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FULLNESS OF LIFE IN MAE ENGA TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND CHRIST THE LIFE

Abstract. The Mae Enga are friendly, hospitable, strong of character and different from the other groups of Papua New Guinea. Through a brief reflection on the traditional world-view centered life and on evaluation of their concept of life, the study forms a foundation for dialogue and inculturation.

The material used in this article, beside the literature, is data collected during my research in 2020, via one-on-one interview (30 women and 30 men) and group discussions (10 women and 10 men) from two villages: Par and Yampu). A qualitative method was employed.

The findings of the research show that the whole life of the Mae Enga is oriented towards reciprocal relationships with the entire universe to experience abundant life here on earth, within one's own clan community. Despite the socio-cultural changes that influence their values, beliefs and attitudes, the "life" remains the central value but the ways of obtaining life have changed. The traditional religion is giving space to Jesus Christ the Life, who takes Mae Engans "beyond" their own clan and offers to them a new identity as followers of Christ, Ktaisanya Tata (Tribe of Jesus Christ).

The presented reflection creates a space for dialogue between Christianity and culture. Jesus Christ enters the present Mae Enga socio-cultural reality in order to transform it, to offer a new identity and a new dimension in their search. In turn, the Mae Enga offer to the world the "Face of Christ" with its own cultural features and values, with its ways of worship and reconciliation.

Keywords: life; relationships; reciprocity; fullness of life; Christ the Life.

INTRODUCTION

When I said that this study would be on Mae Enga traditional religion and the fullness of life as the central value, the first question many people asked me was: Who are the Engans?

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Enga is to be understood within the context of a highly segmented society, where tribes need each other's support for survival and for well-being in their lives. Their whole life has been oriented towards life-giving relationships with the entire clan community, well-guarded by laws, taboos and responsibilities. The Engans form a group of about 430 thousand people who live in the Central Highlands of Papua New Guinea (PNG) and who were unknown to the outside world until 1934 when Australian gold prospectors first contacted them.

The Mae Enga, with whom this study is concerned, forms the largest group among those distinguished in Enga. As reflected through traditional Engan religion, its oral history, myths and their daily life, it is life in its fullness that is constantly searched for by the people. Therefore, what attracts people's attention in the New Testament is the fact that Jesus Christ proclaims the message of life.

For the purpose of this article, it is appropriate to look at the traditional concept of life, the central value of the Mae Enga that is essential in the Engan traditional religion.

A traditional daily routine of movements limited to the clan's settlement has visibly changed in Enga with the mission presence and the Australian administration. With the introduction of the Australian currency in 1950s, the Engans entered the realm of smallholder production and trade. People travelled to other provinces on business, in search of jobs and education that widened the circle of relationships and broadened the community's life.

On September 16, 1975, PNG became an independent country with their own currency, replacing the Australian dollar with the kina and the cent with the toea. The Porgera gold mine opened in 1990 and other mining ventures changed rapidly the face of the Enga Province. In the last decades, the people of Enga moved from relative isolation and a Stone Age society type to high technology, the mobility and complexity of today's world. Children born at the beginning of this "new era" serve as nurses, teachers, medical doctors, airline pilots and government leaders. The rapid changes, however, over which traditional law has no authority, evoked new problems affecting many aspects of daily life and culture.

The following pages present the sociocultural and religious background, to better understand the traditional Mae Enga concept of life and their approach to religion. This article relies on literature review and data collected during research in 2020. Two research tools were used: one-on-one inter-

views (30 females and 30 males) and group discussions (10 females and 10 males) in two villages, Par and Yampu, employing qualitative method.

1. COMMUNITY OF LIFE

It is commonly agreed that life, with its continuation, protection, sustenance and celebration, is the central value of Enga culture. The fullness of life (*gut-pela sindaun*) in the traditional Enga society used to be found in the community living in harmony with the living and the dead members, with Aitawe the Supreme Being, Sky Beings (*Yalyakali*), with the spirits of the environment and the entire universe. The Engans believed that the “abundant life” constantly longed for can only be obtained through harmonious relationships here on earth. Consequently, the traditional Enga leader (*Kamongo*) was expected to be in a special communication with the ancestors to maintain harmonious relationships in order to channel abundant life into the community. Therefore, the network of relationships had to be constantly renewed, repaired and sustained through the rituals, performed by men only.

