai Faith in East Africa. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of Tanzania had printed a booklet describing how the Faith was established in the country. It is estimated that there are 6,000,000 Bahais in the world. In Tanzania there are over 130,000 Bahais but active ones are 35,000.<sup>24</sup>

Three men are at the centre when it comes to the introduction of the Bahai Faith to the Sinai community: Shabban Seffu, Rwegasira Muhingo and Zawadi Aly. By 1990 the Bahai Faith had taken root in most regions of Tanzania. The work of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of Tanzania was gaining in momentum.<sup>25</sup> In that year 1990, Shabban Seffu, the secretary to the National Spiritual Assembly (NSA) of the Bahais of Tanzania visited Rwegasira Muhingo who was a Home Front Pioneer serving in Mbeya region (photo 11). On the cause of the visit he found the area very receptive to the Bahai Faith. The people he met were eager to listen and ask relevant questions. In view of this response, he made-up his mind to send a team of Bahais to go and introduce the Bahai Faith to these people in a systematic way. Rwegasira

Muhingo had already met some Sinai adherents who wanted to hear more about the Bahai Faith.

Shabban Seffu in his capacity as the secretary to the NSA of the Bahais of Tanzania was instrumental to the formation of the Bahai communities in many regions of Tanzania. He was responsible for the execution of teaching plans and coordinating the work of the Bahai Faith in the country. He worked hard in making sure that Muhingo continued to teach the Bahai Faith in Mbozi district. He also linked up new Bahai converts with old ones so that the new adherents would be matured in the Faith. Since the late 1980s he continued to serve as the secretary to the NSA of the Bahais of Tanzania. At one time he served in this capacity as a part-time occupation. In the 1990s he retired from salaried employment to serve full-time at the National Bahai office assisting with the co-ordination and management of Bahai activities in Tanzania. The role of Shabban Seffu is that of an explorer or traveler who was excited by the receptivity of the Mbozi people to the Bahai Faith. From Dar es Salaam he directed many teaching campaigns. He is the one who encouraged Muhingo to promote the Bahai Faith in southern Tanzania.

Muhingo and Zawadi Aly represent the efforts of the Tanzanian Bahai community to teach all Tanzanians the Bahai Faith<sup>26</sup>. At the center of the acceptance of the Bahai Faith in Ipapa is Zawadi Aly<sup>27</sup>. In the mid 1980s Zawadi joined the Sinai Church through the influence of his aunt Nessi Mwazembe.<sup>28</sup> During this time Zawadi was a student at Iyunga Secondary school. He joined the Sinai Church after developing some mental problems that prevented him from continuing with his studentship. When he was in school he would lose consciousness but when taken home he would get better. The problem went on for two years forcing Zawadi Aly to drop out of school at form two (grade 10). While in search for treatment from traditional healers his aunt who was by then a staunch follower of the Sinai Church requested that he visits the Sinai clinic and seek treatment there. A fellow student called Godfrey Williams escorted him home when he was seriously ill.<sup>29</sup>

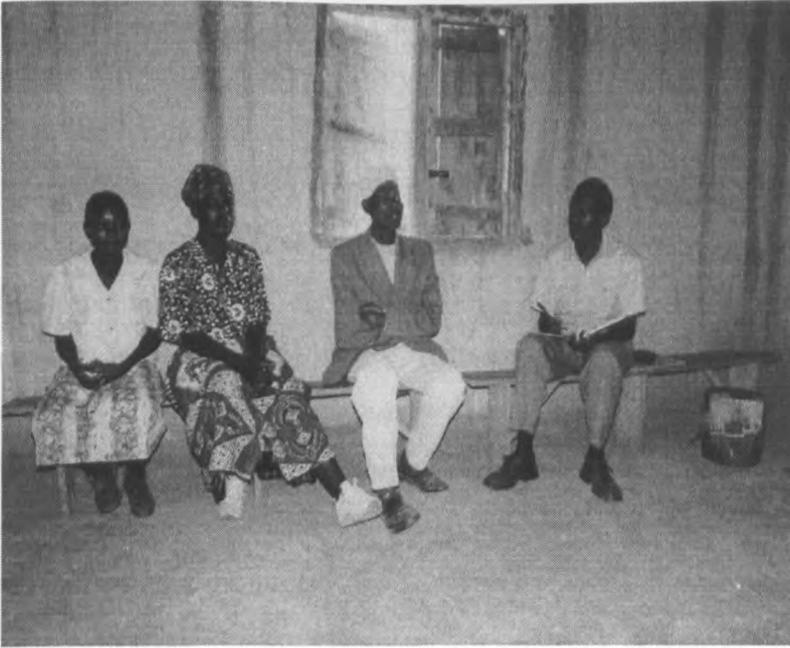


Photo 11: Rwegasira Muhingo in a cap, the researcher, and other respondents at Halungu Bahai Centre. *Photo by the researcher*

At one point Godfrey Williams went to find out how Zawadi was doing only to find that he had gone to Ipapa. Godfrey followed Zawadi to Ipapa where he came across the Sinai Church members. At school, both Zawadi and Godfrey were born again Christians. From their understanding of the Christian teachings and practices they thought that the Sinai Church was not “in the light.” Zawadi had prepared to go and evangelize them. However, when he went now to seek for treatment from the Sinaists, he did not start to evangelize them. Rather, the members of the Sinai Church were open to what he had to say. The Sinaists who heard of him thought that he had the same mental disturbance that many initial adherents had before they joined the Sinai Church. After examination, Lwitiho recommended that he be given a drum treatment until all would be well with him. As the drumming reached a crescendo and the rhythm was so fine, Zawadi found himself dancing and later he fell into trance while he was still dancing as it was the custom of those who received this kind of treatment. The Sinai adherents who were present rejoiced for getting yet another and a well educated member. The drumming acted as an initiation ceremony.

When Godfrey came to visit his fellow student he was astonished as to the kind of stories that now he was telling him. Godfrey enquired more into the nature of the Sinai Church. Godfrey linked the Sinai teachings with the Bahai Faith whose teachings he had come to hear through Muhingo. When Zawadi was at Iyunga Secondary School in Mbeya, they had prepared to go and visit Muhingo in order to win him to the Christian faith. Godfrey happened to have visited Muhingo during the time that Zawadi was away from school owing to mental illness. It followed that when now they met they had not accomplished their missions. Zawadi was to convert the Sinaists to Christian Faith while Godfrey was to convert Muhingo and other Bahais to the Christian faith. Muhingo seemed to be the leader of the Bahai Faith so if they would win him over they would win the entire community.

Zawadi had now embraced the Sinai Church following the treatment he had received. He was also given leadership responsibilities as an educated young man who seemed to understand the Bible. On many occasions he was called upon to teach the Sinai community more about the Bible and how the Sinai community fitted into the Biblical teachings. Following the social influence coupled with the spiritual authority that came with this new role, Zawadi suspended his schooling. Through dreams it was revealed that he should not go back to school until he would be told to do so through dreams. In the Sinai community the influence of Zawadi continued to increase. He occupied a very significant position in the decision making circles of the Sinai Church. For instance, at one point when they were on *Mlima Sinai*, one adherent by the name Noah Kamela saw a vision where two doves rested on the shoulders of Zawadi.<sup>30</sup> In the vision, Lwitiho Namonje, came with a white scarf and placed it on Zawadi's shoulders, while a voice said "you should now be listening to Zawadi!"

Zawadi continued to influence the Sinai community in the way he taught them a mixture of Christianity and traditional teachings that came in dreams and visions. Any dream and vision were taken as authentic if more than five members reported it. As the Sinai Church continued to grow in size and strength, many Christian denominations wanted to have them as part of their own. However, the traditional

teachings and practices that were part of the Sinai Church did not augur well with the mainstream Christians in the area.

Incorporating the Sinai Church in the mainstream denominations was not possible unless the Sinai Church members would drop their traditional practices. Such practices included; polygamy, reverence to ancestral spirits, ritualistic dancing among others. For instance, on one occasion, Christian denominations (Moravians and Last Church of God) in the region had gathered on *Mlima Sinai* in 1989. All the Sinaists in the region were also present. The leaders of the Sinai Church had convened the meeting and invited the Christians in the area. It was a follow-up to the many attempts by the Christians to evangelize the Sinaists. The meeting was to influence the Sinai Church to be more Christian than being traditional for it was argued that by being more Christian they would be more influential. Zawadi led the Sinai community to say no. From that time, there was no major meeting between the Sinai Church and other faiths in the region until the Bahai Faith came into the scene. So the meeting was fruitless. The drumming ritual continued to pull crowds.

In seeking the fulfillment of their (Sinaists) expectations of a world-wide religion, Zawadi introduced the Bahai Faith to Yohannes Simbowe. Zawadi already new of Muhingo since him and Godfrey Williams had visited Muhingo in an attempt to win him to the Christian faith. The meeting took place when Zawadi was still in school. Yohannes Simbowe paid attention to what Zawadi had to say and they agreed to go and search for Muhingo at Halungu. Zawadi convinced Yohannes Simbowe about the validity of the Bahai Faith. They then agreed to get more information from Muhingo. The journey to Muhingo's home was to begin in the evening at different times so that the community would not know of their destination. At Muhingo's they were welcomed and discussed religious matters the whole night. For the whole night, the conversation was about the expectations of the Sinai Church and the teachings of the Bahai Faith. In the morning Yohannes and Zawadi set for their homes. At the Ipapa Sinai Worship Center the following Sunday the two men found the members sharing their dreams. It was astonishing to find the members using *Allaha-u-Abah* (God is

Great) instead of *Alleluia* (Praise the Lord). The community was in much anticipation to see the fruition of their expectations especially after the consultation with Christians had failed to materialize.

At Halungu, Muhingo had informed Yohannes and Zawadi that he would seek for guidance from the NSA of the Bahais of Tanzania and report back. Muhingo informed the researcher that, on the night Yohannes and Zawadi visited him, he was very frightened and could not trust them to sleep lest they might harm him with their spiritual manipulation. He identified them as people possessed with *Mizimwi* (ancestral spirits). The LSA of the Bahais of Halungu had an initiative of taking the Bahai Faith to its neighbourhood. They had local Bahai teachers and Bahai scriptures to use in that endeavour. The whole exercise was called a Mobile Institute because they would take Bahai teachings to people. Occasionally, they would request for reinforcement from the national office. Through the efforts of the Mobile Institute, the LSA of the Bahais of Halungu prepared to visit the Sinai community. The preparation was coordinated by the NSA at Mombo Institute in Tanga. The Universal House of Justice was also consulted on how to induct a religious community that had expressed interest to join the Bahai Faith en mass.<sup>31</sup> It was finally agreed that local pioneers would be best suited to teach the Sinaists. Tanzanian Bahais would be more appropriate than expatriate pioneers. It was noted that the presence of a non-Tanzanians might be counter-productive, especially with the risk of promoting dependency at the expense of spirituality.<sup>32</sup>

In Dar es Salaam it was planned by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais in Tanzania that a Bahai team from Dar es Salaam would meet another one from Halungu and they would combine efforts in teaching the Sinaists. The team from Dar es Salaam included: Mr. James Farly, Ms. Shanaz, Ms. Jamar and Ms. Seffu. The team from Halungu included: Mr. Muhingo, Mr. Gevalonge Myombe, Mr. Horod Nairobi, Mr. Ali Nzunda, Mr. Pintson Mkota and Mr. Oswald Mbuzi.<sup>33</sup> The plan was to spend five days with the community. A day before the Halungu team set for Ipapa, Zawadi Aly was sent by the leaders of the Sinai Church to go and direct them to

Ipapa. Muhingo was astonished by the timely visit of Zawadi Aly since the LSA of Halungu had not informed the Sinaists of the day Bahais would visit Ipapa. Muhingo says that, through dreams and visions, the Ipapa community had known that they would have visitors from Dar es Salaam and Halungu. Godfrey Williams who had embraced the Bahai Faith through Muhingo directed the team from Dar es Salaam to Ipapa.

The Halungu team walked to Ipapa while the Dar es Salaam team drove. Immediately after the arrival both teams were taken into a room to wait for directions. While waiting they consulted on how to go about the task and they appointed Muhingo to facilitate the meeting. They were then called into the altar of the Sinai Church at Ipapa (see photo 5). The Bahais realized that the leaders of the Sinai Church had been in prayer for all the time the Bahais were kept waiting. The purpose of the prayers was to seek divine intervention and confirmation on what they were to do with the visitors. After prayers, the Bahai teams were given a warm welcome. In the compound, about 200 people had come to hear about the Bahai Faith.

As the Bahai teams took to the altar, they were a bit jittery. In the Bahai worship there is no altar. The Bahai teams agreed to use the altar for convenience and rapport between themselves and the Sinai Church. The leaders of the Sinai Church introduced themselves as Christians and wondered whether the Bahais would reject them for that reason. The Christians had rejected the Sinaists because of some of their practices: polygamy, falling into trance, traditional drums, dealing with *mizimwi* (ancestral spirits). The Bahais led by Muhingo used dreams and visions that the Sinaists had recorded as starting point. The attempt was to interpret the dreams and visions in light with the Bahai Faith. The Bahais also emphasized to the Sinai community how Bahauallah had fulfilled the Christian expectation of the second coming of Christ. The oneness of religion was introduced and the role of religion in building society anew. The Bahais authenticated the spiritual experiences of the Sinaists as part of the expression of true religion. The Bible was used on this basis. For instance, the words of prophet Joel about how God would pour his spirit on his people and a new

community would be formed.<sup>34</sup> They were therefore told that the Bahais did not condemn their falling into trance as it was biblical.

The Bahais requested the Sinaists to investigate more about the Bahai Faith. The Sinaists would practice their religiosity until they were convinced to embrace the Bahai Faith. The adherents of Sinai Church continued to congregate at the Sinai Church compound to the point there was no space to sit. About 400 - 500 individuals were introduced to the Bahai Faith for the five days that the Bahai teams spent at Ipapa. The Sinaists were informed and assured of how the Universal House of Justice, the NSA of Tanzania and above all Bahauallah had accepted them. The Mt. Camel Tablet (Appendix IX) was read to them and explained the circumstances under which that it was revealed. The Tablet was revealed by Bahauallah when he was allowed to move out of the prison room at Accre and visit Mt. Camel. The Tablet is a call to Christians to consider who Bahauallah is. They were encouraged to learn more of the Bahai Faith.

As days passed and the teaching activity continued the choirs of the Sinai Churches that had attended started to include Bahai teachings in their hymns. The leaders also began to use the Bahai scriptures together with the Bible and the catechism that they were already using. After the five days, the leaders of the Sinai Church decided together with the Bahais that they would needed more meetings. It was agreed that fortnightly the Bahais would visit the Ipapa Community. Although the Bahais used the Bible to introduce the Bahai Faith to the Sinai Church, the Bible was read and interpreted differently. The teaching on the progressive religion and the inner meanings of Christian symbols and teachings were used to win the community to Bahai Faith.

After introducing the Bahai Faith to the Sinai Church, the LSA of Halungu in consultation with the NSA of the Bahais of Tanzania, with the direction of the Universal House of Justice organized a systematic teaching campaign for one year. This was nick-named the Youth Year of Service in 1993, that was meant to give the

Bahai youths a chance to serve in their countries and other countries so as to beef up teaching activities in the world. In Tanzania, the team was made up of 15 young Bahais men and women. The fifteen were first taken to Mombo Bahai Institute at Tanga. They were instructed on the best way to introduce the Bahai Faith to the communities in Tanzania. The House of Justice had already advised that it would be wise to send local people. In such a context the would-be Bahais would find it easy to identify with one of their own in terms of culture and social orientation. The 15 young Bahais were divided into three groups to be deployed to various areas in Tanzania. Zawadi Aly and Noah Kamela were part of the team for they had already accepted the Bahai Faith. The two men, plus John Msabi, Godfrey William and Rwegasira Muhingo were the five that went to Ipapa and the entire Mbozi district to introduce the Bahai Faith and to deepen those who had already accepted the Faith. The three groups spent the whole of 1993 in the field teaching and deepening people into the Bahai Faith.

During the initial days that Bahais went to teach, the members of Sinai Church kept asking what they could do to become Bahais. The leaders of the Sinai Church in the region consulted and agreed to request for group membership. They wrote a letter to the NSA of the Bahais of Tanzania requesting to be accepted as Bahais (Appendix X). By 1996, a majority of the members of the Sinai Church in Mbozi district had embraced the Bahai Faith. They were now practicing Bahais. Many seminars, meetings, plus new methods of teaching were employed by the Bahais in order to help the Sinai community to be firm in the new faith. After the original meeting with the Sinai community in the region, it was organized that the fortnight meetings would be taken to all local Sinai churches in the following areas: Ipanzia, Ipunga, Chiwezi, Isakamwela, Mponera, Isalalo, Hakunku, Tunduma and Vwawa. The five Bahais serving in the Youth Year of Service were part of the teaching activities in the district. Ipapa was the melting pot of Bahai Faith in the region and the name Ipapa became synonymous with the religion in spite of it being a location. The activities at Ipapa raised eyebrows in the Bahai world and many Bahais visited this community that had

a very unique history in the way it embraced the Bahai Faith. Even to date Ipapa is a household name among the world Bahai community.<sup>35</sup>

By 1998 the Bahai Faith had attained an eminent profile in the region. The activities of the Sinai Church by then had been integrated to the Bahai Faith. As the Bahai Faith established itself, changes started to be experienced by the new converts. Zawadi had to go back to school. Instead of picking up from Form Three where he had dropped out at Iyunga Secondary school, he started at Form One at Ruaha Bahai International School in 1995. After finishing his schooling, he went to Haifa, Israel for 18 months. Normally Bahai youths from all over the world are given a chance to serve at the Bahai World Center in Haifa, Israel. Zawadi worked in the security department. By the time of this research 2005, Zawadi was writing his Memoirs focusing on the formation of the Sinai Church and how it embraced the Bahai Faith. The proposed title for his Memoirs is "*Karne Komavu kwa utu wa Ndani wa Mwanandamu*"- The Century of the Coming of Age of the Inner reality of Humanity or The Century of the Nobility of Humanity. The thrust of the book as Zawadi informed the researcher is that humanity has the power to know, to love and to will. The harmony of these powers brings self-actualization and progress both at individual and societal levels. Many more former members of the Sinai Church have had their children taken to school particularly to Ruaha Bahai International School.

#### **4.4 The Fulfillment of the Sinai Expectations in the Bahai Faith**

The Sinai community generally relied on dreams and visions when it came to making any decision. Depth psychologists suggest that a dream, or a spontaneous, dreamy phantasy, can tell more of what is happening below the surface of the human mind than any amount of intellectual analysis or statistics.<sup>36</sup> Such experiences are no marvel to the psychologist who is familiar with the fashion in which, once our waking modern attention is relaxed more primitive ways of viewing our surroundings take its place. Since time immemorial nature has always been animated; now for the first time we are living in a nature deprived of both spirits and gods.<sup>37</sup> The Sinai Church illustrates that there are people whose nature is still animated by spirits and gods. The

Sinaists are not ignorant about presence of the spirits. The dreams and visions to the community were attributed to the spiritual plane of life and were taken seriously. There are specific dreams and visions that informed their acceptance of the Bahai Faith. The first was the Bahai teaching on the Oneness of God, Religion and Humanity. The teachings around these subjects resonated with the Sinai teachings and expectations. The Sinai Church had in the past tried to join other Christian denominations but the Christians judged them instead of accepting them the way they are. Having experienced this alienation, it was such a relief to find a people that would accept them and they would feel comfortable with.

The Bahais did not condemn the cultural identity of the Sinaists. Instead the Bahais demonstrated institutional acceptance towards the Sinaists. The reading of the Mt. Carmel Tablet and hearing that the NSA and the UHJ were with them in their attempt to consider the new faith assured the Sinaists of that acceptance. The cultural practices that identified the Sinai community were used by the Bahais to affirm the religiosity of the Sinaists. The Bahais first taught the Sinai community more of the Bible. Christian eschatology was taught from a Bahai point of view. The thrust of the view is that Christ has returned in the person of Bahauallah. The Bible was then used to direct and guide them to their expectations of a world-wide religion that would unite humanity.

The Sinaists cultural practices that were not against the Bahai Faith were not condemned. At first the issue of polygamy was not adversely mentioned as a majority of the members were practicing polygamists. From a Bahai point of view caution had to be used in the way the issue was addressed so as to help the new adherents to understand and appreciate what Bahai Faith stands for.<sup>38</sup> Bahai Faith does not permit polygamy, however when polygamists become converts, they are to be accepted although they should not take more wives. Bahai marriage is between one man and one woman;

...The Lord, peerless is He, hath made woman and man to abide with each other in the closest companionship, and to be even as a single soul. They are two helpmates, two intimate friends, who should be concerned about the welfare of each other.<sup>39</sup>

The use of traditional herbs and methods was also a major boost to the acceptance of the Bahai Faith by the adherents of the Sinai Church. For the Bahais, the spiritual aspect of humanity has to be put into consideration when treating any ailment. The *Mizimwi* aspect of the healing as practiced by the members of the Sinai Church was also affirmed and not condemned. However, Bahais advised on moderation when it came to consulting the spirits. The new converts into the Bahai Faith were advised to hold the Bahai teachings as the panacea to their spiritual needs. In case of any ailment, competent medical advice was to be sought.

The Bahai practice of *Karamu ya Siku Kumi na Tisa* (Nineteen Day Feast) every month resonated with the Sinai practice of the monthly party that they had on *Mlima Sinai*. When the Bahais introduced this practice, the members of the Sinai Church did not find it strange. The Sinai community therefore accepted the Bahai feast as part of the preparation that they had gone through. The party made it possible for the community to create time when the members would meet on *Mlima Sinai*. The main difference between the Nineteen Day Feast and the Sinai monthly party is that, the Sinai party was not informed by a calendar separately from what the wider society was using. The Bahai Feast and other activities are informed by a calendar that is unique for the Bahais. The activities are fitted into the Christian calendar.

The dreams and visions of young men and women who would speak all languages was seen to be fulfilled during the Youth Year of Service. The Sinai community had the expectation that 12 young men and women from all corners of the world would come to the area and introduce a new faith. They would also come with baskets full of fish. The basket full of fish was seen to be the books that the Bahais gave to the members of the Sinai Church. The leaders of the Sinai Church recorded all the books that they

had received although there came a time when receiving of books and visitors was not an issue to be recorded, (Appendix VI).

The use of songs in teaching the Bahai Faith resonated well with the Sinai community for they were great singers and composers of songs. The Bahai writings generated more creativity in the field of music. It is worth noting that a choir from Ipapa Bahai community visited Kenya in the year 2000 and recorded their songs with the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) the national broadcasting service in Kenya. The choir was well received in Kenya. They use the Bahai scriptures in the composition of their songs and create new tunes whereas the Bahais of Kenya find it a challenge to restrict their hymnody to the Bahai scriptures.<sup>40</sup> The Bahais of southern Tanzania are great composers of songs and they were great singers too. In the communities the researcher visited there were various choirs- quartets, trios, youth choirs and a choir that combined all those who wished - kind of a mass choir. The voices and tunes of the songs are very uplifting and they even themselves enjoy singing. What would be the rationale of these tunes?

The people in southern Tanzania are subsistence farmers who depend on weather patterns to practice farming. It means that after harvest and before land preparation, they have a lot of time to relax and engage themselves with activities of their choice. Music is such an activity. A daily and seasonal schedule that is not very tight is a factor to the excellence they demonstrate in music. The other factor that contributes to excellent singing could be the cooperation and harmony that is evident in the communities making it possible for them to join efforts in any undertaking. The social bonds are very strong in the area under study. The researcher and any visitor into the community during the time of field research were a community issue and not a private and individual matter.

By and large, music, songs, and dance in Ipapa has a social function. In Ipapa the *ngoma ya kiasili* bring people together and offer continuity from the past to the present. Despite the Bahai influence, the traditional values of the Sinaists have not

disappeared. The Bahai Faith became a vehicle to carry them into the present. However, the Ipapa Bahai community hymnody is largely influenced by the Bahai scriptures.

The Bahai teams promised the Sinai Church leaders chance to travel beyond their locality. The first three Sinaists to travel out of Ipapa were Zawadi Aly, Noah Kamela and Maria Simbowe (daughter of Yohannes Simbowe). They were part of the team that was serving in the Youth of Service in 1993. There was also the hope of visiting the Bahai World Center in Haifa, Israel, which the Sinaists who embraced the Bahai Faith likened with their own *Mlima Sinai*. Yohannes Simbowe had the honour to visit the Bahai World Center in 2001 during the opening of the Bahai Terraces. He thought whatever he saw in Israel was anticipated in the dreams he had many years earlier about the future glory of *Mlima Sinai*. The book containing the Terraces and the various buildings on Mt. Carmel where the Bahai World Center stands has been used as a teaching aid among the Ipapa community most of whom were Sinaists. After his visit to Bahai World Center, Yohannes Simbowe organized a meeting with the LSAs in the region so as to explain what he saw and what he experienced in Haifa, Israel.

The Ruaha Bahai International School is another factor that encouraged the Sinai Church to embrace the Bahai Faith. The hope that they had an institution on *Mlima Sinai* was equated to the kind of school that Ruaha was. In this school, many Bahais from Mbozi district have been sponsored. Since 1992, more than twenty youths from this region have gone through the school. This has been seen as a great contribution to the social change in the region. The Bahai World Center has been instrumental in this development. The literacy level in the area has improved with the introduction and acceptance of the Bahai Faith. In a way, the need for education is being catered for. Formal education and the exposure that it grants to those that go through it has been praised by the local community. The Bahais from elsewhere have appreciated the improvement in the standards of living that this exposure has brought.<sup>41</sup>

The vision of the following characters was also instrumental in the integration of Sinai Church and the Bahai Faith;

SALA BE SAHAH NO 108421

The syllables and characters were recorded from dreams and visions among the Sinaists (Appendix VI p.19). The syllables and characters raised great curiosity among the Sinaists. When the Sinaists encountered the Bahais, the Sinaists sought to understand whether they were of any significance. Gilberta, a Bahai adherent from Ethiopia rendered the vision this way:

SALA = Kuomba  
BE = na  
SAHAH = Kutenda Mema  
NO 108421 = 1844

The explanation is that in seeking the glory of God one needs to pray and accompany the prayers with seemly deeds (Appendix VI p.26). The writings of Isaiah 2:1ff and Micah 4:1ff were used to explain the characters from a biblical point of view. 108421 was rendered as 1844 the year that the Bab declared his mission, hence the year that the glory of the Lord was revealed.<sup>42</sup>

Going by the teaching from the above characters, the Sinai community had a way of encouraging universal participation of all the members. The 'service staffs' that were given to each Sinai adherent demonstrate the social aspect of the Sinai Church. Seemly deeds (service to others and respect for all) were encouraged and the unity of the community endorsed. From a Bahai perspective, human beings have the duty of serving God as they serve their fellow human beings. The Bahai Faith teaches that even work done in the spirit of service is worship. The Sinai community identified easily with this teaching. The challenge as the next chapter will highlight would be the place of the Sinai leaders in the new religion.

Over and above the teachings of the Sinai Church that pointed to the Bahai Faith either directly or indirectly, there was an underlying need for a better life. The social,

political and economic changes that the shift offered was a major attraction to the people in the region. First, they had attempted to be integrated with other religions in the region to no avail. The Bahais accepted them thereby validating their religious experiences. The Sinaists felt affirmed by the Bahais. This also meant that institutional leadership was now available to the church that had grown beyond the capacity of charismatic leadership. Second, owing to the alienation that they experienced and the frustrations that they had with a government that was not being felt, the Sinaists saw the functional benefits in accepting the Bahai Faith. The area is a border region and hence anything that would prove to work for the people will always be acceptable given the diversity of lifestyles in the region and the competition to excel in life. Having institutional links with Dar es Salaam and even Haifa meant that socially, the Sinaists were not just a local movement. Their social influence would be great.

The schooling that came with the Bahais and even employment meant that the lifestyle of the Sinaists was bound to change for better. Bahais would occupy a higher station in the social strata of the society. The social placement would imply that the social influence of the Bahais would be more than any other group if they were to realize the dreams and visions of the Sinai Church. At the functional level, religion becomes a cry for that which works and people will always have the conviction that theirs is the best suited in helping humanity face the existential challenges of the area and of the times. The many foreigners that visited and continue to visit the region in the name of Bahai Faith have exacerbated the social function of being a Bahai in Ipapa. The minds of a people who have very little to show in terms of social influence and economic endowment, will always be touched by the visitors who come to promise a better lifestyle for the moment and the days to come.

To a majority of people the wellbeing of a person in this world means that his or her God by whatever name is powerful and mighty. Thus at Ipapa the Ultimate reality as expounded by the Bahais seemed to be superior in comparison to their notion of Ultimate reality. It meant that it was the responsibility of the Bahai Faith to meet the integral needs of the Sinai community. It was in this development, that the

institutionalization of the religious phenomenon of the region was to depend on the Bahai Faith. When cultures are transformed, even the gods get different shapes, shades and acquire different meaning. It means that understanding a people is essential if one is to understand their religious experience and expression. In the next chapter, the process of institutionalization of the change and its meaning to the community will be discussed. At the heart of the changes in Ipapa is the dramatization of power relations, which has its meaning in the socio-political and economic balance of the time. Yet whatever the motivations there is the option of the Sinaists to become exemplary Bahais.

#### **4.5 The Practice of the Bahai Faith in Ipapa**

The acceptance of the Bahai Faith by the Sinai community resulted in new practices based on new teachings and renewed hope of a better life. From a Bahai perspective the first observable evidence of the acceptance of the Faith was the formation of Local Spiritual Assemblies in the place where the Sinai Church used to be. Hope and encouragement of the human potential is a strong point that favoured the Bahai Faith in Mbozi district. The scriptures of the Bahai Faith that relate to the social transformation of society were very assuring to a community that had experienced marginalization. The formation of Local Spiritual Assemblies meant that the institutions would be in a position to liaise with the NSA and even the UHJ. It is evident that the Sinai community wanted and desired this link. The various letters that they wrote to these institutions are an indicator of what they needed, (Appendix VI).

The life of any Bahai community is to be found on the functioning of the LSA and the believers respecting the LSA decisions and supporting the institutions of the Faith. The Bahai institutions offered new life to the community that would be part of the global Bahai Community. The Bahais teach and believe that, the same way there was Pax Romana, Pax Britanica and Pax Americana, in the same vein there will be one time Pax Baha. Pax Baha will come because of Bahai institutions being mature to address social, political, and economic issues of the world.<sup>42</sup> Pax Baha is well described in the New World Order anticipated by the Bahais, (Appendix IV). The

biggest challenge is that the comparative paxes (sic) are political empires reinforced with military might and economic hegemony, yet the Bahais want theirs to be reinforced by obedience to Bahauallah and the institutions of the Bahai Faith.

The dynamic approach (as has been here described) of putting the Bahai Faith in the hands of the masses of people makes it a force to be respected. More so the control and co-ordination offered by the UHJ gives the whole enterprise the authority and power it requires. In so doing, the activities that the Bahais engage in as guided by the institutions, are seen as part of the unfolding of the Minor Plan of God. The whole process is well organized to the extent that the Sinai community found a vision and mission to identify with. If the mission is realized an alternative way of organizing society and viewing reality will be exhibited. On the other hand it is difficult to sustain mass enthusiasm over an extended period of time when there are no evident and obvious personal advantages being gained. The institutions may function but individuals must also be involved in the process.

The instructions from the UHJ to all pioneers and Bahais in general to be aware of the needs for an encounter between the Bahai Faith and the cosmology of the masses of people's culture and traditions is overwhelming.<sup>43</sup> To view it comparatively, it took Christianity many years to have institutionalized missionary enterprises and talk about making Christianity at home in peoples homes. For Christianity, when the inculturation and contextualization were being talked about, the damage had already been done. Christianity was divided into various denominations each aspiring to express Christianity in the thought forms and patterns that were understandable to them. The Sinai Church therefore opted for an organic union with the Bahai Faith on the functional and developmental value that the Bahai Faith added to the adherents. The integration suggests that the Bahai Faith appeals to the dormant and active African culture, which has been buried by the religious fervour, found in Christianity. The fervour in Christianity right from inception might be due to the misunderstanding of the station of Christ in relation to humanity and the role of God in building humanity towards himself from the beginning of history.

The new development in Ipapa resulted not merely in the use of new terms and formulae. There were subjective changes, the attitude, points of view, and the contents of new and fresh flow of experience. All deeper feelings compel modification and adjustments of thought where all sincerity and intellectual honesty that the Bahai Faith ignited forced a certain systematization of activities in the region. At the heart of the social changes in this region, sincerity and genuineness are more potent than cynism, indifference, and merely conventional attitudes that shaped part of the society before the formation of the Sinai Church and the integration with the Bahai Faith. The people in the region realized what they needed and worked their way to the vision that they had for the society. The people in this region were ready to experiment with anything that promised better life in accordance to what they thought and saw as their vision of a better society. The self-sacrifice, renunciation, self-denial, faith in the best for humanity and confidence in the future or the unseen, are some of the factors that worked in the hearts and minds of the Ipapa Community. In a bid to bring out this need and desire, the outpourings of dreams and visions became extensive in the community. The well-being of individuals and the entire community was at the heart of the dreams and visions.

But while the progress notable in Ipapa brought better conceptions of reality, at the same time it certainly increased the responsibilities, duties and abilities that the community had to concern itself with. The progress also magnified the possibilities of good and evil. The development, therefore, is extremely significant for the relation between the local people and reality, as they understand it. This interaction informs the thrust of the next chapter. The Bahai Faith brought to the community a deeper recognition of the necessity of higher standards of moral, spiritual, and intellectual life. For instance Bahais are challenged to pride themselves in being members of the human race and not in being members of a given tribe or nation.

The development of new conceptions of reality in this case affected the life of all who embraced the Sinai Church and later embraced the Bahai Faith. The striking

differences between the Bahai Faith and the Sinai Church in terms of ethical, spiritual and intellectual aspects, is in their conception of God and the expression of the same. The difference could be attributed to human nature. God is the name given to the sublimest of realities. Humanity becomes conscious as standing in a uniquely personal relationship with that reality. The relationship between humanity and the Ultimate reality contribute to the resultant varying conceptions. The conceptions can thus develop further and in so doing, lead to newer and more effective convictions of reality. The Ipapa phenomenon demonstrates how human perceptions develop and the search for meaning take them to new convictions of dealing with reality.

The development of the Sinai Church and its spontaneous shift into the Bahai Faith means that an adequate conception of the ultimate reality was being sought. In the search for adequate meaning, the imperfect conceptions were to be replaced. The result is increased power and ability for social change. The social change has to follow the religious matrix of social transformation (diagram 2) so that all the actors of social change are to be involved. The development is not so much of the self-alone as of an environment or a system of relations of which the self is the centre. The development for it to bring forth the desired social transformation demands continued discipline and re-organization. Stanley Cook observes that, belief systems must connect human activities with those of the universe, whether directly or indirectly.<sup>44</sup> Belief system should be plausible to the best of the practitioners experiences and expectations. He asserts that,

...although progressive thought may reject certain explanatory conceptions or theories, human beings require some organization of experience, some adequate body of thought, some tolerable outlook upon the universe, which will enable them to direct and understand their experiences and to realize the significance of human existence so as to be able to live healthy and useful lives for the good of a universe from which they can never escape.<sup>45</sup>

The experiences that adherents of the Sinai Church went through informed their thought patterns to the extent that their religiosity at its best involved the immediate consciousness of transcendent realities of supreme personal worth, vitally influencing

life and thought. The experiences have been expressed in forms which are conditioned by the entire phase of development reached by the individuals and the community. There is a positive development of consciousness and thought in history, and consequently it is possible to seek to correlate both the static aspects, which are essential for all stability, and the dynamics, which are indispensable for future progress. For to do justice to the ultimate facts of harmony and of development in the universe, is one of the main functions of religion.<sup>46</sup> From this perspective the growth and development of the Sinai Church and the integration with the Bahai Faith are concomitant to a people who are seeking to realize their destiny in this world and to some extent in the world to come. In this regard the practice of the Bahai Faith may not have replaced the practice of the Sinai Church it may only have changed form and style and added more dynamism for the progress of the community.

The Ipapa community illustrates that religion and society form the systems of thought, feelings and behaviour of human beings. In this regard, the Sinai Church and the Bahai Faith are seen as paradigms for social transformation. Using the religious matrix of transformation one finds that the acceptance of the Bahai Faith in Ipapa indicates that, humanity cannot improve society simply through its own ploy or machination. A higher authority is sought in an attempt to legitimize human activities towards social transformation. A credit to religion! Society is not merely the artificial creation of individual contractors. On the contrary, the individual was formed by society, and society, by God. This process of formation brings about the interrelations between community, religion, tradition, authority, and the individual, which the Tanzanian government failed to accomplish through the socialist policies it advocated. *Ujamaaism* advocated more inward looking than outside looking attitude. At another level religion was not given institutional recognition.

Religion as an institution has a social function, it is not just a matter of dogma or faith. Religion at its best should be allowed to influence transformation at institutional level. It is this aspect among the Bahais that challenges the Christian approach to religion as a matter of being 'heaven bound'. As the socialist ideals were compelling people to

become what they were not at home with, the Sinai and Bahai shift portrays growing surge for toleration in a land where the state had a fixed legal, political, religious and economical attitude towards the Tanzanian growing nation. Toleration was to embrace all manner of alternatives provided they worked for the well-being of the individual and society as a whole. In this regard, the founding of the Sinai Church and the shift to Bahai Faith was a critique to the socio-political and religious paradigms of the day.

Tanzanians in a way proved that statehood alone cannot bring about social order and nationhood. Rather it begets frustration and alienation that are a hindrance in the development of nationhood. The frustration and alienation created an occasion for religion to prove its worth to human activities. In the circumstances of frustration and deprivation, the people of the region under study entered into a relationship with a sacred ground of existence and experience. In that process a view about empirical reality was developed in terms of that transcendent and sacred relationship. In this regard social security and meaning, both adjustment and hope were realized and means to maintain them sought. In this light, Bahai Faith becomes an alternative way of ordering society. Politically this might not be a threat to any government in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, since Bahai Faith is a nascent community worldwide.

As tentacles of the Bahai Faith continue to reach out to every corner of the world in a very subtle way it is a matter of time and the Bahai community world wide will be a force to reckon with. The world systems will be forced to deal with the Bahai Faith. In the Tanzanian case, the need for social transformation compelled the Tanzanians in this region to accept a faith that took their social and political life seriously. The acceptance of the Bahai Faith implied the institutionalization of the Sinaists endeavours in social transformation. Functionally, religion maintains the social system by providing an answer to the problem of meaning. This happens as religion justifies the socially accepted goals, by renewing solidarity through ritual and cultic practices. Religion also maintains social harmony by deepening the acceptance of norms through their sacralization. It also provides some catharsis for frustration and making

it understandable in the context of a larger religious view and a deeper relationship to the sacred.

Peter Berger observes that, in those parts of the world where Christianity has been the dominant religious tradition – and where historically it has been identified with the interests of colonial powers – there is a fascination with liberation theologies that sometimes advocate social and political revolution.<sup>47</sup> Religion at its best has to be institutionally identified with the well-being of the society. New institutions will emerge when religion fails to play its part in social transformation. Liberal theologies do not negate religion rather they critique the purpose that religion serves.

In societies where religion does not yield social transformation among the recipients of missionary enterprise, the relations between religion and society are shaped by new formulations of faith that are tailored to facilitate transitional or revolutionary activity.<sup>48</sup> In this social manifestation, religion still presents itself as a guardian of sensitivities concerning distinctions between the sacred and the profane. And in its religious dimensions, society continues to be known by the collective aspirations to which its sanctioned activity lends expression. Using the religious matrix of social transformation, religious innovation may arise because of a peoples' experience of the Holy Being then the process leads to an organized society on the basis of that experience, (diagram 4). On the other hand, religious innovation may result from a situation of compromise in a given society then people in protest seek for new ways of relating with the sacred and organizing society.

In Ipapa, the two responses are notable; innovation and shift. The formation of the Sinai Church is an innovation while the acceptance of the Bahai Faith is a shift. The political establishment had compromised people's religious sentiments with statehood and the dominant religious orientations in the Ipapa area. Moravians, Last Church of God and Roman Catholic did not seem to minister to the needs, aspirations, hopes and fears created by this situation. The institutionalization of religion helps to carry transformation to heights that individual members cannot. Ipapa was starved

institutionally at all levels. Diagram 4 demonstrates how the religious experiences of the leaders of the Sinai Church led to the formation of an independent church. The leaders Yohannes Simbowe, Petero Simbeye and Lwitiho Namonje formulated the idea out of the religious experiences that they had gone through. The idea of a religious movement was initially couched in the cultic practices of the Sinai Church. At the organization stage, Yohannes Simbowe took a central position compared to the other leaders. This explains why he was instrumental in the acceptance of the Bahai Faith.

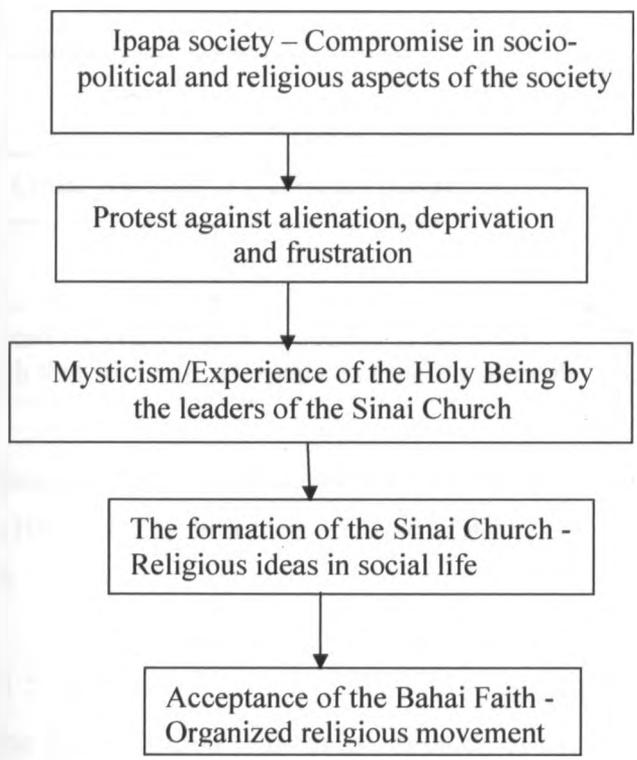


Diagram 4: Religious innovation and shift occurred in Ipapa arising from societal context

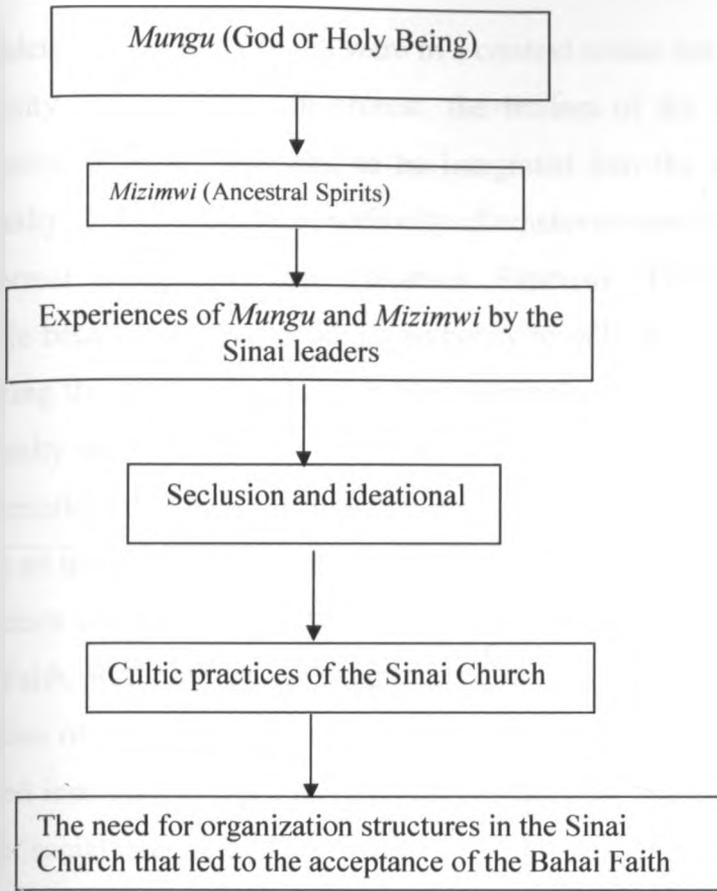


Diagram 5: The process of religious innovation and shift at Ipapa. The diagram demonstrates how the experience of the Holy Being by the leaders led to the formation of the Sinai Church and the later shift to the Bahai Faith

Diagram 4 and 5 demonstrate how the context of the Ipapa community facilitated the formation of the Sinai Church and the acceptance of the Bahai Faith. To understand this context, the integrating and stabilizing functions of religion are relevant. It is within functioning institutions that religion will influence its adherents towards integration and stability. Institutions are greater than the individuals who staff them and the individuals they serve. The Tanzanian government and its concomitant policies contributed greatly to the feelings of alienation, deprivation and frustration in a region whose people thought they must be taken seriously. On the other hand the religious orientations in Ipapa did not institutionally help the Ipapa community towards a given identity and solidarity.

