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(121) AFRICAN CHURCH MEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

Kennedy Owino

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to give a brief overview and description of the various church men's organizations in Africa, highlighting some examples of such organizations in particular denominations. Because it is difficult to speak of men's organizations in Africa without making links to ongoing studies on men and masculinity in Africa, I will concur with van Klinken who argues that 'the question of how men and masculinities are addressed, contested and transformed in local churches calls for an in-depth qualitative research...'¹ The hope, therefore, is that this brief survey will contribute to ongoing discussions among scholars, and also establish the need for further qualitative research on church men's organizations within critical studies of men and masculinity in Africa.

Church Men's Organizations in Africa

Christianity in Africa is diverse, coming with a variety of expressions in church denominations. Hence, church men's organizations are numerous and they number as many as there are churches and denominations. The paradox, however, is that an increased interest in the studies of men and masculinity in the past three decades has surprisingly not given enough attention to church men's organizations as part of its enquiry, with the exception of a few qualitative studies.² In several ways, applying a critical approach to studies of men and masculinity to examine reasons for increased growth in men's organization and associations in various church denominations in Africa can be attributed to the quest for what it means to be a Christian man within changing social religious contexts. Towards this goal, men are seen to respond to complex societal changes. Such responses are evident from conversations within men's organizations, either directly or indirectly, and to a wide extent focus on a belief that Christian men have a 'divine responsibility' from God for the local church, their homes and community.

Within this understanding, men are constantly negotiating new ways of being Christian men and are continually reminded of the need to stand against emasculation. The need to constantly protect and defend what it means to be a Christian man remains central in most of the church men's organizations. Of importance to note within this quest to defend what is perceived as an 'ideal' Christian man are: how Christian men have responded to concerns on gender inequalities, the empowerment of women which has contributed to contemporary shifts in gender roles and relations, concerns around issues of sexuality, and social and economic shifts that have brought changes in family organizations. Hence, with all their diversities, church men's organizations have become associations *of* men and a space *for* men who seek to equip and empower men to be better Christian men in their families, at their workplace and in the community at large.

¹ Adriaan S. Van Klinken, *Transforming Masculinities in African Christianity: Gender Controversies in Times of AIDS*. (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), 21.

² See for example qualitative research on men by Ezra Chitando in Zimbabwe – 'A New Man for a New Era? Zimbabwean Pentecostalism, Masculinities, and the HIV Epidemic', *Missionalia* 35, no. 3, (2007): 112-127; by Van Klinken in Zambia – 'Transforming Masculinities in African Christianity' 2013; and Kennedy Owino in South Africa – 'Godly Manhood': Evangelical Constructions of Masculinities in a South African Context – A Case Study of the Mighty Men's Conference (MMC), 2014.

Terminologies, Naming and General Activities of Church Men's Organizations

Generally, different church denominations in Africa have applied varied terminologies to refer to their church men's organizations. These include, but are not limited to, terms such as Men's Groups, Men's Associations, Men's Ministry, Men's Fellowships, Men's Forums, Men's Society and Father's Fellowships. In some case, particular names are given to men's organizations in various church denominations, typifying what they intend their men to be – for example, 'Men for His Master', 'Men of Truth', 'Men of Valour', 'Men for Faith', 'Fathers of Honour' or 'Mighty Men'. Such names do not specifically include the term 'African', but are designed to inculcate particular values, behavioural expectations and characters which call men to strive and live to a particular desired standard. In most cases, concepts such as 'godly manhood', or 'Christlike men', 'the man as priest, prophet and king' are applied to typify notions of 'biblical manhood' as an alternative image of 'ideal' forms of Christian church men, against what the church does not expect of men, often described in the language of 'irresponsible manhood', or 'weak men'. Emphasised strongly in most of the church men's organizations is the key concept of 'responsible manhood', but this is often understood within the contours of a traditional definition of manhood which has risks of propagating the norms of patriarchy. The conservative notion of who a man is expected to be is grounded in the idea of his primary responsibility as the head in marriage, who provides for the needs of the family and thereby provides leadership in all areas of life.