In the Mae Enga community, men and women lived in separate houses and had clearly divided responsibilities, which made them strongly interdependent. A man depended on his wife for domestic tasks, she was expected to be a caring and faithful wife and work hard to make her husband into a wealthy leader. A man, in turn, was expected to prepare the ground for a new garden, make the house, fences, etc. The dominance of men becomes obvious especially in public, spiritual and political areas. Enga women had no voice in public or religious matters and they did not participate in rituals, yet, they carried out much of the hard work, often, with much humiliation. Men were aware that they depended on women to make them who they were.

The life in Enga without a community is impossible, since it is the community that gives the sense of belonging to every member. The Engan worldview was shaped and inspired by their environment, social structures, values and beliefs. In this world they encountered an abundance of life as well as poor harvest of food, they experienced sickness and health, danger and death. Therefore, the Mae Enga looked for ways to establish relationships with the negative and positive forces of the universe, since they held that harmonious relationships with entire universe lead to abundant life.

2. LIFE IS MAINTAINED AND ENHANCED

To appreciate the traditional concept of life it is vital to examine Mae Enga traditional religion. The term *religion*, however, as found in European cultures, has no counterpart in the traditional Melanesian cultures. This is also the case for the Enga. Thus, there is no separation between the sacred and secular. Mae Enga traditional religion is integrated into every aspect of life.

2.1 RELIGION AS TOTALITY OF LIFE

Among the many descriptions of religion centered around an awareness of the sacred is Rudolf Otto's definition that stresses the essence of religious awareness as **wonder** and **awe** before the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans numinous*. His explanation of the numinous as "evoking fear and love" goes well with the Islamic and traditional type of religions. There is a risk, however, that such an interpretation could limit the religious experience of extraordinary, overpowering events and would go against the Melanesian understanding of religion. Melanesian authors offer valuable insights to the religion in Melanesian context. Bernard Narokobi says:

I hold that Melanesians do not differentiate religious and non-religious experience. I believe, a religious experience, or experience in general, is a total encounter for the living person with the universe that is alive and explosive. In fact, for Melanesians there are no religious and other experiences. An experience for Melanesian, I believe, is the person's encounter with the spirit, the law, the economics, the politics and the life's total whole...¹

Stephen Pokawin also stressed the holistic dimension:

Religion captures the complexities of man... a creature whose total existence requires a multifaceted approach in meeting both the internal and external needs of his being. Religion describes man's relations with himself and his environment.²

Patrick Gesch has adapted Otto's definition to the Melanesian context using terms of wonder, surprise and concern to daily life. He says:

I have employed the terms "wonder" and "surprise" to indicate what is qualitatively different about a religious moment. I see the religious as that which catches up a whole

¹ Bernard Narokobi, "What is Religious Experience for a Melanesian?" in *Christ in Melanesia: Exploring Theological Issues*, ed. James Knight (Goroka: Melanesian Institute, 1977), 8.

² Stephen Pokawin, "Cargo cults and development," *Point* 1 (1979): 85.

personality in such things as concern for its survival, or its development into a new state, rather than just partial occupations. Concern or wonder is provoked in someone's life or world in times of perceived discontinuity, when a development is said to be not from one's power seen to be proportional to oneself.³

Gesch also defines religion as a concern for the totality of life and engagement of the whole personality, with its concern for survival and development. Yet, he employs the concept of *power from beyond*, which in the Melanesian context does not only relate to spirits and ancestors but it is vital to their world-view.

The above definitions of religion apply also to the Enga traditional religion. The prosperity of each individual and of community is a part of entire socio-cultural context, where traditional religion plays a vital role. Religion is a means of recognizing Aitawe as the Giver of Life. Through the ancestral cult and rituals, the traditional religion provides a sense of communion and communication between the living and the dead. It offers a sense of belonging and a means of sustaining life in the entire universe but it does not consider the eschatological dimension and the value of the Enga community where the experience of social solidarity is so vital, does not extend this solidarity beyond their clan. To understand the Mae Enga relationship with cosmos, let us examine the Mae Enga worldview.