The leaders of the Sinai Church were in a context where the society had compromised its identity and solidarity. In protest, the leaders of the Sinai community led the community to voice their need to be integrated into the national and international community. In this endeavour, authority of whatever was to be done was needed. The para-normal experiences that Yohannes Simbowe, Petero Simbeye and Lwitiho Namonje became famous for are an authority to rally the community behind them. In mobilizing the Ipapa community behind themselves, aspects of African Religion and Christianity were blended to form the Sinai Church. From the religious matrix of transformation, the three social actors must be in harmony with social change for the process of transformation to be conspicuous. The Bahai Faith met this need. Hence, the Sinaists notion of social change became the agenda within the main agenda of the Bahai Faith. Religion has the functional ability to maintain social solidarity and the promotion of social change. The institutionalization of religious sentiments in Ipapa produced institutions with a hierarchical structure. In this case religion is seen to be a factor of social integration.<sup>49</sup>

In both the Sinai Church and the Bahai Faith, there is an appeal to revelation. The appeal to revelation goes together with the wellbeing of life in all its forms. The revelation offers inspiration to those who accepted and believed. The inspiration indicates specifically under what conditions each adherent and person in general can fulfill his destiny and experience wellbeing in total. Individuals in both orientations are given a way of participating in their wellbeing. The religious expression in Ipapa should thus be seen as a virtue that led and leads its adherents to render to God the respect and honour that is due to him. From this respect and honour, attitudes and thought patterns and systems are formed and reformed. Central to the activities that took place at Ipapa is the community's view of God (Appendix VI p. 11). From the attitudes and thought patterns, words and actions are inspired. The attendant events set trends and processes that will result to religious institutionalization. The institutionalization of religion helps the adherents to be cared for within the vision of their religion for the society.

At the level of institutionalization, there is the need for being rational. Being rational for the Ipapa people meant that they had to move away from para-normal experiences. Structures were needed to carry the agenda of social change. The Sinaists needed to be aware of all that is essential for every step that their vision required for it to be actualized. The amazing thing is that all activities seem to have been more random than systematic. Para-normal experiences did not end with the acceptance of the Bahai Faith.<sup>50</sup> It is only through the acceptance of the Bahai Faith that some rationality was employed although the former tradition of randomness was called upon in order to make a ruling for the shift and commitment to the Bahai Faith. In any religious orientation, there prevail beliefs and practices of entire surrender, whether to a Supreme Power or principles in the universe or through asceticism or quietism. In entering upon any new system of thought, individuals are in a greater or less degree, as against inhibition, objectivity, and insistence upon one's own individuality and point of view. The Sinaists had surrendered to the para-normal experiences as their reference point. The experiences were attributed to God and to the ancestral spirits.

The Sinaists embraced the Bahai Faith as individuals and as a community for varying reasons. The acceptance and progress into the Bahai Faith was augmented by innumerable acts of faith, trust, surrender, and reliance. As the occasions varied in intensity and objective significance, the three social actors were involved. At the individual level, some part of the self is affected and developed and at times, the whole self seems to be renounced only to gain 'a higher' or 'better self'. Individuals and the Sinai community saw the Bahai Faith in general as way of attaining better heights in social, religious, political and economic fields.

The feelings of surrender in human relations, is mostly in the religious sphere of life. The step of surrender in many cases has a leap into the unknown even though there is the confidence that underneath are the everlasting arms. In this leap to the unknown, are experiences varying in degree and uniting the individual and one's ordinary life and thought with that which is most profound and ineffable in the universe. The experiences correlate uniquely the non-religious and the religious, the known and the unknown, and forming the basis of all adequate conceptions of existence, knowledge and reality.<sup>51</sup>

The social-action theory as propounded by Thrstein Veblen (1857 – 1929), Karl Mannheim (1893 – 1947), and Talcot Parsons (1902 – 1979), contends that the social milieu posses a set of conditions that are beyond the control of each individual, but not outside the mastery of collective human agency. The proponents of this theory insisted that social thought be pursued in a methodologically sophisticated cross-cultural and interdisciplinary manner. Religion should be seen as a cultural system with seven dimensions. The interaction of the seven dimensions (Doctrinal, Ritual, Mythical, Experiential, Ethical, Social, Material) with the society, their presence and the way each is expressed gives a religion its internal dynamism as well as its morphology.<sup>53</sup> Smart observes that there is the ongoing dialectic in which a religion and its society help and shape one another. The inner dimensions of the Sinai Church and the Bahai Faith has pointed that there is a significance difference which made the dialectic forces in the two faiths to create an occasion for blending.

The blending of the African traditions in the teachings and practices of the Sinai church, the Christian forms they embraced and the Bahai faith, demonstrate a combination of ultraconservative trends with the drive for change in Tanzania and Ipapa community manifest that kind of inclination. In their attitude towards change, the Sinai community moved from a conscious attempt as a form of social change, through the teachings of African traditional norms combined by Christian values to an extreme, drastic outlook and change aimed at putting an end to the Christian and any other religious influence in the region. The role of Christianity and the state in the problems of the community were highlighted in the process of change. The founding of the Sinai Church was a conscious effort of the community in finding its own identity away from the forces of the state and the church. The shift to the Bahai Faith can be explained as a drastic move on one hand and defiance on the other. As a drastic move, the community opted to become Bahai en mass after consultation. It was defiance to what the church and state stood for, for they sought other avenues of being themselves apart from what the state and the church were driving them to.

In conclusion, it has been demonstrated that, Sinaists found their value systems and structures for authentic actualization at stake. In such a situation, the Sinai community found itself responding with institutional survival tactics. The response was to the anxiety that the people had and the fear they felt about their future due to the trends that the community found itself in. T. C. Oden defines anxiety as the response of self to some envisioned future possibility which is symbolized as a threat to some value regarded as necessary for one's existence.<sup>54</sup> Anxiety is the awareness of potential threats to one's essential values. From an African point of view, the Ipapa community valued unity and concord and progress in all the spheres of life with religion taking a central place in this matrix. However, the leaders of Ipapa community felt threatened by what they were experiencing and what they expected was not forthcoming. The Sinai Church was a community running away from imagined potential destruction in terms of their identity and solidarity. They thought themselves, in a tight situation, under constriction, pressed into narrow, limiting circumstances. Forces were shaking the foundations of the community and flight or fight was needed for survival. The shaking was in social, economic, and cultural history and in the sense of being in a community. The community opted to take flight by founding the Sinai Church and accepting the Bahai Faith. Bahai Faith offered opportunities to solve institutional challenges amidst other needs of the Ipapa community. Nyerere identified disunity and ignorance as the two main weaknesses of African communities.<sup>55</sup> The Bahai ideal was an alternative to what the government championed.

In the above mentioned circumstances the needs and the aspirations of the Ipapa community met with the needs and aspirations of the Bahai Faith. To some extent then a symbiotic relationship developed. The need and aspirations of the Bahai Faith was to make the world know that there is a better way to organize society and religion at its best has the panacea to an agonizing world. Enlisting new members was thus and is still a demonstration that Bahai Faith has influence. This explains the Bahai art of mastering the Bahai scriptures and making them theirs so that there is harmony of character when teaching. The Institute Process aims at this harmonization.<sup>56</sup> It helps those who go through it to master the skills needed to marshal their abilities and

enhance capacities towards the entry by troops as the Bahais would call it.<sup>57</sup> On the other hand the needs and aspirations of the Sinaists were couched in simplicity and honesty and going by the promptings of the spirit. At the point of encounter, they kept their options open and simple. It implies that the two groups were reaching out to each other but for different reasons.

The two groups may be said to have had experiences of anxiety due to different needs and aspirations. Both are minorities, both are marginal and both have 'obscure' scriptures. The Sinaists wanted to survive and thrive in a very limiting world. The well-being of the Ipapa Bahais depends on how their expectations would be met. The expectations were the occasion for the Bahai institutions to be centrally relevant to the Ipapa community, by having a common vision and mission with them. In a pluralistic society, the Bahais wanted to demonstrate the validity of their faith. Since anxiety attacks the foundation of the security system itself, the individual cannot stand outside the source of the threat.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand anxiety is a correlate of freedom. The most elemental characteristic of freedom is to experience the capacity to determine oneself toward one option while rejecting the other options. In Ipapa Tanzania, there was no alternative and the people had to be innovative for their survival. But how would this survival take shape in a changing political and economic environment? To the Bahais their validity would mean their continued existence. The cultural background that informed the formation of the Sinai Church was not considered in the encounter with the Bahai Faith. The cultural gap created would affect the commitment into the Bahai Faith.

## Notes

1. A. Hastings, *The Church in Africa (1450-1950)*, (London: Clarendon, 1974), 493-539.
2. The researcher has come across this phenomenon among African Instituted Churches in Nairobi from the Urban Mission Students at Carlile College
3. Debbie Gill (ed). *Religions of the World*, (London, 19), 32.
4. J.E Esslemont, *Bahauallah and the New Era*, (Wilmette, Illinois: Pyramid publications, 1970), 18.
5. Aslan Laloui, Interview, University of Nairobi, 16<sup>th</sup> April 2002.
6. A. Taherzadeh, *The Covenant of Bahauallah*, (London: George Ronald Publications, 1995), 33.
7. Ibid., 52.
8. Bahauallah, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, (Haifa, Bahai World Centre, 2002), 5.
9. Sara Zarqani-Rene, *The Bahai Portrait*, (New Delhi: Mirat Publications, 2003), 102.
10. Hushmmand Fathezam, *The New Garden*, (New Delhi: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1996), 39.
11. Matthew 19:28 – 29
12. Bahauallah, *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1993), K38 34.
13. Sara Zarqani-Rene, Op cit., 120.
14. Op cit., 21
15. Shoghi Effendi, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahauallah*, (New Delhi: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1973), 66.
16. Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of Malaysia, *A selection of Bahai Prayers*, (Kuala Lumpur: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1996), 11.
17. S. Coob, *Security for a Failing World*, (New Delhi: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1971), 99.
18. Mohamed Tozy, *Africa Now: people, policies and institutions*, (London: Villiers Publications 1996), 70.
19. The researcher attended a Bahai meeting on June 1999 at Nairobi Bahai Centre where one Ahmed Ehsani to the members through the calculations of the Right of God.

20. Bahauallah and Abdul-Baha, *Bahai World Faith*, (New Delhi: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1990), 372.
21. The researcher through observation participated in various Bahai activities.
22. Shabban Seffu, Interview, Dar es Salaam Bahai Centre, 6<sup>th</sup> April 2002.
23. Ninian Smart, *The World's Religions*, (London/Glasgow: Collins/Fontana Press, 1989), 480.
24. Sara Zarqani-Rene, *The Bahai Faith: A portrait*, (New Delhi: Mirat publications, 2003), 198.
25. Reported by Shabani Seffu a long time secretary to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of Tanzania.
26. Rwegasira Muhingo, Interview, Halungu, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2005.
27. Zawadi Aly, Interview, Ipapa, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2005.
28. Nessi Mwazembe, Interview, Ipapa, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2005
29. Godfrey Williams, Interview, Ruaha Bahai International School, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2005.
30. Noah Kamela, Interview, Ipapa Bahai Centre, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2005.
31. Shabban Seffu, Interview, Dar es Salaam Bahai Centre, 16<sup>th</sup> April 2002.
32. Ibid.
33. Gevalonge Myombe, Interview, Ruaha Bahai International School Iringa, 4<sup>th</sup> of June 2005.
34. Joel 2:28
35. It is in this vein that the researcher came to know of the Ipapa Bahai Community
36. Depth psychologists employ psychoanalysis in an attempt to explain human behaviour.
37. Ibid.
38. Shabban Seffu, Interview, Dar es Salaam Bahai Centre, 16<sup>th</sup> April 2005
39. . H. B. Hornby *Lights of Guidance*, (New Delhi: Bahai Publishing Trust. 1997), 227.
40. Njuru Nganga, Interview Nairobi Bahai Centre, 12<sup>th</sup> July 2000.
41. Ibid.
42. Yohannes Simbowe, Interview, Ipapa, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2005

43. Herbat Sikombe, Interview, Mwanjelwa Mbeya, 24<sup>th</sup> of June 2005
44. S. A. Cook, 'Study of Religion' in Hastings, J. (ed). *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* vol. 10, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), 691.
45. Ibid., p. 393.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid., 384.
48. Ibid., 383.
49. Ibid. Yohannes Simbowe
50. T. F. O'dea, 'Sociology of Religion' in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol XII (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 267.
51. S. A. Cook, Ibid.
52. Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, (London/Glasgow: Collins/Fontana Press, 1971), 18.
53. T. C. Oden, *The Structure of Awareness*, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1969), 141.
54. Julius K. Nyerere, "Socialism and Rural Development", Dar es Salaam, 1967
55. The Institute Process is the program of course offered to Bahais in a bid to mature them in the Bahai Faith.
56. Shabban Seffu, Ibid.
57. Ibid., Oden, 154.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE IPAPA BAHAI COMMUNITY AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD

#### 5.0 Introduction

Relations between the Ipapa Bahai community and the wider society at any level are fundamental to the nature of the Bahai Faith. In this chapter, the relationship between the Ipapa Community and its neighbours is going to be analyzed in the light of the Bahai Ideal. Societies are characterized by the values they embody, the individual and collective motivations they encourage, the incentives they inspire and sanction, and the ideals by which belief, attitude, and behaviour are established and secured. In this regard, the Ipapa Bahai community cannot be defined and described except in terms of its social context. Bahai Faith offers prescription for social order, individual behaviour, and collective action. In this case, the teachings of the Bahai Faith are drawn from knowledge and experience of how individual and collective human life ought to be ordered, and how human aspirations are to be accorded privilege, in the light of the sacred and the profane. The religions of the world can be distinguished from each other because of their selective interpretations of the fundamental relationship between what are acknowledged and understood to be the most compelling objectives of human life and day to day conduct. A society is thus known by its collective aspirations – aspirations to which religion attributes sanction.<sup>1</sup>

Following the religious matrix of transformation, all the relations in Ipapa, hinge on the individual. The flow of social change from there to institutions and the community characterizes the Ipapa Bahai community. The wider community in turn shapes the individual experiences and knowledge. It means that the relations with the outside world at Ipapa must recognize the individual aspect and how the outside relations shape it. In general, the three social actors do not operate in isolation and exclusively. They are mutually inclusive for the process of social transformation to be triggered. The outside world in this case starts with their immediate environment and the scope then goes beyond the regional and national borders. The relationships discussed are aimed at underlining the Bahai ideal at the personal, interpersonal, institutional, religious and the wider society level. The Bahai ideal in this case is looked at as the

vision and mission of the Bahai Faith that each Bahai community works for. The standard is thus set to point how the existential realities of the Ipapa Bahai community are being shaped by the Bahai Faith and how in return they are shaping the Bahai cause in their milieu. The relationships must be in a response to the needs, aspirations, fears, and hopes at individual and communal level. Arnold J. Toynbee observes that no human soul can pass through this life without being challenged to grapple with the mystery of the universe.<sup>2</sup> If the distinctively human impulse of curiosity does not bring us to the point, experience will drive us to it – above all, the experience of suffering.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century development in Europe and America brought about a mathematical-physical dimension to the approach of life at the expense of the spiritual dimension. The revival of Christian missionary enterprise was largely influenced by the monastic perspective of Christianity though with modifications. The New Age movement is challenging the world to rethink this kind of orientation and embrace the spiritual field of activity that is the domain of freedom. The spiritual goal as envisioned in the Bahai Faith is to seek communion with the presence of God through his Manifestations, and seek it with the aim of bringing oneself into harmony with his presence. The process must be guided by the Holy Writings that the Manifestations have left to humanity and activities of service must be informed by the Writings and carried out in a spirit of selflessness.

### **5.1 The Bahai Ideal**

Describing the Bahai ideal at Ipapa will help to describe the nature of the Bahai Faith in relation to its aims and objectives for humanity. The hallmark of the Bahai Faith is its comparative success or failure, not merely in defining the truths and interpreting the counsels but also in helping the Bahais to take the teaching of the Bahai Faith to heart and to put its counsels into action. So the last word has not been said about the Bahai Faith when we have accepted its definitions of the nature of Reality and its influence in Ipapa. We have also to look into the daily lives of its adherents and see how they practice the Bahai Faith. In so doing, whether the Bahai Faith is helping its

adherents to overcome the challenges of life will be ascertained. Bahais believe and teach that the most individually important form of creative work one can indulge in is the forming of one's character and personality. No one can create another's personality. This is an individual responsibility and it is the most important task in life. As one creates his or her higher self on the inner plane, so correspondingly will be the effects of all his or her efforts on the outer plane. We must be in order to do.<sup>3</sup>

At the functional level of any religious orientation, religious leaders make effort in awakening the social responsibility of their adherents and in return that consciousness generates social and political reforms towards a given vision of the society. Every person exists in relation to the future. To imagine oneself without a future is to imagine the situation of death.<sup>4</sup> For all the relations to move in the right direction, the individual conviction about the future that one has to yearn for must be nurtured. Bahai teachings are designed to create the spiritual and moral context sufficient to encourage a harmonious individual life, a community governed by justice and righteousness and institutions founded on the spiritual dimension of humanity. Spiritual cultivation of individuals, communities and institutions is the prerequisites for peace in the world. However, in this process of transformation, it is out of personal conviction and choice. When conviction is achieved, the individual decides to order one's life on the basis of that conviction. C. Oden observes:

I never confront any imagined future without any special value orientation, my understanding of who I am, my assumptions about authentic self-actualization. Conscience is the accumulation of internalized, stored concepts of value. While conscience does indeed have a judging function as it reflects backward toward past time, it also has an imaginative function which motivates and prods the self toward future value actualization. If certain goods are indeed worthwhile, if this is who I am, if my self-image is at stake, then I must try to manipulate various determinable aspects of the future in order that the value I prize may actually come into being and not threatened with destruction.<sup>5</sup>

The acceptance of the Bahai Faith in Ipapa demonstrates that conversion and faith are not necessarily determined by missionary or pioneer activities, scriptural persuasion, or outside influence but are strongly influenced by perceptions of mythology, dreams,

and vision. The cultural environment of the Sinaists was a factor in the choice of the Bahai Faith. In this regard, change in religious orientation seems not to have followed a change of cultural identity. The members of the Sinai Church after embracing the Bahai Faith did not become Iranians or embraced the cultural norms of the religious others - pioneers. The social and cultural habits and traditions practiced in the neighbourhood persist. It implies that in the choices that the new Bahai adherents in Ipapa were to make a lot of trading was going on in their minds. In the words of T.C. Oden one ascertains this trading:

The complexity and subtlety of the special value constellations impinging upon any given decision thus depend upon my presupposed value orientation and the unique situation which I confront. My valuing process is highly contextual, even changing from moment to moment. I weigh the situation and its possibilities in the light of current perceived values. I select one constellation of values at the price of negating others. Choice demand negation.<sup>6</sup>

All the Bahai respondents that the researcher interacted with consider Bahai Faith to be their religion and way of life. It means that the daily activities of the Ipapa Bahai community bare the influence of the Bahai Faith. The rites connected with marriage, birth, death, widowhood, harvest or installations to traditional offices. A great deal of normal communal activities and for all their influence, demonstrate that the Bahai Faith is entrenched in the region. The Ipapa Bahai community identifies itself with other Bahai communities in Tanzania. The best example of how the Bahai ideal is being practiced in Ipapa is the faithfulness to the Bahai calendar (see p. 94). However, the feeling of fulfillment has undergone some metamorphoses on the bases of how the needs, aspirations, hopes and fears have been dealt with. The Sinai Church embraced the Bahai Faith because the Sinaists believed that it was in the Bahai Faith that their aspirations of a society with schools, reliable communication networks, world-wide recognition and influence would be realized.

The nascent Ipapa Bahai community today struggles to be a better Bahai community. The social situations are well integrated with the Bahai teachings to the extent that the Ipapa community can talk of having a Bahai culture. The building of a Bahai culture

in Ipapa has been a slow process. It began with understanding the past and opening to the present. It involved containing in oneself, the confusion of stereotypes, and from the tentative and hotly debated socialism and *Ujamaaism* that the government championed as ways of fulfilling human needs and in the process of creating an African nation immediately after independence. In the 1960s and the 1970s under the leadership of Dr. Julius Nyerere, Tanzanians in the rural areas were moved from their ancestral lands and relocated in collective villages. This was African socialism or togetherness with families as the basic units.

In the execution of *Ujamaaism*, the Tanzanians in Ipapa became conscious of the economic and social gaps between themselves and others and this spurred concern to understand why?<sup>7</sup> They would compare themselves mainly at two levels; at a religious level and socio-political level. The consciousness thereof was alarming, and at times, a source of obscure anger, that people could be so different from them, and they themselves so different from what they would like to think. The process of change in Ipapa, is striking in that, key individuals rose above communal consciousness to their heightened personal consciousness which was informed by want of more life for oneself and for the community. Yohannes Simbowe and Petero Simbeye together with the four adherents who first joined them were an epitome of the communal desire that went against the main grind of the country for social change.

Through the activities of the founders of the Sinai Church, the intention was to foresee the immense and continuing moral effect that the consciousness the leaders presented was to have upon the Ipapa community. The Sinai leaders challenged the way the Ipapa community was organized and led. The identity of the Ipapa community was in jeopardy in the Christian denominations that did not allow African practices. The ancestral spirits were not recognized in such churches. For instance, *ngoma ya kiasili* was not permissible in these churches. The inward looking attitude of *Ujamaaism* and the alienation in the churches opened the way for the discovery of other alternative objects of worship and social organization. The discovery gave the community a consciousness that looked deeper within themselves and beyond the national

boundaries for social change. Dreams and visions were used as the authority of this consciousness.

The leadership of the Sinai Church was identified with the guidance of the ancestral spirits and a modicum of Christian teachings. There was intimacy between the leaders and the still voice that guided them in dreams and vision. The main challenge to self-centered leadership is that the leader would like to be idolized. The Sinai leaders were a precursor of eminent social change in Ipapa and to all who would follow them into the Bahai Faith. The mysterious working of the heart compelled 8.5 percent of the respondents to embrace the Bahai Faith since they felt directed by the force they identified with God. For 3.4 percent it was the end of an intellectual search for complete answers because the heart had no capacity to believe anything of the sort. 22 percent of the respondents said they became Bahais because of their parents becoming and being Bahais. 66.1 percent were sought and taken by the hand, and led into being and becoming Bahais by the leaders of the Sinai Church, (Table 4.1). The Bahai Faith meant different things to different people and this is why one needs to treat seriously the relations that took place after the Bahai Faith was accepted in Ipapa. The relations at their best indicate the fulfillment of individual and communal needs. It is against this backdrop that the openings of the outpourings of change in Ipapa are variegated.

Table 4.1: Sinaists reasons as to why and how they joined the Bahai Faith

N= 118

	<i>f</i>	%
Dreams and visions	10	8.5
Own reasoning	4	3.4
Influence of Sinai leaders	78	66.1
Influence of parents	26	22.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100.0</b>

At the heart of all relations in Ipapa and the entire region, the personal and interpersonal relations have been influenced greatly by the acceptance of the Bahai

Faith. More than 50% of the respondents identified the Bahai Institute Process as the major difference between the Sinai and Bahai teachings and practices. The Sinai catechism was limited in scope whereas the Bahai Institute Process was to give the new converts a series of eight books and a hope for more.

At the personal level, the Bahai Faith has helped many Ipapa people to accept themselves better than they had done before. Considering the alienation and deprivation that the region experienced many people wondered about what it meant to be a Tanzanian in such a situation. The religious orientations that many knew did not assist them to address their inner most feelings because they felt insecure and lack of trust characterized the relations that they had. The Sinai Church made the Sinaists to feel at home with themselves and with others. The expression of trust came with the commitment the Sinaists offered to the course of the Sinai Church. The Sinai Church helped to heal the emotions to the extent they could trust themselves and others. In the process of being at home, the Bahai Faith came and fulfilled much greater needs that individuals and the community had at large. The need for self-worth at personal level is a factor of being accepted by a significant other. The Bahai Faith presented that significant other and hence the trust. To the community, the Bahai Faith presented a means to integration with the wider society. The integration starts at the individual level when one appreciates the teachings of Bahauallah. Advising Bahais on their daily lives the Universal House of Justice states:

The people of the world not only need the laws and principles of the Bahai Faith – they desperately need to see the love that is engendered by it in the hearts of its followers, and to partake of that atmosphere of tolerance, understanding, forbearance and active kindness which should be the hall-mark of a Bahai community.<sup>8</sup>

To many adherents feelings of hope for a better life were kindled by the acceptance of the Bahai Faith. The hope for a better life for one's children and for the community as a whole meant that the feelings of deprivation and alienation were dealt with from the root of their courses. As individuals and as a community, the Sinaists embraced the Bahai Faith with a social, cultural, political, and economic agenda. The multifaceted

agenda must therefore influence the relations that resulted after the acceptance of the Bahai Faith. At the personal and interpersonal relations in the region among Bahais themselves and between Bahais and non-Bahais is a factor of social change in the region. At the basic level of these relations is the possession of a charitable heart that instinctively goes out in kindly thought and deeds to others. Such a heart can only be in those who are spiritually attuned to God. The goal at personal and interpersonal level is to lend asunder the prejudices of all kind. The prejudices act as veils which have concealed humanity from each other's understanding. The other goal is to cut from human feet the tradition-forged shackles which have held them from walking out to meet their brothers of different gender, clan, and even locality and creed. In this case, "love" is regarded as creative force. It builds up. The spirit of universal interactive love will assuredly erect upon the foundation of world brotherhood marvelous institutions of culture, of art, and of religion.<sup>9</sup>

The craving to be in touch with the wider Bahai community is a pointer to the need for wider integration and an alternative way of organizing the community. Many youths aspire and desire to serve at Holy Land-Israel if not to go for pilgrimage while others seek to serve the Bahai Faith in other countries. In Bahai teachings, the world is but one country and Bahais on the basis of their faith are allowed to seek pioneering activities wherever their skills will be needed. The only predicament is that a majority of Ipapa and Tanzanian Bahais are only conversant with Swahili and it is not the medium of communication in Holy Land or any other country apart from Kenya and few East African countries. The implication is that, the learning of English has picked-up quite tremendously since the acceptance of the Bahai Faith. Hundred percent of the Bahai youths interviewed in Ruaha Bahai International School consider working in the Bahai World Center after they complete their schooling.

The Bahai Faith in this region has a political impact for it has implications on the allocation of social influence within the community. For instance, the regard accorded to the initial founders of the Sinai Church who embraced the Bahai Faith is notable. Yohannes has served as an assistant to Auxiliary Board Member (ABM). ABMs assist

the Continental Counselors in the spread and consolidation of the Bahai Faith in their localities. He has also served as a member of the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of Ipapa. The social organization of the Bahai community is structured in such a way that the religious matrix of transformation finds a ground to operate on. It means that if the Bahais practice their true religious sentiments and political principles by going deeper and further than most individuals, communities and institutions attempt, an alternative to social influence in Ipapa will be cultivated. If this would happen it is only with time that the secular government will borrow most of the principles. This political dimension to the social interactions is of great importance in accessing the future of the Bahai Faith in the region and in Tanzania in particular. Bahai Faith at its best is an economic and political establishment that may seek to replace other systems in the areas it takes root. The challenging question is whether the Bahais in this region turn to the teachings of Bahauallah as a frame of reference that guide their relations at all levels.

In the transformation of the individual, Bahais may not content themselves with the noise, the clamor, the hollowness of religious doctrine. Nay, rather, they should exemplify in every aspect of their lives the attributes and virtues that are born of God, and should arise to distinguish themselves by their behaviour. They should justify their claim to be Bahais by deeds not by name.<sup>10</sup> A true Bahai is one who strives both day and night to progress and advance along the path of human endeavour; whose cherished desire is to live and act so as to enrich and illumine the world; whose source of inspiration is the Essence of Divine perfection (Bahauallah); whose aim in life is to conduct oneself so as to be the cause of infinite progress. Only when he attains unto such perfect gifts can it be said of him that he is a Bahai.<sup>11</sup>

## **5.2 The Growth and Consolidation of the Ipapa Bahai Community**

The vision of the Bahai Faith is to have the whole of humanity turn to Bahauallah. The mission is therefore to see to it that the masses of humanity receive the writings of Bahauallah and to use the writings to shape their life in total. The Universal House of Justice (UHJ) guides all the Bahais in this endeavour at the three levels of social

transformation namely the individual, the community and the institutions. The Bahai Writings and the needs of the Bahai Faith on the other hand guide the UHJ at any given time at any given place. Going by the needs of the Faith in a global scale, the UHJ develops plans that guide the Bahais for a specific period. For instance, there is the 10 year plan or crusade that saw the introduction of the Bahai Faith in many parts of the world including Tanzania. The plan was initiated in 1953 and ended in 1963.

The plans come with specific guidelines on how the Bahai Faith should be advanced and consolidated at the same time. Every year the UHJ releases a letter to all the Bahai of the world highlighting the way the three actors should move on for that year. The annual message from the UHJ is called the Ridvan Message. Ridvan days (celebrations) are from 21 April to 2 May, in commemoration of the twelve days that Bahauallah spent in the Garden of Ridvan (Paradise) in Baghdad in 1863 when he declared his mission to few companions. Every Bahai activity is reported to the UHJ through the two arms of administration (the learned and the rulers). In return, the UHJ compiles a report of the activities and the report is entrenched in the Ridvan Message and distributed through the same channels. The UHJ is therefore aware of the activities in Ipapa and the Ipapa Bahais are aware of the requirements of the UHJ.<sup>12</sup>

The collaboration of the Bahai administrative institutions makes it possible for the Bahais in any part of the globe to be at the cutting edge of what the Faith needs. However, there is a price. It calls for thorough deepening (in-depth study of the Bahai scriptures) for individuals, communities and institutions for them to resonate with the needs of the Faith and not go by their needs. The Bahai Faith teaches that when Bahais release their energies and time to the needs of the Faith it is at that point that the Faith will minister to their needs. The level of trust needed here and the commitment requires surrender of the self to Bahauallah an issue that a majority of Bahais struggle with. Since Bahai Faith has no clergy as in Christianity, individual Bahais assess their growth, in relation to the Bahai scriptures. For instance, surrender is a prescription for those Bahais who take the message of Bahauallah to different parts of the globe - the pioneers;

There is also the all-important question of where to settle in the country one has pioneered to: if a village the need is always very great-the strong probability is the pioneer must have a personal income or receive help from the Fund as jobs are likely to be non-existent; if he can get a job in that country the secondary towns-small cities or large villages-should certainly have priority over the capital or other big cities. Provincial capitals are very important because settling there means the pioneer can either open to the Faith a new Province or State or Department, as the case may be, or assist and foster the work in a large area where he or his family are more than likely the only pioneers. Far often-to the great detriment of the Bahai work-one finds most of the pioneers congregated in the capital of the country, busy earning their living, having personality problems with other pioneers and really, if they only knew it, spiritually frustrated because they are not accomplishing for Bahauallah what they set out to do when they left their native land for His sake.<sup>13</sup>

With the guidance of the UHJ Bahais find themselves encouraged to participate in the affairs of the Faith with selflessness. At the heart of this encouragement is the fact that Bahai Faith has no priesthood as understood in other religions. Individuals must therefore be at the forefront always offering themselves to the Faith. The aspect of pioneers comes at this level of commitment. At the formation of the Ipapa Bahai community, the UHJ advised that non-Africans and more specifically non-Tanzanians were not to be used in the teaching and consolidation of the Ipapa Bahais. Spiritual interests were to be guarded against economic interpretation of the Bahai endeavour in Ipapa. However, on the other hand the Ipapa people in their expectations and hopes, had room for outsiders. If only the African Tanzanian Bahais were to teach the Ipapas, there would have erupted a clash of interests since the Sinai Church expected foreigners.

The wisdom of the UHJ in restricting Bahai movement in the world should be well understood. Historically, it may be observed that the economic and political context at Ipapa would have made the influence of non-Tanzanian Bahais to be misinterpreted. The needs, hopes, aspirations and fears were informed by the religious, economic and political context. It may be that the presence of foreigners would spur economic feelings at the expense of spiritual sentiments. It is in this regard that the UHJ keep advising the Bahais to take Home Front Pioneering very seriously.<sup>14</sup> This would mean

that deepened (mature) Bahais from Africa would teach their fellow Africans. This notwithstanding, the Ipapa Bahais have received many visitors from Kenya, Uganda, America, Britain, Iran and Israel. The Sinaists' expectation of foreigners as their visitors has been met. Every Bahai who hears about the Ipapa Bahai community desires to visit Ipapa.

The paradox of the Home Front Pioneering is that, people need to be introduced to the Bahai Faith and this would mean that outsiders will always be party to the growth and consolidation of any particular community. In spite of the UHJ advising that only Tanzanian Bahais should introduce the Bahai Faith to the Sinaists, non-Tanzanians also found their way to Ipapa. When Bahais move from one area to another, the UHJ requires them to have a recommendation letter from the Local Spiritual Assembly that they hail from. The restriction to guided travel is on the other hand a very healthy way of safeguarding the image of the Bahai Faith in many areas. The Bahai teaching that humanity is one race and the world is but one country can be abused by any Bahai. For instance, in the name of this teaching, an individual Bahai from Africa may opt to offer to teach in Europe for one knows that the economic avenues that the opportunity offers are many. In another perspective, a Bahai from America may realize that the market for his or her goods and services is better in Africa than in America, and therefore offers to pioneer in Africa where the market is very much available. To avoid abuse, the administrative arms of the Bahai Faith are involved in the pioneering activities. The involvement may be in advertisement of pioneering activities or in the sending of pioneers.

The growth and consolidation of the Ipapa Bahai community, is because of all the local and pioneering activities that the area has received. The interactions have meant that the value systems of the community have taken from those whom they think are significant to the Ipapa Bahai community. The art of consultation is such a virtue that the researcher observed as being celebrated by the Bahais of this area. *Ujamaaism* has contributed to this art of dialogue since it is African and affirming. In Bahai consultation, the idea is to discuss an issue from all dimensions by all the Bahais

involved until the truth is realized. To find a rural community engaging in a lively consultation in Swahili and Kinyiha and all the members participating quoting Bahai scriptures was such a credit to what the Bahai Faith has done to the adherents. In many religious orientations, only few people make decisions for the wider community. Ownership of the ideas and resolutions becomes a challenge in that kind of setup. However, for the Bahais, on every Nineteen-Day's feast, the entire community has to consult in order to find out the best way to accomplish their plans. On enquiry as to why the Bahai holy writings were used in guiding the consultation, the researcher was informed of the Bahai Institute Process.

Individual Bahais with the encouragement from the UHJ, are required to participate in a series of courses.<sup>15</sup> The courses are meant to equip the Bahais with attitudes, skills and abilities that will make them better Bahais. For instance, the first book in what is called the Ruhi Institute orients Bahais on how to rely on the Bahai writings in their day-to-day life. The thrust of the book is in three parts. The first part aims at developing the capacity to read the Bahai Writings and to meditate on their meaning in order to fulfill the obligation of studying the Writings every day. The second part aims at helping Bahais to understand the importance of daily prayer and to develop the required attitudes of prayer. In this part, Bahais are expected to memorize prayers and understand their meaning. In the third part, the aim is to help participants to understand that life is not the changes and chances of this world, and its true significance is found in the development of the soul. In this part, Bahais teach and believe that, true life, the life of the soul, occurs in this world for a brief time and continues eternally in other worlds of God. The Ipapa Bahai community uses the books that have been translated into Swahili. There is no book that has been translated into Kinyiha. Hornbly notes:

But before the majority of the Assembly comes to a decision, it is not only the right but the sacred obligation of every member to express freely and openly his views, without being afraid of displeasing or alienating any of his fellow-members. ...The Assembly members must have the courage of their convictions, but must also express whole-hearted and unqualified obedience to

the well-considered judgment and directions of the majority of their fellow-members.<sup>16</sup>

In the Ruhi Institute courses, there are other seven books making eight books. Only the first four books have been translated into Kiswahili. The translated books have inspired the songs and music in Ipapa. The other seven are as follows:

Book II *Arising to Serve*, which includes; The joy of teaching, deepening themes and introduction to Bahai beliefs.

Book III *Teaching Children's Classes Grade I*, and it includes three parts; Some principals of Bahai education; lessons for children's classes, grade I; and conducting classes for children.

Book IV *The Twin Manifestations* It includes: the greatness of this day; the life of the Bab; and the life of Bahauallah.

Book V *Teaching Children's Classes, Grades 2 and 3* It includes: Lessons for children's classes, grade 2; and lessons for children's classes, grade 3.

Book VI *Spiritual Growth*, it includes; the spiritual path; and becoming a tutor for book I.

Book VII *Family Prosperity*, it includes; Bahai Family life; and giving: the spiritual basis for prosperity.

Book VIII *The Covenant*, which includes; the covenant of God; and the covenant of Bahauallah.

All the above books are copyright to Ruhi Foundation, Colombia. The books are mainly excerpts from Bahai scriptures. Implication and application questions on any thematic area are included in the books to assist understand the quotations. Each participant is expected to respond to the questions with the help of the facilitator of the books. The Ruhi books have been endorsed by the UHJ as the best tool for the Bahais to use in the growth and consolidation of the Bahai communities the world over. The books offer a systematic and methodical approach to the institutionalization that the Sinai Church needed when the growth of the Church demanded that dimension. The researcher in two visits to the community under study observed a lot of enthusiasm for the institute courses. Although Ipapa community uses the books that have been

translated into Kiswahili, the participants would attempt to express their understanding of Bahai scripture quotations in Kinyiha.

The motivation to participate in the Ruhi Institute courses could be different from what the UHJ envisions, but largely a new consciousness is awakened in being and becoming a Bahai. For instance, there could be those who are motivated by the fact that for one to be considered a Home Front Pioneer (HFP) one has to have completed a specific number of courses depending on the needs of the area that one desires to pioneer. The Ruhi Institute course therefore helps to systematize Bahai teaching activities. It means that, the need for facilitators of each book grows with the number of people that want to be introduced to Bahai Faith. In this regard, the Ruhi Institute becomes a means to an end, an end that is selfish contrary to the guidance of the Bahai Writings and the admonitions of the UHJ that individuals must consider the needs of the Faith first for the Faith to minister to their needs.

The Institute activities have influenced the way the former members of the Sinai community viewed their purpose in the world. To appreciate this fact one needs to compare the Sinai catechism and the content of the Institute courses. The Sinai catechism is based on basic questions of existence and how that existence is to be experienced in the community. African religiosity and a modicum of Roman Catholicism are put together. The Institute courses are Bahai scriptures in easy reading.

The title of each book demonstrates the thrust of the book. For instance, book I *Kuelewa Mandiko ya Kibahai*, (Understanding Bahai Writings), focuses on how Bahais are to read and apply the Bahai scripture in their daily lives. Slowly, an attitude based on the Bahai understanding of reality is formed. The attitude thereof is only observable among those who have surrendered their self to the Bahai Faith an issue that is a challenge to many. To say the least, this transformation is only evident among the Bahais who were the leaders of the Sinai community and have been given recognition in the Bahai Faith. Individuals like Yohannes Simbowe, Zawadi Aly,

Nessi and others who seem to be benefiting from the Bahai Faith. It is this factor of benefits that in a way influences the functioning of the LSA that were formed in the areas that were at first adherents of the Sinai Church. Many members came to view the Bahai Faith in terms of what they were to get out of it not what they are expected to do for the faith.

Bahai institutions are meant to enable individuals to satisfy social needs that cannot be provided for within the narrow range of relations attainable through direct personal intercourse.<sup>17</sup> Institutional relations leave personal relations far behind in respect to the number of the individuals that they can bring together into society. All Ipapa Bahai experiences testifies that institutional relations at their best cannot compare in spiritual quality with personal relations at their best. In both, Bahai Faith helps to fulfill the true ends of its adherents' lives. The institutions at this level should enshrine the purpose of service to the individuals and the community. From a Bahai point of view a person's true end is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever and religion should facilitate this vision at its heart. The Bahai institutions and the attendant relations should aim at organic growth where the needs of the institutions and individual needs should be well articulated and realized through time.

### **5.3 The Ipapa Bahai Community and Other Religious Communities in the Region**

Mbozi region had the initial religious influence from the Mennonites, Roman Catholics and the Moravians. The other Christian orientations that later came into the area are the Methodists, the Last Church of God, the Lutheran Church, and a modicum of Pentecostalism. A score of African Instituted churches are evident in the region too. In this part of the study, the focus is on the relationship between the Ipapa Bahai community and other religious orientations. Bahais teach and believe that by not promoting practical ecumenism, religious movements have both directly and indirectly contributed to human tragedy the world over. A letter by the UHJ was issued to all Bahai communities of the world to be circulated or presented to all religious leaders in the world. The process of inviting dialogue with other faiths using

that circular was initiated in 2002. It is expected that religious leaders in the world will one day consult on the best way to organize society that is characterized by globalization.

To the Bahais, when other faiths talk of durable peace after the eradication of conflict and strife and its symptoms, Bahais claim that they go further not to give people mantras but to provide an alternative to conflict. Bahais are encouraged by the UHJ to open the Institute courses to non-Bahais. The expectation is that with time the non-Bahais will convert to Bahai Faith or become positive to the Bahai Faith. In Dar es Salaam while the researcher was en route to Ipapa, a group of Hindus had been attending Ruhi Book One and by the end of the study, they had converted to Bahai Faith. In Ipapa however this element of non Bahais attending the Institute courses is not as common as one would imagine. The major boost of the relationship between the Bahais and non-Bahais is the Children's Classes, which has gained a lot of publicity in the Bahai world. Many parents Bahais and non-Bahais are seeing the worth of the education provided by the Bahais to their children. It is in this aspect of education that in every Bahai Center the talk of initiating Bahai Nursery Schools is a matter of urgency owing to the number of children who join the Bahai Children's classes. The agenda by the end of the day is to incorporate spiritual (Bahai teachings) education to ordinary school curriculum (non-Bahai schools' curriculum) right from the start of a child's learning process. The assumption among Bahais is that no curricular apart from the Bahai are holistic. The assumption is erroneous for religious instruction is to be found in even secular curricula.

The climax of this direct contact of the Ipapa Bahais in particular and the Tanzanian Bahais in general and other faiths is at Ruaha Bahai International School. The Bahai administration in the school offers scholarships to Bahai youths from poor families. In this school founded and governed on Bahai principles, many youths from Ipapa have found formal learning. Between 1995 and July 2005 the number of Bahai youths from Ipapa who have benefited from the school was estimated to be over 20. Out of the 20, 4 have gone up to form six and are teaching in the school. The 4 are: Maria Zawadi,

Gevaronge Myombe, Godfrey Williams and Zawadi Aly. Thus they have been affirmed by the significant others in the Tanzanian Bahai community at large and in the school. The affirmation gives the affirmed and those who desire to be affirmed the motivation in their paths of service that the Bahai Faith recognizes.