As a space seeking to address men and their roles in church, at home and in the workplace, church men's organizations use different methods to motivate men to become faithful and responsible. The majority of these men's organizations outline their mission and vision as beginning with the need to address and meet men's spiritual and religious development and growth within their specific church denominations. Events that can bring men together for the purpose of enhancing their spiritual, mental, social and physical growth include men's monthly meetings, men's breakfast meetings, men's weekends, men's retreats and camps, men's business summits and men's conventions. These meetings tend to cover a wide range of themes addressing concerns around fatherhood, issues on marriage, gender and sexuality, a quest for purity and integrity, the need for mentoring young men to be godly Christian men and the various ways men can be effective in the church.

In some cases, men have crossed church denominational boundaries and regularly gather together in the form of men's interdenominational conferences. This depicts the difference between men's movements and church men's organizations. An analysis of men's movements shows that different church men's organizations, irrespective of their church affiliation, come together for specific reasons. Examples of such men's movements are evident with the Promise Keepers (PK) – South Africa³ and the Mighty Men's Conference (MMC),⁴ also found in South Africa and other countries in Africa. Such men's movements adhere to conventional Christian beliefs about who men 'should be' and are often established within perceptions of social 'crises' of masculinity among Christian men, thereby calling men to a journey of retreat towards rediscovering themselves and their 'divine mandate' in society.⁵ Other men's movements still hold international affiliations yet take the form of organizations seeking to improve the lives of other men. An example of this is the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International (FGBMI) in South

³ See Lahoucine Ouzgane and Robert Morrell (eds), *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the late Ninetieth Century to the Present* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Angus Buchan and the Promise Keepers, <https://www.discerningtheworld.com/2009/11/11/angus-buchan-and-the-promise-keepers/> (accessed 31 January, 2016).

⁴ See Angus Buchan's Movement in Owino, 'Godly Manhood': Evangelical Constructions of Masculinities', 2015.

⁵ See for example Michael A Messner. *Politics of Masculinities: Men in Movements*. (London: Sage Publications, 1997).

Africa, which is also found in other African Countries.⁶ Its mission is stated as an ‘International Fellowship of Men doing the Business of the Gospel, Fully.’

Some Examples of Church Men’s Organizations in Africa

The Young Men’s Guild of the Methodist Church

The Young Men’s Guild (YMG) is an organization of African laymen within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA), founded in 1920.⁷ Madise points out that the establishment of the mining industry in South Africa was a major catalyst behind the emergence of this church men’s organization in the mining compounds of Kimberley (in the Northern Cape) and Benoni (near Springs), where young men sought new ways to address their spiritual needs.⁸ The YMG branded themselves as an organization described as ‘The Young Men’s *Manyano*’, or ‘The Sons of Wesley’. With the passing of time, the organization became known as ‘The Young Men’s Guild’ (*Umanyano Lododana*) or the *Amadodana*,⁹ following the submission of its constitution for approval by the 1929 Conference.¹⁰ Their emergence can be linked with a variable Apostolic Band after the pattern of the Holy Club of Oxford which inspired the Wesleys with a gripping call to evangelise, a passion to save souls and a zeal to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ.¹¹ With its official uniform adopted in 1938 through the District Synod, the YMG is known for its transformation of the rigid form of worship in the Methodist Church, with regular gatherings of men’s conventions. Its motto is ‘One Heart, One Way’.¹² The organization has a general mandate of:¹³

1. Calling sinners to repentance and to acceptance of the saving faith in Jesus Christ.
2. Spreading Scriptural Holiness in the land by calling Christians to a ‘way of life’ that is compatible with their profession of religion as propounded by the early Christian church...thereby promoting a life of abstinence from all forms of unrighteousness such as evil, drinking, and sexual sins.
3. Bringing every young man and woman into the fold of the Christian church for wholehearted and active service in the church.

The Anglican Men’s Association

The Anglican Men’s Association is an association or organization of men in various Anglican churches in Africa formed with the view of bringing Anglican men into fellowship with one another. For example, the Kenyan Anglican Men’s Association (popularly known as KAMA) emerged from what was initially known as Father’s Association or the Father’s Union or the Men’s Association, following various gatherings of Anglican men across different dioceses in the Province of Kenya. In Kenya, it is widely held that Father’s Union was started by the late Archbishop Manasses Kuria in order to meet the needs of men

⁶ See the vision, mandate and the core values of the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International (FGBMFI) at www.fgbmfi.org.za/ (accessed 31 January 2016).

⁷ Ezekiel E. Mahabane, ‘The Young Men’s Gild’ in A. E. F. Garrett (ed), *South African Methodism: Her Missionary Witness* (Cape Town: Methodist Publishing House, 1965), 107-109.