2.2 WORLDVIEW

The Melanesian authors speak of religion as a "total cosmic vision of life"⁴ and a "person's relations with self-and entire environment"⁵ that unfolds a deeper understanding of the specific features of the Mae Enga traditional religion. The Engan traditional religion was shaped by their history and their environment, where they experienced sickness, death, hunger and a high mortality rate of children and pigs. They looked, therefore, for the causes of these evils and for the way to lead an abundant life.

There is a natural drive in humans to search for a cosmic and spiritual explanation of one's own identity, which is also visible in the Mae Enga traditional life. They saw a need to establish a harmonious relationship with the

³ Patrick Gesch, *Initiative and Initiation: A Cargo Cult-Type Movement in the Sepik against its Background in Traditional Village Religion*, Studia Instituti Anthropos 33 (St. Augustin: Anthropos Institut, 1985), 222.

⁴ Narokobi, "What is Religious Experience for a Melanesian?", 8.

⁵ Pokawin, "Cargo cults," 85.

spirits who caused the experienced evils to provide blessings visible in prosperity. Anthropologists present different descriptions to illustrate the Engan worldview. Jentsch and Doetsch showed the understanding of universe of the Keman people as divided into three realms⁶ (see figure 1):

- the Supreme Being (*Aitawe*) and the Sky-Beings (*Yalyakali*) – the highest realm;
- the forest, inhabited by the spirits (*yombone*), and the lowest realm (*pututuli*);
- the territory of the clan members, the ancestors, and the ghosts (*timango*).

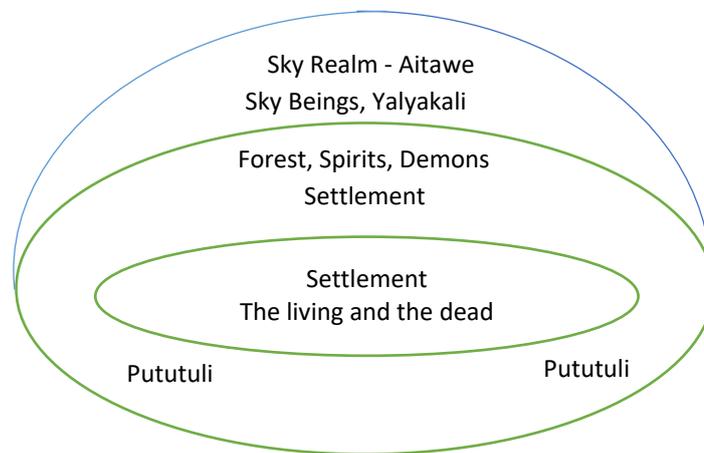


Fig. 1. The Keman understanding of the universe.

A group discussion stressed that it was a task of the Kamongo to sustain harmonious relationships between all three realms.

Lacey⁷ speaks about the Engan worldview in terms of relationships, not in terms of realms. It can be summarized as follows:

- the life and the way of living of a person flows from the ancestor's heritage who continue sharing this life;
- the Engan community consists of living members and spirits; some spirits have human characteristics but some are considered divine;

⁶ Thunar Jentsch and Rainer Doetsch, *Keman eine Siedlung im Hochland von Papua Neuguinea* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1986), 200–202.

⁷ Roderick Lacey, "The Enga Worldview," *Catalyst* (1973): 42.

– a good Engan strives to maintain appropriate relationships with people, spirits, and the whole universe.

Sharing life with the entire universe, as believed, Engans care for a reciprocal exchange with people, with ancestors and with the spirits to experience abundant life. To express the fullness of life they often use the expression in Melanesian Pidgin, *gutpela sindaun*, to describe the life in abundance that contains the idea of security, peace, blessing, joy, harmony, health, wealth and fulfillment. Thus, a community is the only secure way to *gutpela sindaun*.

The research participants confirmed that abundant life was experienced in one's own community and the Kamongo through upholding harmonious relationships with the universe channeled the abundant life to his own clan.