The Bahai youths at the school have the task of making the Bahai Faith attractive to the non-Bahai students through their words and deeds. The Bahai students are encouraged to be active in Bahai activities and invite non-Bahais in their meetings. Bahais and Bahai institutions are encouraged to foster education, and generally to use the Bahai teachings as the basis for transforming aspects of family and communal life that are not in accord with the purpose of God. The Iringa Bahai community in the area is also a vibrant community and the students participate in the Bahai holidays at the Iringa Bahai Center. All Bahai youths interviewed would like to visit Haifa the Bahai World Centre for one year of service after their study at Ruaha.

During the one year of service in Haifa it is expected that other avenues of progress such as employment and scholarship for college education will open, thereby keeping one committed to the Faith at all times. One cannot underestimate the influence of the school to the non-Bahais in the school. The motivation helps the non-Bahais either to aspire to develop their best abilities in any available opportunity or to have nothing to do with the Bahai Faith. The school in this aspect becomes a tool to teach the Bahai Faith. This is reminiscent of the way the Christian missionaries in the 1920s used the schooling system as an evangelistic tool. However, this offer has room for manipulation.

Apart from the African Instituted Churches with a perspective similar to the Sinai Church such as the *Mutumwe Yesu – Mwana wa Maria: Umoja wa Waganga* (Jesus the Messenger-Son of Mary: The Unity of Traditional healers), all other Christian communities in the region treated the Sinaists with suspicion. To make the situation more intriguing the Sinai Church joined the Bahai Faith. With the acceptance of the Bahai Faith, the former Sinaists expected to win other faiths into the Bahai Faith. The

mainstream Christian denominations in the region mainly; Roman Catholic, Moravian, Mennonites, Lutheran and the Last Church of God regarded the members of the Sinai Church as *watu wa mizimwi* (people of ancestral spirits). For all the Bahai respondents, their interaction with non-Bahais was a factor of their (non-Bahais) understanding of the Sinai Church. The experience of suspicion and prejudice as many pointed out, contributed to them embracing the Bahai Faith for they felt accepted and not condemned. In an interview with Militab a former member of the Sinai Church (a founder member, who had joined a Mennonite congregation), was hesitant to say anything that she used to say or do when she was a Sinai. Militab claims that she was delivered from the spiritual forces that bound her in the Sinai Church. Since the Sinaists accepted the Bahai Faith the *mizimwi* are also expected to be prevalent in the Bahai Faith. In her view, the members of the Sinai Church were “lost” and needed the saving grace found in Christ.<sup>18</sup> At the end of the interview which was hurried by the respondent, she prayed and refused us to pray with her and even to take a photo of her.

As an African Instituted Church, the Sinai Church resonated well with African religiosity and culture. In this resonance the African way of life was practiced and acknowledged by the historical continuity and loyalty to African culture. Sinai religiosity was based on shrines and the human response to God through the leaders. The Sinaists wanted to be dynamic and loyal to their roots but this was not to last for long since the leaders facilitated the acceptance of the Bahai Faith. The regard for African religiosity is common among some of the Ipapa Bahais. This is mainly among those who thought that the Sinai Church should not have given herself to Bahai Faith without enough consultation on the needs of the community and how the Bahai Faith was to facilitate their realization.

When the Bahais were instructing the Sinaists into the Bahai Faith, the Sinaists were expected to drop the teachings of the Sinai Church. There developed tension between those Bahais who were not from the Sinai background and those who had a Sinai background.<sup>19</sup> For the Bahai Faith to have a future in Ipapa and continue to be relevant it must adapt to the changes of the times without compromising its basic tenets. This is

because religion at its best should inform the way people order their lives and for what purpose. From the religious matrix of social transformation perspective, human beings are ever searching for meaning and purpose in the troubled ocean of life. Religion with her three actors of social change – individual, institution and the community - should be able to set out the vision and the mission that people should aim for. When the vision is well grasped and taken to others in the best way possible; conviction is born and commitment follows. The commitment of this kind informs social action and social service. With time a religion will beget a civilization.

Each civilization goes through a cycle of birth, adolescence, maturity, decay, and death. Bahais hold to this idea concerning human progress. Bahais promote the idea that the activities of their Faith on a worldwide scale are intended to bring forth a new civilization with a different outlook altogether (Appendix IV). The Old world Order, they say is giving way to a New World Order. Interestingly, Bahais argue that their Day will not be followed by “darkness” meaning no “death and decay” for the new civilization. The Ipapa community was found by the Bahais in a process of attempting to create an identity for itself and the progressive theory of civilizations seems to have yielded much in favour of the Bahai Faith. The relations with other faiths should be more of a partnership with others of the same vision and not on prejudices.

In an interview with Bison Kawawa, the respondent was very positive about the exploits identified with the Sinai Church in the region.<sup>20</sup> He used to be a member of the Sinai Church and even embraced the Bahai Faith together with his wife who was also a member of the Sinai Church. They both got excited talking of the experiences and the expectations that the Sinai Church had given them especially the communal profile that it had nurtured among the Sinaists. Kawawa pointed out that even though he has joined the Last Church of God he will only be settled in his mind and spirit when the Sinai Church will be re-established. The story of Kawawa indicates that during the meeting and integration of the Sinai Church and the Bahai Faith took place, not all went well.

The Ipapa Bahai interaction with other faiths is mainly between the Bahais who used to be members of the Sinai Church. Occasionally, Independent Churches with Sinai characteristics fellowship with the Bahais in the Bahai Centers. At times, the fellowship happens in the churches. Such meetings are more ad hoc than organized. The common meetings are when individuals of either group make their own arrangements to visit each other as friends. The researcher was taken to one such denomination. The researcher had an interview with the founder and participated in a worship service organized by the founder (photo 5). The experience gave the researcher a taste of their worship service and practice. The drumming is reminiscent to the Sinaists. It is blended with trances ritualistic healing mediated by the founder.<sup>21</sup> The Ipapa Bahais relate cordially with this type of religiosity. Some Ipapa Bahais are even active participants of the *Mutumwe Yesu-Mwana wa Maria: Umoja wa Waganga* Church. The Bahais who participate actively in these activities are those with a Sinai Background and are not very active in Bahai institutions. They claim that the ritualistic dancing and healing that was in the Sinai Church used to minister to them in away that the Bahai Faith does not.

In relation to Christian-Bahai relations in the region, the Bahais regard themselves as having the mandate to ensure that there is peace on earth and goodwill amongst humanity. The Bahais do not wait to listen to the people at the grassroots in order to have any plan! The Bahai claim is that Bahauallah has already diagnosed the illness and given the medicine, which is both curative and preventive. The Bahai scriptures (creative word) when put into practice, are believed to attract divine confirmation that will lead to the realization of God's kingdom on earth. To the Bahais, religious differences should not prove insurmountable to any initiative that will bring forth unity and concord to humanity, for there to exist an underlying thread of unity connecting the world's great religious traditions. Bahai Faith teaches that, each religious tradition propounds basic spiritual truths and standards of behaviour that constitute the very basis of social cohesion and collective purpose. The religions should therefore, from a Bahai perspective, be able to collaborate on an effort that

draws on and honours their deepest truths and holds such promise for humanity. The idea of unity is captured in this Bahai prayer:

O Thou art the Lord of Lords! I testify that Thou art the lord of all creation, and the Educator of all beings, visible and invisible. I bear witness that Thy power hath encompassed the entire universe, and that the hosts of the earth can never dismay Thee, nor can the dominion of all peoples and nations deter Thee from executing Thy purpose. I confess that Thou hast no desire except the regeneration of the whole world, and the establishment of the unity of its peoples, and the salvation of all them that dwell therein.<sup>22</sup>

In Christianity it is the responsibility of theologians in the academia and in the pulpits to encourage believers to take the responsibility of ensuring that hope amongst those plagued by frustration, anxiety and despair thrives. In the Bahai Faith, the emphasis is towards making individuals self-motivating agents of social change. From 1990s the Christian attitudes and actions towards social reconstruction have been challenged. The new paradigm that has arisen from this endeavour is reconstruction. Scholars like Mugambi, Mary Getui, Tarimo and others have been championing the new paradigm relentlessly.<sup>23</sup> Non-Africans like Stein Villumstad have also contributed to the paradigm of reconstruction.<sup>24</sup> Villumstad endeavours to stress that there is God's Order that Africans should aim at.

For the last quarter of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century, humanity is endeavouring to consciously advance an evolution on the planet. The evolution is expected to be rich in potency for universal prosperity and happiness yet so impoverished and wretched, at the core, because of the lack of a guiding ideal and an ethical statesmanship.<sup>25</sup> Bahais in their social transformation recognize that human nature contributes to the flaws of the society. Selfishness, aggressiveness and exploitation all founded on greed and the Bahai scriptures must deal with egoism if any social transformation is to be achieved. However, lack of universality, perfectness, and a cultivation of absolute and undivided acceptance of and obedience to the paradigm plus a strong scriptural basis of this paradigm renders it toothless and it is only in the hands of scholars whose engagement with the wider public is limited. The enlightened rulers of the world and the champions of the reconstruction paradigm,

like the Athenians of old, are worshipping a god whom they begin dimly to perceive but cannot name – the god that is to further progress, justice, and universal prosperity.<sup>26</sup> The reconstruction paradigm as appealing must not only deal with the social structures in the society, but also must look keenly on the nature of the human being. Coob notes:

When we realize how deep-seated and primitive the acquisitive instinct in man is, we can understand how the basic emotion of greed naturally injects itself into the whole economic, political structure of life and how difficult it is to control. Yet until this baser, more primitive side of man's nature is greatly moderated, there is danger that any economic reform, any attempt at ameliorating the faults in our economic and political institutions, will meet with failure. For no institution can rise above the character of the men and women who constitute it.<sup>27</sup>

The Bahais capitalize on this nuance pointing out that, Bahai Writings for instance in the *Book of Certitude*, - *Kitab-i-Iqan*, demonstrate how believers should order their lives according to the purpose and will of God for their lives. For the world to achieve new heights in development there need to be a shift from the old religious traditions and teachings whose social teachings have been overtaken by time. The contemporary world provides new circumstances where different resources in social transformation and the divine imperative are needed. When the social actors embrace the motivation for social transformation, humanity will be at the threshold of a new civilization. Bahais in their understanding of social transformation advocate for a different type of thinking, a new social conscience, a new type of cooperation and organized endeavour. The point of departure in this social transformation is the principles of the Bahai World Order (Appendix IV). Towards this end, the Institute Process is geared to re-orient and re-train people so that they have a different world-view from what they have been having.

The Bahai world-view encourages people to embrace the teachings of Bahauallah the "Manifestation of God for today" in order to understand Bahauallah's will for

humanity. The challenge is for individuals to become constructive agents of social change. In the context of despair and frustration, the Bahai Faith teaches that "true life" is the life of the soul and not the changes and chances of this world. When people have done their best to change their situations and nothing comes out of the efforts, then, they should resign to God's will and know that worlds of extreme joy awaits them. The interaction of what Bahais call the Minor and Major Plans of God brings chaos into the world, as humanity is reluctant to embrace the Bahai Faith. According to the Bahai Faith, divine imperative has always motivated any civilization, and it is for humanity today to seek that imperative and start being functional. Apparently the divine imperative has also been abused for instance in Apartheid, and Nazism.

According to the Bahais, the conventional judgment among the Abrahamic religions – Judaism; Christianity; and Islam should in the twenty-first century open the eyes of humanity to the rigid conventionalities of the social order of the day. The Bahais point out that the world is not merely an arena for the play of living forces. Rather, the material and spiritual forces guide the universe to the extent that their harmony is the desired end and the platform for progress for humanity. Bahais using the progressive revelation, claim to have perceived the truth that other Abrahamic religions have not perceived. Bahais regard their faith as the fulfillment of all religious expectation. In the process of fulfillment, there is the fusing of religion and art, and revealing the mysteries of creation in the quiet passage of the day in service of God. Social transformation therefore, belongs to the eternal, a spiritual world and can only be realized when human beings recast their spiritual energies to equal the material progress.

The relationship between the Ipapa Bahais and other religious orientations has the indirect role of enhancing religious identity for the Ipapa Bahai community. In all the activities the Bahais of the region have endeavoured to distinguish themselves as a religion that has its own ethos and place in spiritual transformation of humanity. The Bahais delight in being in a position to survey the social landscape with new eyes and new hearts. The Bahais also yearn that all people of the world, especially those of

other religious traditions to behold what they (the Bahais) behold, to know what they have known, and to feel what they feel as appertains to being and becoming illustrious members of the human race. The following words describe the spiritual transformation anticipated by the Bahai:

Miraculously, the anger, cynism, and bitterness of our past is being replaced by warm joy and emotions which we can only describe as love. Yet, a lingering sadness remains due to the overall spiritual plight of our brothers, a plight which has its deep roots in the haunting memories of slavery and the debilitating effects of racism. For each of us, without hesitation, ... marked a turning point, a beginning, a turning away from the dungeons of our past, a past that remains the present for millions...for we are bound to each other as if chained together. If one falters in crime, social disgrace, or drugs, we cringe from shame or run from his pain. If another ascends to heights of well-being or prestige, either our hearts go with him or our envy.<sup>28</sup>

The Spiritual identity and transformation that has been going on in Ipapa is a challenge to all those who concern themselves with spiritual and social transformation. If religion goes beyond the roots of motivation, it then follows that spiritual transformation precedes social transformation. If it does not happen, it becomes an ideology. Have both transformations taken place in Ipapa? Some of the Bahais attested to the fact that, Bahai Faith has thrown enough light into their path, a light that helps them to relate with their existential reality in the mysterious universe in which they find themselves. In this existence, they are confronted by something spiritually greater than themselves which in contrast to human nature and their experiences is Absolute Reality. Moreover, they say they were thirsty of the Absolute Reality. When it was presented to them, they found themselves needing not only to be aware of it, but to be in touch with it and in harmony with it. They also assert that, it is the only condition on which they can feel themselves at home in the world in which they find themselves in. The Ipapa Bahai community observes Bahai Holy Days and devotional meetings. The Bahai identity is also evident in the election of the Local Spiritual Assemblies, the holding of moral classes for children and junior youth, the holding of special seminars and training courses for the advancement of women.

The Bahai Faith and any other religion operate in two ways: first, in raising human nature to higher levels so that a large proportion of those with exploitative tendencies and characteristics are sublimated into types of voluntary service. The individual offers service to the community and the institutions for the well-being of all. Pioneering in Bahai faith is in this category. Secondly, in establishing an ethics so clear-cut, definite, and final that the percentages of those who remain predatory are not able with all their subtlety and force of persuasion or aggressiveness to corrupt the standards of the requirements of the age. The realization of the Bahai World Order is in this category.

Throughout history, religion at its best has always succeeded in organizing human groups into cooperative, gracious and successful forms of economic and social living. The successful organization of great civilizations has persisted as long as the dynamic power of religion was great enough to hold ethical standards strongly to the front and create as heroes in the eyes of communities the individuals of greatest service instead of individuals of greatest exploitation. Religion at its best is capable of exerting a force greater than all other forces that move upon the human heart and will. It is strong enough to harness even the predatory characteristics in individuals to common ends.

#### **5.4 The Ipapa Bahai Community and its Relationship with the Secular Society**

The LSAs in Ipapa collaborate with the local political administration. The researcher was at one point taken to the area Cultural Chief – Chief Seruka. The Tanzanian government recognizes the traditional leadership of the Cultural Chiefs in communities where they are to be found. The cultural chiefs assist the *Katibu Katas* in maintaining social and cultural harmony. The *Katibu Kata* at Ipapa was Yohannes Simbowe who later retired and Bison took the position (photo 9). There is a cordial relationship between the Bahai and the political establishment at the grass-root level. The role of a cultural chief is to use culture to unite people and maintain harmony in the region. He works with assistants in every village. The relationship was nurtured since the formation of the Sinai Church. At the initial stages of the Sinai Church, the

founder members went to the chief and presented a *panga* (machete) to him. The *panga* was a symbol of power implying that the Sinai community recognized his power and gave him the authority to exercise this power even among the Sinai people. The *panga* was to be symbolically used to eliminate evil in the region.<sup>29</sup>

At the initial stages of the formation of the Sinai Church it was reported that, the government had sent a representative to investigate the intentions of the community and to help the Sinai Church to be a registered movement. However, the leaders of the Sinai Church declined the offer for registration arguing that they were looking forward to becoming part of another religion as their dreams and visions guided them. At another level Yohannes Simbowe was also a government representative (*Katibu Kata* -Secretary of the location) working in the area and therefore he would report to the head of the location. The implication is that the government was aware of the activities of the Sinai Church and there was no threat to peace and order in the area. Even after the Sinai Church embraced the Bahai Faith there was no big concern apart from the Cultural Chief who wondered as to why there was a shift yet the church had been very supportive of his activities in the region. He was not certain that the Bahai Faith was going to be supportive. However, immediately after the shift to Bahai Faith, the leaders of the then Sinai Church went to the chief and still pledged their loyalty and support.<sup>30</sup>

During the visits to the area, the researcher was always taken to visit the Cultural Chief. The Ipapa Bahais pride themselves in having a Chief who is very understanding and who accepts them as they are. In many cases the Bahais from outside the region will be taken to salute the chief and thereby maintaining a cordial relationship between the chief and the Bahais. Bahais are also in good records with the political establishment due to the social principles that the Bahai Faith enshrines. The principles envisage a New World Order. When politics is defined as the art of the feasible (numbers, size, resourcefulness etc.), than any thoughtful politician cares to admit in politics, then it is predictable that the Bahais are grooming a society of its own kind with the teaching of Bahauallah as the frame of reference. The UHJ heads

and guides the community assisted by various institutions at all levels of the society. One can see the Bahai civilization unfolding and the talk of a New World Order being a political one, (Appendix IV). However the steps taken towards this direction are very minute though they have achieved some degree of receptivity in Mbozi district of Tanzania as demonstrated by the Ipapa Bahai community.

At all levels the Bahais have a cordial relationship with the government owing to the teaching that, they should not engage in partisan politics and above all they should be obedient to the government. Bahais who persistently refuse to dissociate themselves from political activities are to be deprived of their voting rights.<sup>31</sup> At their best, Bahais seek to influence leaders of the society by giving them the writings of the Bahai Faith and if it is possible teach the leaders the Bahai Faith. The aim is to have the teachings of the Bahai Faith influence the attitudes, thoughts and actions of the leaders. In so doing, it is expected that moral leadership will be nurtured. Bahais in offering moral leadership, argue that, at the core of the global crisis currently afflicting humanity there exists a pervasive lack of moral leadership at all levels of human society. This is conspicuous in the increasing evidences of ethical laxity and corruption found among officials of the highest levels of society in both public and private institutions throughout the world.

Through the Institute Process it is hoped that non-Bahais will note the need and value of the Bahai teachings in their lives. Leadership from the Bahai Faith must embrace service to humanity. The goal of leadership is to help people recognize and put into use their abilities which should be enhanced so that they are both effective and efficient. The Bahai writings and the UHJ encourage Bahais to involve themselves positively with the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their affairs in order to influence humanity towards the Bahai world-view and organize society from that world-view.<sup>32</sup> Bahai Faith is introduced through close association and loving service to non-Bahais.

From the religious matrix of transformation, spiritual and personal transformation precedes social transformation. At the personal level, the purpose is to transform the latent potentialities of the individual into a living reality, in which the physical, intellectual and spiritual aspects of the human being may attain their fullest and most noble expression. At the level of social transformation, the Bahai Faith aims at the promotion of an ever-advancing civilization based on principles of the New World Order as revealed by Bahauallah. Bahais have given themselves to the development of a just society. In such a society, the common good is fostered through structures that facilitate collaboration and cooperation, and in which benefits of individual initiative and creativity are safeguarded and encouraged.<sup>33</sup> Using the matrix, it is impossible to conceive of social transformation without individuals, who are actively engaged in the process of personal transformation, working towards its achievement. On the other hand, it is likewise impossible to achieve personal transformation in social vacuum. Only when an individual is engaged in serving the processes of social transformation can one develop one's highest and most noble potentialities.

In the promotion of both personal and social transformation, the Bahai Faith has identified checks and balances that enhance the realization of the Bahai mission by those who surrender to Bahauallah. One important aspect in making it possible for the Bahais to have unity of thought and purpose is the teaching on the Covenant of God and the Covenant of Bahauallah. The thrust of this teaching is the understanding that, God will always guide humanity towards that which he wants them to achieve. The challenge is for human beings to turn to the one who God has appointed as center of the covenant. Bahauallah as the Manifestation of God for this age directed his followers to Abdul-Baha for guidance. Abdul-Baha in turn directed the Bahais to Shoghi Effendi. Shoghi Effendi directed the Bahais to the UHJ for direction and guidance. The authority that is accorded to the centre of the covenant at any particular time is such that their (the Center of the Covenant) word on any subject is final. Using the Covenant, the Bahais aim for a definite frame of reference for social transformation.

Having experienced the uncertainties in their daily lives in the search for self-reliance, the people of Mbozi as epitomized by the Ipapa community continue to yearn for financial resources and opportunities that in one way or another affects their view of the Bahai Faith. The interpersonal relations with other Bahais is also affected in that, the opening of doors to pioneers and visitors is an economic and political factor. Those who continually receive visitors are treated with suspicion and this affects the character of the Bahai community in the region. However, the aim of the Bahai Faith is to offer to the society a new ideal and a new model of social transformation. Economic development, in the Bahai view, is an organic process in which the spiritual is expressed and carried out in the material world.<sup>34</sup>

From the religious matrix of transformation, meaningful development requires that the seemingly antithetical processes of individual progress and social advancement, of globalization and decentralization, and of promoting universal standards and fostering cultural diversity, be harmonized. The Bahai Faith promotes just institutions, from the local to the planetary level, and systems of governance in which people can assume responsibility for the institutions and processes that affect their lives, are also essential. Although the Bahais are to avoid partisan politics, the influence of Bahai principles on secular institutions is instrumental. This influence is one way of helping humanity out of the problems that hinder total or healthy living.

Bahau'llah teaches that recognition of the fundamental spiritual principle of the age (the New World Order as envisioned by Bahau'llah), the oneness of humanity, must be at the heart of the new civilization. Universal acceptance of this principle will necessitate the restructuring of the world's educational, social, agricultural, industrial, economic, legal and political systems. The restructuring must be ordered by an ongoing and intensive dialogue between the two systems of knowledge available to humanity – science and religion. The vision is to facilitate the emergence of peace and justice throughout the world. On the basis of this teaching and understanding one is in a position to comprehend the efforts that the Ipapa Bahais and others from other parts of the globe put in building rapport with the political establishment at any level. In the

process, the principles of Bahauallah will trickle to the individuals, the communities and the institutions. The long-term effect is social transformation.

The Sinai Church was a reaction to the worldview that the Mennonites, the Last Church of God and the Roman Catholic Church who evangelized the area, presented to them. The Mennonites bequeathed to the Ipapa community, an attitude of aloofness towards the state. The Mennonite missionaries taught that neither the church nor the individual Christian should be involved in politics for to do so would dilute the gospel of Christ. Individual spiritual growth in discipleship is not tied to social transformation. The Last Church of God and the Roman Catholic Church, sought to alienate their adherents from their African identity. The acceptance of Bahai Faith in Ipapa could be a statement by the community that social transformation should be an engagement of individual believer, religious institutions and the community of Faith at large.

The Ipapa community's cultural identity informed the initial events of the transformation. The transformative style of the Bahai Faith derives from the principle that an individual is a member of this World Order, with a divine vocation to serve one's neighbour by engaging in social issues. Bahai Faith at its best should bequeath a civilization to its adherents. The inclusive and transformative views of religion are dialectically opposed to exclusive and conformist tendencies. The spiritual aspect of religion must be recognized for the realization of social transformation. The Ipapa Bahais in their fullness of lives and relationships with the secular world must give themselves to Bahauallah. Largely the Bahai social teachings are a critique of the theories and principles of institutions that were in Ipapa. The Bible expresses the idea of this negation in more clear words thus:

He has showed you, O man what is good;  
And what does the Lord require of you  
but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.<sup>35</sup>

In Tanzania under the socialist government, there were demands for security, social justice and a higher material standard of living. The nation state did not meet these needs and therefore the search for alternative means. The religions in Ipapa did not provide the alternative. The Tanzanian nationalism provided security at the price of submitting to the political and economic bondage of some kind of socialism. In so doing, institutionalized religion became the field in which individuals would seek the freedom without which they could not live. In this field, the public authorities would be the least mindful of leaving open the necessary vent. The Sinai Church was an avenue of seeking alternatives. It means that if Sinai Church was to remain alive in Ipapa, it had to grow or move with the times.

The Ipapa community could not live without a minimum of freedom, any more than they could live without a minimum of security, justice, and food. The freedom was to determine their identity based on African culture while security was on the continuity of the community. Even the most long-suffering peoples revolt at some point, and even the most efficiently despotic governments have found it impossible to suppress freedom in all spheres simultaneously. Despots who have recklessly sat on the safety valve have usually been blown sky-high eventually. The frequency of this mishap has taught the more prudent practitioners of the hazardous art to leave some vent open for their subjects.<sup>36</sup> Although Nyerere was not a despot the African socialism that he advocated limited the Ipapa community by its failure to provide minimum freedom and minimum security. The regard of African culture became the vent for the Ipapa community.

According to the religious matrix of transformation, in a strictly controlled world the realm of the spirit may be freedom's refuge. Spiritual freedom could not be achieved in Ipapa solely by the action of *Ujamaaism*. What the Tanzanian government was doing to provide freedom is, no doubt, indispensable if *Ujamaaism* was popular at home and abroad. However, this internal and external popularity can perpetuate injustice and insecurity. The state at its best should be the embodiment of all the virtues of a functional institution – an institution that nurtures social transformation. It

should refrain from either penalizing or favouring any religion that is professed by any of its subjects, and it should 'hold the ring' in the sense of restraining its subjects from combating one another's religion.

Freedom of worship and expression should be accorded its rightful position for the masses to attain to their full potential. But spiritual freedom must be alive in the hearts of the people themselves. For individual spiritual transformation to take place, each member of the society has to learn to reconcile a sincere conviction of the truth of his or her own religious beliefs and the rightness of the practices with a voluntary toleration of the different beliefs and practices of one's neighbours. A toleration that is genuinely voluntary is the only kind that has virtue in it; but the degree on motive, and the motives for toleration are various.<sup>37</sup> The Bahai Faith in Ipapa, seeks to relate cordially with the government and other religions so that perchance the Bahai ideals may percolate into the societal institutions.

The appropriation of the Bahai teachings in Ipapa is found first within the thought forms that structure the religious experiences of the Ipapa Bahai community. Thought forms can be expressed or assumed not to exist. The Ipapa Bahai community has found their own way of dealing with God. Necessity will always arise when one shows oneself out. Thus, for social engagement of the Ipapa Bahai community to be at its best, the Bahai Writings and their traditions, coupled by reason and experience must be well integrated. The integration will grant the community an ethos that would meet their needs and address their hopes and fears. The conviction has the capability of helping the Ipapa adherents construct the network of ideas, values, feelings, beliefs, opinions, intuitions, judgments, choices, and actions that constitute the way the adherents view the world. This capability is well enhanced through the Institute Process. Bahai Writings place particular emphasis on education of children and youth. The children classes curriculum which includes the memorization of prayers and Bahai Writings and the basic principles of the Faith on the one hand inculcates the reliance on Bahai Writings and on the other the spirit of world citizenship in the child. The curriculum also prepares the child early enough for a lifetime of service to the

community. Moral education classes are also carried out along other training from early childhood.

The Ruaha Bahai International School is an endeavour by the Bahais to cultivate a new model of education in the region. At the core of the training, moral excellence is incorporated into the curriculum. Young men and women are equipped with the capabilities that will enhance personal transformation and in the end social transformation. Through the application of moral education, the school has managed to foster religious tolerance among the students who are from diverse religious backgrounds. The school seeks to cultivate the limitless potentialities in human consciousness and pursue as a major goal the participation of all the students in generating and applying knowledge.<sup>38</sup>

In order for the school to equip self-motivated agents of social change, the students are encouraged to be ever vigilant through self-reflection and self-evaluation. They are taught how to set clear goals, meaningful principles and standards, and agreed indicators of their progress in the learning process and regular corrections to their course determined and carried out. The Deputy Principal Mr. Juma intimated that the many graduates of the Ruaha School have found themselves in influential positions of the Tanzanian society. Another benefit that Ruaha grants to its students is the interaction of students from all over the world and a faculty that is also as diverse. In a society that was initially closed, there is an added advantage in this diversity.

The impact of the Bahai teachings can be predicted when one appreciates the place of progressive revelation in Bahai spiritual and social teachings. The progressive theory of religion implies that the best of all past civilizations is carried forward and the bad elements done away with. The individual's relationship with God is interdependent with relationships among human beings in social settings. The vision is a Bahai civilization that represents a successive stage in the spiritual development of civilization by introducing new spiritual, moral and social principles for the advancement of society. In appreciating the doctrine of progressive revelation one can

highlight how Islam, Judaism and Christianity has contributed to the spiritual and social development of humanity and how the best of these religions are re-interpreted in the Bahai Faith. To begin with, Judaism was shaped by the context of conflict and a changing world where national identity was at stake. The survival of Judaism is as a result of it being a way of life where the material and spiritual component of a civilization are taken into account. Its impact into the world can be appreciated through the various conflicts that the Jews have gone through. Even today, they continue to experience social and political crisis and religion is a major factor in all these conflicts.

The collective identity and the national consciousness that Judaism grants its adherents plus the adaptive and resistive side of the faith are factors to reckon with in the history of the Jews. The primacy of the covenant that Judaism advocates insures that those who are bound to sovereign deity according to its dictates possess a collective identity. It also implies that this identity will distinguish them from all other peoples who are not so bound. To realize the creator's purpose for creation is to start the journey of salvation. The Bahai Faith borrows the ideas of national identity, the covenant and purposive living into the progressive theory of religion. The Bahais in the light of the covenant are very clear on how humanity should relate with God. The short obligatory prayer captures this reality:

I bear witness, O my God, that Thou hast created me to know Thee and to worship Thee. I testify, at this moment, to my powerlessness and to Thy might, to my poverty and to Thy wealth. There is none other God but Thee, the Help in peril, the Self-Subsisting.<sup>39</sup>

Christianity began as a movement within Judaism and it inherited its predecessor's emphasis on the primacy of the covenant (the pact between humanity and God) as well as its singularly monotheistic understanding of the nature of deity. However, informed by the life of Jesus Christ and giving a triune formulation to its belief in the one true God, Christianity, even in its initial stages of development made appeals not only to Jews but to all inhabitants of the Greco-Roman world. Consequently,

adherence to the covenant was reinterpreted in terms more spiritual and less judicial than otherwise prevails in Judaism. The New Covenant in the New Testament is the basis of a revised collective identity. It gives Christianity universality. Christians as the salt of the earth should bring and/or discover the presence of God wherever they find themselves.<sup>40</sup> In capturing the best of Christian teachings, Bahais are encouraged to be a new kind of people, a people with a distinction to the extent that the world will note through their words and mostly deeds that they are Bahais. The Bahais view Christianity as a religion whose social teachings are not relevant to contemporary world.

A Muslim is identified as one who surrenders to the will of God and who confesses the fact that 'There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet'. Islam has a strong basis for social and political cohesiveness. Islamic doctrine and Islamic way of life are conceived as aspects of the same will. The Islamic ethos blends the spiritual with the temporal, the public with the private, and individual religious aspiration with the affairs of the state. This civilization found its way into Europe. The renaissance and later the enlightenment were a new paradigm shift in the place of human reason as opposed to tradition replaced the old one giving rise to the European and American civilizations. The two civilizations have dominated the world for centuries after the enlightenment period. Bahai scriptures teach that, Islam has been instrumental in the establishment of nation states on the basis of law. However, the current world trends, seeks global consciousness which only the Bahai Faith can give to the world in all its aspects. The teachings on, One God; One religion and Oneness of humanity are core principles that the Bahai Faith advocates in raising global consciousness among its adherents. Humanity should therefore not pride in being members of a given nation but being members of the human race and recognizing the world as one country.

The attitude that Bahai Faith has toward society is a factor on how the faith portrays the human condition, the value it places on human community and how it delineates what is expected of the individual in light of its more comprehensive understanding of the Bahai World Order. By claiming to stand with the teachings of the three religions

cited above, Bahai Faith gives a perspective of a world embracing and affirming religion. The thrust of the Bahai Faith is the well-being of humanity in all the worlds of God including the earth where individuals acquire virtues that will enable them to contribute to their well-being and the well-being of others.<sup>41</sup>

The progressive theory of religion has undertones from social theorists. Hegel (1770-1831), the famous German philosopher of the nineteenth century saw history as the unfolding of the Absolute Spirit in the development of human freedom. Progress is by a process in which successive series of contradictions are reconciled until the Absolute is fully manifested in history. At this point individuals are in a position to determine their destiny. On the other hand, Karl Marx held the opinion that matter in flux is the only reality and that all human institutions, including religion, are determined by the economic process of production. He maintained that the history of hitherto existing societies is a history of class struggle. The ultimate goal is when workers will establish a classless society. The human nature as proved over by history has no static plane where there is no change. When the spiritual dimension is added to the matrix of transformation, the purpose for human life is underlined. It is against the Bahai teaching on oneness of humanity that their attitudes, thought systems, words and actions are verified.

As Bahai institutions relate with the government and the entire society, they envisage an economic state where no one is required to serve without motives of personal reward. Self-seeking incentives are allowed still to operate, but within the practical range of mutuality as between individuals and between classes. All political and economic enterprises must be fair in accordance with the Bahai Writings. It must be mutually advantageous and the reward and profits must be equitably distributed as between the classes.

The Bahais teach that the law of mutuality and equity is the only possible basis of security whether economic or political.<sup>42</sup> To this end any government which desires stability must offer clearly perceived advantages to the vast majority of its citizens,

and any government which would endure must guarantee economic security. At the principle level, there must be equilibrium between investment, production, and consumption. The labour throughout all industry will share in ownership, management and profits of factories; and this, not by illusionary methods of stock purchase but by mere fact of workmanship. Thus, labour will receive not only wages but also a large share in the dividends. In this way the profits of industry will be so distributed that consumption will always be to keep up with production. In so doing the wealth of the masses is increased and the wealth of the capitalistic class is relatively reduced. The vision must need the acceptance and conviction, the obedience of humanity to its basic tenets. This is what agitates Bahais for better relations with the people of great influence in society that perchance the noble principles will find their way into the way society is organized politically and economically.

By and large, the humanitarian and spiritual principles enunciated in the nineteenth century by Bahauallah and molded by him into a coherent scheme are one after the other being taken by the Bahais as the marks of progressive civilization. Bahais believe and teach that;

... the sense that mankind has broken with the past and that the old guidance will not carry it through the emergencies of the present has filled with uncertainty and dismay all thoughtful individuals save those who have learned to find in the story of Bahauallah the meaning of all the prodigies and portents, of the times.<sup>43</sup>

It may be notable that the physical facilities for peaceful intercourse which the progress of technology has provided at an ever accelerating pace have suddenly established contact between societies which have hitherto been physically insulated from one another by lack of adequate physical means of communication, and which therefore have developed very different means and customs and outlooks. Technology has the ability to bring strangers physically face to face with one another in an instant. However, it may take generations for their minds and centuries for their hearts, to grow together. Physical proximity, not accompanied by simultaneous mutual

understanding and sympathy, is apt to produce antipathy, not affection and consequently discord, not harmony.<sup>44</sup>

In dealing with the secular society Ipapa Bahais teach and believe that, there must be a planned society, worldwide in its scope. This society must be cooperative in its foundations and principles, scientific in its development and distribution of produced wealth, and non-exploitative in its administration.<sup>45</sup> In this endeavour, the three social actors will rise to new heights both in concept and action. The creative force of gifted and truly patriotic individuals, forging new folk-ways within Mbozi and Tanzania, will eventually flow together and coalesce with the world-wide Bahai community. In so doing, a world power of totally new type, constructive, conserving power that will build and not destroy that will distribute and not pre-empt that will stabilize and not endanger the structure of civilization will be established. The vision of the dry bones that became a mighty army is used to point to the fact that by the will of God they can live.<sup>46</sup> Bahais encourage humanity to release themselves to the will and purpose of God and he will use them in his faith for his purpose. It means that the plan for a World Order is in God's mind if only humanity would access it through his Manifestation of the age –Bahauallah.

On the basis of the Bahai Writings the Ipapa Bahais aim at reconstructing the world-view of the people they interact with. Through the reconstruction, individuals, institutions, communities, and the world at large will conceive the existential realities of their times. The changes expected are therefore at the world-view level and functional level. In the process of social change, the Bahai Writings are to inform the conscious part of the individual. The sub-conscious part of the individual will eventually be influenced. At the individual level, the Bahai Faith operates as a symbolic self-transcendence. In the process of being and becoming a Bahai, individuals, institutions, and the Ipapa community transcend their particularities by a constructive objective that is all embracing, and morally binding universe of meaning. The practice and expression of the Bahai Faith in Ipapa particularly and in Tanzania in general is a projection grounded on specific infrastructure and a sacred cosmos is

established. The awareness of the presence of the sacred in human consciousness makes it possible for humanity to conceive of a cosmos. Berger notes:

It can thus be said that religion has played a strategic part in the human enterprise of world-building. Religion implies the farthest reach of man's self-externalization, of his infusion of reality with his own meanings. Religion implies that human order is projected into the totality of being. Put differently religion is the audacious attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant.<sup>47</sup>

In summary, Bahai Faith legitimates the fundamental values (communal bond, identity, and livelihood) of the Ipapa community by enabling the community to construct the meaning of its existence. The legitimization takes place upon the three social actors of the religious matrix of transformation namely the individual, the institutions and the community. For each actor an ultimate valid ontological status is realized by locating them within a sacred and cosmic frame of reference. On the other level the practice and expression of the Bahai Faith in this region serves to maintain the reality of the reconstructed world-view to the point that at the conscious and sub-conscious level, awareness is cultivated that in turn informs the culture of the actors.

## Notes

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7. Herbert Sikombe, Interview, Mwanjelwa Mbeya, 13<sup>th</sup> June 2005
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12. Shabban Seffu, Interview, Dar es Salaam Bahai Centre, 16<sup>th</sup> April 2002
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14. Herbert Sikombe, Interview, Mwanjelwa Mbeya, 13<sup>th</sup> June 2005
15. Ibid.
16. H.B. Hornby, Op cit., 177.
17. A.J. Toynbee, Op Cit., 265.
18. Militab Namkondya, Interview at Ipunga, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2005
19. Zawadi Aly, Interview, Tunduma, 1<sup>st</sup> July 2005
20. Kawawa Bisson or Bethlehem, Interview, Ipapa, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2005
21. The researcher was taken to one of the African Instituted Churches at Ipapa and shared in their worship service. The interesting part was when the members of this church started to fall into trance after the three drums were rhythmically beaten and tapped.
22. The Spiritual assembly of the Bahais of Malaysia, *A Selection of Bahai Prayers*, (Kuala Lumpur, BPT, 1996), 77.
23. J. N. K. Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction*; M. Getui and Mugambi, eds., *Religions in Eastern Africa under Globalization*; Tarimo on Reconstruction

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25. Ibid., 1.
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28. Taken from the article 'The Black Men's Bahai Gathering' 2.
29. Yohannes Simbowe, Interview, Ipanzia, 29<sup>th</sup> June 2005
30. Chief Seruka, Interview, Ipanzia, 29<sup>th</sup> June 2005
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32. Shabban Seffu, Interview, Dar es Salaam Bahai Centre, 16<sup>th</sup> April 2002
33. Herbert Sikombe, Interview, Mwanjelwa Mbeya, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2005
34. Abdul-Baha *Paris Talks*, (London: BPT,1969), 9.
35. Micah 6:8
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37. Ibid., 249.
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## CHAPTER SIX

### THE FUTURE OF THE BAHAI FAITH IN IPAPA TANZANIA

#### 6.0 Introduction

This chapter explores what the events in Ipapa mean to the people of the region, to Tanzanians in general and to those interested with social change on the basis of religion. The question that the chapter attempts to answer is whether the kind of change and transformation observable at Ipapa is sustainable or not. If it is sustainable, what factors makes it so, and if it is not what factors makes it so. The question of what is best for the region in particular and for a society, yearning for change is attempted. The following factors are going to be looked at mainly; cultural, religious, political, institutional, and the human nature. For the Bahai Faith to have a future in Ipapa and Tanzania it must be expressed in belief, ritual and spiritual experience of its adherents. The future of the Bahai Faith is identified as the Bahai ideal or the New World Order as envisioned by Bahauallah (Appendix IV).

Bahai Faith was accepted in Ipapa since it promised a better way of life than the Mennonites, Moravians, Roman Catholic, and Wanyiha Traditional Religion. In its origins in Iran, Bahai Faith is a protest religion. As a protest religion, its teachings are a critique against the established religions in its original context. Using the progressive theory of religion, Bahais critique the failure of other religions to adequately address the disintegration in culture, religion, politics and economics in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century. Using the Bahai Writings, Bahais would like the people of the world to believe that it is only in recent revelation (Bahai Faith) where God is active. From the Bahai Writings, humanity can get to hear the voice of God concerning the predicaments of the contemporary person. This theology is well articulated using the progressive approach to revelation. In discussing the future of the Bahai Faith in Tanzania, the social function of the progressive theory of religion is analyzed.

When the Ipapa Bahai community looks at the Bahai ideal, their view cannot be more than a glimpse, and even this may be elusive. Nevertheless, there is an attempt in

Ipapa to prescribe the Bahai Faith to other people. Harmony among the three social actors will facilitate a better view and realization of the ideal. The Bahai ideal is anchored in the Bahai Writings and understanding them is therefore important. Any human observer has to take ones' bearings from a particular frame of reference. One is bound to be self-centered; for this is part of the price of being a living creature. In a historical approach, one attempts to correct self-centeredness. Self-centeredness is one of the intrinsic limitations and imperfections, not merely of human life, but of all life on the face of the earth. The historian arrives at his or her view by consciously and deliberately trying to shift his or her angle of vision away from the initial self-centered standpoint that is natural to him or her as a living creature.<sup>1</sup> The future of the Bahai Faith in Ipapa depends on the way the Ipapa Bahais appropriate the Bahai teachings. The Bahai Writings are the frame of reference at each of the three levels of social transformation, namely the individual, community and institutional.

The people of Ipapa region in Tanzania owing to their experiences of their environment desired to assert their identity, their communal lifestyle, and their religiosity in an institutionalized manner. Elements of self-preservation and innovation are instrumental in the events that the community experienced. Self-preservation marked the practice of the Sinai Church. Innovation is notable in the formation of the Sinai Church and the acceptance of the Bahai Faith. However, each generation recognizes that their life is the centre of the universe and desire to maintain it at that. So each generation has its own importance in its own right. The limit of the Ipapa community brought curiosity about their environment for the sake of self-preservation. This curiosity inspired the Ipapa community to take advantage of the opportunity, opened up for them by the Bahai Faith. In taking advantage, there was an accumulation of records and experiences among the Ipapa community. In so doing all people involved were partially extricating themselves on the intellectual plane from the innate self-centeredness that the socio-political environment had confined them. This move should be complete for it to yield the results of self-identity, self-dignity, and self-actualization in a context of change. The process of social transformation in Ipapa on the basis of the Bahai writings was triggered when the Sinaists as

individuals, institutions, and the community started to participate in the Bahai Faith. The Ipapa community was in a position to break out of its self-centeredness as soon as it got interested in the Bahai Faith. However, in the acceptance of the Bahai Faith, the Bahais did not appreciate the innate elements of the Ipapa community. The challenge is for the Ipapa Bahai community to assert its identity in the process of social transformation. They need to take their identity seriously if they want to be taken seriously. Anold J. Toynbee notes:

For, when once a human being has recognized that these other human beings, in their time and place, had as much right as his own generation has, here and now, to behave as if they were the centre of the universe, he must also recognize that his own generation has as little right as these other generations had to maintain this self-centred approach. When a number of claimants, standing at different points in Time and Space, make the identical claim that each claimant's own particular point in Time-Space is the central one, common sense suggests that, if Time-Space does have any central point at all, this is not to be found in the local and temporary standpoint of any generation of any parochial human community.<sup>2</sup>

In the realization of the Bahai New World Order, material and spiritual progress are appreciated simultaneously. The religious matrix of transformation is handy in describing and analyzing the implementation of the Bahai ideal in Ipapa. Based on the three actors of social change and their place in spiritual and social transformation, the Ipapa Bahais have found clues to the understanding of the process of history. The socially significant past as presented by the Bahai Faith, is appropriated in Ipapa in a bid to bring social transformation in the region. When human history and achievement come to their zenith in materialism, the piety of the saint is dismissed while the genius of the most eloquent and articulate are reduced to mere frills to the story. Only the vested interests involved in religious conflicts, need realize the place of class structure of the religion concerned, and the tensions or conflicts between classes. It is in this observation that Bahai Faith teaches that material and spiritual progress should be integrated. Human nature limps inadequately in the world when the two are not well integrated.