⁸ Mokhele Madise, ‘The Centenary of *Amadodana* in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa: Development and Influence of this Movement’, *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 39, Suppl.1, (2013): 353-363.

⁹ ‘*Amadodana*’ is an IsiXhosa and IsiZulu word meaning young men. In English the name would be the ‘Young Men’s Guild’, an order of men’s organisation in the Methodist Church. For detailed historical origin and development of this men’s organisation see Madise, ‘The Centenary of *Amadodana* in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa’, 2013.

¹⁰ Mahabane, ‘The Young Men’s Gild’, 108.

¹¹ Mahabane, ‘The Young Men’s Gild’, 107-108.

¹² Madise, ‘The Centenary of *Amadodana* in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa’, 2013.

¹³ Mahabane, ‘The Young Men’s Gild’, 108-109.

and to strengthen their fellowship in the church.¹⁴ It was only in July 2001, under the leadership of the retired Archbishop Dr David M. Gitari, that the fellowships that were referred to as Father's Union were officially registered by the Provincial Synod as the Kenya Anglican Men's Association (KAMA).¹⁵

Under the motto, 'But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord' (Josh. 24:15b), KAMA addresses the role of men in the church in respect to concerns around church leadership, community leadership, political leadership and men in development work. The department organizes breakfast planning meetings where thematic issues such as men and their role in mentorship are discussed. They discuss and formulate remedies for other contemporary issues that affect men and the church, like matters of youth, HIV & AIDS and environmental degradation.¹⁶ Similar men's organizations exist in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa by the name 'Anglican Men's Fellowship' in different dioceses;¹⁷ in Ghana it has the same name, 'Anglican Men's Fellowship', and in Nigeria, the 'Men's Fellowship.'

Adventist Men's Organization

The Adventist Men's Organization is a department within the Seventh Day Adventist Church concerned with nurturing men for service to God, family and the community. Various Adventist churches have autonomous men's organizations with different mottos. For example, the Adventist men's organization at Jomo Kenyatta University Seventh Day Adventist Church in Kenya seeks to "nurture men for the purpose of building a solid foundation for the church, the homes and the communities".¹⁸ The Adventist Men's Organization of the Seventh Day, Bantama Church in Ghana, for instance, has the motto 'The just man walketh in his integrity; his children are blessed after him' (taken from Prov. 20:7). The Bantama Adventist Men's Organization was, therefore, established primarily to promote programmes and activities designed to foster the spiritual, intellectual, social, moral and physical well-being of students, the working class, businessmen, professional men and many more.¹⁹

The bottom line in Adventist men's organizations is to be able to get men into small groups, meeting together regularly, ideally on a weekly basis. Men's ministry is about building relationships with God and other men. Similar Adventist men's organizations can be found in Zimbabwe, Zambia and in other countries in Africa.

The Presbyterian Church Men's Fellowship

The Presbyterian Churches in Africa have men's organizations in the form of men's fellowships. For example, the Presbyterian Church Men Fellowship (PCMF) of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa

¹⁴ Alfred Sheunda Keyas, 2005. 'Kurua, Manasses', *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, www.dacb.org/stories/kenya/kurua_manasses.html.

¹⁵ All Saints' Cathedral Diocese, Kenyan Anglican Men's Association, <http://allsaintscathedraldiocese.org/index.php/departments/missions/kama.html>; Anglican Diocese of Mount Kenya South, KAMA, <http://ack-mtkenyasouth.org/diocese/kama>.

¹⁶ Anglican Church of Kenya. Kenyan Anglican Men's Association (KAMA), www.ackkcodioc.org/node/64.

¹⁷ The Anglican Women's Fellowship (Mothers Union) has been more actively involved in the Church compared to its men. This led to the creation of the 'Church Men's Society' and the Network of St Bernard Mizeki Guild as an entity separately for men to do welfare and express their faith Southern Africa (see Delene Mark, Ignatius Swart, and Austen Jackson, 'The Anglican Church and Social Welfare in Post-apartheid South Africa, in *Welfare, Religion and Gender in Post-apartheid South Africa*, eds. Ignatius Swart, Amanda Gouws, Per Petterson, Johannes Erasmus and Fouwien Bosman (Stellenbosch: SUNMEDIA, 2012), 165-184.