3. AITAWA AND THE SKY BEINGS *YALYAKALI*

Traditionally, the Engan believed in ONE Supreme Being known under different names: Aitawe, Weapo and Tae, depending on the area. Among the Mae Enga, the name Aitawe was used. Aitawe is unique, superior to all beings also to the Sky-Beings.

3.1 AITAWA – THE SOURCE OF LIFE

The reviewed literature presents Engan beliefs in Aitawe and Sky-Beings, described with human characteristics. Rusoto, for example, describes Aitawe as a “big handsome man”, the central person of the community of Sky-Beings, but there is uncertainty in describing female Sky Beings. The people find it difficult to describe Aitawe. In the group discussions, the adjective most frequently referred to Aitawe was “good”. A male participant said: “He is the Powerful Source of Life, who created the world, the human beings and keeps the universe going, but he is not interested in people's daily matters. Aitawe is like the sun but he is not the sun”. All participants stated that Aitawe is watching over them and even today in Mae Enga the child is reminded not to misbehave because Aitawe is watching. Kambao gives an example of a father's encouragement to his son, as a natural way for an Engan to instruct his son: “My son, when you wrap the sugarcane, the finishing knot must be firm, strong, complete and permanent.” When *Wasiamo Akali Weapo* comes at night he will say of you: “Oh, he will live long”. The

expression: “He will live long” shows Engans’ belief in Aitawe who is in “charge of life”; he is the Life Giver and he has the right to take it.

Since Aitawe was distant, as believed, from the daily matters of the people, no daily communication with Aitawe seemed to be necessary. Yet, in the time of clan-wide calamities the people would kill pigs to honor Aitawe, asking him to turn his face towards them. They believed that Aitawe would never harm anyone and that all clan-wide misfortunes are caused by clan ghosts. Yet, these ghosts would not work their mischief when Aitawe’s face is turned towards people; Aitawe’s goodness pacified the ghosts.

3.2 SKY BEINGS *YALYAKALI*

The Mae Enga do not have creation stories, yet they do believe that Aitawe created *Yalyakali*, or Sky Beings, with human characteristics, who lived as people on earth; they married, raised pigs and grew crops. Their dwelling was described as *yuu etete auu pipae*, a very good place to live. The spring of the living water gave them immortality. Some myths present the Sky Beings with creative powers; some came to populate the earth and each sky tribe founded his own terrestrial tribe and passed on the ritual knowledge to establish the social structure. Other *Yalyakali* provided their representatives with the Water of Life. The quoted myth describes how the people lost their way to the spring of the Water of Life:

In the land of the Sky People *Yalyakali* there is no hunger or pain, no tension among the people, no sickness or death, no fighting. All is in perfect harmony and peace. In past times the *Yalyakali* set about the task to peopling the earth. The first man found a wife, and they lived together in a land of plenty without the cares, problems and pain in daily life. At the birth of their first son, the father knew that he would have to go to draw water from the spring of “the Water of Life” to give to the baby. Before he left, he warned his wife not to give the baby any breast milk, even if the baby cried, but to wait till he brings the water which would ensure the continued prosperity and happiness of all. The trip was long, however, and the young mother could not deny the hungry wail of her son, so she fed him from her breast. With this action, humankind was now bound to the earth with all its trouble, sickness and death. The Water of Life and the way to paradise were lost. People were left with a longing to return and be made whole again. They hoped that one day someone would find the way, would discover the *yalya toko*, a ladder to paradise.⁸

⁸ This myth of the Water of Life is quoted in Herdwig Wagner and Herman Reiner, eds., *The Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea. The First Hundred Years 1886–1986* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1987), 301–302.

As seen above, a broken relationship through the wife's disobedience caused suffering, disharmony and mortality. The Engan mythology reflects the constant longing for the "lost paradise" as longing for ideal community and abundant life. The participants confirmed that when the Water of Life was lost, the Sky-Beings gave to the tribe founders the *stones of power*, believed to be the bones of ancestors. These stones were used in fertility rituals. The benevolent Sky-Beings controlled meteorological phenomena, such as rain, lightning, earth quakes etc. Therefore, in times of clan-disasters, rituals to honor the Sky-Beings were performed to plead their care. But ghosts and spirits evoked tremendous fear in the Mae Enga.