According to the religious matrix of transformation, the indestructible (spiritual) nature of humanity must always be ascertained for progress to be inevitable. This nature is validated by the scripture that a particular faith community holds to, the experience of the community of faith and reason. For more than a century, Bahai communities around the globe have been working down barriers of prejudice between people in order to realize the Bahai ideal. It has also attempted to promote the model of global society in collaboration with other like-minded groups.<sup>3</sup> The Ipapa Bahai community anticipates the realization of the Bahai ideal.

### **6.1 Social and Cultural Factors in the realization of the Bahai Ideal**

In realizing the Bahai New World Order in Ipapa, socio-cultural factors must come to play. Culture as the sum total of human life as expressed by a peoples way of life is in most cases observable in the areas of religion, politics, aesthetics, kinship, economics, ethics and in material culture.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand the way people experience and judge reality and the response thereof is a factor to the people's world-view. A people's world-view is blended in their culture. Religion has the capacity to reconstruct a people's world-view with little resistance if and when the social actors yield to that religion. Religion can also be reconstructed by a changed world-view. However, the yielding to change is the factor to consider and the process it takes and the challenges it encounters. In any particular world-view there are the integral needs, hopes, aspirations and fears that must be appreciated in the process of social change. Religious conversion entails world-view reconstruction. The reconstruction is complete when the integral needs of the religion meet the integral needs of the social actors and harmony is established.

Bahai Faith is a missionary religion. It embarks on a program to convert all people to the Bahai Faith if that is possible. As a missionary religion, Bahai Faith must come to terms with the world-view of the would-be converts and in this case the Ipapa world-view. This can only happen if the art, philosophy and ethos of the Ipapa community is translated and understood by the missionaries themselves who the Bahais call pioneers. By so doing any form of prejudice against the Ipapa community is

eliminated or minimized. The pioneer then walks with the would-be converts until there is confirmation of faith in the heart of the new convert. From the Ipapa community and Mbozi region in general it was noted that the feelings of alienation and frustration were prevalent among the people who were seeking better ways of belonging and having a sense of hope. The introduction of the Bahai Faith was done without due attention to the Ipapa world-view. All that mattered to the Bahai pioneers was the practice of the Bahai Faith. The needs of the community were not taken into consideration. The need for identity, quality education, better health, communication infrastructure and functioning institutions were not considered before the introduction of the Bahai Faith. The Bahais were very enthusiastic to affirm the authenticity of their faith by promoting it to an African Independent Church and its branches. The Sinaists were pointed to the future when the Bahai New World Order will be in operational.

The acceptance of the Bahai Faith by the Sinaists brought a lot of excitement among the Bahai teachers who were involved in the teaching. The Ipapa community received sustained attention from the Bahais. In 1998, a team of five African American Bahais visited the Ipapa Bahai community. During their visit, they helped the Tanzanian Bahais in teaching the Bahai Faith to non-Bahais. During the golden jubilee of the Bahai Faith in Tanzania, Mr. Ali Nakhjavani who by then a member of the UHJ visited the Ipapa Bahai community. For the Ipapa Bahai community it was such an honour to receive a member of the UHJ. The visits even went beyond the normal as the gifts of this community were taken for granted. For instance, the kind of spontaneity that the former members of the Sinai Church demonstrated was unparalleled in Bahai history in Africa. Every visitor almost demanded to be treated with the sweet melodies of the community. The valuable time of the community was exploited instead of being invested constructively on ways that the community would benefit. For instance, in 1999 a group of young Ipapa Bahais came to Kenya to record their songs. After the recording, the tapes are now on sale in Kenya copy right to the Arts and Drama Committee of the Bahais of Kenya. The group was in Kenya for a month helping the Kenyan Bahai community in teaching activities in Nairobi, Central

Kenya and Western Kenya. The group thought that they would get the copy right of their music and even have the master tape. Nothing went to the group apart from the payment of their transport and accommodation during the period of recording and stay in Kenya. This discouraged the young Bahais from Ipapa. However, they have continued to compose songs directly from the Bahai Holy writings.

If the world-view of the Ipapa community was taken seriously reciprocity would have been a better principle in the relationship with the community and other Bahais. A gradual process would have been instituted that eventually would lead to true conversion. If one is going to receive an alien world-view at all, it is less damaging to receive it in installments and in a more systematic way than to be dosed with it all at once. In this regard the Bahais would have done more investigation as to the content of the dreams and visions that directed the Sinai community to the Bahai Faith. The study thereof would have helped to clarify most of the questions about the nature of the community and what they were looking for in the Bahai Faith. The systematic functioning of the Bahai Faith in this community would have given a pointer to the kind of approach that the Bahais would have taken. A Bahai study of the Sinai Church and its context would have meant informed pioneering. As this was neglected, there is decline of enthusiasm. For instance, the interviews with Zawadi Aly, Militab and Kawawa all of whom were core members of the Sinai Church, all expressed this concern. Others even desired anonymity with regard to their feeling about what happened. Kawawa even joined the Last Church of God but awaits the enthusiasm of the Sinai community to be rekindled in the Bahai community.<sup>5</sup> The paradox is that those that are Bahais and were not from Sinai Church would not be comfortable when the Sinaists religious orientation is elevated at the expense of others. Many feel that something must have gone wrong in the way the Bahai Faith was introduced.

The presence of foreign pioneers in Dar es Salaam and other big towns in Tanzania and not in the countryside creates a distance between the African Bahais and the pioneers. The pioneers are mainly Iranians, Indians, Americans, Britons and few Kenyans. The pioneers in towns have chances of better living conditions, have

salaried employment, and have investments, which are scarce for the Bahais in the countryside. The countryside Bahais on the other hand have to depend on weather patterns for their subsistence farming. Ipapa has poor transport and communication infrastructure and hence the purchasing power of the community is weak. The disparity implies that Bahais from Ipapa will always depend on the pioneers and other influential Bahais in big towns to set the agenda of the Bahai Faith. Due to this distance, the Ipapa Bahais will take time to own the Bahai Faith.

The racial, nationality and economic barriers should be overcome for the Ipapa Bahai community to own the Faith. When the Sinaists were made Bahais out of prejudice, the adherents were condemned to go through a protracted involuntary revolution. The adherents found themselves compelled to follow up their initial reception of some secular elements of the pioneer after another- this does not bridge the gap between the pioneer and the adherent. The adherents gradually became estranged from their own ancestral culture without ever coming to feel that they progressively adopted pioneer world-view and its attendant culture has become wholly theirs. The Ipapa Bahais view the pioneers as their standard or frame of reference in being a Bahai. The result is what one encounters in many Bahais from Mbozi – feelings of alienation from what they would consider as the sphere of influence. A majority feel that their presence in the Faith is not taken seriously. Those who seem to be doing well are also looked down upon as if they are the ones that hinder others to receive the attention of the significant others in the Faith.

Functionally, the Sinaists accepted the Bahai Faith on the basis of the benefits that they would get. The Ipapa Bahai community has integral needs (identity, formal education, affordable and quality medical care, political influence and means of livelihood) that the Bahai Faith needs to minister to for the well-being of the community. Bahais Faith teaches that for the faith to be of help to an individual the functional approach must be negated. The greatest need of the Bahai Faith is to take the teachings of Bahauallah to the masses of humanity and ensuring that the masses align their lives to the teachings of the Bahai Faith. The individual and the community

should start from the needs of the faith and seek to minister to those needs. Bahais should not think in terms of how 'they should serve' the Faith but how the Faith 'should be served'.

In thinking how 'should I serve the faith' one asks, "What can I do? What can I afford to do, provided it does not pain me, provided it does not call for any sacrifice from me, provided it is just a measured step?" In thinking 'how the faith should be served' one asks, "I want to see what the beloved Faith needs because that is my beloved faith. I'll do anything for it. Let me find out what it needs. I will go; I will attempt." The difference is like that of mother and nurse when it comes to caring for a child. With the nurse, everything is measured; time is measured, effort is measured. The nurse will do things that she can afford to do for that child. But the mother; the mother is a lover. There is no "time" for her; the mother does not think that this is at midnight, or it is early morning, or she has not had her lunch yet, or the lunch is going to be late; none of these things are thought of, because she is a mother, because the thing uppermost in the mind of the mother is the child not herself. But the nurse usually thinks of herself first, and then the child next. For instance, the faith need well informed adherents who in turn will distinguish themselves on the basis of their words and deeds. It follows that individuals should work out this need first before they think of their needs.<sup>6</sup> The implication is that, the Sinaists started from a functional point of view and this explains the decline of their enthusiasm. The Bahai ideal attracted them to embrace the Bahai Faith. That was not the end, effort by the pioneers was to be met by more effort by the Ipapa Bahais for the realization of the Bahai ideal.

The social and cultural aspects of the Ipapa community need to be appreciated in the practice of the Bahai Faith. In so doing, the relationships that will develop could be likened to that of the garden and the plant and the sun and its rays. The Ipapa Bahais are encouraged to seek the relationship of the sun and the rays. It is not enough in being a plant in the garden, the relationship here is at low level for there is differentiation between the plant and the garden while as the relationship between the sun and the rays is that of unity and harmony. The ray is nameless, is selfless. If you

put two rays together, they become one. If you put nine together, they become one. The Bahai pioneers and Bahai institutions in Tanzania should walk with the Ipapa Bahai community towards this kind of relationship. In unity and harmony, the social actors will be activated in the process of social change. The individual is the basic unit in the process of religious and social transformation. The starting point is the appreciation of Bahauallah.

Who seeketh Me, shall find Me. Whoso draweth nigh unto Me, shall love Me. Whoso loveth Me, Him shall I love.<sup>7</sup>

The challenge for the Ipapa Bahais is to take the integral needs, aspirations and hopes of the Bahai Faith and make them theirs. Looking at the level of needs in Ipapa, this transformation of world-view is a time long challenge. The only language that can help is that of trust, obedience and surrender. This kind of language will lead to unity and harmony. For this to happen the significant others (pioneers) need to have worked hard though on their other part. It takes individual initiative to accept to trust, obey and to surrender. The Ipapa Bahai community's way of life is a pattern of conduct in which the parts are interdependent. The interdependence is multiple and so intimate that elements which at first sight, look as if they could not have any connection with one another turn out to be indissoluble. A practical example is the acceptance of the Bahai Faith. To the Bahai teachers who took Bahai Faith to Ipapa, the acceptance of the Bahai Faith meant replacing the Sinai (local) elements by some Bahai (foreign) elements. The local elements such as ritualistic dancing, traditional herbs and communal lifestyle have proved impossible to eliminate, without also eliminating, or at least modifying, a whole set of other local elements. The single foreign element proves impossible to include without also introducing a whole set of other foreign elements.<sup>8</sup> The social actors in Ipapa should operate in unity and harmony while appreciating the social and cultural context of the Ipapa Bahai community. In so doing, events that will initiate the trends of religious and social transformation will take off.

After transformation in Ipapa gains in momentum it would be worthwhile to conduct a research on how the Bahais minister to the integral needs of the faith and to what extent they recognize those needs in the first place. The current study takes into consideration how the Bahai Faith has met the integral needs, aspirations, hopes and even dispelling the fears of the Ipapa Bahai community. The starting point here is the functional approach to religion. As observed earlier, looking at the way the Sinai Church was organized, one notes a community that needed social identity, schools, hospitals, well organized religion with its influence being felt far and wide. Yet the Bahai teachers pointed to a higher ideal- that Bahais should think and act in regard to the needs of the Bahai Faith. This may explain the decline in enthusiasm among the Ipapa Bahais.

The adherents who have benefited from the Bahai Faith are enthusiastic about their faith. For instance, Yohannes Simbowe found himself in Haifa during the inauguration of the Terraces in 2001, Zawadi Aly has worked in Haifa for eighteen months and continues to get benefits from the Faith especially after being given a scholarship at Ruaha Bahai International School. Four Bahais from Ipapa work in the school, while youths continue to get education from the school. The community as a social actor of change does not have anything to show that has come because of being Bahai. Institutionally, the Local Spiritual Assemblies in Ipapa are not in a position to carry out extensive programs of growth that will result to well-being and livelihood among the Ipapa Bahais. The effect is that the Ipapa Bahais who have not benefited in Bahai have been demoralized. For this reason, those from the Sinai background look back to the days they were in the Sinai Church. The school, the hospital and communication center that they looked forward to are not yet realized. The challenge for the international Bahai community through the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of Tanzania is to reconsider investing in this community in a more systematic way. Reciprocity will be a good ground to start. In reciprocity, the Bahai Faith will benefit and the community will benefit. Equilibrium of a kind needs to be achieved if the growth of the Bahai Faith is to keep its momentum in Ipapa.

In the realization of the Bahai ideal in Ipapa, Bahai Writings form the main frame of reference. Yet as the Ipapa Bahais yearn to read the Bahai Writings, none has been rendered into Kinyiha. They read the few Swahili translations of the Institute books. From the writings, the Bahais will find the vision and mission of Bahauallah. The Bahai institutions are expected to interpret the vision and mission on a continuous basis. The UHJ develops annual plans that are to be implemented by all the Bahais. Although the mission of the Bahais is to put the Writings of Bahauallah in the hands of humanity, the Ipapa Bahais depends on the interpretation and understanding of the pioneers. The community is thus alienated from the frame of reference of the Bahai ideal. Max Weber (1864 – 1920) observed that religious ideas possess interdependent significance in all systems of social action or processes of social change. The interdependence of Protestant theology (motive) and capitalist economics (actions) is Weber's chief example of the dynamics of social integration. Religion as an ideology and as a conceptual system, supplies motivation within a society and the process of change is either triggered or sustained. The motivation and action feed on the understanding of the frame of reference.

The conception of deity within the Ipapa Bahai community influences individual and collective actions as well as the significance that is attributed to social relationships. The way in which the cosmos is depicted in Bahai scriptures bears relevance to the social economic theory of those people whose life has been influenced by the Bahai teachings. From Weber's assertions, religion can be seen to lend constitutionality to the social order.<sup>9</sup> Religion and society are formative cultural elements to be described and defined in relation to one another. The Ipapa Bahai community needs the Bahai Writings in Kinyiha so that the frame of reference for the Bahai ideal is articulated in the local idioms. The community will use the Bahai Writings as instruments for motivation and collective actions.

In Ipapa, the foundation of the Sinai Church was factored by feelings of deprivation, alienation and communal identity. The word Sinai and the ridge that was named Sinai demonstrate the future expectations of the community and what they felt at the time

the Sinai Church was founded. The theme of Exile and Return are common with founders of religion. Followers of a religious leader for a variety of reasons such as social injustice, feel themselves in exile-from God, from their culture, their fellow men and women and from themselves. From the biblical history of Israel, 'Sinai' marks the point in time and space when the children of Israel went through a paradigm shift. The shift was from an orientation of slavery in Egypt to a new world-view which demanded that they trust and obey Yahweh in spite of the uncertainties that were ahead of them. The process of becoming a Bahai community creates three protagonists in the achievement of the Bahai ideal (Appendix IV). The protagonists are the religious leaders, the followers and the non members. A high level of organization is necessary for the leader to instill to non-members the hope and pride to be followers. On the other hand, the followers need high level of devotion and commitment to the ideal so that they can win the non-members into the faith. In Ipapa, the Local Spiritual Assemblies are composed of individuals who are motivated by the benefits that accrue from the Faith. Thus, the spirit of the Bahai ideal has not been domesticated so that the Ipapa Bahai community can think in terms of the needs of the Faith.

The Ipapa community is a farming community. The mode of production is through small-scale farming. Manual labour is thus treasured. In this context micro-enterprises such as nursery schools, basic health care, agriculture, and the environment should be started. The projects should have the potential to grow in size and complexity. In working for the Bahai ideal, new modes of production are expected. Cooperation among the means of production (land, labour, capital, and market) is advocated for. With time, the Ipapa Bahai community should engage in big complex projects with significant spheres of influence. Such projects need to address problems of the community and the region in a coordinated, interdisciplinary manner. It is in such projects that the initial desires of the Sinai Church should be articulated. The three social actors in Ipapa are carriers of such transformation.

The Bahai ideal integrates the distinctive spiritual, social and administrative principles enunciated by Bahauallah. The Ipapa Bahais have not yet taken their faith into the realm of economics. Most of them wait for Bahai pioneers (outsiders) to make this happen. The relations of production in society impose certain logic on the behaviour of individuals, the community, and the institutions. The social actors operate within the constraints established by the Bahai ideal. At the level of social formation, numerous contingent relations between individuals, the community, and institutions deflect the logic of economic reproduction. Thinking about a materialistic perspective of religion situates Bahai Faith in the experience of physical and physiological reality. Bahai Faith lies at the crucial interchange between nature and culture in the formation of the Ipapa community and the creation of Bahai attributes in Ipapa. The interchange cannot, however, be understood in general, but only in the context of the material mode of production of individuals and the community. The materialistic theory of religions, by definition, a historical-materialistic perspective it is, as Engels noted is the study of the production of the means of subsistence and of the production of human beings.<sup>10</sup>

Using the doctrine of progressive revelation, Bahais believe and teach that truth is one and it is to be found in all religions. Human beings should always seek truth in their lives. All belief and knowledge are culturally specific and therefore there are no universal criteria of rationality and goodness by which religious practice could be compared or evaluated. The challenge for the Ipapa Bahais is to have their own specific expression of the Bahai Faith though under the guidance of the Bahai Writings and the Bahai institutions. The specific expression is compounded by the fact that trust, obedience and surrendering to the Faith are still not at the state that a Bahai culture that is authentically Kinyiha will emanate. When relativism is carried to its logical conclusion it demonstrates that knowledge of the world is merely ethnocentric, subjective, preference. Relativism means that no objective valid comparisons between societies could be made. Nevertheless, it is difficult to conceive of knowledge that is not comparative or at least containing comparisons. Thus to know something is, in principle, to be able to speak about it. Language necessarily involves contrasts and

comparisons. In the religious matrix of transformation, the individual, the community and the institutions operate in the context of trust, obedience and surrender to the Supreme Being. In such a context the, identity of the social actors in Ipapa will be shaped by the frame of reference (the Bahai Writings).

The Sinaists developed their own teachings and practices in borrowing from the Last Church of God, Roman Catholic, Mennonite, and Wanyiha Tradition Religion. With time, the Sinaists were in a position to appreciate the Bahai Faith by slotting it into a pre-existing code or discourse that rendered the Bahai Faith intelligible. Along the process of understanding the Bahai Faith, the Sinaists' frame of reference was negated. By so doing the Sinaists were not able to overcome the philosophical difficulties of translation by drawing upon various forms of accounting which highlight differences in characteristics between their culture and Bahai Faith and its culture. The Bahai ideal possesses a number of essential characteristics- rationality, democracy, industrial progress, literacy – in terms of which the Sinaists' culture is deficient.

In regard to comparisons and relativism Turner asserts that any comparative study of religion will, tend to draw upon pre-existing assumptions and scholarly traditions which provide an interpretational matrix of contrasts and comparisons.<sup>11</sup> The doctrine of the progressive revelation slots all major religions into the discourse and they are re-interpreted. In the re-interpretation, the progress within a religion is negated and the prejudice of superiority is apparent. This approach to other religions hinders harmonious relationships with people of other religions especially if the Bahai Faith is not vast in the details of the re-interpreted religion.

In the process of seeking to re-interpret other religious traditions, the social influence of the Bahai Faith takes the upper hand. The consciousness of the differences makes it possible for the Ipapa community to hope for the Bahai ideal. In Mbozi, private property was introduced when the Tanzanian government dropped the socialist

ideology in favour of capitalism. In communal property ownership, social institutions intervene between rulers and the general population.

It has been observed that the *Ujamaa* system of government did not give room for innovation and creativity. The aftermath of a long period of institutional control of land ownership was frustration and deprivation especially for a border community that was aware of other communities and their expression and social influence in their resourcefulness. The religions that were operational in Mbozi did not give an alternative either. The shift to Bahai Faith was in this regard a desire to have a different structure of the mode of production. At the core of the shift of faiths at Ipapa, Bahai adherents want to claim the ownership to instruments of social control namely: the loyalty of individuals and the community to the Bahai Faith; an ideology for the institutions; and an educational program for the development of human resources for the institutions and the community. The best instrument of social control is one's resourcefulness and the knowledge that guarantees the continuity of the social structure. The expectation of the Sinai community was to integrate their distinctive spiritual elements, with the social and administrative principles of the Bahai Faith. The integration would put the community and the region in a better economic and political state than the way the government and the traditional communal ownership had done. The expectation has not materialized and this may eventually lead to feelings of alienation and deprivation and another shift may result. In anonymity, some Bahais who came from the Sinai Church shared about the revival of the Sinai Church. The revival of the Sinai Church in its original form may sound very noble at some time if the Bahais do not attempt to arrest the situation before it is too late.

The desire prevalent among some Ipapa Bahais to revamp the Sinai Church indicates that they may have been deceived in one way or another. Yet in this view, the enthusiasm with which they embraced the Bahai Faith must be explained. The Bahai Faith needed converts and the Sinaists were receptive to the Bahai teachings. On the other hand, the Sinaists needed the legitimation of their identity, a place of influence in the society and socio-economic well-being. In the initial encounter with the Bahai

Faith, the needs of the Sinaists were not expressed apart from the mention in their dreams. The Bahai teachers acted as if the context of the Sinaists did not matter. In this regard, meeting of the two faiths was not on equal terms. Anold, J. Toynbee notes;

In matters of religion, it is very easy to deceive humanity, and very difficult to undeceive them. People love their prejudices, and they can always find leaders who will indulge them in this foible. These leaders make their business pay in coin of authority as well as monetary profit. The more disinterested natures realize when the malady has become inveterate that the malady would be worse than the disease. These dare not heal the wound; the others would not wish to heal it. This is how the abuse perpetuates itself. Dishonest people protect it; honest people tolerate it.<sup>12</sup>

The pioneers who introduced the Bahai Faith in Ipapa taught the Bahai Faith without giving attention to the needs of the Sinai Church. However, the Bahai pioneers pride themselves in winning a whole African Instituted Church into the Bahai Faith. Probably the Sinaists thought of a trade off where they would benefit economically and socially by embracing the Bahai faith. When the religiosity of the Sinaists was trivialized because they embraced the Bahai Faith, feelings of deception arose. The feelings of being deceived works against the best interest of the Bahai Faith. Those who feel deceived find it hard if not impossible to willingly support any Bahai program and feelings of antipathy dominate.

The Sinai community had enthusiastically embraced the Bahai Faith. Where then did the feelings of deception and frustration originate? The most probable area is how the Bahai Faith was presented to them. The Bahai pioneers did not understand the motivation of the Sinaists. They blindly went for outreach, and blindly imagined that the truths of the Bahai Faith are so clear that the representatives of the Sinaists could not have failed to see them. If the Sinaists held to their cause, the reasons as to how and why they stick and make it their own, needed to be taken into consideration by the Bahai pioneers. Bahai Faith being a missionary oriented religion would not have trivialized the religiosity of the Sinaists. In Toynbee's view:

There is no system which is exempt from having to satisfy two conditions in order to be accepted as valid. The first condition is that the ideas in it should be clear; second is that it should be able to account for the facts of experience.... Man alone- man is the masterpiece among all the visible works of creation – is a very great stumbling block to a belief in the unity of God.... Man is wicked and unhappy: everyone of us knows this from what goes on within his own self, as well as from the dealings that he is obliged to have with his neighbour.<sup>13</sup>

The religious context of the Sinaists was pluralistic. However, the catechism that the Sinaists adopted was silent on the truth in other religions. Nevertheless, having borrowed most of the catechism from the Roman Catholic Church, it implies that the Sinaists understood the validity of the Roman Catholic Church. The point of departure was the cultural practices that the Sinaists thought as important and the Roman Catholic Church nullified. The appreciation of the ancestral spirits, polygamy, traditional methods of healing using herbs and ritualistic drumming and dancing were central to the practice of the Sinai Church. When the Sinaists embraced the Bahai Faith, their religiosity was at first tolerated eventually it was condemned. The condemnation appears well silent but well orchestrated. The condemnation is silent because the Bahai pioneers did not at any time condemn the Sinai Church directly. It was well orchestrated because the Bahai Faith was systematically introduced and taught in a way to suggest a continuation from the Sinai Church to the Bahai Faith.

The Bahai Institute Process has no room for the cultural context of the Ipapa community. Religious pluralism advocated in the progressive revelation at its best produces religious tolerance. However, this tolerance could have different motives. The lowest negative motive for toleration is a belief that religion is of no practical importance, and that therefore it does not matter what religion our neighbours profess. This kind of motive is to be found amongst many non-Bahais in Ipapa and therefore to try and reach them becomes a heavy task since they have already given up on religion as an aspect of debate. The next lowest negative motive is a belief that religion is an illusion, and that therefore it is idle to inquire whether this or that form of religion is true or false or right or wrong. This motive is not prevalent in the area for it is to be found amongst those members of the community that feel they have gone past the

desire to have religion. The next negative motive arises from the observation that religious conflict is a public nuisance that easily becomes a public danger. From these negative motives, it is therefore better for discordant religious sects to resign themselves to living and letting live, without breaking the peace by trying to eliminate one another. Religious dialogue advocates the point of living and letting live. For the Bahais religious dialogue is a way of evangelization and its end is adherence to the Bahai Faith.

The Sinaists who embraced the Bahai Faith suffer silently when their culture is silently condemned and they are expected to be good Bahais. The Tanzanian political landscape seems to favour this kind of motive. It therefore follows that, the Ipapa Bahai community finds itself in a very tricky environment. From within, there are feelings of alienation and frustration. The community must also contend with the indifference to religious concerns in the public domain and on the other hand, there is the appeal to increase the number of Bahai adherents.

Religious innovation in Ipapa implies that the previous world-view was not enough to give meaning to life per the expectations of the individuals or community that advocates for religious innovation. The subsequent shift to the Bahai Faith demonstrates that even the Sinai Church did not meet the needs of the Ipapa community. Total conversion to the Bahai Faith is the only way out of the Sinai Church and the only means to becoming a Bahai. This total conversion is not notable among the Ipapa Bahai community apart from very few individuals. One of the Bahai principles states that there should be individual and private investigation of truth and not communal. The former world-view of the Sinai community and the community in general was based on attachment to leadership. The leadership of the Sinai Church was given communal sanction and following was not on the basis of sound reasoning and judgment. Adherents were made because the significant other in the community had decided for the majority and the demand for allegiance meant the harmony of the community had to be maintained. In the Bahai faith, the former Sinaists have to read

the Sacred Writings daily, to draw closer to God, get to know Bahauallah, love him and understand the magnificence of his revelation.

Recite the verses of God every morn and eventide. Whoso faileth to recite them hath not been faithful to the Covenant of God and His Testament, and whoso turneth away from these holy verses in this Day is of those who throughout eternity have turned away from God. Fear ye God, O My servants, one and all.<sup>14</sup>

Although the Ipapa Bahais are to read the Sacred Writings for themselves, illiteracy level is 60%. The aftermath of this innovation and shift of faith is therefore a clash of world-views. At one level one is demanded to partake in one's destiny in a more personal manner where there before the person was given to communal destiny and riding on the wings of the community. In the Bahai world-view the community is formed out of individuals' determination towards the identified ideal. To compound the challenge, the individual search for truth is now demanded of an individual who is illiterate. The old will only be indifferent to the Faith and only be vibrant to the communal activities. The Institute Process is to reverse this tendency. At the individual level, therefore, the demand to determine one's destiny in the Bahai ideal is very high and only the second generation Bahais may attain this destiny. It means that one of the social actors the individual is not in a position to participate fully in the process of social change unless adult literacy classes are provided.

At another level, the former world-view demanded a sense of the sacred that was expressed even in inanimate objects like mountains. The new world-view though it does that, it has not recognized the former icons of the community. The interactions of the two world-views pity the Sinaists' against the Bahai Faith. It is as if the Sinaists had been all wrong when they were in the Sinai Church though nobody has told them so. The Bahai pioneers have attempted on several occasions to teach the Ipapa Bahai community to abandon their original religiosity. The method they use confuses both the teachers and the taught. The teacher does not recognize and appreciate the experience and the background of the learner. The efforts of the pioneers leave the Ipapa individuals and community wandering in the past as they attempt to make sense

of what they are taught. Yet the pioneers could be identified as the significant others to the Ipapa Bahai community in regard to the present and the future that they should yearn for. Under these circumstances the attachment to the past among the Ipapa Bahais will not make it possible to realize in full the ideal that the Bahai Faith points them towards.

The clash in world-views is observable when comparing and contrasting the Ipapa people and Bahai cosmologies. For the Ipapa Sinai community and their African spirituality, the universe is governed by cosmic rhythm attributed to the *Mizimwi* (ancestral spirits). The ritualistic drumming and dancing is an attempt to create rhythm that invites the *Mizimwi* to the aid of the dancers. All creation dance to this fundamental rhythm of the universe. The now is important only in relation to the *Mizimwi*. Harmony within the Sinai community is harmony with the *Mizimwi* in many aspects of the community. The traditional religious healers and leaders are there to make sure that people walk by the set traditional rhythm. When the rhythm is disrupted, the religious leaders are there on behalf of the community to guide the community on what the oracles of the ancestors demand. This cosmology is integrated with the Roman Catholic one. For instance in the second commandment of the Sinai Church it states, *funga siku ulizopewa na njozi zako na pia kula chakula kinachokubalika na pepo zako* (fast according to your penance and eat the food that is acceptable to your spirits). On the other hand the Bahais have a different view of the universe. Though cyclic, the recurrence of day and night plus the annual seasons forms the existential context. It is God who gives the existential context, its meaning.

The recurrent movement of seasons is characterised by times of crisis and times of splendor. According to the Bahai Faith humanity in its existence goes through the cyclic season of winter, summer, autumn, and spring. Religion has the same nature of death and decay and resurrection. Harmony in this perspective is only attained when individuals learn to understand the times they are in and live according to the needs of that period. The Bahai Writings teach that former religions have taken humanity into autumn and only the Bahai Faith can take them through spring. The crises in the

universe are harbingers of a new life that is breaking into the world. The Bahai Faith and its operations in the world is called the Minor Plan of God. Outside the Bahai Faith, the Major Plan of God is operational. The Major Plan of God uses calamities to push people into the recognition of their times while the Minor Plan is in the hands of those who have dared to listen to the voice of God in that particular moment. In this age Bahai Writings teach that the mouthpiece of that divine voice is none other but Bahauallah.<sup>15</sup>

From the perspective of the Major Plan of God Ipapa Bahais are ready to accept crises in their context as heralds for good things. In the practice of the Bahai Faith, the Ipapa Bahais seek to avert crises and maintain harmony with the universe at any cost. The challenge is for the Ipapa Bahais to seek harmony with the universe by maintaining order in the universe in a system that they are not conversant with. In so doing, they are to break away from inertia mode and in Bahai language offer themselves to Bahauallah who will direct them into the spring of humanity where harmony is at a global level. They should work for this harmony in spite of their situations of need. In the new world-view the Ipapa people are to accept the hard doctrine that they have been called, not to enjoy unique power, wealth, and glory, but to bear unique burdens and to suffer, unique tribulations for the fulfillment of God's purposes in the universe. The Ipapa Bahais are to shift their view of reality from below (centered on humanity) to a view that is from up (centered on God). The view from up, appreciates that God has a purpose and will for the entire humanity.<sup>16</sup> With regards to conversion, this shift is gradual and the feelings of deprivation, alienation and frustration may not let the community embrace the needs of the Bahai Faith in its own terms with a give and take principle. The Bahais at their best insist that it should be a personal enterprise to investigate the truth to the point that one will have a clear understanding of what is needed of him or her. However, the three social actors in the religious matrix of social transformation must be in place for transformation to take off.

The Germans and later the British in Tanzania were working hand in hand with the Christian missionaries in a bid to extend the European world-view among the

Tanzanians. Later, *Ujamaa* was meant to deal with the effects and forms of colonialism and to some extent any religion that was there to divide Tanzanians. Churches in Ipapa were teaching catechism of Europe or America, with a special suppression of the African culture. The founders of the Sinai Church wanted a continuity of their culture into Christianity. In the meeting and integration of the Sinai Church and the Bahai Faith, the Bahai teachers ignored this element of inculturation. The paradox is that the Sinaists agreed to embrace the Bahai Faith although the Bahai pioneers did not give credit to cultural practices that defined the Sinai Church. The result is the vindication of the Bahai Faith in African tradition.

The Bahai pioneers did not listen to the Sinaists in their quest to embrace the Bahai Faith. But the Bahais went ahead and indoctrinated the Sinaists in the name of fulfilling the many expectations that the Sinaists had. The Bahai pioneers should aim to listen to the Ipapa community if the Bahai Faith is to have a future in the area. There should be communication between the Bahai Writings and the context of the Ipapa Bahai community. The emphasis on the august revelation in Bahai Faith led to a situation where the Ipapa converts sought for the benefits of the Bahai Faith. After the meeting the two faiths, there was no interest in understanding the connection between the Bahai Faith and the existential reality of the Sinai Church at a socio-cultural level. The Sinaists' concern with the Bahai Faith was more functional than transformational, while the Bahais' concern with the Sinai Church was more evangelistic than transformational.

Colonialism robbed the people of southern Tanzania of their cultural identity. *Ujamaa* was expected to restore this identity and pride in being African. It had its hostilities against anything European or American. The Sinai Church was founded on the cultural identity of the Wanyiha tribe in southern Tanzania. The shift to Bahai Faith did not carry with it the same enthusiasm about culture. Probably the Bahais would have worked for a change of names in Ipapa from *Kanisa la Sinai – Dini ya Mila na Utamaduni*, to *Dini ya Bahai – Dini ya Mila na Utamaduni* ("Sinai Church – A Religion of Traditions and Customs" to "Bahai Faith – A Religion of Traditions and

Customs”). This would mean cultural continuity and identity on one hand and change and innovation on the other. The debate on interculturalism is evident among the Ipapa Bahai community, however, it has not been given any space, and appreciation by the Bahai pioneers. Bahai pioneers who have continued to teach the faith in Ipapa think that the traditional practices of the Sinai Church are anti-Bahai Faith. However, the ontological reality in Ipapa is that cultural identity is a concern. For instance, occasionally the community at large is involved in drumming and ritualistic dancing and traditional healing. The Ipapa Bahais as individuals join hands with the wider community in the elements of culture that have been mentioned. Alienation from the social and cultural foundations, means that the Bahai Faith in Ipapa is “their faith” not “our faith.”

## **6.2 Institutional Factors in the Realization of the Bahai Ideal**

Institutions are actors in social change. According to the religious matrix of transformation, institutions should have a different life on themselves separate from individuals and the community. It means that when the members of a Local Spiritual Assembly meet they are an institution. However, individual members of the LSA are not a Local Spiritual Assembly. Bahai institutions operate in the Ipapa community to implement the Minor Plan of God. In carrying out the Bahai teachings, the Bahai ideal or Bahai civilization will be realized. Historically, it is observable that every civilization comes with its religion or each religion breeds its own kind of civilization. For instance, from the seventeenth century onwards European civilization has made efforts to get rid of the Christian garb to the point of being a secular civilization. However, Christianity has weathered the efforts because of its capacity to adapt to changing cultures. The sixteenth century Protestant reformation and Catholic reformation were coping mechanism of Christianity. In adapting to changing cultures, humanity must always have an object of worship. For those that think that they do not need religion, religion has been replaced by technology as the paramount interest and pursuit. The secularization of the western civilization deified the place of humanity and technology in the universe and what followed was a spiritual crisis. For any civilization and religion to have influence upon humanity, it must embrace certain

teachings that develop and establish institutions that carry forward and maintain the civilization or religion. The development of the Bahai institutions aims at the identity and continuity of the Bahai Faith and the realization of the Bahai ideal. At the grassroots, the Local Spiritual Assemblies articulate the teachings of Bahauallah and direct the activities of the local Bahai community. Institutions entail the structures of leadership and their functions in the community. Institutions are like the wings or wheels on which civilizations and religions depend to be entrenched in the society. The strength of the institutions is dependent upon the principles on which they are built on. The leaders of the Sinai Church as an institution were founded on the claims of revelation based on dreams and visions. However, Bahai institutions are founded on appointment and elections. The participation of the community in leadership gives, the institution of leadership its mandate and authority. Finally, the Bahai institutions are ratified by the Bahai Writings.

In Bahai theology, religion is found in human situations. As a social phenomenon, the Bahai Faith operates and seeks to advance its vision in society. The advancement of the Bahai vision requires the various Bahai institutions. The Bahai institutions are the conduit of the blessings of God. The blessings of God are the features of the Bahai ideal (Appendix IV). The institutions should be nurtured to full operation so that the blessings of God can get to his people. Those in leadership positions are servants of the Most High and hence one is made to understand how the kingdom of God will be established here on earth.<sup>17</sup> The universal future for the nations is well articulated in this theology. The realized Bahai ideal is God's ultimate reign of Justice and peace. The ideal serves as a powerful magnet-not because the present is empty, but precisely because God's future has already invaded it with the institutions already in place. Whereas Sinai Church's eschatology is for angelic bodies where new bodies will be given to human beings, the Bahais give it a new meaning where the renewal of human community is affected by the creative word of God (Bahai Writings) through obedience. The new earth and new humanity are an ongoing process where the old world is folded. The New World Order of Bahauallah entails a new consciousness among human beings shaped by the creative Word of God.

At the international level the Bahai Faith is led by a nine member council called the Universal House of Justice (UHJ), whose administrative and spiritual centers are at Haifa – Israel. The UHJ is elected every five years in an international convention made up of delegates from every country. Below the UHJ is its advisory institution the International Teaching Center (ITC), which comprises of some of the Hands of the Cause, and some counselors appointed by the UHJ. Below the UHJ and the ITC the institutions are divided into two arms – the arm of the rulers and the arm of the learned. The institution of the rulers comprises the National Spiritual Assembly (NSA), Regional Bahai Councils (RBC) and Local Spiritual Assemblies (LSA). An NSA is to be found in a country or state with various LSAs. The rulers deal with all administrative matters relating to the Bahai community including education or teaching of the Faith.

The members of the NSA are elected in an annual convention during the festival of Ridvan, which occurs from 21<sup>st</sup> April to 2<sup>nd</sup> May. Specifically, the elections are held at the end of April or 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of May every year across the world. The convention is composed of delegates from the LSA. The delegates elect nine members among themselves. The elected nine members later elect the office bearers from among themselves. All administrative matters rest on the institution of the rulers. The NSA has its immediate purpose to stimulate, unify and coordinate by frequent personal consultation, the manifold activities of the adherents as well as LSAs; and by keeping in close and constant touch with the World Centre, initiate measures, and direct in general the affairs of the Bahai Faith in the country of its jurisdiction. At the grass-root level, any Bahai community that has more than nine members has the right to elect a Local Spiritual Assembly. LSAs are elected on 21<sup>st</sup> of April so that they may later participate in the national annual convention at the end of April or early May. The RBCs are appointed by NSAs to assist in the administration at the regional level where there are many Bahai activities and the NSA is not in a position to effectively render administrative roles.

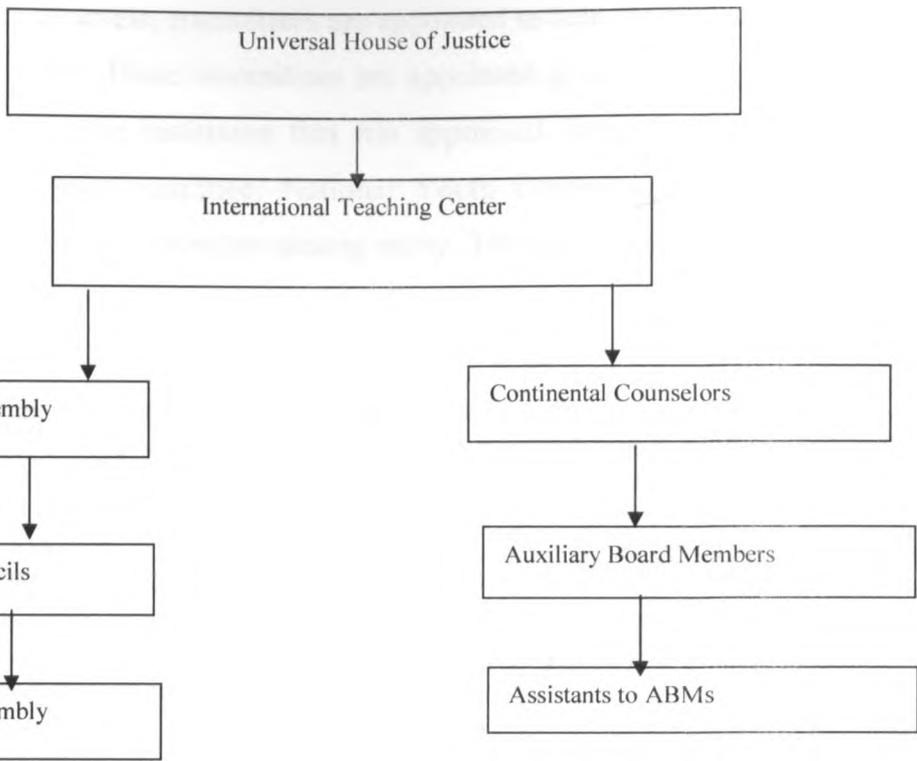


Diagram 4: Bahai administrative structure

The institution of the learned has the duty of the propagation and the protection of the Bahai Faith. The ITC in co-ordination with the UHJ appoints Continental Counselors who co-ordinate the works of the Faith in their respective continents and countries. The counselors are appointed every five years. After the appointment, they then appoint their deputies the ABMs who also appoint their assistants to help them carry out their duties of propagating and protecting the Faith. The institutions may explain why Bahai Faith has no clergy. When any Bahai election is conducted, Bahais are required to have an attitude of service to the Faith of God.

...but for the comforting thought that if we rise to play nobly our part every deficiency in our lives will be more than compensated by the all-conquering spirit of his grace and power. Hence it is incumbent upon the chosen delegates to consider without the least trace of passion and prejudice, and irrespective of material considerations, the names of only those who can best combine the necessary qualities of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognized ability and mature experience.<sup>18</sup>

At the national and local levels, committees are appointed to help the assemblies carry out their tasks effectively. These committees are appointed given the need that there may be. They report to the institution that has appointed them. Such committees include; Public Relations Committee, National Youth Committee, Local Women Committee, Arts and Drama Committee among many. Through all the institutions, the expectation is the same;

High aims and pure motives, however laudable in themselves, will surely not suffice if unsupported by measures that are practicable and methods that are sound. Wealth of sentiment, abundance of goodwill and effort, will prove of little avail if we should fail to exercise discrimination and restraint and neglect to direct their flow along the most profitable channels. The unfettered freedom of the individual should be tempered with mutual consultation and sacrifice, and the spirit of initiative and enterprise should be reinforced by a deeper realization of the supreme necessity for concerted action and a fuller devotion to the common weal.<sup>19</sup>

For the proper functioning of the Bahai institutions in Ipapa, conversion and world-view reconstruction should be in place. According to the religious matrix of transformation, the individual's appropriation of the divine revelation is the foundation for setting forth the momentum for transformation. In Ipapa, the understanding of institutions is very warped. The popular expectation is that institutions are there to serve the needs, fears, aspirations and hopes of the people at all levels. Institutions are masters and those who they serve are "subjects". This understanding is a ground for abuse of institutions. Selfish motives catapult individuals into the institutions on wrong motives of self-aggrandizement. This kind of experience was reported in Ipapa. If a woman is given a position of responsibility, some individuals express their disregard for the woman just because she is a woman. It means that, the high expectation for the Bahai institutions in terms of establishing them and their purposes, meets a people with a different understanding of institutions.