¹⁸ Seventh Day Adventist Church, *The Adventist Men Organization*. <https://jkusda.adventistafrica.org/amo> (accessed 31 January 2016).

¹⁹ Seventh Day Bantama Church, Bantama Adventist Men's Organization, www.bantamasdachurch.org/adventist-mens-organization-a-m-o/ (accessed 31st January 2016).

(PCEA) in Kenya brings together men under the motto 'Working for the Lord'.²⁰ The PCMF seeks to restore the family to God's original intentions, within its philosophy specified as, 'We believe in Men being the best as God intended'.²¹ The Presbyterian Church of Africa (PCA) in South Africa, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe have the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) as an active group of men within their churches.²² Men within the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) have a men's association, the Uniting Presbyterian Men's Fellowship (UPMF). Its mission is to build Christ-centred and Spirit-filled men within the denomination and, at large, to become a moral regeneration tool for men in society.²³

The Catholic Men's Association

The Catholic Men's Association (CMA) are at the same time referred to as Catholic Men's Organization (CMO) and operates alongside the association of Catholic women called the Catholic Women's Organization (CWO).²⁴ The men's association is a lay movement for all men in the Catholic Church, with its origins dating back to 1947 when it was formed by the Catholic Men of Italy, under the guidance and instruction of Cardinal Giuseppe Pizzardi of Italy.²⁵ In 1948, Pope Pius XII welcomed the CMA foundation and declared it a Catholic Church Association.²⁶ As an organization for laymen within the Roman Catholic Church, the CMO operates as a religious organization found in various countries of Africa, including Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa and Zambia. Among Catholic men, the figure of St Joachim (an ancient saint)²⁷ is used in some contexts as a model of Catholic manhood and a religious ideal of masculinity, intended to motivate Catholic husbands and fathers to model their lives around his 'love, faithfulness, obedience, devotion, diligence, goodness and openness of husband and wife to one another'.²⁸ Generally, the CMA seeks to increase men's commitment to the church and its Catholic faith and teachings.

The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa

Not much is written about the men's organization in the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA). Nonetheless, it is recognised by its motto, 'The Soldiers for Christ'.²⁹ The men's organizations

²⁰ Presbyterian Church of East Africa, *Presbyterian Church Men Fellowship*, www.pceaheadoffice.org/PCMF.html (accessed 31 January 2015).

²¹ Presbyterian Church of East Africa, *Presbyterian Church Men Fellowship*, www.pceaheadoffice.org/PCMF.html (accessed 31 January 2015).

²² The Presbyterian Church of Africa. www.presbyterianchurchofafrica.co.za/ (accessed 31 January 2016).

²³ Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, www.upcsa.org.za/docs-ga2012/Split_papers/petitions.pdf (accessed 31 January 2016).

²⁴ Anthony B. C. Chiegboka, 'Challenges of Catholic Men in the Church and the World', *African Journal Online* 1, no. 2, (2009), www.ajol.info/index.php/jrhr/article/view/87328/77044 (accessed 31 January 2016).

²⁵ Catholic Men Association of Kenya-Makupa Parish-Mombasa, <https://www.facebook.com/.../Catholic-Men-Association.../17925611546...> (accessed 31 January 2016).

²⁶ In 1983, CMA was first nationally introduced in Kenya through the Diocese of Nakuru by missionaries from Austria. The Association was nationally inaugurated on 17th August 2000, at the Holy Family Minor Basilica in Nairobi, in a memorable Eucharistic celebration presided over by Rev. Raphael Ndingi Mwana N'zeki, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Nairobi. See Catholic Men Association of Kenya. <https://www.facebook.com/.../Catholic-Men-Association.../17925611546...> (accessed 31 January 2016).

²⁷ According to apocryphal Christian traditions, Joachim is the father of Mary who is the mother of Jesus. See Adriaan S. van Klinken, 'St. Joachim as a Model of Catholic Manhood in Times of AIDS: A Case Study on Masculinity in an African Christian Context', *Cross Currents* Vol. 61 no. 4, (2011, December): 467-479.

²⁸ Van Klinken, 'Transforming Masculinities in African Christianity', 62.

²⁹ Steve de Gruchy, 'Some Historic Roots and Contemporary Routes of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA)', <https://fwnw.com/407795435> (accessed 31 January 2016).

vary from one congregation to another, with different names applied to refer to the organization, ranging from Men's Group to Men's Forum and Men's Ministry.