4. ANCESTORS, GHOSTS, SPIRITS AND DEMONS

Figure 1 shows that the living people, ancestors, ghosts, spirits and demons live on the lower realms. The spirits' presence in daily life of people, however, might be better understood in terms of relationships since, as believed the abundant life was obtained by establishing harmonious relationships with all who may channel blessings visible in prosperity of the living and "reciprocity" is vital here. The relationships are established and sustained through an exchange of goods between communities or individuals. The same refers to relationships with ancestors, spirits, powers and the entire universe. Mae Enga distinguishes between the recent death (ghost), remote death (ancestors), and the spirits. In this study, the term *timango* stands for the spirits of deceased human beings and the term *pututuli* stands for other spirits.

4.1 ANCESTORS – MEDIATORS OF LIFE

The ancestors in Enga are those who give the land, their social, economic and religious institutions, the ritual renovation and the clan's identity as a group. The Engans speak of the mythical and historical ancestors. The historical ancestors lived in the past, considered as heroes who channel abundant life. The mythical ancestors are seen as deities; those who gave their lives for the well-being of their tribe are known as *dema*. The ancestors were passing on their wisdom through dreams and mediating blessings from the supernatural. A clan-wide crisis was a sign of a broken relationship with the ancestors, then, the whole clan was preparing a ritual to restore harmony.

The spirits of ancestors controlled relationships and morality but those who evoked enormous fear were the ghosts of the recent dead.

4.2 GHOSTS

According to Engan beliefs, in the moment of death the spirit leaves the body and becomes a ghost (*timango*), causing enormous fear. A *timango* wanders endlessly during the night. Ghosts' presence is recognised through sudden death, illness, or cry of a bird. There are different opinions regarding women's ghosts in Enga, but it is commonly agreed that the father's ghost is the most dangerous. The ghosts are seen as the "forces of fear" that rule the relationships. Such beliefs encouraged effective functioning of the Engan clan organization, a deep sense of solidarity and responsibility for the clan's well-being.

4.3. *PUTUTULI* DEMONS – THREATS OF LIFE

The *pututuli* spirits are forest spirits that live in caves, waterfalls, trees, isolated spots on the high mountains and are known as evil beings bringing misfortune. To keep harmonious relationships with the spirits of the forest, certain taboos were respected; for example, Engans would never cut old trees unless they kill and cook a pig in front of the chosen tree, asking for a permission of *yombone*, a spirit living in the old trees. A sudden fall of darkness or rain, indicated that a taboo was broken that called for a ritual. Some female spirits were believed to exchange the babies with the *putuli* babies; it became known only when the child was handicapped or mentally ill; it explains the existence of handicapped children.

The network of relationships in Mae Enga is constantly being renewed, and sustained through ritual, let us briefly unveil its importance.

5. RITUAL AS A WAY TO RENEWAL AND RE-CREATION

Traditionally, the ritual mediated well-being to the clan. For the Mae Enga, ritual engages the whole personality which means that the external action expresses the inner beliefs. Such an approach corresponds to the Mae Engan holistic approach to life. The stress was put on correct ritual performance of ritual. Engans believed that a correctly performed ritual makes

them “participants in their cosmos, rather than passive receivers”. Ritual has a social dimension and manifests solidarity within the group. Spirit of harmony and integrity among the community members assures the desired result.

The traditional name for ritual experts is *topoli*, referring to anyone who possesses secret knowledge of spells, magical powers and is effective. The skills and knowledge of a ritual is inherited from a parent. The family keeps the knowledge top secret to protect power, wealth and prestige of the family. The young man inherits the fame from his father but he must prove his effectiveness. Ritual performers mediate right relationships, channel fertility, health and wealth to the clan, yet, a healing power gives a special place to a healer among ritual experts.