The institutional factors to the realization of the Bahai ideal are a combination of internal and external factors. Internal factors come from the Ipapa Bahais themselves and their lack of understanding on how they should relate with the institutions. This

factor is compounded by the clash of world-view. The commitment to Bahai Writings and practices in Ipapa should yield to world-view reconstruction and conversion. The Institute Process should be well organized and the best methods of delivery should be identified together with all the attendant features that would make it possible for the community to refocus its efforts, emphasizing a sequence of courses that would create capacity and commitment on the part of individuals to carry out acts of service to the Faith. At individual level, choices and decisions must be made to obey and trust. Individuals must be helped to realize the benefits that accrue from them serving the Faith in more selfless ways. This is the most challenging part and it is such a drawback to the realization of the Bahai ideal in the community.

The external factors include the kind of institutions that the Ipapa community were used to and the world-view that has shaped that understanding. The nineteenth-century is the defining period for the political history of southern Tanzania. Tribal chiefs were in control. Economically, the chieftains were maintained by ivory and slave trade. To maintain their control chiefs had to mobilize armies to protect their territory and to conquer new territories. Chiefs like Chief Mirambo-ya-Banhu of Nyamwezi who died in 1884 and Chief Mkwawa Mwamnyika of the Hehe who died in 1898 dot the history of southern Tanzania. The chiefs maintained their grip of their chieftains by the unity of their ethnic groups, continuity of chieftainship by heredity and the communal strength of the chieftain. Through the 1886 Anglo-German Agreement finalized in 1890, Germany took nominal control of Tanganyika (Mainland Tanzania). The agreement facilitated the dehumanization of the Africans and in this case Tanzanians.

They divided our continent in 1885 at Berlin, and without ever asking anybody, they took pity on us and our miserly. They came to 'educate' and 'civilize' us. ...And before our unbelieving eyes they displayed the great benefits derived from the ignominious treaty: the pacification of a whole continent, the blessings of a civilization that were brought ... And no single soul ever mentioned anything of the contempt and disdain which accompanied us blacks wherever we went. A human being, one equal to you, arrogates to himself the management of your own affairs without even asking you.<sup>20</sup>

After the World War I the British were given the control of Tanganyika. The presence of the British was only felt in major towns such as Dar es Salaam, Arusha, Morogoro, Mwanza, Iringa, Dododma and Mbeya. By the end of the World War II Tanzanians were agitating for political and economic independence. From 1954, Julius Kambarage Nyerere led the independence movement. In 1961, through his leadership Tanzania had peaceful transition to independence. Nyerere's legacy of "African Socialism" *Ujamaa* ended in economic disaster but in a united Tanzania.<sup>20</sup> Through *Ujamaa*, Chieftains as economic and political establishments were abolished and their only mandate was the cultural identity that the chief stood for. Ipapa was at the fringes of these defining trends in Tanzania. Before independence, the social political environment in southern Tanzania paints a picture of institutions that are there for personal gain and institutions that are tools of power and authority.

The spirit of *Ujamaa* or togetherness although economically disastrous threw everyone together during the 1960s and 1970s, when over eighty percent of the rural population were moved from their ancestral lands and relocated in collective villages.<sup>21</sup> The *Ujamaa* political philosophy was basically from the African ideal of community coupled with socialist ideals. The main thrust of the system was a reaction to the effects of colonialism and capitalism. It would therefore thrive as long as the agenda of opposition was there in whatever form. In this kind of environment, being different requires commitment and sacrifice in terms of what people have known to work as long as their history permits them. In fighting colonialism, the Tanzanians wanted freedom to determine their lives and on the other hand, there was the appeal to be like the colonial masters in lifestyle. The deprivation and alienation created by the colonial government and later by the *Ujamaa* policy triggered reactions towards indifference. Positions of power and authority are in this context used as means to acquisition of property and consolidation power. To this extent, the institutions find it hard to function for from within there are contradictions that the external world makes even more compounding.

At another level, the institutions that the Ipapa Bahais are aware of are institutions that are inorganic and static meaning they do not have a spirit of their own apart from the form that people notice. Institutions in this perspective are identified with people and their improvement is not thought in terms of the growth of the institutions but the change of those who are in the institutions. Organic institutions have their own rhythm, movement and balance that are not restricted to the individuals in the institutions. The Bahai institutions introduced to the Ipapa people are organic from the Bahai perspective. They have a life of their own and their nature and character will keep changing for better when the adherents put effort in serving the needs of the Faith at all cost. Likewise if the needs are not met it also follows that the institutions will have a retarded growth and may even weather and die away. The aspect of an institution that has life permeates Bahai literature. In this regard, the Bahai Faith is identified with a living organism that has a body, various organs that form various systems all of which must be in harmony for the maturity of the Faith. Shoghi Effendi in the light of the organic nature of the Bahai Faith and institutions wrote:

Administrative efficiency and order should always be accompanied by equal degree of love, of devotion and spiritual development. Both of them are essential and to attempt to dissociate one from the other is to deaden the body of the Cause. In these days, when the Faith is still in its infancy, great care must be taken lest mere administrative routine stifles the spirit which must feed the body of the Administration itself. That spirit is its propelling force and the motivating power of its very life.<sup>22</sup>

The clash of world-views is notable in the way people relate with the institutions. At the local, national and international levels Bahais are required to obey and support the institutions according to the Bahai Law. The nature and character of the institutions should not be an issue; the issue should be the needs of the Faith at any given time and place. On the contrary, the Ipapa Bahais are familiar with competitive and opposition politics where criticisms are leveled to any institution that does not deliver and a need to start an alternative one that will deliver what the people need. The principle of opposition and alternative ways of governance is what breeds competitive politics and even multiparty democracy. Bahais are advised differently;

It is very unfortunate that some of the believers do not seem to grasp the fact that the Administrative Order, the LSA and NSAs, are the pattern for the future, however inadequately they may sometimes seem. We must obey and support these bodies. for this is the Bahai law. Until we learn to do this we cannot make real progress.... To undermine confidence in the National Body disrupts the Faith, confuses and alienates the friends and prevents the thing that the Master desired above all else, that the Bahais be as one spirit in many bodies, united and loving.<sup>23</sup>

Another institutional challenge is the failure of a majority of the Ipapa Bahais to grasp what the institutions are there for. A majority identifies the institutions with any other organized group and few see an alternative way in organizing society in the Bahai Institutions. Without grasping the importance and the value that the founders of the Faith attached to the Administrative Order, Ipapa Bahais will complain about how the LSAs, NSA or even the UHJ is failing to meet their needs or seems not to care. The realization of the higher ideal of the Administrative Order are well expressed in the word justice itself of which should characterize the Bahai Faith. In regard to justice and the Administrative Order, Shoghi Effendi wrote;

So great and transcendent is this principle of Divine Justice, a principle that must be regarded as the crowning distinction of all Local and National Assemblies, in their capacity as forerunners of the Universal House of Justice, that Bahauallah himself subordinates his personal inclination and wish to the all-compelling force of his demands and implications. ... I am restrained, however, by the binding law laid down in the Book, and am myself bereft of all worldly possessions.' 'Know thou, of a truth,' he significantly affirms these great oppressions that have befallen the world are preparing it for the advent of the most Great Justice wherewith mankind hath adorned, and yet the people are, for the most part, asleep.' 'The light of men is justice,' ... The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men.' 'No radiance,' He declares, 'can compare with that of justice. The organization of the world and the tranquility of mankind depend upon it.' 'Oh people of God!' He exclaims, 'That which traineth the world is Justice, for it is upheld by two pillars, reward and punishment. These two pillars are the sources of life to the world.'<sup>24</sup>

Institutional challenges to the Bahai ideal indicate that the understanding and value of institutions among the Ipapa community does not correspond to the Bahai teachings on Bahai institutions. On the other hand, the Bahai institutions do not have a historical identity among the Ipapa community. The world-view of the Ipapa community is coloured by the traditional chiefs who were very influential. *Ujamaa* did not give

them any prominent political space apart from mandating them to preserve cultural identity. Yet the religious matrix of transformation places institutions at a central point in social change. From the Bahai perspective, the Bahai institutions are like conduits that enable humanity to tap the blessings of the Almighty. The blessings will only be realized if and when the institutions are formed and made operational within the framework of the Writings of Bahauallah. The writings advocate for a change of attitude and mindset, the realization of which will set in motion the process of transformation. When the process takes off, the inner person is transformed towards the Bahai ideal and world-view that is manifested in the lifestyle of a person, community and in the institutions that stem from the Writings of Bahauallah.

Until the Bahai ideal ceases being the future by embracing a dynamic relationship with the Sinai culture in the now and be expressed in institutions, the glorious future of the Bahais in Ipapa will remain an enigma. They probe it with their imaginations, hopes, expectations, anticipations, prophecies, prediction and extrapolations; but until it becomes now, it remains an inexorable question mark. Thinking that they have secured the Bahai ideal without expressing it in institutions, is living under great illusion. Ironically, it is precisely the empty, unfulfilled, undetermined quality of the future that placed its most powerful demand upon responsibility and decision of the Sinai Church. Bahai institutions in Ipapa need to work within the framework of the Bahai Writings.

### **6.3 Operational Factors in the Realization of the Bahai Ideal**

The Bahai ideal is articulated in the Writings of Bahauallah. It is one thing for the Ipapa Bahais to have the Bahai ideal as an alternative plan for social reconstruction and it is another to make it work. The Ipapa Bahais need to put the ideal into program of activities. In wanting to have a religiosity that will minister to their needs, the Sinaists embraced the Bahai Faith. The Bahai Faith should therefore help the Ipapa community at individual, institutional and communal levels to cope with their existential challenges. In history, religion has been the driving force for the renaissance of cultures. When the Roman Empire collapsed, Christianity perpetuated

the empire's civilization. Christianity also salvaged modern Europe from cultural decay between 16th and 19th century. Islam united warring tribes into a brotherhood. On the other hand, religion can act as a meat-fly which accelerates the rotting of fresh meat. The Dark Ages of Europe were characterized by deep religiosity, but it was a religiosity that killed all initiative and innovation, deteriorating into pettiness and mediocrity.

It was the brilliance and dynamism of Islamic expansion that shook the slumbering European religiosity into the renaissance and the Reformation.<sup>25</sup> There should be credit to the divine imperative invoked by religious expansion that accords it the power and authority to mobilize masses towards their ideal. It is this divine imperative that the Sinaists called upon in their religiosity. Using the ritualistic dances and healing, new members were recruited into the Sinai Church. The drumming and dancing resonated well with the cultural identity of the Wanyiha. The rhythm, movement and balance in the drumming and the dancing cultivated unity and communal strength. The cultural identity of the Sinaists was not appreciated in the conversion to the Bahai Faith. The Bahai leaders seek to cultivate a Bahai ideal in Ipapa without the Ipapa context in mind.

In initiating the Bahai ideal, the Ipapa Bahai community must resonate with the International Bahai community headed by the UHJ. The Ipapa Bahai community looks up to the power and authority of the UHJ as the key to their progress. The progress is linked to the functioning of all the institutions of the Bahai Faith in Tanzania. The UHJ is infallible, a position that is fixed by the three core founders of the Faith; namely The Bab, Bahauallah and Abdul-Baha. The role of the Bahais is to follow the Bahai institutions faithfully. The directions of the UHJ are treated with a lot of dignity and are believed to be directions from God.

The dreams and visions of the Sinai Church express the need to know, evaluate and respond to reality. In striving to go beyond their limits, the Sinaists embraced the Bahai Faith. The deprivation of quality formal education, medical care, all-weather

transport and communication networks in Ipapa can be resolved by treating the causes and not the symptoms only. The Ipapa Bahai community from a religious point of view and using sociological and anthropological theories can initiate programs that will address their needs. Social transformation in Ipapa will happen when all members of the community will participate in long-term pro-active program of activities. The program of activities will ensure more secure existence for the Ipapa community. The Ipapa Bahai community should use Bahai Faith and become self-motivated agents of change. In becoming self-motivated agents of social change, Bahais are to respect the Bahai institutions because according to the Bahais, God through Bahauallah founded these institutions. Respect for institutions has nothing to do with personality, but the importance of the institution in itself. The understanding is required for the Bahai ideal to be brought into fruition.

Many Ipapa Bahais look at the institutions as occasions for leaders that want to meet their personal needs through the Bahai Faith. For instance when one is a member of the NSA or LSA chances of funding to travel away from home are very high. For others being in the institutions is a better way to gain influence over others. Time is needed for the Bahai ideal to be operational in Ipapa.

The Bahai Faith teaches that institutions must be put in place so that they may respond to human needs and aspirations where universal participation is emphasized. The Bahai institutions are perceived to be the divine avenues through which divine grace flows and assist weak humanity to build civilization of unprecedented proportions. At Ipapa and probably in many Bahai communities in Tanzania, the understanding is basically on paper but practically the situation is different. The institutional infrastructure is weak to the point that it appears many do not comprehend what is needed from them. A new religious movement needs a new set of services that it offers to the adherents and even those that are in its proximity. If it is quick to win affection and begin a new tradition of obedience, it needs a material culture which will command respect, and a flexibility of language which will win the maximum assent. In becoming self-motivated agents of social change, the Ipapa Bahai community will

burst with energy and enthusiasm to transform the world according to the Bahai ideal. However, the community is seeking attention on the basis of religion, for it to achieve her needs.

The Ipapa Bahais are in a situation where internal and structural challenges of their environment make it hard for the Faith to take root. Concerning the Institute Process, physical infrastructure is important. Part of the infrastructure includes buildings, transport and communication. In Ipapa transport and communication is poor and where available it is not reliable throughout the year. For instance, Bahai converts travel many kilometers on foot or by bicycles or on pick-ups. For example, the researcher was carried on a bicycle for over three hours from Halungu to Ipapa (photo 12). In another incidence, he had to cancel a trip from Ipapa to Chiwezi for lack of reliable means of transport. If he were to go, it would mean walking for four to five hours according to the normal rate of the residents. In this kind of a situation getting resource persons from outside so as to boost the local capacity is very demanding on those who are not used to such constraints. It is in this regard that the region has so many Bahai youths - about 300 but they do not have any person of capacity who would walk with them in the process of becoming better Bahais. This is a challenge that many respondents cited as a drawback to the growth and progress of the Faith in the area.



Photo 12: Two Bahais from Halungu assisted the researcher to move from Halungu to Ipapa. Transport and communication is a challenge in the region. This is the same river in which the Sinaists were Baptized. *Photo by the researcher*

The Bahai Faith is a literate religion. It means that a great deal of the religion is taught through the written word. The written word in this case is in English and Kiswahili. English is the language that is highly used in addition to Arabic and Persian. In a country and region where Kiswahili is the main language, rendering the English writings into Kiswahili is a great need and challenge. Many Bahais are without any adequate and advanced literature in regard to their Faith. In terms of understanding of the Faith therefore a majority follow what they have heard from others. The scope of knowledge and learning is limited. Yet Bahais advocate for the personal investigation of truth. The emphasis on one's ability to read for oneself is so great that relying on what others have said is equated to a person who is not in a position to chew food for one-self and in return others must do it for him or her.<sup>26</sup> Lack of adequate knowledge on the Bahai ideal is probably the greatest challenge. Any operation of the Bahai ideal must always depend on adequate amount of knowledge on the Bahai Faith. When the knowledge on the Bahai ideal is limited, the ability to function will also be limited. Adequate knowledge is that knowledge that is in a position to help the Ipapa Bahais

move from attraction to the faith to devotion to the Bahai ideal. Bahai pioneers in Tanzania should devote themselves to translating Bahai writings into Kinyiha.

With the necessary knowledge of the Bahai ideal, the Ipapa Bahais are to respond to their existential reality. The Ipapa Bahai community need to be specific and systematic in the process of social transformation. The stages of planning need to be observed: find out the facts, select a project, obtain finance, take action, and evaluate the project. Social-economic projects undertaken by the Bahai world community are significant not because of their size but rather because they offer new fresh and distinct models to address human needs.<sup>27</sup> The method used to keep track of what is going on in Bahai program of activities is that of project cycle management. The method entails; needs analysis, planning for action, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. When individuals, the institutions, and the community at large understand the method, realizing the Bahai ideal will be easy.

Ipapa Bahais are not highly learned to appreciate the basics of project cycle management. More time is spent in regional and national Bahai meetings and conferences than in the implementation of projects. In the meetings and conferences, the leadership of the Ipapa Bahai community spends time with the regional and national institutions either attempting an analysis of progress and shortcomings or attempting to attain a unified vision and purpose. Another resource that is utilized in this process is finances that are already scarce. Facilitating reflection meetings drains cash. The Bahai Faith is built by plans that take a definite duration. The more time people are in meetings and conferences the little they may be in a position to achieve especially if what they are to achieve is measured on a time scale.<sup>28</sup>

The systematic approach to doing things is very healthy at the high levels of the Faith but at Ipapa, a system that appreciates the level of schooling, experience and knowledge of the Bahai Faith is needed. The need to understand what works for a specific context is important so that entry points are identified. At Ipapa, local influential people could be used to identify strategies of growth and consolidation.

Such influential people could be taken for work camps in areas where program of activities are going on. Together with the community, the influential people are to identify projects for the area. Such projects should be accelerated. Nevertheless, more often than not foreigners are the ones engaged to develop the various projects the community needs to go through in action and reflection. The local community will not easily own the Faith and in most cases the ownership of the Faith will be jeopardized and dependence on foreigners will choke creativity and imagination of the local people in the progress of the Faith.

In one of the visits, the researcher found Mary Juma a Kenyan and a member of the Iringa Bahai community, taking some Ipapa Bahais through Ruhi Book 3. The dependence on foreigners seems to have crippled the Faith in Ipapa region. From the time the Sinai Church was founded, an element of outside assistance has marked the operations of the Bahai Faith in the area. The place of the local people in realizing the Bahai ideal is not as strong as that of foreigners. The community is thus much more outward-looking than inward-looking in terms of abilities, skills and resources that they need for authentic living. As one of the respondents explained, the influx of foreigners to this region was very unhealthy for the growth and consolidation of the Faith. Yes the visitors marvel at how the community was formed but they fail to understand the harm they cause. For instance, the time spent to entertain visitors should be utilized in more productive ways. A case in point is when visitors demand or request the community to entertain them using songs. In comparison with other Bahai communities in Tanzania, singing is more polished among the Ipapa Bahais. If the songs are well recorded and intellectual property rights observed, the songs would add value to the community. As observed earlier in this work, the experience with a Kenyan team of visitors who later invited a group of Ipapa youths to Kenya for a month left feelings of nostalgia among many Ipapa Bahais. They recorded the songs yes, but the proceeds did not go to those who worked hard to come up with the songs and even to sing them very well. This is against the intellectual property rights and it is exploitation. Many adherents expressed their concern on how the Ipapa songs are

recorded and nothing else is mentioned and done. Exploitation erodes trust and commitment and undermines the Bahai ideal.

The Bahai view of reality is different from the Ipapa people's view. The vision of how life should be comes with it the ways to achieve it. The effectiveness of Bahai ideal in Ipapa is a factor of the interaction between the Bahai view of reality and the Ipapa view of reality. Each view has ways to achieve it. The acceptance of the Bahai Faith by the Sinaists would make the Bahai pioneers to suppose that there is only one view of reality after the conversion. However, the two views of reality are present and influential in the Ipapa Bahai community. The Bahai view of reality is elaborate compared to the Sinai one and thus it is viewed as superior. The Bahai law and institutions govern Bahai ideal. The *Kitab-i-Aqdas* or the *Most Holy Book* of the Bahais contains Bahai Law that is to govern the Bahais. Since the book has not been translated into Kiswahili language, the Tanzanian Bahais in this region find it hard to know by themselves what they are required to do especially when Bahai Law clashes with the traditions and customs of the people. A lot of teaching is needed of which only the people who really understand the context will be in a position to carry out this task. The basic laws that seem to clash with the traditions of the Ipapa Bahais include; the Bahai law on marriage, burial, inheritance, and writing of will, non partisan politics among others. The adherence to these laws is a test to conversion and transformation that is expected to take place in the lives of all Bahais. It therefore becomes hard if not impossible for the adherents to lead authentic lives as Bahais. In adherence and obedience to the Bahai ideal the distinctiveness of the Ipapa Bahais is not outstanding.

The challenge to the Bahai pioneers is to prepare a strategy of maintaining adherents to the point of conversion and commissioning. The commissioned Bahais are the self-motivated agents of social change. They do not wait for external motivations to practice the ideals of the Bahai Faith. They understand the requirements of the Bahai ideal, they are convinced about its efficacy, and theirs is to seek the guidance of Bahauallah in their efforts to make the Bahai ideal a reality.<sup>29</sup> The irony is that over the

years in Ipapa, a majority have been attracted out of the masses who watch at a distance, few have become adherents and out of the few a small number has been converted from where the commissioned individuals have come from. The commissioned believers must reach a given percentage if the transformation on the basis of the vision of reality that the Bahai Faith proposes is to be achieved.

Globalization as the movement of goods and services from one point of the globe to another is a challenge to the fruition of the Bahai ideal in a number of ways. The movement of goods and services has established contact between societies which have hitherto been physically insulated from one another by lack of adequate physical means of communalization, and which therefore have developed very different manners and customs and outlooks. The influx of foreigners to Ipapa over a period of more than ten years has brought a shift away from the former Sinai world-view. However, technology can bring strangers physically face to face with one another in an instant, but it may take generations for their minds, and centuries for their hearts, to grow together. More than 50% of the Ipapa Bahais that were interviewed noted that, Bahai Faith in Ipapa seems to be in the hands of people who have benefited from the Faith. Those who have gone to Haifa for service or visit are seen as beneficiaries. Yet, after they come back, their outlook to their community is different and a clash of world-views takes place. For those who have served in Haifa, through their stay they encounter the cream of the material culture of the Bahai Faith. They are also exposed to a better understanding of the Bahai Faith. Having such a culture and understanding in Ipapa is their mission. In this clash, the local community expects this lot of Ipapa Bahais to be the best of the Bahais in everything that pertains to the Bahai Faith.

On the other hand, other members strive hard to make sure that they also get the benefits. The drive for benefits may cause indifference towards each other in the community. Physical proximity, not accompanied by simultaneous mutual understanding and sympathy, is apt to produce antipathy, not affection, and consequently discord, not harmony.<sup>30</sup>

The Ipapa Bahai community cannot maintain its social cohesion unless a decisive majority of its members hold in common the Bahai guiding ideas and ideals. The Bahai Institute Process is of importance in helping to raise a critical mass of the Ipapa Bahais who will be commissioned and affirmed in their service to the Faith. It is therefore paradoxical that the acceptance of the Bahai Faith by almost a whole community has not realized a critical mass. There is therefore a significant difference between acceptance of a faith and conversion to a faith in the process of social transformation at individual, communal and institutional level. When this difference is taken into consideration new initiatives of growth and consolidation will be considered. On the other hand, when this difference is played down upon, integral transformation will not be realized and in return what will happen is that confusion and lack of growth will mark the activities of the Faith.

In conclusion, raising a critical mass in Ipapa is a prerequisite. The Institute Process should start with efforts to create among the Ipapa Bahais the will for the Bahai ideal and an awareness of the possibilities for achieving it. The NSA of the Bahais of Tanzania should offer advice and practical help in tackling specific components of the Bahai ideal. To support the enterprise Bahai Writings are to be translated into Kiswahili if not in Kinyiha. The rhythm, movement and balance created by the drumming and the dancing could be used to cultivate communal spirit so that there is universal participation. Until the Bahai ideal ceases being in the future by becoming functional in the now, the glorious future of the Bahais will remain an puzzle. The Ipapa Bahais will be tired of waiting and probably another shift will be embraced. The ultimate desire is for a system that works for them at the individual, communal and institutional level. The Bahai pioneers should not think that they have secured the Ipapa Bahai community. The empty, unfulfilled, and undetermined quality of the Bahai ideal in Ipapa demands responsibility and decision among the Bahai institutions in Tanzania.

## Notes

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2. Ibid., 5.
3. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of Tanzania, *Golden Jubilee of the Bahai Faith in Tanzania 1951 – 2001*, (Dar es Salaam: Business printers Limited, 2001), 21.
4. I am indebted to Ninian Smart and Mugambi in their analysis of the dimensions of culture.
5. Kawawa Bison alias Bethlehem, Interview, Ipapa, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2005
6. Herbert Sikombe, Interview, Mwanjelwa Mbeya, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2005
7. From the “*Dawn Breakers*” and quoted by Ali Nakhjavani in a talk delivered at Haifa Israel in a gathering of Bahais working in the Bahai Gardens.
8. A. J. Toynbee, *A study of History*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 198.
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10. B. S. Tuner, *Religion and Social Theory*, (London: Heineman, 1983), 13.
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12. A. J. Toynbee, Quoting John Lock’s ‘*A letter Concerning Toleration*’ (London: Oxford University, 1956), 173.
13. Ibid., 37.
14. Bahauallah, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, (Wilmette: BPT, 1993), 73.
15. Zawadi Aly, Interview, Ipapa 27<sup>th</sup> June 2005
16. Ibid
17. Shabban Seffu, Interview, Dar es Salaam, 7<sup>th</sup> April 2002
18. Bahai Publishing Trust, *Bahai Institutions-a Compilation*, (Wilmette, 1973), 11.
19. J. Finke, *The Rough Guide to Tanzania*, (New York: Rough Guides, 2006), 513.
20. B. Bujo, *African Christian Morality*, (Nairobi: Paulines, 1990), 120.
21. J. Finke, Op cit., 11.
22. Bahai Publishing Trust, Op cit., 10.
23. Ibid., 63.
24. Ibid., 66.
25. S. Zarqani-Rene, *The Bahai Portrait*, (New Delhi: Mirat Publications, 2003), 194.
26. Bahai Publishing Trust, Op cit., 18.

27. J.N.K. Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction*, (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1995), 163.
28. Herbert Sikombe, Interview, Mwanjelwa, Mbeya, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2005
29. Ibid.
30. John Msabi, Interview, Ruaha Bahai School, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2005.
31. A. J. *Toynbee A study of History*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 213.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE BAHAI RE-INTERPRETATION OF CHRISTIAN TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES

#### 7.0 Introduction

The Sinai Church was an African Instituted Church. However, the level of Christianity was affected by lack of trained leadership. In seeking institutionalization the Sinaists embraced the Bahai Faith. Other Christian orientations in Ipapa also embraced the Bahai Faith. Christianity is a missionary religion, therefore, the events that led to the formation of the Ipapa Bahai community should pose a challenge to Christian theologians both lay and ordained. The Ipapa Bahai community indicates that, it is possible for another religion to pouch from the Christian fold. The Sinaists and others who embraced the Bahai Faith in Ipapa had not attended any training to help them align their thinking towards any religious orientation. Yet they overcame what pluralists and inclusivists would term as prejudice and stereotypes, to embrace a religious orientation of their choice.

The Ipapa Bahai community may struggle to attain the Bahai ideal but the Faith has its presence in the area. The fact is that poor and half-educated Sinaists decided on the kind of religious orientation to practice. The dominant Christians denominations in Ipapa must ask themselves why the Sinaists did not decide on them yet they have been in the "market" for longer. Still the denominations should ask why they lose some of their members to the Bahai Faith. The response to these questions will enable the Christian denominations to carry out their evangelism and discipleship in a way to recruit and retain members.

The Sinai Church was an African Instituted Church before its members enlisted as Bahais. In this regard, the Christian missiological paradigm that encourages dialogue with other religions in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries is questionable. The Christian faith cannot surrender the conviction that God, in sending Jesus Christ into the world, has taken a definitive and eschatological course of action and is extending to human beings forgiveness, justification, and a new life of joy and servanthood, which, in turn,

calls for a human response in the form of conversion.<sup>1</sup> Honest dialogue aims at exchange of ideals for better understanding of the faiths concerned. If we dialogue is there a limit to the dialogue or is it open? There should be limit to dialogue. The Ipapa community demonstrates that at the grassroots the missiological paradigm is at work. If this trend is not checked, it may be only fifty years and a majority of Christians in the world would be enlisted as Bahais. Christian leaders need to educate their faithful on the authenticity of Christianity amidst the challenge of religious pluralism. But even when that kind of education takes place the market forces in the religious sphere of life could bring new alignments in terms of religious orientations. The religion that will minister to the needs, aspirations, fears and hopes of the masses of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will win majority of adherents. It is in this regard that it is worthwhile to see how the Bahai truth and reality is presented to a Christian.

### **7.0.1 The Background to the Re-Interpretation**

Bahai Faith teaches that the human race moves from one level of consciousness to another with the guidance of the Manifestations of God. Bahauallah taught: "Know of a certainty that in every Dispensation the light of Divine Revelation hath been vouchsafed unto men in direct proportion to their spiritual capacity."<sup>2</sup> In the light of globalization, the integration of the human community will unavoidably require a measure of eventual religious integration – or at the very least synergetic coordination and interaction among the religions that the Bahai Faith claims to fulfill. If Christianity does not undertake this pursuit of integration, its universality will become an occasion of conflict with the progressive forces of integration.

The Moravians, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Last Church of God in Ipapa did not acknowledge the Sinai Church as an authentic expression of Christianity. Yet the political philosophy of Tanzania (Ujamaaism) encouraged family-hood. The Sinaists wanted to be recognized and accepted by other religious orientations in the area. The cultural identity was a challenge to the need to be included among the acceptable religious expressions. However, the Sinaists were excluded from authentic religious expressions by the Christian denominations in Mbozi. The Christian debate on

inclusivism and exclusivism in regard to religious pluralism is a pointer to where the forces of integration are headed to. From a missiological position, Christianity has attempted to understand in its own terms and from its own inner resources, the nature of the foundation of all religious belief. The Christian religion finds itself under the pressure to universalize itself to itself in the first instance, before it is in a position effectively to discharge its leadership in the universalization of religious belief of the human race.<sup>3</sup> In this move, the worst challenge is the various orientations within Christianity. Some of the orientations do not acknowledge others as authentic Christianity. In a derogatory way the Sinaists were termed as *Watu wa Mizimwi* (people who belief in ancestral spirits).

The Sinai community demonstrates that life has changes and chances and adapting is vital. The concern then became whether the Sinaists would change on their own accord, without human management, or whether they would change deliberately, consciously, with self-regulation. The leaders of the Sinai Church had a vision that they aimed at. Religious belief cannot remain essentially unaffected by human evolution. If faith were not a form of human consciousness, people would not be pressed to decide for themselves and to do so immediately. But religious belief is a fundamental part of the human experience only it varies from individual to individual, community to community, time to time and place to place. One of the major changes and chances that have affected humanity in late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries is globalization. Religion cannot remain unaffected by the forces of globalization as people enter the epoch of self-directed evolution. The entire process of re-alignment in all the spheres of life is what the Bahais capitalize on when teaching about the validity of their faith in a world that is seeking meaning in the era of globalization. Only that the Bahai Faith teaches that all re-alignment must be as taught by Bahauallah. The following quotation demonstrates the Bahai perspective to the forces that are shaping humanity:

We are indeed living in an age which, if we would correctly appraise it, should be regarded as one which is witnessing a dual phenomenon. The first signalizes the death pangs of an order, effete and godless, that has stubbornly

refused, despite the signs and portents of a century-old Revelation, to attune its processes to the precepts and ideals which that Heaven sent Faith proffered it. The second proclaims the birth pangs of an Order divine and redemptive, that will inevitably supplant the former, and within whose administrative structure an embryonic civilization, incomparable and world-embracing, is imperceptibly maturing. The one is being rolled up, and is crashing in oppression, bloodshed, and ruin. The other opens up vistas of justice, a unity, a peace, a culture, such as no age has ever seen. The former has spent its force, demonstrated its falsity and barrenness, lost irretrievably its opportunity, and is hurrying to its doom. The latter, virile and unconquerable, is plucking asunder its chains, and is vindicating its title to be the one refuge within which a sore-tired humanity, purged from its dross, can attain its destiny.<sup>4</sup>

Bahais acclaim the New World Order as a system with irresistible power guided by the teachings of Bahauallah. The world's equilibrium has been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this New World Order. Humankind's ordered life hath been revolutionalized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System.<sup>5</sup> The spiritual forces unleashed upon the world by the Bahai Revelation are seen to be the responsible factors to the unpeaceful situation in the world. For the Bahais the only solace for humanity will be to accept the Bahai teachings and appropriate them in ordinary life by recognizing Bahauallah's mission to humanity. It appears that the Bahai Faith celebrates any kind of crises and would like people to believe that the world is falling apart. In a religious pluralistic world, every religion must develop its selling points.

From the Bahai teaching activities in Ipapa, Bahai Faith becomes an agent of evolution that starts with the core aspect of an individual – one's spirituality, and proceeds to the existential reality. People will always go for a faith that will reinforce their contemporary experiences. In spite of the challenges to the Bahai ideal in Ipapa, the fact remains that, over ninety-nine per cent of the Sinaists embraced the Bahai Faith. Although the Sinai Church was an African Instituted Church, the re-interpretation of Christian teachings and practices endeared its members to the Bahai Faith. It is with this in mind that Christians need to be aware of the Bahai Faith and how it re-interprets the Christian teachings and practices to the point of getting adherents and converts from the Christian religion. It is in the best interest of

Christianity if this knowledge is well articulated and taken as means to better the Christian charge of evangelism.<sup>6</sup>

The teachings of the Bahai Faith anticipate that the faith will at one point be at direct conflict with other religions that it seeks to re-interpret. If the Bahais continue to teach their faith to non-Bahais, a day will soon come when the Bahai Faith will have so permeated the world that no one will dare ignore it.<sup>7</sup> The Sinai Church is an African Instituted Church that accepted the Bahai Faith. The current chapter illustrates that the Sinaists' shift to Bahai Faith is of significance to Christianity. The Bahai teaching on progressive revelation of truth and the re-interpretation of Christianity are a focus in this illustration.

### 7.1 The Progressive Revelation of Truth

The doctrine of progressive revelation of truth as taught by the Bahai Scriptures rests on the first three important principles about the Bahai Faith, (Appendix IX ). In regard to the progressive theory of revelation, the *Most Holy Book (Kitab-i-Aqdas)* of the Bahais opens with the statement:

The first duty prescribed by God to His servants is the recognition of him who is the Dayspring of his revelation and the fountain of his law, who representeth the Godhead in both the kingdom of his cause and the world of his creation... to observe every ordinance of him who is the desire of the world.<sup>8</sup>

The quotation refers to the three personalities who are the frame of reference in Bahai theology and practice. The personalities are; God, God's servants, and the Dayspring of God's revelation or the Manifestation of God. The interaction of the three personalities forms the basis of the doctrine of progressive revelation of truth. Bahai Faith teaches that God is transcendent and that the human mind cannot be in a position to fathom God. This is because from eternity God has been veiled in the transcendent sanctity of his exalted self, and will everlastingly continue to be wrapt in the impenetrable mystery of his unknowable essence. For this reason God appoints a perfect soul to be his mouth-piece or manifestation at different times and different

settings. He does this out of his transcendent concern for the wellbeing of human beings. Quoting Bahauallah, Shoghi Effendi states:

And since there can be no tie of direct intercourse to bind the one true God with his creation, and no resemblance whatever can exist between the transient and eternal, the contingent and the absolute, he hath ordained that in every age and dispensation a pure soul be made manifest in the kingdom of earth and heaven.

Bahai Faith teaches that the Manifestations of God or the pure souls reveal the 'religion of God' which is eternal both in the past and in the future. In every age and cycle God has, through his Manifestations recreated all things. In recreating all things whatsoever reflects in the heavens and on the earth the signs of his glory may not be deprived of the outpourings of God's mercy, nor despair of the showers of his boundless grace.<sup>10</sup> The earth has not been deprived of God's bounty, and of his word. Religious truth is relative and not absolute while divine revelation is orderly, continuous and progressive and not spasmodic or final. When the Manifestations of God appear they come to renew the eternal covenant that God has with the human race since he has created them in his own image to know him and worship him. In the process of knowing and worshiping him, people need the social teachings of religion to be renewed so that the 'religion of God' is relevant at all times. The same spirit of renewal comes at different times and acquires different names for example; Abraham, Moses, Krishna, Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ, Muhammad, Bab and currently Bahauallah. The personalities listed as Manifestations of God are the founders of the great religions of the world. Bahai Faith is the recent religion in the renewal pattern. It claims to be the fulfillment of all the other religions. According to Bahai Faith the renewal or rebirth of all past religions happens by accepting the Bahai teachings. Nevertheless, the idea of renewal is more philosophical than functional since it is by becoming Bahais that renewal and rebirth are attained. With regard to becoming Shoghi Effendi notes:

...Nor does the Bahai Revelation, claiming as it does to be the culmination of a prophetic cycle and the fulfillment of the promise of all ages, attempt, under any circumstances, to invalidate those first and everlasting principles that

animate and underlie the religions that have preceded it. ... It regards them in no other light except as different stages in the eternal history and constant evolution of one religion, Divine and indivisible, of which it itself forms an integral part. ... Far from aiming at the overthrow of the spiritual foundation of the world's religious systems, its avowed, its unalterable purpose is to widen their basis, to restate their fundamentals, to reconcile their aims, to reinvigorate their life, to demonstrate their oneness, to restore the pristine purity of their teachings, to coordinate their functions and to assist in the realization of their highest aspirations.<sup>11</sup>

The Bahai belief and teaching of fulfillment and renewal implies that the re-interpretation of other religions is vital. In the re-interpretation the starting point is that God is one, religion is one and humanity is one. Following this line of thought Christ is equated with all the other Manifestations, except that each Manifestation is unique according to the needs of the times he lived.

The divine prophets have revealed and founded religion. They have laid down certain laws and heavenly principles for the guidance of mankind. They have taught and promulgated the knowledge of God, established praiseworthy ethical ideals and inculcated the highest standards of virtues in the human world.<sup>12</sup>

The Bahai teaching on progressive revelation is coupled with the idea of renewal.

Gradually these heavenly teachings and foundations of reality have been clouded by human interpretations and dogmatic imitations of ancestral beliefs .... Soon after their (heavenly messengers) departure from this world, the essential truth of their teachings was lost sight of and dogmatic imitations adhered to.<sup>13</sup>

From a sociological perspective, religion begins by offering simple aid to harassed and bewildered humanity. It culminates by giving to a people the unity of morals and belief which appear to be favourable to leadership and art. Religion then ends by advocating for the realization of the lost paradise. Meanwhile among the oppressed another myth arises, gives new form to human hope, new courage to human effort, and after centuries of chaos builds another civilization. In this perspective, religion is socially conditioned and is a factor of social trappings. The Bahai perspective traces the source of religion from God Himself. In every dispensation the light of Divine revelation has been vouchsafed to men and women in direct proportion to their spiritual capacity.<sup>14</sup>

The progressive doctrine of revelation describes religion at various points of growth. The theory also explains religion at various points of reception and finally predicts the aftermath of religion after a period of acceptance and practice. The cycle of the 'Religion of God' is such that the appearance of the Manifestations is the 'spiritual springtime', it is the 'divine splendour', it is the 'heavenly bounty', the 'breeze of life', the rising of the 'sun of reality'. After a period of time the 'life giving spring' ends in 'fruitful summer'. When it reaches the highest point it will begin to decline and descend, and the 'spiritual summer' will be followed by autumn, when growth and development are arrested. Breezes change into blighting winds, and the unwholesome season dissipates the beauty and freshness of the gardens, plains and bowers.<sup>15</sup>

The imagery of the four traditional seasons means that attraction and goodwill do not remain, divine qualities are changed, the radiance of the hearts is dimmed, the spirituality of the souls is altered, virtues are replaced by vices, and holiness and purity disappear. Only the name of the 'Religion of God' remains, and the esoteric forms of the divine teachings. The foundations of the 'Religion of God' are destroyed and annihilated, and nothing but forms and customs exist. Divisions appear, firmness is changed into instability, and spirits become dead; hearts languish, souls become inert, and winter arrives. In this state, the coldness of ignorance envelopes the world and the darkness of human error prevails. After this comes indifference, disobedience, inconsiderateness, indolence, baseness, animal instincts, and the coldness and insensibility of stones.<sup>16</sup> In this regard the social laws of religion change with the times unlike the spiritual laws that are eternal. The renewal of the spiritual laws brings about the renewal of the social laws that help humanity to adjust to the times they are living in. When humanity creatively adhere to the renewed laws a divine civilization accrues. The civilization must in this case depend upon the scope of knowledge and powers of judgment that the manifestations enhance among humanity from time to time. Abdul- Baha states:

Praise and thanksgiving be unto Providence that out of all the realities in existence He has chosen the reality of man and has honoured it with intellect and wisdom, the most luminous lights in either world. Through the agency of this great endowment, He has in every epoch cast on the mirror of creation new and wonderful configurations. If we look objectively upon the world of being, it will become apparent that from age to age the temple of existence has continually been established with a fresh grace, and distinguished with an ever-varying splendor, deriving from wisdom and the power of thought.<sup>17</sup>

With regard to change and renewal of religion, the idea of the end of the world as taught by Christians is given a new interpretation. For instance the coming of Bahauallah is understood to be the second coming of Christ. That is to say Bahauallah is Christ in another name. In narrating the search and wait for Christ in mid nineteenth century, Bahai literature documents the search focused on the Bahai Faith. The attempt is to inform Christians that Christ surely returned amidst the waiting. William Sears notes:

...This is the story of a modern search for the Holy Grail, the cup of everlasting life. It began in the land from which the three kings came to Bethlehem guided by a bright new star. There was now another sign in the heavens, a great fiery comet. Many were awed, many were frightened, many were cheered, for it was at a time when both the East and the West were caught up in a millennial zeal.<sup>18</sup>

William Sears shares the Bahai Faith from an investigative journalism perspective. He points to how Christ came as a thief in the night.<sup>19</sup> In his words he says that "... and in which I submit a solution to the strange case of the missing millennium. In solving that century old mystery of why Christ did not return as expected, I discovered the Bahai Faith and Bahauallah."<sup>20</sup>

When teaching Christians, the Bahais will always quote various biblical verses that demonstrate the return of Christ like a thief in the night and the promise of the Comforter. To this end many Bahai sources and scholars are quoted in presenting the Bahai case to the Christian. The return of Christ is a topic that one hears as Bahais present the Bahai Faith to Christians. The first promise that Jesus made to his disciples is here quoted: "And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him

privately, saying, 'Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world.'<sup>21</sup> Jesus answered and said that there would be lots of wars and rumours of wars and many would come in His name but they should not be deceived and then gave vividly his first promise: "...And when this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come..."<sup>22</sup> The Bahais then would take the Christian through the history of Christianity and wisely point to the fact that by the 1840s Christianity was being taught on an organized scale even in the heart of the African continent.<sup>23</sup>

The second promise that the Bahais quote is the one that Christ gave concerning the land of Israel and Jerusalem thus:

And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive unto all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles (non-Jews), until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled... And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory...<sup>24</sup>

According to the Bahai re-interpretation of the above scripture, Jesus promised that he would return to earth when the Jews would be back to their homeland following the period of banishment. On the fulfillment of this promise, Bahais reckon that, since AD 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, it was not until 1844 that the Jews were granted permission to go back to Jerusalem. It means that, for the Bahais the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled in 1844 when the Turkish government signed the edict of toleration.<sup>25</sup> In the book of Revelation, it is prophesied that Jerusalem will be trodden under foot for 1260 days. Using the scale of one day equals one year, Bahais calculate the year 1260 in the Muslim calendar to be the same as 1844 AD. The edict of toleration and the prophesy in the book of Revelation become a double proof that for sure the times of the Gentiles ended in 1844. It therefore means that the times of the gentiles are the times for Muslim occupation of Jerusalem.