Church Men's Organization in some Pentecostal and African Instituted Churches

In the majority of Pentecostal churches in Africa, men's organizations are referred to as Men's Ministries, Men's Groups or Men's Fellowships. For example, in South Africa, the Pentecostal Holiness Church Men's Ministry, is a fellowship which seeks to help men become dedicated to God, motivated for ministry, and mobilized for action.³⁰ In Zambia, we have the well-known Northmead Pentecostal Assemblies of God Church whose men's ministry is called Men of Truth, working towards raising men to 'biblical manhood.'³¹ Similar groups of men's ministry and men's fellowships exist in other Pentecostal denominations such as the Apostolic Faith Mission in South Africa, the Assemblies of God, and the Full Gospel Church. Such men's groups are not only limited to Classical Pentecostal churches but are also found in Neo-Pentecostal and emerging Charismatic churches.

Church men's organizations also exist in some African Instituted Churches like the Zion Christian Church. The all-male *Mokhukhu* organization which initially developed under the leadership of Edward Lekganyane as a church choir, wearing military-style khakis, police-style hats, and the star badge, is a good example of a men's organization in an African Instituted Church.³² This group engages in dancing, singing and praying three times a week.

Challenges and Way Forward for Church Men's Organizations in Africa

The restructuring of the corporate world in most African countries in the past three decades has in various ways brought shifts in gender roles, leaving many Christian men 'vulnerable' within their traditional understanding of who an ideal Christian man is supposed to be. Given the emphasis made on gender equality, socio-economic and political shifts have mainly contributed to an increased entry of women who were previously appreciated as 'home-makers' into the labour market. In real-life situations, notable changes are currently destabilising the conventional notions and beliefs of what an 'ideal' Christian man should be. The effect of this is that notions of a Christian man, as the head in marriage and provider of primary needs in the home and a leader at work, are to a wide extent disrupted. Faced with such changing contexts in which men find themselves, church men's organization must not remain religious spaces that seek to re-establish 'lost' traditional understandings of masculinity based on the assumed erosion of the authority of Christian men at home and at work. The priority of these men's organizations should not be seeking to safeguard and 'save men' from the tensions of emasculation. Rather, they must seek to equip men towards what it means to be a Christian man in a changing contemporary context. Archbishop Thabo Makgoba of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa in this case gives a charge, challenging men towards a fresh reflection of what it means to be a Christian man in today's world – 'especially in being actively part of the solution'.³³ To be part of this desired solution, church men's organizations should aim to use this religious space to bring transformation by engaging men towards fresh reflection on alternative forms

³⁰ Men's Ministries PHCSA, Constitution of the Men's Ministries of Pentecostal Holiness Church in South Africa 2010 – 2015, www.phcsa.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Mens-Ministry-Manual.pdf (accessed 31 January 2016).

³¹ Van Klinken, 'Transforming Masculinities in African Christianity.'

³² See Marcus Ramogale and Sello Galane, 'Faith in Action: Mokhukhu of the Zion Christian Church', www.folklife.si.edu/resources/festival1997/faithin.htm (accessed 31 January 2016).

³³ Thabo Makgoba, Archbishop Thabo Makgoba's Charge to the Provincial Synod of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa. <http://archbishop.anglicanchurchsa.org/2010/09/archbishop-thabo-makgobas-charge-to.html> (accessed 02 February 2016).

of being men. In a similar way, Lesejane cautions against resistance to change and transformation often led by men:

Without offering much evidence, it can be argued that such resistance is based on men fearing the loss of their privileged positions in the life and power systems of society. For men, the oppressive (to women) teachings and practices are maintained in the church to protect the interests of men, accumulated over the centuries, using varying texts, traditions and interpretations thereof.³⁴

Alternative interpretations of who a Christian man should be are therefore crucial in church men's organizations. These should address, among other concerns, religious assumptions that God divinely created men with masculinity(ies); the dangers of 'soft patriarchy' in Christian homes which embrace aspects of violence and abuse against women and children. Such organisations should seek to help men embrace the challenge of Jesus Christ who is highly esteemed as an ideal model for masculinity in most church men's organization who is in actual fact a counter-model to the ideals of a Christian man that as ever currently being promoted.

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³⁴ Desmond Lesejane, 'Through Men, by Men, for Men: Christianity and the Quest for Gender Equality', *Agenda* Special Focus (2005) 78-79.

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