5.1 COMMUNICATION WITH THE SKY DWELLERS THROUGH RITUAL

There are some rituals in Mae Enga that mediate communication with Aitawe and Sky Beings to honor the Sky Dwellers and to remind them of the people’s difficulties. Many cultures have some forms of sacrifices and ritual offerings to express an act of worship. The offering, regardless of its purpose, form and matter, is directed from the earthly to the supernatural realm and the giver gets a possibility to participate in divine reality – abundant life. In Enga, most rituals involve killing of pigs and cooking of pork. The rituals have one common purpose: to show respect for the Sky Dwellers, or to pacify ghosts causing calamities.

5.2 *KANA KAI* – RUBBING OF THE STONES WITH PIG’S BLOOD AND FAT

In times of crises, stones appeared to a man chosen by Aitawe to indicate a need for ritual to restore the broken communion within the entire universe. When a ritual is agreed upon, a small wooden enclosure is built and some sacred stones are placed there on a platform. While pigs are brought and clubbed inside of the enclosure, the *topoli* chants magic words, three men rub the stones in pig’s blood and the *topoli* dedicates each pig to the ghosts. Other men, decorated beautifully, are dancing and chanting. When the pigs are slaughtered, three men return to enclosure to rub pig’s blood and fat onto the stones and to present the clan’s petitions; the singing and dancing goes on. The remaining pork is roasted and eaten by men performing the ritual. In Enga beliefs, stones were given for communication with the Sky-Dwellers

but the human intent was presented in sacrifices. When a branch fell from a tree, the ritual had to be repeated.

There are some precautionary *Imbu* rituals, e.g., to prevent trouble where sacred stones are used to mediate the communication with the supernatural. Pigs are killed and cooked in the ground ovens and close to them the colored stones are placed. The aroma from the cooked meat pacifies the ghosts and restores the relationships. The men who perform the ritual eat the meat but women are not allowed to eat this food, otherwise, they would become insane or would have insane children.

Let us note, that the ancestral cult in traditional religion did not replace the divinity, but Engans communicated through the ancestors with Aitawe, the Source of Life. Such conviction is conveyed in the Enga mythology.

6. MAGIC AND SORCERY

While magic *nemango* is believed to be at times an appropriate way to control the antagonistic powers, which can be used both to heal or to destroy, sorcery is always a treat to life. There are different types of sorcery known in traditional Mae Enga, which are designed to kill or to harm human beings. For example, in some sorceries Engans use a powder (*pitpit*) to spread over the person or to add to the victim's food. The symbolic action of grinding is to hurt the enemy.

Nowadays, as Gibbs describes in his article, the sorcery took a very different path in Enga where mostly women are accused of being witches (*sanguma*), interrogated, tortured, and often killed. This topic, however, will be elaborated in a separate paper.

All the rituals, also healing rituals with the use of magic, aimed on restoring harmonious life of entire universe. Reciprocity, through ritual, brings positive change resulting in wealth and fertility. Sorcery has always been a real threat to life.

As seen above, rituals were finalized with a festive meal, symbolizing the expected prosperity and a celebration as the essential expressions of the abundant life. Life in Mae Enga is to be celebrated in song, dance, splendour of colours and plenitude of food which is shared and distributed within the community. In the next paragraph we look briefly at the importance of the rites of passage that created the occasions to the splendid, communal celebrations.

7. LIFE IS CELEBRATED: THE RITES OF PASSAGE

The scope of this article does not allow me to elaborate on the topic it is vital, however, to mention briefly the importance of the rites of passage in the Mae Enga associated with the major transitions of the life cycle. The Mae Enga experience life in the pattern of birth, adulthood, marriage and death that creates an opportunity to celebrate life in their community and to strengthen communion with the living, the dead and the universe. Thus, in the Mae Enga culture the “sacred” enters every phase of human life. Being born, maturing, getting married and dying, are all acts that fall within the sacred sphere. The ritual transforms a person into a new state of being, that is insertion “into the sacred”. This is, e.g. visible in the rites of a boy’s initiation, which not only marks “rebirth” of the individual, but creates existential change in a young man bringing him to a higher level of existence. The series of life passages from one status to another, involve a ceremony of transition into a level of new demands regarding relationships. It is through the various rites of passage that a Mae Engan is prepared gradually to take up a new responsibility for the “continuation, protection, sustenance and celebration of life”; the central value of the Mae Enga culture. All the celebrations connected with a new status and its responsibilities take place within the clan-community as a visible sign of *gutpela sindaun*.