With regard to his return Christ gave a third promise that is of interest to the Bahais when they are teaching Christians. The third promise talks about the abomination of desolation, spoken by Daniel the prophet:

How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed... Understand O Son of man; for at the time of the end shall be the vision.<sup>26</sup>

The Bahais interpret that, Daniel promised that 2,300 years would pass before the sanctuary would be cleansed. Before the passage of this time people would have fallen into a state of 'abomination', without love of God; then the Messiah would appear and restore their faith. The Bahais calculate 2,300 years from the Decree to rebuild Jerusalem in 457 BC, and that gives them, 1843. The calculation also gives the Bahais the date of Christ's return.

On the three promises, the calculations point the fulfillment year to be 1844. However, before giving the Bahai teachings and interpretations of 1844, other Bible prophecies relating to the return of Christ need be underlined. When Christ was speaking about his return on some occasions he refers to the return of His Spirit in the Glory of the Father.<sup>27</sup>

Following the calculations the Bahais would have Christians believe that Christ was to return in 1844 and in a different name - the Glory of the Father. The Bahais do not just stop at the year and the name, they also teach on how Christ will return. Christ's return is seen as a time of testing and judgment which cannot happen if and when he returns in his name, on the clouds, and accompanied by all the fanfare described in the Bible. Parallel to this return, the Bahais claim that, a majority of the Jews rejected Christ, the messiah, on the grounds that he did not fulfill the literal interpretations of the prophecies on the coming of the Messiah. Bahais on this note caution Christians not to interpret the Bible literally and make the same mistake as the Jewish institutions and the community. To drive the Christian to the Bahai conclusions on the return of Christ, Bahais teach that, Christ will come like a thief in the night and will require a spiritual eye and spiritual ear to see and hear him.<sup>28</sup> The logic is that Christ returned in

1844. in new name-the Glory of the Father and the coming was not according to beliefs, standards or expectations of anybody.

The Bahais would want the Christian seeker to want to know, what really happened in 1844. Before the conclusions are made another pointer to the return of Christ is made by physical signs that accompany a great event on earth. A parallel is made here to the star that the wise men followed and the concourse on high singing to welcome the birth of Jesus. The Bahais point to the fact that many milleniumists and Christian scholars had calculated the coming of Christ to be in 1844 as attested by the Adventists and the German Templars who built their homes on the side of Mount Carmel awaiting the return for they thought the Glory of God would appear there.<sup>29</sup> When the anticipation of the Christian seeker bears curiosity it is at that point that the history, the teachings and practices of the Bahai Faith are systematically expounded.

The Christian is informed that on May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1844 Ali Mohammed (Bab) announced his mission of inaugurating a new religious dispensation and preparing the way for Bahauallah the prophet founder of the Bahai Faith. On the same day Abdul-Baha the son of Bahauallah was born. At the end of the discussion, another meeting may be set and with time the seeker becomes attracted to the Bahai Faith and literature is offered if one is capable for unaided study of the Bahai Writings. Visits are made to the seeker(s) and the seeker(s) may also accompany Bahais on several teaching occasions. Through this method the Ipapa Bahais were made. The dreams and visions the Sinai community prior to the introduction of the Bahai Faith had prepared the journey in advance. It was therefore easy for Bahais to communicate the Bahai Faith to the members of the Sinai Church owing to their context and situation.

The Sinaists as members of an African Instituted Church were not versed in theological discourse. Taking them through the doctrine of progressive revelation was to assume they had the ability to engage with the Bahai pioneers on the same level. The Sinaists had no knowledge of the history of world civilizations, history of religions and the impact of those religions to their practitioners. The use of the

traditional seasons (spring, summer, autumn, and winter) to illustrate the progressive revelation is not adequate to a people who are not conversant with these kind of weather periods. The Bahai pioneers would have started by understanding the context of the Sinaists before teaching them the Bahai Faith. After this understanding, Bahai Faith would be communicated in terms that the Sinaists would understand.

Although there is no uniformity in Christian eschatology, Christians do await the second coming of Christ. For Bahais to claim that Christ has come again in the person of Bahauallah is to teach realized eschatology which implies the realization of God's kingdom on earth. The kingdom of God on earth implies well-being, peace harmony, prosperity, being untouched by violence and misfortune, bodily health, abundance a long life and security. The struggles and the hurting that Christians experience are an indication that Christ has not yet returned. Christians in general will not accept the Bahai teaching on progressive revelation. Only believers who are not deep rooted in Christian Scriptures will entertain that teaching or have other intentions in accepting this teaching.

Using the doctrine of progressive revelation, Bahai Faith advocates religious pluralism. However, this pluralism is just to place the Bahai Faith in the arena of other faiths. The core aim of the doctrine is to win other faiths into the Bahai Faith. In winning members of other faiths into the Bahai Faith, Bahai Faith teaches that, the 'Religion of God' goes through renewal. The recent renewal is in the Bahai Faith. By implication members of other faiths should abandon their faiths and embrace the Bahai Faith because it is in the Bahai Faith that the spirit of God is at work. This teaching does not appreciate the renewal that is evident on every religion that the Bahai Faith attempts to re-interpret.

## **7.2 Christian Doctrines Given a New Meaning in Bahai Faith**

### **7.2.0 Jesus Christ the Son of God**

In the book *Some Answered Questions*, Laura Barney records Abdul-Baha's answers to the questions related to the prophets, to human destiny, his attributes and powers, to

immortality and the life hereafter, which has long been cherished as an ideal introduction to this new age of universal religion. The book is mainly used by Bahais to teach Christians for it presents a re-interpretation of Christian teachings and practices but from a Bahai perspective. In the book and related Bahai writings Christian subjects are given a re-interpretation that the researcher found worthy to highlight for they were used to teach the members of the Sinai Church the Bahai Faith. One wonders how other Christians would respond to the same re-interpretation.<sup>30</sup>

In the light of the nature of Christ, Bahais accuse Christians of misunderstanding and misrepresentation of truth. To the Bahais, the idea of Christ's greatness is not on the fact that he is the only begotten Son of God but because of the Holy Spirit of God that was active in him and in his life. The Holy Spirit of God is the principle that unites all the prophets of God.

It was the Holy Spirit reflected in Christ which was the means of His honour and greatness. It was not the person of Jesus that was important but the Holy Spirit of Christ which shone within Him. The same principle was true of Moses and of every other Messenger of God<sup>31</sup>

The kind of argument and discussion that ensues is compounded by the description of Adam who had no mother or father yet Christians do not regard him the way they regard Jesus. Bahais point the Christian seeker to the illustration of the light and the mirror. In this illustration, God is the source of light the Holy Spirit the rays of that light and the Manifestation of God the mirror that reflects the light. According to the Bahai Faith the title Son of God is symbolic and functional and should not be taken literary the way Christians do. The target of this discussion from a Bahai point of view is to highlight the fact that Christ came in the station of the Son, and was misunderstood. Bahauallah has come in the station of the Father and has been misunderstood.<sup>32</sup>

The discussion about the nature of Christ is a thorny one even among Christians. The Arian controversy in the Early Church illustrates this fact very well. Arius believed

and taught that the Son is not equal with the Father for there was a time that the son was not. The Nicene creed was formulated to counter this trend of thought.<sup>33</sup> Even to date many Christians settle for the fact that the nature of Christ is a mystery that infinite mind cannot fathom and describe. Therefore, when a Christian who is not versed in biblical knowledge and the history of Christianity is confronted with such an argument many yield or avoid any discussion that will manifest their ignorance. To those that yield a crisis of faith arises from which credulity forces them to seek for answers that the Christian faith may not be willing to provide. The situation that Yohannes Simbowe was in as he sought baptism may illustrate this point. Still many Bahais with a Christian background express their satisfaction in the picture that Christ is given from a Bahai perspective. It means that the Bahai Faith persuades their reason towards something that they can understand and live with unlike the mystery that the Christian Faith teaches.

### **7.2.1 The Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**

From the Sinai catechism, Christ fulfilled his promise to be with his disciples by sending the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Appendix VI p. 13). The Bahai teachers took the Sinaists still to another mystery that they may not have been conversant with in terms of history and the clear position of the Sinai Church. The Sinaists took the Trinity to be a *fumbo* (a riddle or mystery). Church history demonstrates that, the Council of Nicaea declared that Christ was truly God, and that he was co-eternal with the Father and of one substance with the Father.<sup>34</sup> After the early Church settled for definition and understanding of the nature of Christ, the place of the Holy Spirit became the point of debate. The Holy Spirit was defined as the Spirit of the Father whom with the Son is worshiped and glorified . His divinity was defined which now led to the doctrine of the Triune God. The doctrine has begged controversy throughout church history. Christians who are not schooled in theological matters of their faith may not understand the Church's and denominational stand on the doctrine. The Bahais use this ignorance to teach the Christian seeker, the Bahai

Faith but from the Christian foundations. Bahauallah the prophet founder of the Bahai Faith with regard to trinity teaches that:

God is One, Single, Unknowable, Indefinable, Indivisible and Infinite. There is no exception to this truth. God is exalted above the knowledge of humanity. As he cannot be described, let alone measured and divided therefore there can be no Trinity other than in symbol.<sup>35</sup>

With regard to Trinity Bahais teach that, in every revealed religion there is a Trinity though in symbol and it is to be understood in this way: There is (i) the Giver, (ii) the Gift and (iii) the Receiver. God is the Giver, the Messenger of God is the Receiver and the Holy Spirit is the Gift. Illustrated differently God is the sun (the Giver), Christ is the mirror (the Receiver), the Holy Spirit is the reflection of the sun which shines in that mirror (the Gift). This same Trinity has existed in each of the great religions, and has nothing to do with the oneness of God. Nor does it in any way challenge His infinity or singleness.<sup>36</sup>

....the Essence of Oneness (God), with its infinite perfections and attributes – became visible in the mirror. The meaning is not that the Sun, which is essence of the Divinity, became divided and multiplied for the Sun is one – but it appeared in the Mirror. This is why Christ said: The Father is in the Son.<sup>37</sup>

### 7.2.2 The Resurrection

The Sinai catechism is not explicit on the topic of resurrection. Resurrection is implied when teaching about the future joy with God for believers and moaning for non-believers (Appendix VI p. 11). Mainstream Christianity believes and teaches that Christ died and rose again after three days. Citing some Bible verses,<sup>38</sup> Bahais point Christians to a symbolic rather than a physical resurrection of Christ. Bahais believe and teach that if the greatness of Christ were to be based on His physical ascent into heaven, then he was not unique. Elijah and Enoch are quoted to demonstrate the fact that Christ was not the first to ascend to heaven in a physical body. The physical resurrection is also against science meaning it is not reasonable while for the Bahais

any religious teaching that does not adhere to the rules of science and reason is superstition.

Therefore we say that the meaning of Christ's resurrection is as follows: The disciples were troubled and agitated after the martyrdom of Christ. The reality of Christ, which signifies his teachings, his bounties, his perfections, and his spiritual power, was hidden and concealed for two or three days after his martyrdom, and was not resplendent and manifest.... The cause of Christ was like a lifeless body; and when after three days the disciples became assured and steadfast, and began to serve the Cause of Christ, and resolved to spread the Divine teachings, putting his counsels into practice, ... his Religion found life....<sup>39</sup>

From the above quotation, resurrection according to Bahai teaching is the birth of the individual into spiritual life. It comes through the gift of the Holy Spirit bestowed upon the individual by Christ or other Messengers of God. The grave from which the individual rises is the grave of ignorance and negligence of God. The sleep from which the individual awakes from is the dormant spiritual condition, in which many await the dawn of the New Day of God. The day of resurrection is also the day of judgment when the individual hears the Messenger of God.

The conclusion of the discussion on resurrection points to the belief that the Messenger of God for this day is Bahauallah who is calling upon all humanity to arise from their graves of doubt and error, just as Christ called them. Bahais believe and teach that, Bahauallah has breathed the words of God upon humanity, and all those who are quickened by this life-giving spirit, attain to the 'Day of Resurrection' and are thus delivered from the graves of spiritual death. The mysteries of the Resurrection Day ... have become manifest, but the people are heedless and veiled...<sup>40</sup>

The discussion is aimed to attract the seeker to the life giving spirit – the teachings of Bahauallah. For the Bahais the 'Day of Resurrection and Judgment' has dawned and it is upon humanity to make up its mind.

### 7.2.3 Baptism

The Sinaists practiced immersion baptism as a symbol of membership and readiness to lead a new life in Christ (Appendix VI p. 13). The ritual of baptism has caused as many disputes and divisions within Christian ranks as have the differences of opinion regarding Christology and the Trinity. Bahais capitalize on this to teach their version of the doctrine. The Bible teaches that, except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.<sup>41</sup> The forms and rituals of baptism are three; immersion, sprinkling and spiritual. Each Christian orientation take the form that persuades them to be the authentic and reasonable one. Bahais point to the fact that, true significance of baptism as taught by Christ has vanished in a maze of human-made and often conflicting rituals. Bahauallah teaches as follows on the inner significance of baptism:

As the body becomes purified and wholesome through the use of water to cleanse it, in like manner the soul of man becomes cleansed and freed from impurities when bathed in the spirit of belief in God. The meaning of baptism can be expressed in these words: Oh God! As my body is washed free of physical blemishes by this water, in the same way cleanse and sanctify my soul from the impure things which are not worthy of Thy presence.<sup>42</sup>

True baptism according to Bahais is not with material water. It is with symbolic water – the water of knowledge and belief in God. The knowledge, the love and teachings of God as given to humanity by the Messengers of God are the water that purifies human souls. In this regard Bahais interpret the Bible symbolically for their own motives – one of which is to win Christians to the Bahai Faith. Apparently not many Christians are used to any hermeneutical skills that are given to pastors and priests while in training. However the Bahais by the use of their writings that re-interpret Christianity are in a position to hold very informed religious debates that leave a majority of their Christian targets in wonder of what to say.<sup>43</sup>

The Bahai view on baptism aims at pointing the would be Bahai adherent (seeker) to the fact that in every religion there is an outward form of demonstrating one's belief in the Messenger of God and thus being accepted into his faith. In mainstream

Christianity it is baptism, in Judaism it is circumcision and in Bahai Faith it is the declaration of belief in the form of signing a card. The purpose of each of these acts is identical. Each is a sign of rebirth, renewal, purification and acceptance of the Messenger of God. Baptism methods according to Bahai teachings vary from age to age and from one Messenger to the other. The Sinaists seekers were made to understand that habit, superstition and time have killed the spirit and hidden the true meaning of baptism. In its place, the outward sign of water has been advocated and people permit themselves to be baptized whether they have the inner belief or not.

#### **7.2.4 The Bread and the Wine**

The teachings and practices of the Sinai Church required the Sinaists to receive the Holy Communion especially during Easter (Appendix VI p. 10). The elements of the Holy Communion are another Christian subject that is of interest to the Bahais as they teach Christians. Bread and wine are the elements that Jesus used during the last meal that he shared with his disciples. Since he commanded his followers to remember him always when they meet, bread and wine took a central place in what came to be known as the Holy Communion. Adding to the last supper, Christ on several occasions invited people to feed on him and to drink of him since he is the living bread and the water of life.<sup>44</sup> The unsuspecting seeker from a Christian background is taken through the historical controversies of the Holy Communion.

The Christian form of worship as initiated by Christ and institutionalized by the disciples was too simple to impress either the Greeks or the Romans. Both wanted images and priests and even sacrifices to have dignity in the Christian worship. Church history demonstrates that, by the end of the second century priests and rites were added to Christian worship.<sup>45</sup> The bread and wine came to be conceived as changed by priestly act of consecration into the body and blood of Christ. After the consecration the bread and wine were seen as a sacrifice offered by the priest, and presented to God as a repetition of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Then, in an intense and moving ceremony, the worshippers partook of the very substance of their saviour.

The Bahai re-interpretation of bread and wine follows the statement of the problem. To the Bahais, the bread signifies the heavenly food to be found in the teachings of Christ. "If any man eat of this bread" and "drink of my blood" means that if any human believes in Christ, accepts him, and lives according to Christ's teachings, he will gain everlasting life. The words of the Manifestations of God have the capacity to recreate humanity, hence their words are regarded as creative.<sup>46</sup>

### 7.2.5 Heaven and Hell

The catechism of the Sinai Church recognized *Jehanamu* (hell) as place of torment and punishment for all wrong doers while *Mbinguni* (heaven) to be place of joy and bliss with God (Appendix VI p. 12). Heaven and hell form part of any discussion between a Bahai and a Christian. Bahais believe that the references to 'Paradise', to 'hell-fire', to reward and punishment', are used symbolically. Heaven and hell are not a matter of geography. Closeness to God is heaven, remoteness from him is hell. Heaven is harmony with the will of God and unity with other human beings.<sup>47</sup>

Many Christians accept Christ either to enter heaven or to escape hell. Few accept and serve Christ out of the love they have for him and the trust that they have put on him. It therefore follows that, when given a version of symbolic heaven and hell in a very logical way, the ground of their faith sinks and credulity sets in. The situation creates a crisis of faith that makes the Christian vulnerable to the whims of the Bahai. It is worse if the Christian is not versed in biblical and doctrinal knowledge that will help in the discourse. The other imbalance is the ignorance of the Christian seeker when it comes to the Bahai Faith.

### 7.2.6 The Purpose of Life

To many Christians, the purpose of life according to God's intentions changed after the fall of man.<sup>48</sup> After the fall, the relationship between humanity and God was based on humanity's efforts to reach a God that was very remote. God retreated to his abode and human beings were left to themselves in a harsh world. Philosophies based on the

existence of humanity in the world have been as old as humanity. The normative Christian perspective on the purpose of life is based on the fall while looking forward to the lost paradise and how it can be attained and for many it will happen when Christ will return to earth and establish his kingdom. Bahais point to the Christian the clause in the Lords prayer (... your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is done in heaven...) which demonstrates the wish of Christ that his kingdom be established here on earth in the Now.

The Bahai Faith aims at the development of the individual and society, through the acquisition of spiritual virtues and powers. Bahais teach that, humanity's supreme honour and real happiness lie in self-respect, in high resolves and noble purposes, in integrity and moral quality, in immaculacy of mind. Humanity is therefore admonished in the Bahai Writings to taste the heavenly food of truly human qualities and to drink to the fill from the crystalline waters of the bounties which belong to true humanity.<sup>49</sup> True humanity implies the Bahai understanding about the true nature of human beings in God's perspective:

The purpose of the one true God ... in revealing himself unto men is to lay bare those gems that lie hidden within the mine of their true and inmost selves.  
or

The purpose of the one true God in manifesting himself is to summon all mankind to truthfulness and sincerity, to piety and trustworthiness, to resignation and submissiveness and wisdom. His object is to array every man with the mantle of a saintly character, and to adorn him with the ornament of holy and goodly deeds.<sup>50</sup>

Bahai Faith advocates a purpose founded and purpose lived life. In this regard, Bahais are to be distinguished in terms of character and service to humanity. The praiseworthy character and service to humanity is an act of worship that Bahais must possess and practice at all times. The purpose of life according to Bahai Faith is to know and to love God, a fact that is to be recounted each day by Bahais as they recite the obligatory prayers. In the process of knowing and loving God, one is to acquire virtue and intelligence and apply them in bringing peace and unity to humanity. Humanity should expand the Godlike human faculties to divine dimensions.<sup>51</sup>

The purposeful life according to Bahai Faith has its basic challenge when the spirituality of human life is not appreciated. Failure to acknowledge the spirituality of human life has resulted to imperialism, nationalism, racism, materialism and sectarianism. All have brought humanity to the verge of the supreme disaster foretold by prophetic passages in the Sacred Writings of all major religions in the world. In the desire to create a New World Order or Civilization, Abdul-Baha<sup>52</sup> wrote a treatise which fills the wide gap separating technical politics and technical economics from the very purpose of human creation, the establishment of righteousness on earth:

True civilization will unfurl its banner in the midmost heart of the world whenever certain number of its distinguished and high-minded sovereigns—the shining exemplars of devotion and determination — shall, for the good and happiness of all mankind, arise, with firm resolve and clear vision to establish the Cause of Peace the object of general consultation ....<sup>53</sup>

Civilization according to Bahai Faith is an organism sustained by an all-permeating and guiding spirit — an organism in which the units can never be equal but every unit has its function to render to the whole body.<sup>54</sup> The aim of the Bahais is to align all humanity to the all-permeating and guiding spirit. However, as they do so the scope of knowledge and the powers of judgment among the Ipapa community was minimal. The members of the Sinai Church used their power of discrimination and accepted the Bahai Faith in order to be party to the civilization that the Bahais are building. The amount of information that has been passed to this community can only be tested by time and experience on how they participate in the Bahai ideal. However, as recorded in chapter six there are challenges that the Bahais in Ipapa and Tanzania need to take into consideration, for the Bahai ideal to be realized in Ipapa and in Tanzania.

The above cited Christian teachings and practices are among others that Bahais cling on when they want to win Christians into the Bahai Faith. The hermeneutics involved is above the knowledge and experience of those that are not versed in biblical knowledge and church history. When the cited teachings and doctrines are re-interpreted, the foundations of Christianity in the mind of the Christian seeker fall

apart. The Bahais are quick to point out that at the coming of each Manifestation of God the souls of humanity must be tested;

Know verily that the purpose underlying all these symbolic terms and abstruse allusions, which emanate from the Revealers of God's Holy Cause, hath been to test and prove the peoples of the world; that thereby the earth of the pure and illumined hearts may be known from the perishable and barren soil.<sup>55</sup>

In a very subtle way a different hermeneutic seems to characterize the Bahai rendering of the Holy Scriptures they interact with. Having broad scope of knowledge, the Bahais use the history of Christianity and Judaism; analogies from present circumstance of the Sinaists and lastly drawing from the Bahai Writings present a case that crowns Bahai Faith as the religion of the age from whatever perspective one looks at it. The kind of hermeneutic is foreign to the Sinaists with a modicum understanding of Christianity though they were genuinely religious. The Bahai pioneers used the teachings and practices, the dreams and visions of the Sinai Church as an occasion to teach the Bahai Faith. The experiences and the context of the Sinai Church was thus secondary to the need to teach the Bahai Faith. This is a challenge for the realization of conversion or the Bahai ideal at Ipapa.

### **7.3 The Response of the Sinaists to the Bahai Re-interpretation of Christianity**

The Sinaists welcomed the Bahai pioneers and gave them a chance to teach the Bahai Faith. The Sinai religious teachings and practices formed their convictions about life and to change them is substantially to change their lives. Convictions are tenaciously held formative beliefs of a community or of an individual person.<sup>56</sup> The re-interpretations that the Bahais gave to the Sinai Church was based on their understanding of the Christian religion as taught by the core figures of the Bahai Faith. To the members of the Sinai Church, the Bahais hold a better grasp of Christianity compared to Christians who have not encountered the Bahai Faith. To teach the Bahai Faith, there was a need to understand the historical background of the Sinai Church and what that background meant to the Sinaists. The religious aspect of the background was catered for unlike the social, economic and political aspects of the background. The future of the Sinaists was in turn expanded to a direction that

promised them of their survival. The aspirations of the Sinai Church were triggered in a manner that the Bahais did not realize. For the Sinai Church, the social, political and economic aspects were not divorced from the religious aspect.

The Sinaists did not possess any vast knowledge in biblical knowledge; howbeit they had welcomed Zawadi Aly to teach them the Christian religion only for him to direct them to Bahai Faith. The Bahais presented Christianity as a form of religion that had lost its vitality and therefore the Sinaists needed a religion that would minister to their felt needs in a reasonable way. The re-interpretation of the second coming of Christ appears to have caught them unawares. The religious excitement that they got is fondly remembered by the Ipapa Bahais that were members of the Sinai Church.<sup>57</sup> The relationship between the visions and dreams that they had documented and the Bahai interpretation, made it clear to the Sinaists that the Bahai Faith was the awaited religion.

The Bahai presentation of the interplay between permanence and change, and of being and becoming astounded the Sinaists for to them it was only in dreams and visions that they had a sense of reality that seemed prophetic. However, the logical conclusions that resulted from the encounter seemed to be the answer to the Sinaists long awaited fulfillment of their dreams and visions. The Bahais appeared to be aware of that which is always is and has no becoming (eternal truths of the religion of God), and that which is always becoming and never is (the social teachings of the religion of God). In response to this riddle of being and becoming, the religion of God is eternal and only the social teachings change according to the times and the needs, aspirations, hopes and fears of humanity at any given time.

Owing to the Sinaists context of being at the periphery of political and economic development in Tanzania, the Bahai form of administration and the view of social wellbeing attracted them into the Faith. The world-wide Bahai Community, following the administrative framework, conducts its business through a distinctive system of freely elected governing councils at local, national and international levels. The Bahai

system of administration challenged the experiences and the practices of the Sinaists. The Sinaists were used to charismatic leadership of Yohannes and Lwitiho. Ipapa region was not feeling the influence of the socialist government while at the same time the proximity to the border with Zambia made it possible for interactions which fomented aspirations beyond the capacity of the socialist government. The possibilities of achieving peace and progress were presented in a very logical way to make it hard for any person concerned about progress to discount the Bahai teachings and practices.

Politically and economically, the then closed society had the capacity and the means to be in touch with not only national issues but also international community. In any locality where nine or more adult Bahais reside a Local Spiritual Assembly is elected to look after the affairs of that area. Many Local Spiritual Assemblies were formed in the Ipapa region. Since there was already a National Spiritual Assembly, the Ipapa Bahais felt that their time to be involved in national matters had dawned. The invitation of the leading figures of the Sinai community to Dar es Salaam enhanced the feeling of being recognized and being important.<sup>58</sup> To a people that are hundreds of kilometers from Dar es Salaam the capital of the country the invitation demonstrated the concern that their new found religion had on their existence and progress. The new structure of administration did not end at Dar es Salaam, the Universal House of Justice the supreme legislative body of the Bahais was within their reach. The body is elected every five years by all members of the National Spiritual Assemblies world-wide in an International Convention.

The administrative bodies of the Bahai Faith, at all levels, engages a distinctive method of non-adversarial decision making, known as "consultation". The principles of consultation are well laid in the Bahai writings and whenever any Local Spiritual Assembly is formed, the principles are taught to the members and to the community at large. To the Ipapa community, "consultation was easy to teach since the socialist government required nine members of the nine homes to consult over the issues that concerned them. Consultation is part of the Sinai identity as an African community.

To boost the style of presentation, the parliamentary debates are broadcasted live in Tanzania. The art of expression is thus improved and given a high standard. Consultation seeks to build consensus. Consultation encourages diversity of opinion and acts to control the struggle for power that is otherwise common in many decision-making systems. The climax and utility of consultation is achieved when universal participation is attained. Three fundamental principles of Bahai consultations are as enumerated by Sara Zarqani-Rene<sup>59</sup> are worth quoting:

- Information and opinions should be gathered from the widest possible range of sources.
- Participants must be as frank and candid as possible. But personal attacks, blanket ultimatums and prejudicial statements are not allowed.
- When an idea is put forth it immediately becomes the property of the group.

Consultation as a method of arriving at an informed decision was used when the Sinaists decided to join the Bahai Faith as a community. The community owns the decisions that they arrive at after any consultation. Consultation aims at unanimity. However, where a majority vote has to be taken, once a decision is reached, it is the duty of the entire group to act on it.<sup>60</sup> The feeling of recognition brings with it the feelings of ownership among the participants of any consultation. Unlike the government policies that are there to be implemented, the Bahai Faith seemed to recognize the input of the Sinaists a craving that was expressed in their dreams and visions of a better society only that they did not know how to make it happen.

The Sinaists were also attracted to the international touch of the Bahai Faith. The idea of pilgrimage at least once in a lifetime gave the Sinaists the hope to interact with Bahais from other parts of the world. However, the cost of the pilgrimage in terms of travel and accommodation is prohibitive to the Ipapa Bahais. Coupled with pilgrimage, the Sinaists were also introduced to possibilities of service (salaried work) in Israel. Bahais are entitled to serve at the Bahai Gardens for a period of not less than eighteen months at the expense of the Universal House of Justice. The hope

to serve in Holy Land also was a factor that led many young people from Ipapa to join the Bahai Faith. The biggest challenge is language. Owing to political and geographical reasons, Tanzanians of this region do not have a command of spoken and written English. Yet English is the medium of communication in Haifa, Israel the Bahai Holy Land. Tanzania had a long period after independence when the national policies were based on African socialism that glorified the African culture and language. Tanzania national and official language was Kiswahili. Even after the collapse of the socialist regime, the positive effects of a market economy would take time for them to be experienced in the region. This partly explains the clamour for secondary and college education among the Bahai youths in the region. This education is offered using the English language, a good motivation for a country that had used Kiswahili as its medium of communication.<sup>61</sup>

The Bahai World Centre is a spectacular vista comprising the shrine of the Bab with nineteen terraces, the Seat of the Universal House of Justice, International Bahai Archives, the Seat of the International Teaching Centre and the Centre for the Study of Texts. The buildings form an Arc on the Mountain of God (Mount Carmel). At the centre of the foot of the Arc stands the resting places (graves) of Navvab, the wife of Bahauallah, the sister of Abdul-Baha (the Greatest Holy Leaf) and Mirza Mihdi, the younger brother of Abdul-Baha, who died in the prison of Akka.<sup>62</sup> Surrounding the buildings are the Bahai Gardens with flowers, fruits and grass that are maintained by irrigation. DVDs, portraits, and books are among many references that the Bahai World Centre has published for public consumption in a bid to invite the world into the Bahai Faith through the material culture observable at the Bahai World Centre.



Photo 13: Sara Mbuzi Otieno first row on the right, with Bahais travel teachers from Kenya whom the researcher accompanied in the first trip to Ipapa. Sara has been instrumental in the Institute Process in the Area. *Photo by the researcher.*

In Ipapa, the Bahai World Center and the Bahai Gardens are regarded with reverence and respect. The attachment that they had attached to *Mlima Sinai* seems to have been transferred to Mount Camel. The dreams and visions that they had about *Mlima Sinai* are seen to have been fulfilled in Mount Carmel. The mental pictures that used to be described by the Sinaists resemble the buildings on Mount Camel. Many Bahais that the researcher encountered expressed their wish to either serve at the Bahai World Centre or go for a nine day pilgrimage and have a taste of the Bahai Gardens and the Shrines.

The clamour for education among the Ipapa Bahai youths has also a great bearing on pioneering possibilities and activities inside and outside Tanzania. Since Bahai Faith has no clergy, volunteers are used in the teaching of the Bahai Faith. Going through the Bahai Institute Courses is a requirement for those willing to be Bahai pioneers

and travel teachers in any part of the world (photo 13). The UHJ through the Bahai National Assemblies informs the Bahais on pioneering destinations. Pioneering activities and service at the Bahai World Centre will only benefit those that are fluent in spoken and written English and have gone through the Bahai Institute Courses.

The economic situation and aspirations of the Sinaists made it possible for them to listen and understand the Bahai Faith in a way unique to them. The Bahai Faith proposes an economic World System based on spiritual principles. To a people in the periphery, living in conditions of poverty and squalour, economic emancipation was an aspiration strong to drive them to any system that would assure them of their existence. The ultimate root of economic injustice is human greed. A satisfactory solution to the world's present economic calamity lies in a profound change of heart and mind which only religion can produce.<sup>63</sup> The Sinaists wanted to be party to the system that the Bahais presented to them, a system of equity and social justice:

The time will come in the near future when humanity will become so much more sensitive than at present that the man of great wealth will not enjoy his luxury, in comparison with the deplorable poverty about him. He will be forced for his own happiness, to expend his wealth to procure better conditions for the community in which he lives....<sup>64</sup>

The economic system as proposed by the Bahai Faith attracted the Sinaists to the extent that parallelism was drawn to show how the teachings of the Bahai Faith were an expanded form of the teachings and aspirations of the Sinaists. One of the principles of the Bahai economic system that captured the attention of the Sinaists is the right of every human being to the daily bread, the equalization of the means of livelihood all meant to bring about comfort and well-being.<sup>65</sup> In a context characterised by competition for meager resources among thousands without enough to eat, the proposed Bahai economic system was appealing. To other Sinaists the Bahai economic system was an improvement to the *Ujamaism* that had failed in Tanzania. The idea of ownership and state control of the structures of production, gave the system adherents. The adherents were also animated by the various Bahai Writings on social-economics founded on spiritual principles. According to the Ipapa

Bahai community, the Christian denominations in the region had no spirit and will to bring about the kingdom of God on earth. Bahai Faith is presented as the panacea to this condition. To the question on what attracted them to the Bahai Faith, the book *The Secret of Divine Civilization* by Abdul-Baha was often quoted or mentioned by more than 20% of the respondents. For the respondents who did not mention the book, their responses touched on the Bahai perspective to economic and political well-being - of an individual, community and even the world. The researcher in this case found out that economically and politically there is a significant difference between becoming and being a Bahai and being a member of the Ipapa community.

The Sinaists welcomed with enthusiasm the Bahai re-interpretation of Christianity and they agreed to be Bahais. The newfound faith became an occasion to test all other faiths in their midst. To the Sinaists the Bahai Faith had the answers to their social, economic, and religious problems. Therefore they went inviting as many people as possible to join the Bahai Faith. However, those who became Bahais and did not have the Sinai background wished that the Sinaists would drop their pride on the dreams and visions that directed them to the Bahai Faith. To some extent, even other Bahais wished to remove the Sinai background and in its place have something else - the teachings of Bahauallah. The introduction of Ruhi Institute Courses was an endeavour to give the former Sinaists another frame of reference. To the estimation of the researcher, the move from the background that gave the Sinaists their identity was the first step to killing the zeal and spontaneity among the Bahais with the Sinai background.

To conclude, the story of the Sinai Church and its subsequent acceptance of the Bahai Faith is an attempt to deal with challenges of the environment, their relationship with others in the same society and, above all, their ever expanding relationship with other people outside their own community. By embracing the Bahai ideal, the Ipapa Bahai community had attained some knowledge on social economics. Knowledge is shaped by the intellect, which bestows order, order offers patterns, lends arrangement, and seeks coherence. In seeking coherence, a frame of reference is needed. The Ipapa

Bahais and their experiences with traditional patterns of life, Christian denominations, the *Ujamaa* policies and hopes for a better future formed their frame of reference in appropriating the Bahai principles. Intellectuals in social association come up with the collective ideal. The Ipapa Bahai community becomes associated with the collective Bahai social vision. Apart from the socio-political and cultural context as the frame of reference, the Ipapa Bahai community cannot survive nor can it be understood. The Bahai Faith must be rethought, reformulated, and lived anew in Ipapa in depth and right to the cultures roots. The socio-political and cultural context should call for effective financial planning realism and genuineness for the Bahai ideal to be realized. The ideal should be made operational through three actors of social transformation.

## Notes

1. D. J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 488.
2. Bahauallah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahauallah XXXVIII*, (New Delhi: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1973), 501.
3. L. Dewart *The Foundation of Belief*, (New York: Burns & Oates, 1969), 15.
4. Ibid.
5. Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come*, (Wilmette: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1980), 17.
6. Matt. 28.19 & 20
7. Shoghi Effendi, *The Dispensation of Bahauallah*, (Wilmette: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1944), 109.
8. Bahauallah, *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, (Wilmette: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1992), 21.
9. Bahauallah, Op cit., 66.
10. Abdul-Baha, *Bahai Revelation*, (Wilmette, Bahai Publishing Trust, 1975), 41.
11. Shoghi Effendi, Ibid., 114.
12. Abdul-Baha, Ibid., 238.
13. Ibid.
14. Shoghi Effendi, Ibid., 117.
15. Abdul-Baha, Ibid., 241-2.
16. Ibid.
17. Abdul-Baha, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, (Wilmette: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1975), 1.
18. William Sears, *Release the Sun*, (New Delhi: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1957), 11.
19. William Sears is one of the Bahai scholars who have written extensively on the return of Christ. *Thief in the Night*, *Release the Sun*, and *Wine of Astonishment* are some among many of his titles.
20. William Sears, *The Wine of Astonishment*, (London: George Ronald, 1963), 14.
21. Matt 24:3.
22. Matt 24:14.
23. Sara Zarqani-Rene, *The Bahai Faith – A Portrait*, (New Delhi: Mirat, 2003), 42.
24. Lk 21:24, 27.
25. Op cit., 43.
26. Daniel 8:13,14,17.

27. Matt 16:27; Matt 25:31.
28. Rev. 3:3; Rev. 16:15; Matt. 24:36, 42-44, 50.
29. Sarah Zarqani-Rene, *Ibid.*, 51.
30. At one point the researcher gave the interpretations to lecturers at Carlile College of theology and some of the interpretations are acceptable while others debatable. But one of the responses was that such literatures operate at a deferent wave length compared to the knowledge and understanding of many Christians.
31. Sara Zarqani-Rene, *Ibid.*, p. 53
32. Summery of chapter 6 of *The Wine of Astonishment* by William Sears.
33. Keith B. Anderson, *Church History and Theology*, Nairobi: ACK, 2005), 74.
34. *Ibid.*
35. Sara Zarqani-Rene, *Ibid.*, 56.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Abdul-Baha, *Some Answered Questions*, (Wilmette: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1981), 113.
38. John 3:13, II Kings 2:11.
39. *Op cit.*, 103.
40. Bahauallah and Abdul-Baha, *Bahai World Faith*, (Wilmette: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1975), 172.
41. John 3:5.
42. Bahauallah, *Gleanings From the Writings of Bahauallah*, XLIII, (New Delhi: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1973), 503.
43. At various points the researcher had the opportunity to accompany Bahais in their teaching of Christians. At one point two students of Sokoine University Tanzania came to Zawadi's house and they had a debate of what it means to be a Bahai. At the end of the debate the students were given books to answer most their questions.
44. Jon 6:51, 54; Jon 7:37 & 38.
45. H. Chadwick, *The Early Church*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1967), 46.
46. Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of Malaysia, *A Section of Bahai Prayers*, (Kuala Lumpur: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1996), 4.
47. Sara Zarqani-Rene, *Ibid.*, 69.
48. Gen 3: 1ff.
49. Abdul-Baha, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, (Wilmette: Bahai publishing Trust, 1975), 23.

50. Bahauallah, *Ibid.*, 299.
51. Lawell Johnson, *The Eternal Covenant*, (Wilmette: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1986), 16.
52. In the introduction of the book *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, Horace Holley observes that the book consist of a message from Abdul-Baha addressed to the rulers and people of Persia, whose once glorious civilization had been reduced to pitiful weakness by the corruption of its government, the ignorance of its masses, and the abandonment of the essential truths of its religion.
53. *Ibid.*, X.
54. *Ibid.*
55. Bahauallah, *The Kitab-i-Iqan* Translated by Shoghi Effendi. (Wilmette: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1974), 49.
56. J. W. McClendo *et al.*, *Understanding Religious Convictions*, (London: University of Notre Done Press,1979), 193.
57. All the respondents that the researcher interacted with expressed their greatest moment of turning towards Bahai Faith is the way the Christian Faith was expressed to them.
58. Yohannes Simbowe, Interview, Ipapa 26<sup>th</sup> June 2005.
59. Sara Zarqani-Rene, *Ibid.*, 140.
60. Abdul-Baha, 1844-1921 *The Promulgation of Universal peace*, (Wilmette: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1982), 83.
61. At Ruaha International Bahai School, the researcher was in a position to interact with staff who are themselves Bahais and had been involved and are still being involved in the formation of the Ipapa Bahai Community. At the time the researcher touched base with the School, Mrs. Juma the wife of the Deputy Principal of the school was already in Ipapa holding a women conference. Still when the researcher was at Ipapa the lady came for a children's class training for teachers. The interaction shed a lot of light in the area of education and the Ipapa Community.
62. Sara Zarqani-Rene, *Ibid.*, 145.
63. *Ibid.*, 156.
64. *Star of the West* Vol. 8, 4.
65. Herbert Sikombe, Interview Mwanjelwa Mbeya, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2005.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Since the introduction of the Bahai faith in Tanzania in the early 1950s, Tanzanians have gradually accepted the Faith. In 1990s the Bahai Faith was introduced in Ipapa Mbozi. Out of the 35,000 active Bahais in Tanzania 1.4 percent are in Ipapa, Mbozi. Out of the 3000 localities where Bahais reside in Tanzania, 0.4 percent are in Ipapa, Mbozi. The religious experience and the commitment of faith among the Ipapa people influenced their attitudes, thoughts, and actions to accept the Bahai Faith. Pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial experiences among the Ipapa people shaped and affected their definition of situations and their motivational structures. The need for a better life among the Ipapa people was the underlying factor in seeking alternative means to social transformation. Social transformation needs the three social actors for the process of transformation to be triggered. The social actors are; individuals, institutions and the wider community.

The presence of Bahai Faith in Tanzania generally and in southern Tanzania specifically is an invitation to alternative modes of awareness and social organization that were somewhat forbidden by the socialist regime in Tanzania. In the awareness, new meanings are imparted to human existence and how to organize that existence. For instance, during the times of Nyerere, collective farming was done in such a way as to maximize ideological control and the flow of political and any form of propaganda that would hold the country together. In this political situation, the Christian denominations in Ipapa did not provide visions for a better life. The Christian denominations required their adherents to have nothing to do with their cherished cultural practices. Frustrations associated with this context favoured the formation of the Sinai Church and its integration into the Bahai Faith with the aim of granting meaning to existence contrary to what was not working though popularised by the government and its agencies. It means that control needs to recognize some limits if only to maximize the effects of its own efforts.

The Sinai Church as a pliant religious organization was viewed by the Sinaists as better means to improve life than the Tanzanian political institutions that seemed to frustrate their endeavours towards the wellbeing as individuals and as a community. The members of the Sinai Church and the Ipapa community used religion and in this case the Sinai Church and later the Bahai Faith to help them survive and adapt to their context. In comparison to other Tanzanians in Mbozi, at first the Sinaists and later the Bahais focused on the themes of individual and communal well-being. As the research found out, over seventy-five percent of the Ipapa community adheres to Local Spiritual Assemblies. The capacity to fragment the Ipapa community into numerous sub-groups meeting in houses easily, places them beyond the scope of full political control. The need for self-definition informed the choice the Ipapa community made. The community was ready to be responsible for their choices. In the initial stages of the Sinai Church, music, dance and healing were integrated and viewed as one. The relationship between healing and music is a worthwhile research area.

The Tanzanian society during the reign of the late Nyerere created pockets of alienation for which eschatological and millennial faiths have considerable appeal. The Sinai Church was at first a well of dissident feeling which later helped to institutionalize those feelings by integrating itself to a religion with an international outlook. In a society where life was organized so much around norms of political conformity that did not bring about the well-being of the masses the chances of overt dissidence, even in a religious guise, were very great. The dreams and visions experienced by the Sinaists were an expression of their needs, aspirations and fears. The need for education, the need for available and affordable health care and the state of the art transport and communication network were all a claim to a better life.

The capacity of the new structures of the Bahai Faith to replace the old structures in Tanzania depends in part on the ground plan and structures which *Ujamaaism* had laid and to some extent the current capitalist regime has laid in the psyche and in the social ideals of the society in general. The religious context of Ipapa Mbozi is also important in bringing and sustaining momentum for new structures that could be at variance

with the old structures. The communal aspect of the *Ujamaaism* aided in the formation of the Sinai Church and its integration into the Bahai Faith. In that sense, it is observable that, the frustrations that the Bahai Faith wrought when the visions and dreams of the Sinaists were not realized in *toto*, created a dilemma for the community in different ways.

In one way the integration into the Bahai Faith and how it was conducted makes the idea of going back to practice Sinaism deplorable because Bahai Faith is viewed as the religion of the age a belief they held and voiced in a very loud manner. Yet, the Bahai Faith does not seem to offer the fruits of the kingdom as they had anticipated. For instance, the healing ministry of the Sinai Church was acclaimed to be the best service that it offered to the community. Yet the integration into the Bahai Faith did away with it and no alternative was offered (photo 14). More than seventy per cent of the respondents explained that, it would be commendable if the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of Tanzania would reconsider the healing ministry. Perhaps this would happen by building and equipping a dispensary if not a hospital that would appreciate traditional medicine. The same would apply for education where a technical school would be established on Mlima Sinai. Mlima Sinai would be connected to the outside world with a reliable transport and communication network.

