CHAPTER THREE

BEING AT HOME IN A NEW PLACE:
EAC GROWTH THROUGH RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION

Introduction

By 1975 the Eglise Anglicane du Congo (EAC) was present in most of the towns in Nord-Kivu and Irumu. This chapter studies the growth and the change of the EAC as a result of the migration of its members to urban areas in North-east Congo. It scrutinizes the way in which the rural Anglican identity studied in chapter two was both affirmed and contested in the urban milieu. The chapter argues that a propitious politico-economic situation encouraged people to migrate from village to town where they established their village church. The prime movers were influential lay members and enterprising evangelists of the EAC.

Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet Salzman Chafetz in their study of immigrant religion in Houston, USA, conclude that immigrant religious institutions “...are structured to both ensure continuity of practice and to assume adaptive strategies of change. Because these two processes are often contradictory, immigrant religious institutions typically experience real or potential conflicts among groups of members.”1 The tensions caused by the need for both continuity and change within the EAC form a large part of this study. The future of the EAC depended, to quote Ebaugh and Chafetz again, on how members “...respond[ed] to divisive issues rooted in ethnic/linguistic, generational, gender...differences.”2 This chapter analyses how the EAC enabled its members to take advantage of migrant opportunities whilst maintaining continuity with their tradition. Migrants wanted to perpetuate opportunities for social maendeleo (development) but their religious identity was expressed in a desire to maintain village values of utaratibu, upole and heshima (order, calm and respect); an identity often articulated as ‘being at home’. The chapter also examines in what ways the position they took began to

1 Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet Saltzman Chafetz, Religion and the New Immigrants: Continuities and Adaptations in Immigrant Congregations (Walnut Creek, AltaMira, 2000), 134.
2 Ibid., 134.
be contested by their children. Second generation migrants criticised their parents’ conservative religious ethos, desiring a Christian identity that reflected their national and urban identity. The chapter begins with an analysis of the general patterns of rural-urban migration in the area demonstrating where Anglican aspirations intersected with urban ambitions.

Migration

Many moved because of work. If one had done primary school at Boga one wanted work here in Kainama. But there is no work. One had to go to Oicha or Bunia... Others moved because of *maendeleo*. They saw that to stay here, there is no road, no hospital, no market, so one moves to where the road is,... [in order] to develop. Others moved because of illness. When one is ill one goes to hospital in Oicha or Nyankunde. When one recovers one decides to stay there because to fall ill again and to return again is difficult.³

Thus Musubaho Ndahalirwa, who left his village for education and work as a teacher and pastor until he returned on retirement, explained the migration of members of the EAC from the Semeliki escarpment to the towns. The reasons were not unusual: inequalities between rural and urban areas in economic prospects, educational advancement and health care provision encouraged people to move to the towns. The migratory path was not dramatic; some crossed the country to Kisangani and Kinshasa, but most remained within 150 km of their village of origin. They inhabited commercial towns like Bunia, Beni and Butembo, mining towns like Mongwalo and Makiki, and the towns of Nyankunde and Oicha built around mission hospitals. It was a gradual migration, which slowly depopulated villages changing the demographics of the area. Congolese Anglicans were attracted to the perceived opportunities because they had acquired skills taught in the church school for which there were greater employment opportunities outside the rural areas, and in secular rather than church work, a theme that appears throughout African Christianity.⁴ The gospel in Anglican form had been presented as part of a modernising package that included healthcare, education and employment, based on literacy and numeracy skills. The

³ Interview, Musubaho Ndaghalirwa, Kainama, Swahili, 5 October 2000.