The following pages present briefly the growth of Mae Engans into a Christian community sharing the *Fullness of Life* in and through Jesus Christ.

8. CROSSING THE BOUNDARIES OF DIFFERENT CULTURES

While “crossing boundaries” and entering the world of a different culture, we become more appreciative of the people, their cultural beliefs, customs and values and “we can encounter God anew at the crossing”. In the context of cross-cultural proclamation of Christ’s message, understanding the basic characteristics of the people’s culture and their traditional religion is vital. It helps, first of all, to encounter the people where they are and as they are and to engage in cross-cultural dialogue.

The presented reflection shows the traditional Engan religion, which touches on every aspect and every passage of life in its totality, with no definite separation between the sacred and the secular. Furthermore, it prepares

and opens the Engan people to accept Christ the true Life as the Gift and Challenge to the Mae Enga traditional concept of life.

8.1 GROWING INTO A NEW COMMUNITY

In October 1947, the first Catholic missionaries, Frs. William Ross SVD and Gerry Bus SVD entered the Tsak Valley of Enga and in 1948 the first stations were founded in Kopen near Wabag and Pompabus near Wapenamanda. Since then the Catholic Mission started its activities in Enga. The growth of the Catholic Church happened at times of rapid changes in Enga Province. The mission itself was involved in the areas of education, health and socio-cultural projects, which evoked significant changes. Gradually, 16 parishes were established by the Catholic Mission and in 1972 the Catechist Training Center was established in Kapilam. Through catechetical training and formation, the young Church invited the laity to participate in ministry right from the start. The charismatic renewal in 1970s made the people aware of the special gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as: healing, prayer and the transforming power of God's Word. The movement formed some responsible leaders for the young church. In May 1982, the new Catholic Diocese of Wabag was established, with Fr. Herman Reich SVD as the first bishop. With the help of SAIDI, in the spirit of prayer, reflection, sharing and discussion, the Diocesan Pastoral Plan was created. A clear vision and mission statement addressed the resources and obstacles within the Enga Church. The vision identified the Church as:

A Community filled with joy
Sharing in the Fullness of Life
With the Father
Through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

The two key expressions in the Vision show that it emerged from “the Enga heart”: *fullness of life* and *community*. The central Engan value of life is enriched with the Trinitarian aspect. The Triune God, who is a communion of persons, is drawing the world to the perfect communion.

8.2 JESUS CHRIST AS KAMONGO – THE LORD OF LIFE

Living in Mae Enga today, one easily observes that the presented above traditional religion where the effort to live in harmony with the Sky Dwell-

ers, ancestors and the entire universe renewed by rituals, has been fading away, giving space to Christ and his message of Life experienced in a new community. This new community also freed women to participate in worship and religious life, a domain that was traditionally reserved for men. With the growth of the new Catholic Diocese the involvement of laity in the pastoral work flourished. Several committees were created to coordinate different pastoral activities. Local teams led renewal retreats in parishes and training teams offered various programs in Enga language. The demands coming from parishes proved that such programmes were badly needed.

In the last decades, the Catholic Church put emphasis on dialogue aiming at inculturation. It helped in the process of transformation of the authentic, cultural values through the integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the Enga culture. The Christians in Enga look for a Christ-like model of Kamongo leadership that lives the law of love without “boundaries”, challenging the traditional image of a leader, who cared for his own tribe only, excluding those not bound in a blood relationship.

The Engan holistic approach to life is reflected in various celebrations of life in the clan community, as well as in the liturgical celebrations. The splendour of colourful attire, gesture, rhythm, songs and music adds to the beauty of the universal Church and invites others to a more dynamic participation in the liturgy.

Christ the true Life challenges the traditional concept of *gutpela sindaun* life, celebrated within one’s own clan only. He calls the Mae Enga to open up their cultural horizons and to accept other clans, nations and neighbours as their brethren. Thus, the Christian community offers to the Mae Enga of today a new identity and a sense of belonging to the universal tribe of Christ, *Ktaisanya Tata*.