In reconsidering the Sinai context, Bahais should consider the possibilities of the new structures borrowing from the old structures. The circumstances that invited the Bahai Faith into the scene should well be articulated. For instance, the drumming and dancing rituals should be considered to form part of the Bahai liturgy. The personalities behind the formation of the Sinai Church should be given an upper hand in the new structures that are to be realized for them to be sustainable and worthwhile for the community. People like Lwitiho, Zawadi, Petero and Yohannes should be involved in the consolidation of the Ipapa Bahai community. The need to locate crucial common axes on the basis of which new structures can borrow from the old ones should be articulated by the Bahai Administration. It is thus paradoxical that

what took the Sinaists to the Bahai Faith was slowly denied or given a back seat in the promotion of a new society under the Bahai Faith.

The disillusionment and alienation that the Sinaists were running away from should not be allowed to take root now that they are in the Bahai Faith. New brooms sweep better. The well-being of this community is the success of the Bahai Faith world-wide and specifically the Tanzanian Bahai community. At its best, the Ipapa Bahai community demonstrates that the Bahai Faith is not conterminous in theory or in historical fact with any social system in the region. Having been accepted by a people who seemed to be at the fringes of the Tanzanian society, the view that Bahai Faith is elitist does not hold. Existentially, it (Bahai Faith) should suffer in the breakdown of these systems but their destruction should not mean necessarily its destruction.

Bahai administration in Tanzania should have a way of explaining the failures found at Ipapa or rather in its midst and make those explanations known to its adherents. The explanations would make the Ipapa community to be at ease with the Faith in general and make it their responsibility to work on their shortcomings and the challenges of existence. To this end they will own the Faith. A situation will not therefore arise where the Ipapa Bahai community looks outside to other Bahais for assistance. Rather, they will endeavour to appropriate the Bahai teachings in their lives and in their situations. From a functional point of view, it is the adherents that bring about the meaning of a religion when they let it influence their lives positively. Nevertheless, before that happens the Bahai pioneers need to walk with the Ipapa Bahai community while allowing them to own the Bahai Faith. If this does not happen other options of wellbeing might be considered at individual level first and then communal level.



Photo 14: The dilapidated house where the Sinaists used to join in therapeutic dances. After the acceptance of the Bahai Faith most of the Sinai material culture was neglected apart from the buildings that were turned into Bahai Centres. *Photo by the researcher*

The Ipapa Bahai community need functioning Bahai institutions to enable them appropriate the benefits of the Bahai ideal. With functioning institutions, working in harmony with individuals and the community, the processes of transformation will be sustainable. The value of the Bahai Administration should be well articulated to any new member or community. Bahais hold to the view that, the Administrative Order is fundamentally different from anything that any Prophet has previously established, inasmuch as Bahauallah has himself revealed its principles, established its institutions, appointed the person to interpret his word, and confirmed the necessary authority on the body designed to supplement and apply his legislative ordinances. Therein lies the secret, its fundamental distinction, and the guarantee against disintegration and schism.<sup>1</sup> The Bahai Administrative Order, as it expands and consolidates itself, will come to be regarded not only as the nucleus but as the very pattern of the New World Order, destined to embrace, in the fullness of time, the whole of humanity. It is the sole framework of the Bahai Commonwealth of the future which will be at once the instrument and the guardian of the Most Great peace announced by Bahauallah.<sup>2</sup>

The events that led to the formation of the Ipapa Bahai Community should be treasured among the Bahais and particularly the Ipapa Bahais. The Ipapa Bahais should feel that the Faith is theirs without any feeling that it is not in their hands. The spontaneity that marked their integration into the Faith should carry them all along. The functional theory of religion uses the pragmatic criteria in its judgment of religious efficacy. Social power and the established glory capture the attention of all who value religion from a functional point of view. The power of works represents underlying secularity in the religious sphere. In this regard, Bahais are admonished in their writings to be a people who distinguish themselves not only in the articulate way of presenting their Faith but also by the day to day deeds that adorn their lives. It is in the demonstration of the faith by deeds and words that many will be attracted to the Bahai Faith. The UHJ writing to the Bahais of the world notes:

These indeed, are the days when heroism is needed on the part of the believers. Self-sacrifice, courage, indomitable hope, and confidence are the characteristics they should show forth, because these very attributes cannot but fix the attention of the public and lead them to inquire what, in a world so hopelessly chaotic and bewildered, leads these people to be so assured, so confident, so full of devotion.<sup>3</sup>

Bahais of all walks of life, as they interact with people who are not Bahais aim at the eventual recognition by all humanity of the indispensability the uniqueness, and the supreme station of the Bahai Revelation.<sup>4</sup> The doctrine of progressive revelation that the Bahais use as they re-interpret other religions should be looked at in a critical way. The very consonance between progressive religion and progressive ideology makes the elimination of the former necessary once the revolution is regarded as achieved.<sup>5</sup> Liberal Christians advocate religious dialogue in a bid also to win people to Christ. In the encounter with the Bahai Faith which is also a missionary religion, such Christians are forced to reconsider their stand more so for the sake of the believers whose scope of knowledge is not well versed in church history and doctrines. The observations at Ipapa demonstrate a missiological gap and lapse among Christians in the region under study. The extent to which the member in the pew is grounded in the history of his or

her faith and the basic doctrines, is the extent to which the member will withstand the onslaught of other missionary religions. It is worthwhile if Christians in areas where Bahais can be found to be aware of the Bahai Faith, its intentions and the way the Bahai Faith re-interprets the Christian teachings and practices. A person's faith should at least be reasonable to the person in the first place and can be reasoned out if that person is to be mature in his or her faith. Christian teachers and leaders should be conscious of their responsibilities to the flock when it comes to individual and communal maturity that goes with the times.<sup>6</sup>

From the arguments propounded by the Bahais and the claim to be the fulfillment of all religions it is possible that the world should expect a show-down between the Abrahamic faiths when the Bahai Faith will come to the critical point that demands recognition. The Muslims will find it offensive while Christians will be caught unawares. However as Muslims are aware of the Bahai Faith especially in Iran, the suppression of the Bahai Faith will continue to invite sympathy from all manner of well-wishers among them those who uphold the right to one's conscience. To some extent persecution of any faith grants an amount of power that makes its survival the highest need. In the process, people who are not adherents wonder at the resilience of that faith to the point of becoming sympathizers. With the fall of majority of fundamentalist Islamic states and the establishment of moderate Islamic states, Bahai Faith might find a national status in Iran. The historical moment will be reminiscent of the way Rome gave a state recognition to Christianity in the fourth century AD. As observed earlier, it is estimated that there are over six million Bahais in the world.<sup>7</sup> The social and religious earthquake is gaining momentum as Bahais are added to their number around the globe as witnessed in Ipapa Tanzania. The ignorance of many will fuel the momentum and the outcome can be predicted though in retrospect.

The Ipapa Bahai community is Bahai missionary tool in Tanzania. However, the religious pluralism in the Mbozi should be taken into consideration in the missionary endeavours of the Bahai Faith. The fundamental positive motive for religious toleration is a recognition that religious conflict does not add to the well-being of any

party involved. At its worst religious conflict arouses the survival instincts in human beings. In an age where religious dialogue is the clarion call for many, the honesty of the parties involved as revealed in the Bahai agenda of proclaiming the Bahai Faith to the entire world is questionable. When engaged in religious dialogue, adherents pose behind the fact that every person has a right to commune with God. However, when non-violent missionary means are used to convert people of other faiths a show of power and authority replaces the arena of dialogue. Toleration will not yield any fruits till it is transfigured into a willingness to accept and accommodate divergent opinions.

When a unified outlook of the world was lost in Tanzania, intellectual and moral disquietude coupled with anarchy was favoured. The struggle between the old and the new outlook rendered the Sinaists to be nervous and bothersome from the struggle. Despair eschewed as the Ipapa community struggled to give meaning to their existence. Religion is vital in helping humanity to create meaning to their existence. The Sinai Church and later the Bahai Faith was an attempt to create meaning in Ipapa. However, the meaning created by the integration into the Bahai Faith did not capture in totality the needs, aspirations and fears of the community. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of Tanzania through the various institutions at its disposal has a role to play in making the Bahai Faith more meaningful to the Ipapa community, in a religious pluralistic context.

The few individuals from Ipapa who started the Sinai Church were a direct representation of the real mood of the Ipapa society, a society that was deep down in its depths excited, perturbed, sick and yearning for healing. In this healing their best judgment decided for having their own religiosity and finally accepting to institutionalize it by accepting the Bahai Faith. The acceptance of the Bahai Faith was thus a symptom of reaction to what the government and the context offered. As observed earlier, the context of alienation and frustrations enhanced the formation of the Sinai Church and its integration into the Bahai Faith. For any community to take off on the road to social transformation, the problems of disunity and ignorance have

to be dealt with. The drumming ritual was an attempt to deal with disunity while embracing the Bahai faith was meant to deal with ignorance.

Economic factors had considerable influence upon the spiritual condition of the Ipapa community. A human being is not a soul without a body. The means of production and the whole economic order of the Ipapa community had a considerable influence upon the initiation and development of mental patterns (attitudes that bring out escapism and even religious experiences). The Sinaists in the struggle for meaning in life experienced, lack of peace, mental disturbance, nervousness, weariness, boredom, anxiety, and despair found themselves in the Bahai Faith. The view of the world thus yielded into conflict given the inherent, and the inherited and the expected order of things in Ipapa. The Sinai Church and later the Bahai Faith came to give hope in such circumstances raising expectations beyond the immediate future and also beyond the individual level. However, the Bahai pioneers did not take the hopes seriously. The Ipapa Bahai community hopes that the Bahai administration in Tanzania will consider their plight. The future of the Ipapa Bahai community appears to be in the emphasis on education, economic development and modernization of local institutions.

The early history of the Sinai Church resembles in some way the history of the Bahai Faith in its heroic stage. For instance Siyyid Kazim a follower of the Bab, was guided in a dream to put himself under the spiritual guidance of Shaykh Ahmad whom he was directed to.<sup>8</sup> At Ipapa a group of young men and women were directed in dreams to put themselves under the spiritual guidance of Petero Simbeye and Yohannes Simbowe. Such kind of stories of congruity made it easier for the Bahais to introduce the Bahai Faith. However, the Ipapa community knew very little of the Bahai Faith whose founders were more learned than the founders of the Sinai Church.

The Sinaists felt and realized that there was a relationship between what they had experienced and expected with what the Bahai pioneers were teaching. This relationship also made the integration possible although favouring the Bahai Faith at the expense of the Sinai Church. The situation at Ipapa demonstrates the

interdependence of religious patterns of meaning and social construction of reality from different perspectives. It shows that Bahai Faith gained concrete expression and possesses meaning within the context of social reality in Ipapa. The integration took place because there was a significant difference between the religious experience and expression at Ipapa and what the Bahai Faith introduced. The difference was basically that, the Sinaists thought that their needs, aspirations and fears were to be taken care of in a better way in the Bahai Faith than in any other faith. On the other hand the Bahai pioneers were on an evangelistic mission and their main aim was to win adherents into the Bahai Faith.

Bahai Faith puts across claims in regard to all other religions. The claim is stronger in regard to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The single claim that the age of promise is over and the age of fulfillment is come should initiate lively dialogue between Bahais and other faiths. This kind of dialogue cannot take place if the fundamentals of any faith are not well understood. In the age of religious pluralism Bahais should be given their space of which they should utilize accordingly.<sup>9</sup> In the dialogue, missionary oriented faiths must wrestle with Bahai re-interpretation to their faiths. But they cannot do this if they take the Bahais for granted. The Bahai ideal should be appreciated. The practice and expression of the Bahai Faith and its vision and mission should be wrestled with from the perspectives of other faiths. Bahais are ready for this kind of encounter only that the aim is to enlist the members of other faiths into the Bahai Faith.<sup>10</sup> The Sinai encounter with the Bahai Faith indicates that, in the event of dialogue, Bahais teachers capitalize on the ignorance of the majority of believers of other faiths who do not teach themselves their faith and therefore depend on the institutions of their faiths to feed them spiritually. When the weakness and shortcomings of these institutions that they deify are pointed out, adherents start to oscillate and doubt their own faiths. A crisis of faith is created by the Bahais in the minds of the adherents of other religions.

The acceptance of Bahai Faith in Ipapa Tanzania by an African Instituted Church whose members had limited knowledge with regards to the history of Christianity and

its teachings, demonstrates that Christian denominations in Mbozi need to re-phrase themselves if they are to achieve greater relevance to the contemporary human situation. African Instituted Churches need to be firm in their Christian witness lest they are swayed by forces that have been experienced by mainstream Christianity. Consolidation efforts are endless, but the mere fact of their relative failure in Ipapa is witness to the extent to which the individual in the pew sees the new deal in religion as being made with the same pack of cards. The acceptance of another faith that Christianity in its orthodoxy does oppose is a pointer to the forces acting on Christianity without much reflection from theologians on the subject. In most cases Christian theologians are busy with the doctrines and rituals and how authentic they are and little time is accorded the serious matters of context and relevance.

It is only after another faith has played on Christianity do Christian theologians start to debate about the issue. The disappearance of Christianity in North Africa among other regions that had great numbers of Christianity is pointer to this paradox. An African proverb captures the irony: "A frog does not understand the value of water in the pond until the pond is dry". When context and relevance are taken into consideration, the needs, aspirations, hopes and fears of the person in the pew are considered in the expression of a faith. To some extent, new sects will often be revealed as old heresies in a new guise. Orthodox Christianity opposed Arianism and other heresies in the formative stages of the church, but Bahatism has heretical tendencies when attempting to re-interpret Christianity. Never the less the real ground for heresies is the dissatisfaction with the religion of the day.

The integration of the Sinai Church and the Bahai Faith in Ipapa Tanzania will continue to raise concerns for both Christians and Bahais. For instance, Christian theologians must work for a theology that recognizes other faiths not only in dialogue but in practical and existential way. That kind of theology should percolate to the pews instead of being the subject of debate among the elite. The Bahai Faith by the use of the doctrine progressive revelation has demonstrated that this kind of theology is plausible to all people. Hence, a study and interaction between Christianity and

Bahai Faith would mean that, Christianity will be more inclusive. One of the elements of this kind of study could be Christianity and other missionary religions being conversant with the Bahai Faith. The inclusiveness in this case would mean that Christianity would benefit from the new ideas that Bahai Faith champions. In the interaction, the Bahai leaders must seek to translate the Bahai Writings into the languages of the adherents. Bahais will learn about inculturation from Christian theologians.

The Bahai Faith opened the areas where Christian missionaries had failed to ground the gospel in individual world of experience. The process in Ipapa in a way demonstrates how a religion compromises its future by failing to be relevant and contextual. The Bahais have sidelined the cultural identity of the Ipapa community by not putting any authority on the experiences that the Sinaists had gone through prior to the shift. The introduction of the Ruhi Courses is meant to interpret this experience in terms of the Bahai Faith and in return move the Ipapa Bahais away from their cultural roots. Time and energy on the side of Tanzanian Bahai leaders is needed for the courses to start yielding fruits. The way the experiential dimension was vocal at the start of the Sinai Church is no longer the case, there is gradual shift towards the teachings of the Bahai Faith. However, the cultural identity of the Ipapa Bahai community should be affirmed for the sake of genuine and sustainable transformation that responds to the needs of the community. Bahai institutions should also engage the services of research in their endeavour to sell and implement the Bahai ideals.

The implication is that the Bahai Faith has widened the horizons of this community to the extent that they can think globally, but the cultural identity has been sidelined. This has resulted to disillusionment and feelings of alienation. Individuals desire freedom to define themselves and no system should obstruct innovation and ingenuity. The Bahai leaders in Tanzania have not maintained the mass enthusiasm of the Sinaists into the Bahai Faith. If the Bahai leaders in Tanzania do not arrest the situation, the Ipapa Bahais will eventually be skeptical about the actual value of the Bahai ideal and in effect the opinion leaders of the community may venture to

alternative ways of wellbeing that are real and genuine. The Bahai leaders should help the community with the promotion of industry and technology that will cater for the livelihood and fulfillment of the individuals and the community at large. On this regard, social engineers should study the Bahai models of social transformation.

The Bahai ideal and its ramifications in Bahai evangelism present an alternative way of organizing society. The Universal House of Justice is the institution that has the Bahai mandate of replicating itself at the grassroots and to establish Bahai institutions in the world. It looks impossible to the contemporary world of relativism that humanity can have an umbrella body under which all shades of perspectives are welcome. In such conditions, it would be possible to adjust to the changing conditions of life, and develop a concern with problems which would seem relevant. The Universal House of Justice is attempting to galvanize humanity to this kind of trend where people are required to reflect upon the needs of their times.

The desire for change in Ipapa led to the formation of the Sinai Church. The institutionalization of the process of change invited the Bahai Faith. The Ipapa community and its leadership knew what was best for them. The decisions and choices they made were based on that realization. Any religion should be geared towards giving people a sense of purpose, the actualization of which will mean social transformation. However, a religion that is hinged on rewards and punishments can only influence the dealings of the members who are not keen on asking questions in regard to the motif of the rewards and punishments. To be relevant is not to adopt the ideas of the world, it is to provide a viable, credible and attractive alternative. The global forces acting on humanity tend to neutralize anything that stands for exclusivity in terms of truth. The operations of the Universal House of Justice in regard to global politics, economics and international relations need to be investigated. It is the institution behind the Bahai activities in the world. The influence and status the institution has been given beacons curiosity, due to the alternative way of organizing society it champions.

## Notes

1. Universal House of Justice, *Principles of Bahai Administration*, (London: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1973), 1.
2. Ibid., 1.
3. Ibid., 23.
4. Ibid.
5. Martin, D. *The Dilemmas of Contemporary Religion*, (London: Basil Blackwell & Mott Ltd. 1978), 76.
6. The researcher has observed on many occasions when pastors and priests send their members on teaching missions yet the members are not equipped on how to handle other faiths apologetically and in a manner that does not lead into arguments.
7. Sara Zarqani-Rene, *The Bahai Faith: A Portrait*, (New Delhi: Mirat, 2003), 198.
8. William Sears *The Dawn*, (London: George Ronald, 1963), 4.
9. Bahais attempt to introduce Bahai Faith to lecturers of public Universities in a bid to make converts and not to dialogue. The outcome of such dialogue only time and history will tell.
10. Hornby, H. B. *lights of Guidance: Bahai Reference File*, (New Delhi: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1997), 159 – 163. dilemma

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## Appendix I: The Questionnaire

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_ Current: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Educational Background:

Certificate-Primary Level Class \_\_\_\_\_

Certificate-Secondary Level Level \_\_\_\_\_

Diploma/College \_\_\_\_\_

Others (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Name of your area of residence \_\_\_\_\_

Languages that you can speak and understand.(tick where necessary)

English \_\_\_ Kiswahili \_\_\_ Others (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

### A

1. When did you can to know the Sinai Church?
2. What circumstances led you to know the Sinai Church?
3. What was your first reaction to this religious group?
4. Who founded the Sinai?
5. Who were the immediate followers?
6. Which are the Religious backgrounds of the immediate members of the Sinai community?
7. How was the Sinai community founded?
8. When was the Sinai community founded?
9. Name the major teachings and practices of the Sinai community.

### B

10. Did you embrace and accept the Sinai community? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

if yes continue

11. Why did you accept to be a member of the Sinai community?
12. Name the aspects that identify the Sinai community and differentiate it from other religious groups? Speaking in tongues Leadership  
Types of Church building Baptism  
Others (specify)

13. Which religious group did you belong to before you became a member of the Sinai?
14. Did you hold any leadership position in your former religious group? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
15. If yes which position?
16. How did the Sinai community obtain the name Sinai?
17. Where did you use to meet as members of the Sinai community?
18. Do you still meet there?
19. Why do you go or why don't you?
20. How many people from your former religious group became members of the Sinai?
21. If some did not become members of the Sinai community, Why?
22. What is the relationship between your former religious group and the Sinai community?
23. How is /was the Sinai community organized in terms of leadership?
24. How are / were the leaders elected in the Sinai community?
25. Who heads the Sinai community?
26. Approximate the number of Sinai community members in your area?
27. How strong or weak are they today in relation to when they began?
28. It is said that a majority of Sinai community members became Bahais. Yes \_\_\_  
No \_\_\_ If yes, what facilitated this move?
29. What was the response of the Sinai community towards those who became Bahais?

C

30. What is the manner of interaction between the Sinai members and the Bahais?
31. Are you a Bahai yourself? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ if yes continue.
32. When did you first hear of the Bahai Faith?
33. Who introduced the Bahai Faith to you?
34. Under what circumstances was it introduced to you?
35. When did you become a Bahai?
36. Why did you agree to become a Bahai?
37. What attracted you to the Bahai Faith?
38. Now that you are a Bahai what are the differences between Bahai Faith and the Sinai community teachings and practices?
39. How appealing is the Bahai Faith to the local inhabitants of your area?
40. How regular do you hold Bahai meetings?
41. Do you sing songs when you meet?
42. Who composes those songs?

43. Can one trace some Sinai community elements in the Bahai Faith? If any, which?
44. Sinai community was based on the customs and traditions of the Wanyiha people are they practiced in the Bahai Faith?
45. Name some of the observable practices and customs of the Wanyiha people found in the Bahai Faith.
46. What is the name of your Local Spiritual Assembly?
47. How many members belong to that Assembly?
48. How many of them belonged to the Sinai community?
49. Name some of the other religious groups the members of your Assembly belonged.
50. Name some of the neighborhood Local Spiritual Assemblies.
51. Can you estimate the membership of each?
52. What is the relationship between the Sinai community and the other religious groups?
53. Do Bahais who were members of the Sinai community attend the activities of the Sinai community?
54. Do Sinai community members attend Bahai activities?
55. What is the Wanyiha's myth of paradise and fall?
56. How does the myth relate with the Bahai Faith?
57. Which are the major cultural rituals of the Wanyiha?
58. What is the place of music in the Wanyiha culture?
59. How has the Bahai Faith penetrated the Mbozi region?
60. How has the Sinai community penetrated the Mbozi region?
61. What are some of the experiential and existential differences that you have noted in your life since you changed to Sinai and then to Bahai Faith?
62. How do non-Sinai Bahais relate with the Sinai ones?
63. How are the Bahai treated in the area? a) By other religious groups and b) by the government?
64. What was the place of religion/church in socialist Tanzania?
65. Can one say that the circumstances of those times triggered the formation of the Sinai community and later the acceptance of Bahai Faith? How?
66. How do the Bahais treat the leaders of the 'Sinai Church' that accepted the Bahai Faith?
67. Give any other valuable information in relation to the formation of 'Sinai Church' and the acceptance of the Bahai Faith, and their growth.

**Appendix II: Questionnaire - Swahili version**

**HISTORIA KUHUSU KUUNDWA KWA KANISA LA SINAI NA WALIVYIO KUNJIUNGA NA DINI YA BAHAI**

JAZA MAPENGO YOTE KISHA UJIMBU MASWALI YAFUATAYO

JINA-----

NCHI YA KUZALIWA-----

KAZI -----

KIWANGO CHA ELIMU -----

SINA ELIMU YOYOTE

ELIMU YA MSINGI

SHULE YA SEKONDARI

DIPLOMA

MASOMO YA CHUO

UMRI

15 – 20     21 – 30     31 – 40

41 – 50     51 – 60     61 Na Zaidi

Jina la sehemu unayo ishi -----

Lugha unazo ongea na kufahamu ( weka alama panapostahili)

Kingereza \_\_\_\_\_ Kiswahili \_\_\_\_\_ NyiIngingine (taja) \_\_\_\_\_

A

1. Ulisikia kuhusu kanisa la Sinai lini? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Ni mazingira yapi yaliyokuwezeza wewe kutambua kanisa la Sinai?
3. Mawazo na hisia zako zilikua vipi kwa Kanisa la Sinai?
4. Ni nani walianzisha Kanisa la Sinai?
5. Nani walikuwa wafuasi wa kwanza?
6. Wafuasi hawa wakwanza walitoka mazingira yapi ya kiroho?

7. Jumuiya ya Sinai iliazishwa lini?
8. Jumuiya ya Sinai iliazishwa vipi?
9. Taja mafunzo na maadili makuu ya Jumuiya ya Sinai?

B

10. Wewe ulikumbali kujiunga na kanisa la Sinai? Ndiyo \_\_\_\_\_ Hapana \_\_\_\_\_
11. Kwanini ulinjiungan na Kanisa la Sinai?
12. Taja mambo muhimu ambayo inatabulisha Kanisa la Sinai Kutoka kwa vikundi vingine vya kidini.
   
 Kunena kwa ndimi/Lugha     Uongozi     Aina za mijengo
   
 Mengine (Taja)
13. Ulikuwa wa dini gani kabla ya kujiunga na Kanisa la Sinai?
   
 \_\_\_\_\_
14. Ulikuwa na wadhifa wa uongozi katika dini hiyo? Ndio \_\_\_\_\_ Hapana \_\_\_\_\_
15. Kama ni ndiyo, ni wadhifa upi? \_\_\_\_\_
16. Kundi hili la Sinai lilitoa jina Sinai wapi?
17. Wana Sinai huwa wanakutana wapi? Ama walikutana wapi? \_\_\_\_\_
18. Siku hizi mnakutana huko? Eleza
19. Eleza jibu yako ya hapo juu (18).

20. Watu wangapi kutoka dini au kanisa ulikotoka walijiunga na kanisa la Sinai?  
\_\_\_\_\_
21. Kama kuna waliobaki, mbona hawakujiunga na Kanisa la Sinai?
22. Kuna uhusiano wowote kati ya dini yako ya zamani na Kanisa la Sinai? Eleza.
23. Mpango wa uongozi katika kanisa la Sinai uko namna gani?
24. Viongozi katika Kanisa la Sinai wanachaguliwa vipi?
25. Ninani kiongozi wa Kanisa La Sinai?
26. Jumlisha wafuasi wote wa Kanisa la Sinai katika eneo lako.
27. Nguvu zao ziko vipi ukilinganisha na wakati walipoanzisha kanisa la Sinai?
28. Inasemekana ya kwamba wafuasi wengi wa Kanisa la Sinai walijiunga na dini ya Bahai. Ndiyo \_\_\_ Hapana \_\_\_.
29. Kama ni kweli kwanini walifanya hivyo?
30. Wana Sinai waliwachukulia vipi wale waliojiunga na dini ya Bahai?
31. Wewe ni mbahai? Kama wewe ni mbahai endelea na sehemu ya tatu.

C

32. Ulisikia kuhusu dini ya Bahai lini? \_\_\_\_\_

33. Nani alikufunza dini ya Bahai?

34. Dini ya Bahai ilikufikia kwa mazingira ipi?
35. Uliitikia kuwa mbahai lini? \_\_\_\_\_
36. Kwanini ulikubali kuwa Mbahai?
37. Nini kilikuvutia kwa dini ya Bahai?
38. Sasa kwa sababu u Mbahai ni tofauti gani iliyoko kati ya kuwa mfuasi wa dini ya Bahai na kuwa mfuasi wa Kanisa la Sinai?
39. Ni manufaa gani dini ya Bahai inaleta sehemu unayo ishi?
40. Watu wa sehemu yako wanavutiwa vipi na dini ya Bahai?
41. Unahudhuria mikutano ya Kibahai wakati gani?
42. Mnaimba nyimbo wakati mnakutana?
43. Nani anaye tunga nyimbo hizo?
44. Mtu anaweza kutambua mafunzo na maadili ya kanisa la Sinai kwa Ubahai? Kama ni ndiyo. (taja).
45. Kanisa la Sinai liliundwa juu ya misingi ya mila na tamaduni za watu wa Wanyiha, mambo haya yote yanaonekana sasa kwa wale ambao ni Wabahai? Eleza.
46. Taja tamaduni na mila za Wanyiha ambazo zinaonekana kwa wabahai.
47. Taja jina la Local Spiritual Assembly yako. \_\_\_\_\_

48. LSA yako inahudumia watu wangapi? \_\_\_\_\_
49. Wangapi kati yao walikwa wa Kanisa la Sinai? \_\_\_\_\_
50. Taja dini zingine walikotoka wabhai wa LSA yako.
51. Taja LSA ambazo zinapakana na LSA yako?
52. Unaweza jumlisha idadi ya wafuasi kwa kila LSA?
53. Kuna uhusiano gani kati ya Kanisa la Sinai na dini zingine? Eleza.
54. Wabhai waliotoka Sinai huwa wanaendelea kushirikiana na wafuasi wa Sinai?  
Eleza sababu yako.
55. Je wafuasi wa Sinai wanahudhuria mikutano ya Kibhai?  
\_\_\_\_\_
56. Wanahusiano gani na Wabhai?
57. Taja tamaduni na itikadi muhimu za Wanyiha.
58. Uimbaji unasehemu gani katika mila za Wanyiha?
59. Dini ya Bahai imepenya vipi katika eneo la Mbozi?
60. Kanisa la Sinai limepenya vipi katika eneo la Mbozi?
61. Ni ishara zipi unatabua zinaonyesha kwamba wewe sasa ni Mbhai?
62. Wabhai waliotoka Sinai wanashirikiana vipi na wale ambao siyo wakutoka

Sinai?

63. Wabahai wanachukuliwa vipi katika eneo lako?

i. Na watu wa dini zingine

ii. Na serikali

64. Dini ilikuwa na sehemu gani katika Tanzania ya Ujamaa?

65. Mtu anaweza sema kwamba mazingira ya Ujamaa yalichangia kuundwa kwa Kanisa la Sinai na kisha kukubali kwa dini ya Bahai? Eleza.

66. Wabahai wanawachukulia vipi viongozi wa Sinai waliokubali kuwa Wabahai?

67. Toa maelezo yoyote muhimu kuhusu kuundwa kwa Kanisa la Sinai na vile walikuja kukubali dini ya Bahai na vile wameendelea kukomaa

## **Appendix III: List of Respondents**

### **Nairobi Kenya**

1. John Kagira*	11.03.1997
2. Shabban Seffu*	09.04.1998
3. Njuru Nganga*	12.07.2000
4. Njuru Nganga	16.03.2002
5. Rachel Ndegwa*	16.03.2002
6. Rachel Mwaura	09.04.2003
7. Mehrnaz Ehsani	09.04.2003
8. Asran Laloi*	09.04.2003
9. John Kagira	11.04.2003
10. Mercy Munyua	20.07.2005
11. Focused Group Discussion 1	15.03.2002

### **Dar es Salaam Tanzania**

12. Shabban Seffu*	07.08.1998
13. Mohammed Juma	09.08.1998
14. Shabban Seffu	20.06.1999
15. Shabban Seffu	16.04.2002
16. Peter Juma*	10.06.2005
17. Focused Group Discussion 2	12.06.2005
18. Nicholus Otieno	13.06.2005
19. Mzee Akinda	13.06.2005
20. Mr. Hashim	13.06.2005

### **Ruaha Bahai International School and Iringa**

21. Peter Juma	14.06.2005
22. Peter Juma	15.06.2005
23. Wanjiku Juma	15.06.2005
24. Godffrey Williams*	15.06.2005
25. John Msabi	15.06.2005
26. Gevaronge Myombe	15.06.2005
27. Godfrey Williams	16.06.2005

- |                                |            |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| 28. John Msabi                 | 16.06.2005 |
| 29. Dr. Bahendwa               | 16.06.2005 |
| 30. Maria Zawadi*              | 16.06.2005 |
| 31. Peter Juma                 | 09.07.2005 |
| 32. Focused Group Discussion 3 | 09.07.2005 |

**Mwanjelwa Mbeya**

- |                      |            |
|----------------------|------------|
| 33. Herbert Sikombe* | 18.06.2005 |
| 34. Herbert Sikombe  | 03.07.2005 |

**Halungu Mbozi**

- |                                |            |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| 35. Rwegasira Muhingo*         | 19.06.2005 |
| 36. Fred Muhingo               | 19.06.2005 |
| 37. Manick Muhkondya           | 19.06.2005 |
| 38. Nelson Mwashuya            | 19.06.2005 |
| 39. Pancil Zewanga             | 19.06.2005 |
| 40. Sikujua Pazzah             | 19.06.2005 |
| 41. Jonas Mwambeze             | 19.06.2005 |
| 42. Samson Mwashuiya           | 19.06.2005 |
| 43. Focused Group Discussion 4 | 19.06.2005 |
| 44. Rweghasila Muhingo         | 20.06.2005 |
| 45. David Zewanga              | 20.06.2005 |
| 46. Staford Zewanga            | 20.06.2005 |
| 47. Tusekile Lwinga            | 20.06.2005 |
| 48. Settilie Zewanga           | 20.06.2005 |
| 49. Debora Simikoko            | 20.06.2005 |
| 50. Gressi mwasenga            | 20.06.2005 |
| 51. Paraja Mahenga             | 20.06.2005 |
| 52. Eddwine Shupa              | 20.06.2005 |
| 53. Mesusele Zewanga           | 20.06.2005 |
| 54. Dismas Nkota               | 20.06.2005 |
| 55. Dolika Halekwa             | 20.06.2005 |
| 56. Fasnes Fredi               | 20.06.2005 |

57. Gressi Mwambene 20.06.2005  
 58. Happy Fredi 20.06.2005

**Ipapa and Ipunga Mbozi**

59. Yohannes Simbowe\* 15.06.1999  
 60. Yohannes Simbowe 23.06.2005  
 61. Kawawa Sinyenga 23.06.2005  
 62. Zena Martin 23.06.2005  
 63. Focused Group Discussion 5 24.06.2005  
 64. Aly Zawadi\* 24.06.2005  
 65. Lwitiho Namonje\* 24.06.2005  
 66. Samson Mwampashe 24.06.2005  
 67. Noa Kamela\* 24.06.2005  
 68. Nessi Namwazembe 25.06.2005  
 69. Fainess Simbeye 25.06.2005  
 70. Maria Zawadi 25.06.2005  
 71. Mwasauye Mwamulima 26.06.2005  
 72. Kawawa Bison\* 26.05.2005  
 73. Musa Muselema\* 27.06.2005  
 74. Zawadi Aly 27.06.2005

**Ipanzia Mbozi**

75. Abraham Musangula 25.06.2005  
 76. Musa Muselema 25.06.2005  
 77. Richard Mwanda 25.06.2005  
 78. Violet Mtambo 25.06.2005  
 79. Bisoni Sichone 26.06.2005  
 80. Tyson Siwakwi 26.06.2005  
 81. Selemani Simbowe 26.06.2005  
 82. Militab Namkondya\* 26.06.2005  
 83. Samson Khainga 26.06.2005  
 84. Benson Khainga 26.06.2005  
 85. Focused Group Discussion 6 26.06.2005

86. Chief John Seruka	27.06.2005
87. Piores Sikaponda	27.06.2005
88. Fainess Nambeye	27.06.2005
89. Yohannes Simbowe	27.06.2005
90. Justina Haonga	27.06.2005

**Tunduma - Tanzania Zambia Border**

91. Kenneth Silwibi	28.06.2005
92. Wawazo Mwapaza	28.06.2005
93. Upendo Simbowe	28.06.2005
94. Shadrack Sinienga	28.06.2005
95. Musauye Mwamlima	29.06.2005
96. Pendo Mgala	29.06.2005
97. Chapire Simbowe	29.06.2005
98. Sankara Kawawa	01.07.2005
99. Zawadi Aly	02.07.2005
100. Roda Nambowe	02.07.2005
101. Simon Haonga	02.07.2005

\*Some of the main respondents who were interviewed more than once

## Appendix IV: The Principles of the Bahai Ideal

This is the coming World Order as Bahais conceive it – the Bahai ideal:

A WORLD united politically, religiously, culturally; and educated under a common universal curriculum.

A WORLD in which war is forever banned, and the energies of humanity are devoted solely to constructive enterprise.

A WORLD where all men are seen as brothers and differences of colour, race, and nationality are no longer factors of prejudice but elements of pleasing variety in a vast cosmopolitan culture.

A WORLD where language barriers are overcome by the use of a universal auxiliary language.

A WORLD free from customs barriers and prosperity engaged in international interchange of goods.

A WORLD in which the long and bitter conflict between capital and labour is changed into effective cooperation based on profit sharing and mutuality of interests.

A WORLD where jungle-like competition in industry and business has given place to the orderly workings of a planned economic society.

A WORLD of plenty in which individual wealth is limited and poverty is abolished.

A WORLD in which science walks hand in hand with religion, and knowledge is dedicated to human progress.

A WORLD in which the business of government devolves upon fittest administrators and the best trained experts—a working aristocracy based on democratic universal foundations.

A WORLD, above all, which knows God and seeks to follow ways of righteousness and peace.

Reproduced from the book *Security for a Failing World* p  
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## Appendix V: The Tablet of Camel (LAEH-I-KARMIL) - revealed in 1860

All glory be to this Day, the Day in which the fragrances of mercy have been wafted over all created things, a Day so blest that past ages and centuries can never hope to rival it, a Day in which the countenance of the Ancient of Days hath turned towards His holy seat. Thereupon all created things, and beyond them those of the Concourse on High, were heard calling aloud: 'Haste thee, O Carmel, for lo, the light of the countenance of God, the Ruler of the Kingdom of Names and Fashioner of the heavens, hath been lifted upon thee.'

Seized with transports of joy, and raising high her voice, she thus exclaimed: 'May my life be a sacrifice to Thee, inasmuch as Thou hast fixed Thy gaze upon me, hast bestowed upon me Thy bounty, and hast directed towards me Thy steps. Separation from Thee, O Thou Source of everlasting life, hath well nigh consumed me, and my remoteness from Thy presence hath burned away my soul. All praise be to Thee for having enabled me to hearken to Thy call, for having honoured me with Thy footsteps, and for having quickened my soul through the vitalizing fragrance of Thy Day and the shrilling voice of Thy Pen, a voice Thou didst ordain as Thy trumpet-call amidst Thy people. And when the hour at which Thy resistless Faith was to be made manifest did strike, Thou didst breathe a breath of Thy spirit into Thy Pen, and lo, the entire creation shook to its very foundations, unveiling to mankind such mysteries as lay hidden within the treasuries of Him Who is the Possessor of all created things.'

No sooner had her voice reached that most exalted Spot than We made reply: 'Render thanks unto Thy Lord, O Carmel. The fire of thy separation from Me was fast consuming thee, when the ocean of My presence surged before thy face, cheering thine eyes and those of all creation, and filing with delight all things visible and invisible. Rejoice, for God hath in this day established upon thee His throne, hath made thee the dawning-place of His signs and the dayspring of the evidences of His Revelation. Well is it with him that circleth around thee, that proclaimeth the revelation of thy glory, and recounteth that which the bounty of the Lord thy God hath showered upon thee. Seize thou the Chalice of Immortality in the name of thy Lord, the All-Glorious, and give thanks unto Him, inasmuch as He, in token of His mercy unto thee, hath turned thy sorrow into gladness, and transmuted thy grief into blissful joy. He, verily, loveth the spot which hath been made the seat of His throne, which His footsteps have trodden, which hath been honoured by His presence, from which He raised His call, and upon which He shed His tears.'

‘Call out to Zion, O Carmel, and announce the joyful tidings: He that was hidden from mortal eyes is come! His all-conquering sovereignty is manifest; His all-encompassing splendor is revealed. Beware lest thou hesitate or halt. Hasten forth and circumambulate the City of God that hath descended from heaven, the celestial Kaaba round which have circled in adoration the favoured of God, the pure in heart, and the company of the most exalted angels. Oh, how I long to announce unto every spot on the surface of the earth, and to carry to each one of its cities, the glad-tidings of this Revelation – a Revelation to which the heart of Sinai hath been attracted, and in whose name the Burning Bush is calling: “Unto God, the Lord of Lords, belong the kingdoms of earth and heaven.” Verily this is the Day for which have been laid up those things which God, through a bounty beyond the ken of mortal mind or heart, hath destined for revelation. Ere-long will God sail His Ark upon the, and will manifest the people of Baha who have been mentioned in the Book of Names.’

Sanctified be the Lord of all mankind, at the mention of Whose name all the atoms of the earth have been made to vibrate, and the Tongue of Grandeur hath been moved to disclose that which had been wrapt in His knowledge and lay concealed within the treasury of His might. He, verily, through the potency of His name, the Mighty, the All-Powerful, the Most High, is the ruler of all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth.

Reproduced from *The Writings of Bahauallah*, p. 199 - 200

**Appendix VI: In the following 30 pages are the copies of the Sinai manuscripts on the Teachings and practices of the Church**

CHANZO CHA NINI <sup>YA</sup> SIKI NI NINI YA MUA WA  
UTAMANI IAPA.

UTAMANI ILIZI

Hapo mwanzo tulikuwa na mambo ambayo  
jalikuwa kwa watu wachache tu. Mambo hayo huita  
a mazimu au Mashetani (pepo). Kwa jina la Kisu  
hili jalikulikana kama mashetani.

Mambo hayo jalikuwa mchanganyiko kiasi se-  
hemu fulani jalikuwa na imani ya kumwambua  
Mungu na upande mwingine ilikuwa kuambua  
mizimu. Hivyo watu walioamini mambo hayo  
walikuwa hawatambuliwi wako wapi, yapokuwa  
upande fulani walionekana kuwa walifika ma-  
mbo ya Biblia Takatifu.

Mnamo mwaka 1958 kijana mmoja aliyea  
wa Gershoni Simbawe ambaye alikuwa mwa-  
nafunzi wa darasa<sup>la</sup> pili (2) alitokea na mambo  
ya ajabu akiwa amelala saa 2 za usiku ndani ya  
kubanda chake (kweni). Ghafula alitokea na  
watu wawili walioangia ndani bila mlango  
kufunguliwa walimkuta Gershoni akiwa a-  
la kitandani pake, aliposhituka aliona chum-  
chote kina mwanga mkubwa sana mfu wake  
kabari au taa ya umeme alipotafakari zaidi  
aliviona watu hao kuwa wana msauni ndege  
sana hivyo walimwanabia Gershoni kuambua  
unamwe chini waombi hapo Gershoni alio-  
pa sana akataka kupiga kielele ili suite  
watu wa kumsidia lakini wapi santi iliku-  
ma kabisa ilimbidi atii amri alitaka  
kumya hukuu watu wote wanepiga magoti  
walikuwa wanaomba kwa muda wa dakika 3  
hadi 5 hivi. Baada ya siku hiyo watu wote  
walitoweka ghafu hali mlango ubiwa unepi-  
ngwa vile vile Gershoni akiwa ameduka  
alitaka kutoka nje ili alawaetere wazazi wake  
mambo jalioampata lakini alioona na akata-

mambo yale yaliyomtokea usiku alishindwa kuyaeleza.

Hapo alimwenda shemeji yake wa kijiji cha jirani cha Ipunga ambaye alikuwa Mkristo wa dini (dheheba) la Moravian na alimwedeza mambo yaliyopata usiku ule.

Baada ya muda kupita Gershomu Simbawe alianza kuota ndoto mbali mbali za ajabu. mfano nyumba yake (bweni) paa linazuwa na juu angani angani kuma mtu ameshika likwakwa alivuna zao fulani mfano wa ngano, na picha hiyo hiyo alishaiona ndani ya baadhi ya vitaku na kudumbuka juu ya ndoto yake.

Mnamo mwaka 1966 Gershomu Simbawe alitokwa tena na jambo la ajabu sana alitokwa safarini Tunduma muda wa saa 12 $\frac{1}{2}$  jioni alipoluma akitembea kufika karibu na nyumbani kwao mwendo wa maili mbili hivi, aliona angani <sup>KITU</sup> (PICHA) MFANO WA MDYO WA BINADAMU UKO MBELE YAKE UNA RANGI YA

NJANO, UKIWA UNAWAKA SANA KAMA TAA PIA UKIWA NA RANGI HIYO HIYO YA NJANO. Hapo hapo alianza kupiga yowe wa kuita wati kuwa "jioni ni waambie maneno, na huku alikuwa anazunguka mwanja wa nyumba ya mtu mmoja aliyekuna jirani. Wati

Wazee wake wadiarifina pamoja na mke wake wakaja kumwona wakampeleka nyumbani kwake. hatimaye akawa salama kabisa. Baada ya hapo wazee walimshauri kuwa Geshomu alikuwa na (MIZIMU AU NASHETANI) na kumwambia kuwa aende kuwa wati wa mizimu ili wamwambie nyimbo alikubali ushauri huo na akaenda huko.

