

# ***AN ANALYSIS OF MUSICAL AND THEOLOGICAL MEANING IN THE HYMNODY OF LEGIO MARIA OF AFRICAN MISSION CHURCH IN KENYA***

## **ABSTRACT**

Review of available literature showed a paradoxical hybridity in the hymn singing of the Legio Maria Church (LMC) faithful (*Jolejo*). In a seemingly disjunction to Luo culture and modern innovations, *Jolejo* were viewed as preferring a community of their own that stood opposed to certain aspects of traditional and modern world systems. Yet on the one hand, they embraced and appropriated hymns from Roman catholicism and on the other, explored songs that exhibited Luo traditional musical idioms. It was out of this paradoxical hybridity that an urge for a systematic inquiry into hymn corpus of *Jolejo* arose. To this end, the study sought to analyse the musical and theological meaning in LMC hymnody to ascertain among other issues the role the hymnody played in shaping and informing the religious and socio-cultural life of *Jolejo*. The study employed ethnographic research design in which descriptive research techniques were used. Study population comprised choir singers (n=120), the clergy (n=9) and lay leaders (n=2) drawn from three districts found in Luo Nyanza namely; Migori, Kisumu and Siaya. Descriptive investigations were conducted using semi-structured questionnaires which were administered with the help of research assistants. In addition, formal interviews and field observations were conducted. The study found out that musical meaning in LMC hymnody ranged from varying musical attributes inherent in the hymns and how the attributes were appropriated by *Jolejo*, to different liturgical and socio-cultural roles the hymnody played in the lives of *Jolejo*. The hymnody constituted musical forms and categories that accrued from structural organisation of melodies, rhythms and harmonies. The analysis of transcribed texts revealed that varying thematic ideas were embodied in the hymns. It was found out that message in the transcribed hymns accounted for more than any other, Christological motifs and, which ascribed to Jesus Christ as portrayed in the Bible. Despite appropriating tunes from RCC, Luo traditional and to a lesser extent contemporary musical expressions, it was established that LMC objected to incorporation into its liturgy instrumental accompaniment, dancing, and other gesticulations associated with traditional and contemporary music cultures. Such musical expressions were viewed as distractive and belonging to world circus. It was ascertained that LMC blended continuity and discontinuity of familiar and unfamiliar music traditions. This blend was seen as a way of confronting the challenges posed by the conflict between on one hand, the age-old RCC and Luo traditional music expressions preferred by the old generation and on the other, the neo-traditional and contemporary African idioms identifiable with the young people. In addition, it was ascertained that the LMC hymnody exhibited a nature that was both eclectic and to a lesser extent syncretic. The innovations of the study in the context of Syncretic Interactional Model of African Hymnody (SIIMAH) were viewed as important insights into the dilemma of validating which hymns should or should not be considered appropriate for LMC worship. The innovations were seen as a significant step to fuller understanding of the kind of hymns to be employed in African Christian churches that are seeking to create a hymn singing tradition that balances and blends old and new, cultural and contemporary with limited theological and socio-cultural strain. The study, however, recommended that for the purposes of comparison, a similar study be conducted for other Christian movements in Kenya.

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