8.3 CHRIST – THE GIVER OF LIFE

Jesus Christ as the Giver of True Life is seen in Mae Enga as the ONE who gives His life for the life of all, restoring the broken relationships through his life-giving death and resurrection and bringing the desired harmony and healing into the world.

The concept of a life-giving death is known in Enga mythology in the *dema* kind of myths (e.g., Lepe Plant Origin Myth), where the hero dies to save his community. In the traditional Enga context, repeated rituals have been considered as a renewal of harmonious relationships in the community.

Jesus Christ is not only restoring broken relationships and renewing life, but He himself is the Life. Without a doubt, the universalism of Christ's sacrifice made present in the sacrament of the Eucharist, is the greatest novelty for the Engans, where Christ, the only Son of God the Father, through his death and resurrection offers NEW LIFE that goes beyond the "here and now" experience and adds a new dimension.

8.4 CHRIST IN THE MIDST OF CHANGE

The greatest challenge for Enga Christians today is "to discern the place of Christ within modern developments". The mobility of people, contact with different provinces and cultures, question many aspects of the traditional concept of life. The rapid socio-cultural changes challenge the Engan values, beliefs and attitudes; thus, the youths seem to be more attracted by the modern social life. The crisis of leadership is observed not only in Enga, since today's generation looks for more personal freedom. The breakdown of clan structures, tribal fights, alcoholism, drugs and poverty evoke serious social problems.

Life is still the central value in Mae Enga; what has changed, is the way to attain it. The youths of today show clearly that "the pay cheque" brings more security than cooperation with their brothers. Gardens are less important today as before, since a paid job secures food in abundance. The sense of belonging, so important in the clan-community, is found often in a group of friends.

The Enga Church is aware of the value of dialogue aiming at inculturation. Though much has been done in recent years, yet, to be true to the Mae Enga holistic approach to life, Church must enter into the people's life, following the pattern of birth, puberty, initiation, marriage and death since most of these celebrations take place in the village.

Jesus Christ the Life through his presence in people's daily walks of life, gradually transforms their socio-cultural reality, giving to them a new identity and a new dimension in their search. Therefore, ever more often, one can recognise the "Face of Christ" with Engan features, values, ways of worship and reconciliation. And this is an authentic gift to the Universal Church from the Church of Mae Enga today.

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PEŁNIA ŻYCIA W TRADYCYJNEJ RELIGII MAE ENGA I CHRYSZTUS-ŻYCIE

Streszczenie

Niniejsza prezentacja jest próbą stworzenia przestrzeni dialogu pomiędzy chrześcijaństwem a kulturą. Jezus Chrystus wkracza w dzisiejszą rzeczywistość społeczno-kulturową ludzi Mae Enga, aby ją przemienić, a także zaoferować nową tożsamość i nowy wymiar w ich poszukiwaniach pełni życia. Z kolei Mae Enga oferuje światu „Oblicze Chrystusa” z rysami i wartościami własnej kultury, kultu i pojednania.

Artykuł bazuje na badaniach antropologów, jak również na wywiadach z 80 osobami: 60 osób wzięło udział w wywiadach osobistych, a 20 uczestniczyło w dyskusjach prowadzonych w grupach. Rezultaty badań pokazują, że tradycyjne życie ludzi Mae Enga ukierunkowane jest na życiodajne relacje z całym wszechświatem, które warunkują doświadczenie upragnionej „pełni życia” tu na ziemi, w kręgu członków własnego klanu. Pomimo nieuchronnych zmian społeczno-kulturowych, które wpływają na ich wartości, wierzenia i postawy, życie jest wciąż najwyższą wartością, ale dzisiejsza młodzież wybiera współczesne sposoby, by je osiągnąć. Religia tradycyjna ustępuje miejsca Chrystusowi, Panu Życia, który obala bariery pojedynczych klanów i daje im nową tożsamość naśladowców Chrystusa; *Ktaisanya Tata* (Tribe of Jesus Christ).

Słowa kluczowe: pełnia życia; relacje; wymiana; Chrystus Życie.