

Discourses of wealth in the Gospel Miracle Church for All People

Daudi Mpanji wakes up from his dream. In the dream he has been given a Bible while he hears a voice: “This is the Holy Bible”. As he opens the book he finds a pile of US dollars between its pages. He wakes up in the knowledge that in reality he has no money at all. New life in Mbeya city has not been smooth for him: Doing odd jobs really did not pay off the way he thought back home in Chunya. Money he earns goes for beer, gambling and smoking marihuana. He is annoyed by the dream, does not think it has any relevance. This dream, however, is just the first one on the line. New dreams keep coming. Finally his resistance is broken down as he, wide awake, hears a voice: “Wewe ni mwanangu na utafanya kazi yangu.” (You are my son and you shall do my work.) He becomes born-again and he becomes nabii David Mpanji, a prophet. In 2006 he is 31 years old and ready to found his own church in Mbeya, Southern Tanzania.

Today the Gospel Miracle Church for All People (GMCL) collects around five hundred people every Sunday. Also, it has branches in the neighbouring towns of Tunduma and Mbozi as well as in Dar es Salaam. The church building itself is humble; it has mud floor and tinned roof that leaks during heavy rains. It is hardly a church setting that attracts people with prosperity gospel, but rather with hopes for healing. Almost everybody in the congregation has come there in search for healing. Discourse on economy and money is however present both in words and in symbolic level. The prophet was called through a sequence of dreams and visions, most of them have strong emphasis on economic rewards as the signs of the spiritual power given to him. Prophet also teaches about roho ya maskini, spirit of poverty that possesses not only individuals but also the African continent as whole. In my proposed paper I will examine the discourses on wealth and economic development in the GMCL. How these discourses are visible in different levels: 1) how the actual economy of the GMCL is organized 2) the material existence of the church building, and 3) the teachings of the church leader whose own life is an economic success story. These aspects will present one example of an African charismatic church community that aims to explain the surrounding economic realities.