Na mwaka 1968 GERSHOMU SIMBOWE aliota ndoto kwamba tangu leo hii kwete utaitwa YOHANA pamoja na mwenzake Tenson Simbwe naye ataitwa PETRO na

kuagizwa kuwa <sup>KAZI</sup> ~~kuwa~~ nyimfi mtafanya  
kazi kazi ya neno la MUNGU, ingawa  
mtakuwa wengi lakini kuwa sasa ni nyi nde  
mtakao anza kusoma 'NENO LA MUNGU'. Usi  
huo huo Gershoni yaani Yohana alikuwenda  
kulala kwa Petro. Na baada ya muda si mwa  
jina la Petro lilihitokeza kwa njia ya ndo.

Punde si punde Yohana na Petro walian  
kupata masomo mbali mbali walikuwa waki  
soma mlimani, ndoto zao zilivzongaza wao  
mee kuko mlimani. Waliagizwa kuwa wawe  
vitaku vifuataavyo: ① Bibilia na ② Kalenda

Walikuwa wakishangaa ni kitu gani kili  
cho kuwa kikivafundisha juu ya kumheshimu  
MUNGU na kumheshimu watu na hasa waku  
wa Serikali, na wakisha kusoma Bibilia ndipo  
wawapo  
gundua kuwa Mambo hayo ni ya Mwenyezi  
Mungu tu na wala hayana ubaya wowote.  
GERSHONI (YOHANA) alizidi kutokewa na ndoto  
mbali mbali, alita ndoto moja inamonyesha  
mkono wake wa kulia kulikwa na maji mepo  
sana yalitoka kwenye Chemuchemu, na hapo ha  
aliuzwa swali kuwa: "Je Dawu ya kwanza au nani  
ya kwanza hapa Duniani ipi? Yaani iliyabara ku  
ko zote?" YOHANA alishindwa kujibu swali hilo  
Mpaka alipo ulizwa swali lingine kuwa tokea aoubuhi  
za leo ulikuwa unesha nini? upande wa kulia  
wa kulia? Yohana aliweza kutunuka ku  
mba aliweza kuona maji mepo sana. Na hapo ali  
silia sariti kuwa hiyo ndiyo Dawu ya kwanza  
hapa Duniani. Baada ya matukio yote haya  
waliendelea kusoma mwaka mzima ma  
somo yao gale gale ya Bibilia. Wakati wote wal  
patwa na maazabu ya kila aina walipetwa na ma  
gonjwa mbali mbali na kupelwa kwa wazazi wa  
kuwa kuwenda watoto wao walipatwa na mabaya  
kuwa sababu ya kushinda kuwa mlimani.

1978 wikipokura nye kibirat na nyi nao

okura kur rangangye Yohana alofo kenamba

Wene Yohana na Virginia kenpona rangangye

woko kur kerekura mangangye ya yote otakanga

neti kurekurenye. Nende nyumbani utapeta

kuma muktana na Kikrista kango 8/3/1978.

Alkambira kenamba at erudi kiyake sam

na kuyike tarake kinyo kinyo iki wende

alkandakisha gine koto iki wenge kuyitigye

kura mang ya nyina ndigo dawa yake.

Banda ya tukio kute YOHANA alirudi na kur-

jika nyumbani 6/7/1978 tarake 7/3/1978 alirud-

nda kur Mee na kaise kumuleza shida

yake kur kumwawigye kura ya 8/7/78 kuma Mku

wane wapi na Kikrista? akayabwa kuma

muktana utakura Iyanya. tarake kinyo Yoha-

na alirike kurenye muktana na kumwawigye

a kur alkambira kur rangangye kinyo

siku kinyo kinyo YOHANA alirike suti kura

kumwawigye kur akabwa kute kura

nyumbani na Mungu kuma (10) na kumwawigye

na kura eti angabigye 20/8/1978. Na

kute alipofika 20/8/1978 YOHANA alikurude

Ukumbura kinyo cha Mbeisi na ndiko aliko

kurura tarake 20/8/1978 akabwa eta

"LAST CHURCH"

Alipokura angabigye alipeta ndoto

kura "Wese YOHANA utarudi Tene kura

utaku na mawimbi iki nao turamenge

na kura peleta kur na kute NE No 7A

BISANA kute maki ya wima. Na kumwawigye

akakuti utafinshurira muktana mitofa (3)

ya Dini gram kute maki kaku o kur gura

ya Babo @ na la Masana na @ Na rube Mtakuti

ya Na kute kumwawigye kute chub hite

ya "LAST CHURCH"

Baadaye Yohani aliagizwa kuwa  
 yeye pamoja na Petro wataongoza wenz  
 O. NAO WATAKATA DINI YAO AMBAYO ITAITW.  
 DINI YA SINAI AMBAYO ITAKUWA NI DINI YA  
 MIZA NA UTAMA DUNI. MTASARI KWA KUDIGA MA  
 GOTI NA NJIA YA MSALABA ITATUMIKA, KUVAA MIS  
 LABA. KUTIFUNZA AMRI IO ZA MUNGU NA KUZIFUA  
 KISHA KUBATIZWA BAADA YA MIKA 3.

Mnamo tarehe 11/11/1987 kukatoka kiku  
 ndi cha watu 5 ambao nao walitambili  
 mambo hayo kuhusu dini nao hivi wao  
 walisema kwamba "Ndugu Simbeye tume  
 pata ndoto kwamba utakuwa Kiongozi  
 wetu pamoja na Ndugu Petro Simbeye  
 waliendelea kusema kuwa "hivi sasa uturu-  
 nulie (BIBILIA), MSALABA (ROZARI)". Kikun  
 hicho kiliendelea kusema kwamba baada  
 ya kupata mafunzo ya dini wapelekwe  
 Yordani yaani wapate (UBATIZO). Hiv  
 kikundi hicho kipo tayari kubatizwa. Vile  
 vile kuna ndoto iliyowatokea kuwa kutaku-  
 wa na (BENDI) NGOMA ambayo itapigwa  
 kulingana na Bendi ya shule ili baadaye  
 kuwe na mapigo ya kwaya (nasabiti), na kuch  
 za mchezo utakaowasidii watu wagonjwa.

Kutekana na hali na matukio yote  
 hayo masomo mengi na ndoto nyingi zina  
 zotufikia. "Maazizi mengi tayari yamete-  
 kelezwa, isipokuwa bado vitu vilivalavyo hay  
 chini" ① DAFTARI LA <sup>WATUMSHI WA</sup> NENO LA MUNGU.

② LITAKAZO A NI KWA KWA NAFASI TATII.

MAAGIZO:-

- ① DAFTARI LA MAHUDHURIO KWA MUSAHA.
- ② " " " " KWA MWEZI
- ③ " " " " WTKI
- ④ MAVAZI MEUPE
- ⑤ UJENZI WA KANICA

YA WATUMISHI WA NENO LA MWINGU LA MUSAHA  
KITIJI CHA IPAPA WANISA LA SINAI.

WILAYA YA MBOZI MKOA YA MBEYA-TANZANIA

NAMBA YA KWAN- DIKISHWA	IINA KAMILI LA MTUMISHI	MAHALI KIJIKI	UMRI MAKA	DARASA ALIAMI	MAELE
①	PETRO SIMBEYE	IPAPA	40	14	--
②	MUSSA M	"	36	12	--
③	WALWIHO NAMONJE	"	26	7	--
④	PIALESI NAKAPONDA	ISALALO	38	7	--
⑤	MIRATABU NIMNKONDYA	IPAPA			

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TUMBA YA KITABU KUTOKA DAR ES SALAM

1	BAHAULA # 4	12	UAGAZIWA YA 2
2	MAMENO SALIM FICHWA # 12	12	Siku za kukumbuka
3	AINA MPJA YA WATU # 9	14	AND THE NEWER PA
4	KULEJA WATOTO # 3	15	PARIS 1
5	MAKUSANO # 6	16	MATELEZI YAMARADU
6	SALA # 5		
7	AMANI ULIMWENGO 10		
8	BOSITANI MPJA # 6		
9	MAKATAZO WINSWATI 10		
10	MASIMLIZI YA NABIL # 6		
11	IMANI YAKIPATA # 4		

TUMBA ZA KITABU # JUMLA NI 96 + 39 = 135

IDAN KILIMO KIWENASAKAMWEHA

1	BAHAULA # 3	5	ZAKUKUMBUKA
2	MATANIKO MIFAKATEU 1	3	
3	KULEJA WATOTO 1		Tumbe ya vitabu
4	IMANI YA BAHAI 5		23
5	MASIMLIZI YA NABIL 2		IDAN ni ya kukumbuka
6	MAKATAZO YA WINSWATI 1		UBA NI 11
7	MAKUSANO 1	(1)	Siku za kukumbuka 1
8	AMANI YA IMANI 1+2	(2)	Masimlizi ya nabil
9	BOSITANI MPJA 1	2	Imani ya Bahai 1
10	SALA KIMOJA 1	4	BAHAU YA MBEYA
11	ULIMWENGO MIFAKATEU 10		

## NDUGU TATU NAMONJE:

### UTANGULIZI

Ndugu,

Tatu Namonje alibatizwa angali mtoto mdogo katika dhahabu (Dini ya East Church). Binti huuu alikuwa akisumbuliwa sana na 'Mwagong' wa aina mbali mbali ambayo yaliufanya mwili wake kutsukwa wa furaha mara kwa mara.

Ndugu huyo aliendela na hali hii ya usumbufu hadi alipolewa sehemu za Chiwezi, hatimaye alijaliwa kupata kizazi chake cha kwanza ambapo alipata watoto mapacha, kwa bahati mbaya pacha moja aliaga dunia na alibakiwa na mwana mmoja.

### UTABIRI WAKE "TATU"

Baada ya kuugua kwa muda mrefu ndugu Namonje alianza kuota ndoto kuwa alitakiwa arudi nyumbani kwa wazazi wake (papa ili katika milki mwenye (Chief) Seruka. Ndoto zake zilimwashiria kuwa arudi huko ili akaanzishe kazi ya neno la "MUNGU"! Hapo Tatu alistaajabu mno jinsi mambo hayo yataka vyokuwa kwa vile yeye alikuwa mke wa mtu ingekuwa arudi kwa wazazi wake?

Alipokuwa anafikiri hivyo ndoto nyingine zilimjia na kumwambia kuwa asiwe na mashaka juu ya mambo hayo kwa sababu imeamriwa na mwenyezi Mungu.

9

kazi ya Neno la Mungu pamoja na  
nyinyi. Na kwamba hao watohatizwa  
katika torodani yaani kwa maji Matakati  
fu. Nduku Simbawe aliwanunulia vita  
bu hivyo na kuanza kuwafundisha waumi  
ni hao AMRI 10 ZA MUNGU:

NDOTO KUU -

Mimi naitwa Tatu Namonje! Nimepata  
Ndoto kuu nikaletewa jina jipya ambalo  
ni "UTAITWA kwa TINA LA LWIITHO  
NAMONJE"

## AMRI ZA KANISA LA SINAI

DINI YA MILA NA UTAMADUNI.

- ① HUNHURIA MISA TAKATIFU NA SIKUKUU ZIIO ZO AMRIWA.
- ② FUNGA SIKU ULIZOPEWA NA NJOZI ZAKO NA PIA KULA CHAKULA KINACHOKUBALIKA NA PEPO ZAKO.
- ③ UNGAMA MAKOSA (DHAMBI ZAKO) KILA WIKI.
- ④ POKEA EKARISITI TAKATIFU NA HASA WAKATI WA PASAKA.
- ⑤ ZAKA ZITATOKANA KWA NTIA YA ROHO MTAKATIFU NA WALA USITOWE MFUKONI MWA KO.
- ⑥ SHIKA SHERIA ZA KANISA SINAI ZA NDOA.
- ⑦ FEDHA NI ~~ADUI~~ ADUI WA KANISA SINAI.

## KAZI ZA KANISA SINAI

- ① KUFANYA KAZI YA MUNGU KWA BIDII SANA NA KWA NGUVU ZOTE.
- ② KUMUOMBA MUNGU KILA SIKU.
- ③ KUWAOMBEA WAGONIWA.
- ④ TEKELEZA UANABII.
- ⑤ KUMKEMEA AU KUMKANA (KUM<sup>M</sup>CHAPA) SHETANI.
- ⑥ KUTOA ELIMU YA DINI KWA WAUMINI.
- ⑦ KUFICHUA PALIPO NA MIUJUZA YA ASILI.
- ⑧ MATENGO YA KANISA DINI HII YATULIKANE Tawe safi sana kwa kuwa ni kweli ni NGUVU ZA MUNGU. KANISA NI NYUMBA YA MUNGU.

II MAEUNDISHO YA NINI KANISA LA SINAI

DINI YA MILA NA UTAMADUNI IPAPA.

1 Ni nani alikuumba akakuweka ulimwenguni?

- MUNGU aliniumba akaniweka ulimwenguni.

2 Je, Mungu yuko wapi?

- Mungu yuko mbinguni na mahali pote.

3 MUNGU ni nini?

- MUNGU ni roho tupu kamili kabisa, muumba mbingu na dunia na Burana ~~na~~ mkubwa wa vitu vyote.

4 Je MUNGU atujua sisi?

- Ndiyo. Mungu atujua sana. Hata mavazo ya ndani ya miyo yetu. ZABUR 10 na ZABURI 139.

5 Je, katika Mungu mmoja kuna nafsi ngapi?

- Katika ~~na~~ Mungu mmoja kuna nafsi tatu (3).

- ① BABA ② MWANA NA ③ ROHO MTAKA TIEU.

6 Je, katika nafsi hizo tatu ni miungu mitatu?

- Hapana, katika nafsi hizo tatu ni MUNGU mmoja tu. Hili ni fumbo la "UTATA MTAKATI EU".

7 Je, tutampendaje Mungu?

- Tutampenda MUNGU kwa kushika na kutimiza amri zake kuu tatu za Mungu.

8 Je Mbingu ni nini?

- Mbingu ni mahali pa kufurahi na MUNGU siku zote, ni mahali patakatifu daima milele.

9 Je Watu gani watakwenda mbinguni?

- Watu Yuma tu watakwenda mbinguni.

10 Je Watu wabaya watakwenda wapi?

- Watu wabaya watakwenda motoni mwa TEHANAMU.

11 TEHANAMU ni nini?

- TEHANAMU ni mahali pakuteswa motoni mwa milele pamoja na SHETANI.

12 Kwanza Mungu aliumba watu wangapi?

- Kwanza Mungu aliumba watu wawili. Nao ni ADAMU NA EVA. Huyo EVA aliumba kwa uhavu wa ADAMU wakuume kwa MUNGU BABA MWENYEZI.

13 MUNGU alitumbua sisi sote kwa nini?

- MUNGU alitumbua sisi ili tupate kumjua kumpenda, kumtumikia na hivyo tupate kufika kwake mbinguni.

14 Je Adui wetu mkubwa ni nani?

- Adui yetu mkubwa ni UBINAFSI. Ni Ubinafsi wetu. Hatufanyi tufikiri na kutenda mabaya yamchukizayo MUNGU. MATAYO 10 - 28. WAKOLITHO: 6 - 9 - 10

15 SALA ni nini?

- Sala ni kumfikilia Mungu pamoja na kumsikiliza atuambiayo moyoni mwetu na kuongea naye.

16 Kwa nini sharti tusali?

- Ni sharti tusali ili kuonyesha kwa mba: Twamwamini MUNGU na hivyo kumwa budu, kujuta dhambi zetu, na kumuomba atu samaha. Din kumsh...

yote aliyotujalia, kuzidi kumuomba mahi-  
taji yetu ya roho na mwili. NAYE  
MUNGU BABA MTEMA "Huwaisaidia wale  
wamionmbao kwa maana alisema:-  
OMBENI MTAPEWA, BISHENI MTA FUNGULIWA  
NA TURUNI DHAMBI ZENU NANYI MIASAMENE  
WA.

17 UBATIZO NI NINI?

- Ubatizo ni alama ya kuwa twamu  
ni Bwana na Mwokozi wetu Yesu  
Kristo ambaye yu tavari kutuokoa  
na kutufanya wanakaniisa wake. Kuzami-  
shwa majini kwaonyesha kwamba tumei-  
fia dhambi na tumezikwa pamoja naye  
na tunafufuka naye Kristo. Tunapopole-  
wa majini inayoonyesha tunafufuka naye  
wenye uzima mpya.

18. MTU HUBATIZWAJE?

- Tunambatiza mtu

Watoto wachanga hubatizwa kwa  
kuwa wazazi wao wanamwani Kristu  
na wanaka watoto wao Wakue katika Kristo  
Warumi 6: - 1 - 11 KOLITHO 2: - 12 - 13

18 MTU HUBATIZWAJE?

- Tunamubatiza mtu kwa kumzamisha  
majini na katika hatari ya kufa tuna-  
mwagia maji kichwani tukisema "Nakuba-  
tiza kwa JINA LA BABA NA LA MWANA  
NA ROHO MIAKATIEU. MDO 8: - 36 - 39  
MT. 28: 19.

19 KRISTO ALITIMIZAJE AHADI YAKE YA  
KUWA PAMOJA NASI?

- Kristo alitimiza ahadi yake ya ku-  
wa nasi kwa kutuma ROHO MIAKATIEU  
aishi siku ya PENTEKOSTE. ROHO  
MIAKATIEU ALILISHUKIA KANISA KATIKA  
SURA YA NDIMI ZA MOTO. MDO. 2: - 1 - 20

20 JE ROHO MIAKATIEU AISHI KATIKA KANISA?

14  
Kweli Roho Mtakatifu aishi katika  
kanisa, na ndani ya wale wote wanao-  
mwani YESU.

Kristo yeye huwaongoza wajue ukweli  
na uzima wa milele. YOH: 14: 15 - 17

1 KORINTHO 2: 10 - 12

21

KANISA NI NINI?

Kanisa ni jumuiya ya wale waomwaminia  
Kristu na wamebatizwa. Yeye huwatuma  
wakaiendeleze kazi yake Duniani MDO. 2: 42  
- 47 MDO 5: 12 - 16 - 1: 6 - 8

22

DHAMBANI NI NINI?

Dhambi ni umzi au neno au tendo lolote  
lile lipangalo matakwa <sup>kinyume</sup> matakwa ya  
Mungu. Tu fanyapo mabaya kwa makusudi  
hapo tunamdharau MUNGU na kukkosea  
KRISTU. ALISEMA "MUWE WAKAMILIFU  
KAMA BABA YENU WA MBINGUNI ALIYOMKA-  
MILIFU. Mwanzo 3 - 24.

Matayo 5:-

WATU WALOBATIDWA

1	LWITITO NAMONJE	35	MAINES NAHALINGA
2	YUHANA SIMBOWE	36	HAFSON MNIKONDYA
3	PETRO SIMBEYE	37	GESTA NACHIZYA
4	SIMON HAONGA	38	ELIYA SIMBOINE
5	PAULLO SIWELWA	39	LAIYON SIMBEYE
6	MILITABU NAMKONDYA	40	MATATIRO SILWIMBA
7		41	WILLNESS NATWANDA
8	MELINA NACHLONGU	42	HERUMANNY SILONGWE
9	LEBECCA NAMBWE	43	PETER SIYELA
10	ANJELINA NAMIKO	44	BULACKSONY SICHONE
11	LUTINALA NAMUTAMBO	45	JUSITINA NAMTAFYA
		46	HAONGA
11	MUSAUYE MWAMLIMA	47	FAIDA NASHUYA
12	NESSI NATWAZEMBE	48	ASTONY SICHONE
13	BETHELEMU SICHONE	49	LUSIYA NACHIZYA
14	FURADISONI HAONGA	50	MALIYA NAHAONGA
15	LACKSON MWASHUYA	51	JOSEPHU KAINGA
16	EVER NAMBELA	52	LEHEMA NAWAIWA
17	RAHABU NAMBWE	53	DANNA NAMKONDA
18	PIYALESI NALAFONDA	54	ELIMA NAMNIKONDYA
19	FESTA NAMONJE	55	LOYCE NAMNIKONDYA
20	MALIYA NAMKONDYA	56	ATLINY NACHICANDA
21	YIMBANJI SINKAMBA	57	BAHAZI NIZUNDA
		58	ELIKA NALIBONA
22	NELESON MAPUMBA	59	KUNDANANJI NAMBWE
23	EDWIN HALINGA	60	NISITUE NAMUNUWA
24	JOYCE NAMKONDYA	61	MIZINALA NAHAONGA
25	LUTINDO NAMKONDA	62	EBKSONNY MAPUMBA
26	ORIDA NAKAMBA	63	INICKISONY HALINGA
27	ELINA NAMIKO	64	WILLIAM MAPUMBA
28	ANTHUN HAONGA	65	MWAJUMA MANKANA
29	LUTNESS NALONDE	66	ROZRI NANZOIVA
30	DANDI HAONGA	67	FAINES NAMBEYE
34	JESTINA NAMKONDYA	68	MINES NIMIMBA
32	KIRISTINA NAMNIKONDYA	69	VICK NAMBWE
33	DINAESS NATWUNDA	70	ANJELINA NAHAONGA

72	ESTIA	NAMBOWE.	109	ZAWARD	SICHONE.
73	ESTIA	LWENGA.	110	BISONI	SICHONE.
74	ELIZABETH	SIMBOWE.	111	STEPHANI	SIMBOWE.
75	ZAKAYO	SIMBOWE.	112	MARIYA	NAMKOLONGU.
76	LARARO	SIMBEYE.	113	JESTINA	MAPUMBA.
77	GDWINI	SIMBOWE.	114	JESTINA	NALWIMBA.
78	VERONIKA	SIMBOWE.	115	VALETI	NALWENGA.
79	MARIYA	SIMBOWE.	116	ENISONI	N SILWENGA.
80	LWITITO	SINKAZA.	117	JOSEPHU	MANIKODYA.
81	SISTER	MWASENGA.			
82	MINES	NAMKONDA.			
83	TABU	NASHUYA.			
84	ZAWARD	AVOGADRE.			
85	SELEMANI	SIMBOWE.			
86	TICKSON	SINKONBE.			
87	JACKOBW	SIMFUKWE.			
88	RODA	NAMBOWE.			
89	YOSETU	SIMBOWE.			
90	MIZINALA	NAMUNJE.			
91	FESTA	NAKAMBA.			
92	LISTA	NAMUSINJILI.			
93	SOFIYA	NAMBELA.			
94	SELINALA	NAMJENDA.			
95	LAINESI	NAMUNJE.			
96	FAINESI	NAMBEYE.			
97	PENDU	MUTALLA.			
98	MEDINA	NANAKURU.			
99	LUSE	NAMBELA.			
100	PAULINA	NAMJENDA.			
101	DINACEST	NAMJENDA.			
102	FAINESI	NAMKOUNDI.			
103	FRIDA	HANGA.			
104	AMESSI	HANGA.			
105	NKUSUWILA	NAMBEYE.			
106	MUSA	NWASHUYA.			
107	NOWA	KAMELA.			
108	ECKISON	MAPUMBA.			

Uliyo azima vitabu  
(1) Malla ya kula

husiani mpia,  
masandani ya vitabu

(2) Mwaige

WEU FRA, BATHA'U  
LATH, Uwaigo batani.

SALA BE SALAH No. 108421  
1842

Kuomba na Kutenda mema

Unapo omba na kutenda mema unaoomba  
utukufu wa mungu sawa UNAA

Unamtafuta Bahari Ulah

Tulikuwa tunadubili watu 3 kutunguzwa  
ndini.

KANISA LA SINAI

Box 150

MBOZI - MBEYA

26/7/1998.

TANZANIA.

BALAZA LA KIROHO LA TAIFA.

Box 585

DAR-ES-SALAAM.

TANZANIA.

Wapendwa wababai.

Kanisa la Sinai, ni kanisa ambalo Mchipus wake na Mkusanyika wake ni wote uliofanywa na Mungu mwenyewe kwa kutumia Koho Vitakatifu.

Watu (wamini) wa kanisa hili waliveza kusanyika baada kila mmoja kutokwa na Maono au ndoto. Na Maono hayo na ndoto hizo tulianza kuzipata mwaka 1958. Mambo yaliendelea hivyo mpaka mwaka 1967 ambapo mkusanyiko wa ndoto na Maono ulipitia hatua ambayo tuliona tuwe na Kanisa (Yaani Kanisa la Sinai). Maono na ndoto hizo zilitupitisha hatua ambayo tuliyona majabu mengi mno. Ambalo litupitisha mno ni juu ya Mungu mmoja na bini yake moja. Mambo yote haya yalikuwa yalipitika kwa Kusoma, Kusoma na Kusabi mkimani: Chini ya Kongozi wa Ndugu Yohana Simbwe na Petro Simbweo.

Mwaka 1993 ni mwaka ambao sisi wana Sinai tumebahatika Sans Kusika habari za watu wa aina mpya yaani wababai! ambao tulizipata kwa Godfrey William na A. Mhingo wa Baraza la Kiroho Riji cha Halungu. Habari hizo tulipelewa tuliona hatua Tofauti Kabisa na kile tulichokwa tukikiona hatika Maono na Ndoto zetu.

Hivyo tunalomba Baraza la Kiroho la Taifa kiwe kutupia Macho kwenye Kanisa hili Maono nfa ya kwana imetayalishwa. Hata hivyo tunalomba kiwezekana kwa kutembelea na pia teleweke kabisa kwamba Kanisa hili ni mchanganyiko wa watu wote waliohwa wakristo na wafagani pia. Hivyo ovanahitaji kwekimishwa kwa undani naidi juu ya vitabu Vitakatifu Kabisa vya Mungu yaani Biblia na Kuvani Tunahitaji ushami wenu.

ni sisi wana Sinai.

SALA BE SALAH No 108421

Kuomba na Kutenda memo 1847

2 mugu nadin

2 Watukuja watu 3

Ambao watakuja kukusanyika.

21 - 14 - 12

Sikuku zitabadilika zitakuwa wjungi

kusali mbinani wa kujenga kibanda

Wazungu mtawawa kapa kila mwa  
Ndege itafika

Watawapeleka 1 SM wama sinai  
wote ikatokea

Wanga

THE BAHAIS OF SINAI  
 IPAPA - MBOZI-MBEYA  
P.O. BOX 150.

BAHAI WORLD CENTRE,  
 P.O. BOX 155,  
HAIFA.

c/o NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY,  
 P.O. BOX 585  
DARESALAAM.

REF: OUR UNION UNDER BAHAUILLAH COMPLETION  
OUR DREAM AND TO TELL YOU THE  
REMAINED.

We have great spiritual happy we Bahai's  
 of Sinai, for how assembly have taken  
 us together with love shown since we  
 combined with you. These love have  
 revealed openly once the spiritual  
 assembly together with the world  
 Bahai centre, they reached step to  
 transfer us up to National spiritual  
 assembly D'SALAAM. We say -  
 thank you very much.

This act was first and new for those  
 who was not perfect and build new  
 faith. We don't like wrong words  
 here at our district for anyone who  
 have it.

new discipline. We Sinails here we are at "the region, district, and in villages, here at Papa we have already been Bahai, there are also Sinails whose still to get this faiths but we believe that they are going to ~~get~~ receive it.

After this thanks we come to other side about "DREAM" we had seen long time ago, the period of this dream is near to 10 years from 1967-1977. Things happened on that period was these:

1. To build college at mountain Sinai before 2000 year.
2. There will be built a secondary, and we drawn a sketch on that position.
3. Building a Communization Centre.
4. To build the dispensary, to keep the sick. That we have done, we keep the sick with play, ~~songs~~ and poems. Others are good healthy, other not. And this act is going on today.
5. We had seen we left here to D'salam and this have already complete & 1990.

Coming from several part of the world  
with different ~~and~~ race, and this  
have already completed, and still  
going on.

7. We had seen, we were getting many  
books, and this have already done.
8. Generally we had seen many things,  
for those things had already done.  
we have written in this paper, those  
things not yet we haven't put in this  
writing.
9. This DREAM is very important, "Yohana"  
had seen very long time that is "  
ONE RELIGION IN THREE PERSON.  
FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT. AND THIS  
HAVE DONE WITH BAHOU'LLAH.
10. Another thing was been done was the  
equality between women and men.  
Many things dream and development  
of faith ~~was~~ in the hand of women.  
Even today when Bahau'lah teaches us  
about the Equality, we understand the  
meaning why the women was before us.  
In this kind we know that many dream  
that haven't completed, we had seen  
all are in the hand of Bahair.

#### COLLEGE AND COMMUNICATION CENTER.

This college and communication centre will have  
no work to do that is that . . .

the faith and society in the whole world -  
THINGS TO BE HAPPENED WHEN COLLEGE AND  
COMMUNICATION CENTRE TO BE BUILT - 2002!

After completing building the college  
if could be finished in 2002. We have  
seen that here at Ipapa and out of this  
district they have changed to be Bahais  
In order all of this to be done, the following  
things must be going together!

Ⓐ. TO GET TWELVE YOUNGS.

Those youngs could come from twelve  
nation in the world. Three girls nine  
boys. The following are there studies  
they must work.

THEIR ADJECTIVES.

- ① must be newly Bahais.
- ② must be 18 years and so on.
- ③ must be able to speak two national  
and international language.

THEIR WORK.

- ① To learn Trumpet and fife.
- ② Sucks phom.
- ③ Prances
- ④ To find the great words of Bahi'u'llah  
who is the x pastor of today and  
to enter them into the sacred poem

Our dream tells us about the coming  
of a little peace in the world.

The Bahais of Sinai we believe that a  
little peace will start here at Ippanille  
to proceed with other part of the  
country where this peace will be  
passed. And this will develop in the  
whole world. This thing of a little  
peace will be done in peacefully under  
Bahai religion.

The Bahai of Sinai we have seen that  
a little peace will start here in 2002.  
From here it will develop other side.  
But all Bahais we must be care in  
that period of little peace.  
we have written because we have seen  
all things being under Bahai.  
Many things we have seen, and many have  
been done, and many not yet.

YOHANA S. SIMBOWE

~~THE~~ THE BAHAI OF IPAPA

MBIZI - MBEYA

THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY  
OF THE BAHÁ'IS OF TANZANIA

Incorporated and Exempted from Registration

14 Septemba, 1995  
7 Izzat, 152 B.E.

Bw. Johanness Simbowe,  
Kijiji cha Ipapa,  
S.L.P. Na.150,  
MBOZI.

Rafiki mpendwa wa Kibaha'i,

Tunatumaini kuwa hujambo na unaendelea vyema na shughuli za maisha na vile vile za Imani.

Hii ni kuhusu tafsiri ya ndoto yako ambayo ilikuwa inarudia rudia kila mara. Mbaha'i mmoja aliombwa ajaribu kutafsiri hiyo ndoto na yeye alitafsiri kama hivi:-

" --Ambapo maana nyingi zaweza kufikiriwa, lakini tuliamua kutaja ile iliyo ya moja kwa moja kuliko zote.

1. Mashine ingeweza kuwa Utaratibu wa Kiutawala wa Baha'u'llah ukiwa na Makao Makuu ya Ulimwengu katikati yakiunganishwa kwenye mashirika mbali mbali ya kitaifa na kijiji kuzungukia ulimwengu mzima kwa njia ya mawasiliano mbali mbali.

2. "Sala Be Sallah" katika Kiarabu ina maana "Sala ikiambatana na uchaji". Inaweza kusemwa kwa namna nyingine kusomeka "sala na matendo mema vyote huhitajika". Kwa kweli hii ni maana ile ile ya aya ya kwanza katika Kitabi-Aqdas ambayo hutaka vyote viwili utambuzi wa Mdhihirishaji wa Mungu kwa Siku hii na utii kwa sheria Zake.

3. Namabari 104821 ichukuliwapo toka kushoto kwenda kulia inaweza kugeuzwa kwenye herufi teno za Kiarabu, k.m.

10 ..... "ya"  
4 ..... "d"  
8 ..... "hu"  
2 ..... "b"  
1 ..... "e"

Maneno matatu yafuatayo yeweza kuundwa kwa herufi hizo hapo juu:

Yad..... ambayo ina maana "mkono"

Hub..... ambayo ina maana "upendo"

A ..... ambayo ina maana "alpha, au kwanza".

.../2

Hapa, maana mbili zaweza kutolewa toka ujumbe huu:

a. Kinachohitajika leo ni jamii yenye upgano iliyojaa upendo na umoja, umoja ambao hufanya washiriki wake kama vidole vya mkono mmoja.

b. Mkono (m.y. kitendo), na upendo ni alpha (m.y. huwa ni vya kwanza).

Mfasiri wa ndoto hiyo anaandika "...tungependa kutoa upendo na shukurani kwa Bw. Simbowe, ambaye Mungu amemchagua kuona ndoto hii kuwa chanzo cha maelfu ya roho zitafutazo kukubali Imani ya Mungu na hivyo, kuileta Tanzania kwenye wakati wa uingiaji kwa makundi."

Mfasiri mwingine alisema, "Maneno hayo ikitegemea kama ni Kiarabu au Kiajemi huweza kutafsiriwa katika njia nyingi: "Uwe tayari, kaa tayari; mtu afanyaye mema na kuleta manufaa kwa wengine; akielika watu kuja kukubali jambo fulani; harakia -uwe tayari."

Mshauri Mehrez Ehsani anasema: "Tafadhali pelekeeni upendo wetu kwa Bw. Simbowe. Inaonekana kutokana na ndoto yake kwamba Mungu ana matumaini mengi kutoka kwake."

Pamoja na Salaamu za upendo wa Kibaha'i.

Katika Huduma Yake,

*Griffin D.S.*

(2)

1 D.A.P. - MBOZI  
Sinai Baha Centre,  
S.L.P. 150,  
MBOZI.

10/4/1995

Bahai World Centre,  
S.L.P. 155,  
HAIFA

K.K. Baraza la Kiroho la Taifa,  
S.L.P. 585,  
D'SALAAM.

YAH: MUUNGANO WETU NDANI YA BAAUULLAH NA UTIMIZO WA  
MAONO YETU NA HIVYO KUWAELEZA YALIYOBAKI

Tunayo furaha kubwa sana ya kiroho kwetu sisi wa Baha'i wa Sinai kwa namna ambavyo baraza limetuchukulia pamoja na upendo walituoonyesha tangu tulipoingia na kuungana nanyi. Upendo huo umejidhihirisha kwa uwazi zaidi pale baleza la Kiroho pamoja na nyumba ya haki ya ulimwengu, walipofikia hatua ya kutusafilisha mpaka Baraza la Kiroho la Taifa D'salaam. Shukranisana.

Tendo hilo lilikuwa pigo kwa wale waliokuwa wanatunyananasa na pia kujenga msimamo mpya kwa Wabaha'i wa hapa. Likataa kila neno la upuuzi kwa kila aliyekuwa nalo hapa wilayani petu. Kwa upande mwingine pia lilijenga heshima mpya kwetu. Heshima akijua mahali pa dharau. Wasinai wapo katika mikoa, wilaya, na vijiji, hapa Ipapa tayari wao ni Wabaha'i kamili kabisa, wapo Wasinai ambao bado hawajaipata nao tunaamini wataipata.

Baada ya shukrani hizo tunaingia upande wa ndoto tulizoziona muda mrefu sana, kipindi cha ndoto na maono ni miaka 10 kuanzia 1967 - 1977. Mambo yaliyoonekana katika kipindi hicho ni haya.

1. Kutajengwa chuo sehemu za mlimani Sinai kabla ya 2,000. Tulio kinajengwa chuo hicho kwa unadhifu wa hali ya juu.
2. Kutajengwa sekondari na sehemu hiyo tuliyochora mahali itakapojengwa.
3. Ujenzi wa sehemu ya studio (Mawasiliano)
4. Ujenzi wa Zahanati ya kutunza wagonjwa. Hivyo tuliitimiza kwa kujenga sehemu ya kuwahudumia wagonjwa kwa sala, kwa nyimbo wengi walipona na wengine hapana. Huduma hizo zinaendelea mpaka leo.
5. Tulijiona tunaondoka kwenda D'salaam na hilo limetimizwa 1994.
6. Tuliona tunapokea wageni kutoka sehemu mbali mbali za dunia wenye rangi tofauti na hilo limetimizwa na linaendelea kutimizwa.
7. Tuliona tunapata vitabu vingi hilo limetimizwa kabisa.
8. Kwa ujumla mambo mengi tuliyaona na hivyo yale yaliyotimizwa tunaayandika ndani ya karatasi yale ambayo ni bado hatuandiki humu.
9. Ndoto hii ni ya muhimu sana Yohana aliona muda mrefu sana nayo ni DINI MOJA KATIKA NAFSI TATU. BABA, MWANA, NA ROHO MTKATIFU. NA HII IMETIMIZWA NA BAHU'U'LLAH M'UME.
10. Jambo lingine lililokuwa linatimizwa kwa vitendo ni juu ya usawa wa mwanamume na mwanamke. Mambo mengi, maono na maendeleo ya imani ya Sinai yalikuwa zaidi mikononi mwa wanawake. Na mpaka leo Baha'u'llah anapofundisha usawa huu ndipo tunapoanza kuelewa kwamba ndiyo maana wanawake walikuwa mtali wa mbele. Kwa namna hiyo tumeelewa kwamba maono mengi ambayo hayajaitimizwa tuliyoyaona yote yapo mikononi mwa Wabahai.

CHUO NA STUDIO:

Chuo na Studio hizi vitafanya kazi moja kubwa sana katika maendeleo na mafunzo ya imani kwa ujumla. Na hivyo kufanya kazi kwa ubunifu mkubwa sana na kuendeleza imani na maendeleo ya jami ulimwenguni kote.

JAMBO YANATAKIWA KUTAFANYA KATIKA CHUO NA STUDIO MAREKANI 2002:

Baada ya chuo hicho kukarilika, endapo kitakarilika ifikapo 2002. Tunona watu wote hapa Ipapa na nje ya wilaya hii wamekuwa Wabahai. Na hivyo imani ndogo ita nzia hapa na kuendelea senemu zingine. Ili jambo hilo litimizwe, yafuatayo yanatakiwa yaende sambamba.

(A). KUAPAPA VIJINA KUFI WA MBILI

Vinana hao wapatikane toka nataka kuni na mbili duniani. Wanawake watatu wanaume tisa. Zifuatazo ni kazi ambazo vijana hao wanatakiwa kuzifanya.

JINA ZAO:

1. Awe Mbahai wa kwenye kabisa.
2. Awe na umri wa miaka kuni na nane na kuendelea.
3. Awe na uwezo wa kusoma lu ha mbili za kinataifa na taifa.
- 4.

KAZI ZAO:

1. Kujifunza Talumbeta au fililabi.
2. Sakisifoni
3. Vinanda
4. Kutafuta maneno makazi ya Baha'u'llah ambaye ni Mtume wa leo na kuinjiza kwenye nyimbo takatifu.
5. Mada wa mafunzo ni miezi mitatu.
6. Baada ya hapo kundi hilo utashughulika katika jambo ambalo hata nini mwandishi sijui. Na hilo lipo mbele yetu.

Katika mawazo mawazi Wabahai wana nda hilo kundi ambalo lipo tayari katika shughuli hizo. Baada ya hapo natabazama kupambwa maua pande zote za Barabara kuelekea kwenye chuo. Ambacho ujenzi wake unamaanisawa huu. Chuo cha Mabahai mlimani Sinai.

Ndipo natabazama watu wa mataifa mbali mbali wanaiduka kulizua nyumba ya haki ya ulimwengu maswali mbali mbali. Maswali machache kati ya hayo ni haya yafuatayo:

Mulijuwaje kwa mahali hapa kama ulimwengu ni hapa pe unatahili kujerwa chuo? Mulijuwaje kama mada wa kujenga ni huu?

Ndipo natabazama nyumba ya haki ulimwengu unainuka na kuwajibu kuwa ni kwa sababu ya kuchunguza mafanikio natakati Kiroho na kutokuchapau maono ya mabahai wote. Kisha nikapaona mahali pa chuo pakajeli wa kwa hali ya juu napa pakapewa jina jipya ya ni Betheleemi. Jina hili lilionekana mapema sana. Na kwa sababu mada ulimwengu bano jina hii hilo akapewa kijana amoja hapa hapa kijijini Ipapa Sinci. Ambaye mwanzoni jina lake alitwa Kawe Elsoni. Hivyo amelishika jina hilo kwa mada mpaka pale unabii utakapoziniza.

Baada ya kujengwa hiyo Betheleemi mpya. Hilo setu zinataeleza kuja kwa amani nao o duniani. Wabahai wa Sinai wanazamini imani nao o itaangia hapa Ipapa kijijini na kuendelea mpaka kote ndani ambako amani hiyo itapita. Na hiyo itaendelea duniani kote. Jambo hilo la imani ndogo litatimika kwa ulimwengu zaidi ndani ya dini ya kibahai.

CHUO NA STUDIO:

Chuo na Studio hizi vitafanya kazi moja kubwa sana katika maendeleo na mafunzo ya imani kwa ujumla. Na hivyo kufanya kazi kwa ubunifu mkubwa sana na kuendeleza imani na maendeleo ya jami ulimwengu kote.

HAMBO YATAKAYOTOKIA CHUO NA PUBLIC VIKENJIA: 2002:

Baada ya chuo hicho kukamilika, endapo kitakamilika ifitapo 2002, Tumona watu wote hapa Ipapa na nje ya wilaya hii wamekuwa Wabahai. Na hivyo imani ndogo ita nzia hapa na kuendelea senemu zinayo. Ili jambo hilo litinizwe, yafuatayo yanatakiwa yaende sambamba.

(A) KU APAA VIKENJIA NA KUMI NA MBILI

Vinana hao wapetikane toka mataifa kumi na mbili duniani. Wanawake watatu wanaume tisa. Zifuatazo ni kazi ambazo vijana hao wanatakiwa kuzifanya.

MAFA ZAO:

1. Awe Wbahai wa kweli kabisa.
2. Awe na umri wa miaka kumi na nane na kuendelea.
3. Awe na uwezo wa kusoma lu ha mbili za kinataifa na taifa.
- 4.

KAZI ZAO:

1. Kujifunza Talumbeta au filitabi.
2. SakisiSoni
3. Vinanda
4. Kutafuta maneno makuu ya Baha'u'llah ambaye ni Mtume wa leo na kuinjiza kwenye nyimbo takatifu.
5. Muda wa mafunzo ni miezi mitatu.
6. Baada ya hapo kundi hilo utashughulika katika jambo ambalo hata nizi wandiishi sijui. Na hilo lipo ubele vetu.

Katika moyo mtona Wabahai wana nda hilo kundi ambalo lipo tayari katika shughuli hizo. Baada ya hapo natusama kupambua maua pande zote za Barabara kuelekea kwenye chuo. Ambacho ujenzi wake unachua mwaka huu. Chuo cha mabii mlimani sinai.

Hilo natusama watu wa mataifa mbili mbili waminuka kuuliza nyumba ya haki ya ulimwengu maswali mbili mbili. Maswali nashacne kazi ya hayo ni haya yafuatayo:

Muliujawe kama mahali hapa kama nina ni hapa pa mastahili kujoa wa chuo?, Muliujawe kwanba maia wa kujonga ni huu?

Hilo natusama nyumba ya haki ulimwengu kwanza na kuwajibu kawa ni kwa sababu ya kuamunguz maon ilio natakatihi kiroho na katokeanarea maono ya mahabii wote. Kisha nitepeona mahali pa chuo pakeja wa kwa hali ya juu hapa pakapewa jina jipya ya ni Betelehemu. Jina hili lilionekana napema sana. Na kwa sababu mada ulikuwa bawo jin za hilo akapewa kijana moja hapa hapa kijijini Ipapa Sindi. Ambaye kawasoni jina l ke alitwa Kawewe Bisoni. Hivyo amelishika jina hilo kwa mwa mwa pale unabii uakapo- timizwa.

Baada ya kujengwa hiyo Betelehemu naye. Hilo lo wawo zinatuoleza kuja kwa amani ndo o duniani. wabahai wa sinai wana mimi imani huo o itangia hapa Ipapa kijijini na kuendelea mpaka kote ndhini ambako amani hiyo itapita. Na hiyo itaendelea duniani kote. Jambo hilo la imani ndo o litatimia kwa u liama zaidi ndani ya dini ya kibahai.