



**Midlands State University**  
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**FACULTY OF ARTS**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

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**THE HISTORY OF SACRED SHRINES TO ZIMBABWE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD  
AFRICA: THE CASE OF BINDURA SACRED SHRINE**

**By**

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**THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
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**ZVISHAVANE, ZIMBABWE**

## DECLARATION

I, Nakisai Pedzisai declare that this dissertation is my original work and has not been submitted in any university for degree purpose except for Midlands State University. It is being submitted in fulfilment of the requirement of the Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree in History and International Studies.

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, my parents, my sisters Natsirai and Macdeline and my brother Peter for the support that they showed me throughout my studies.



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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

<b>AFM</b>	Apostolic Faith Mission
<b>AOGA</b>	Assemblies of God Africa
<b>AU</b>	Africa University
<b>PHD Ministries</b>	Prophetic Healing and Deliverance Ministries
<b>SCOAN</b>	Synagogue Church of All Nations
<b>ZAOGA</b>	Zimbabwe Assemblies of God in Africa
<b>ZEGU</b>	Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University



## **GLOSSARIES**

**Bhoziwero**

a rich person

**Handinawangu**

not of my own

**Mutema**

black

**Bako**

cave

**Ngaone**

he must see

## **ABSTRACT**

*The issue raised in the secrecy of the sacred places being placed by the independent churches in Zimbabwe with the special focus on the Bindura sacred shrine of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA) are crucial and pertinent to the faith and wellbeing of Christian who follow the ministry. The research document seeks to bring about the roots of the sacred place of Bindura that will reconcile with the myths which led to the expansion of the ministry. The research is striving to bring about the theology of Pentecostal churches using sacred places as a harbour of their legacy. Some would describe the Bindura sacred place as a billboard of the Zaogian history. It is also going to analyses the impacts that the shrine has to the community and the world at large.*

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## **Introduction**

This study focuses on Bindura sacred shrine to the history of ZAOGA. Bindura sacred shrines have led to the birth, survival and expansion of the ZAOGA church since 1960. According to Eliade a sacred shrine is a concrete and permanent site to which generation will point and say, 'this place is sacred or holy.'<sup>1</sup> He further argues that a sacred space is understood as a place where the divine meets human beings.<sup>2</sup> Therefore the Bindura sacred shrine has been a hub of history to the formation of the Zaogian Church through their leader Ezekiel Guti. The aim of ZAOGA through the sacred place of Bindura has been argued by the founder as having its agenda in preaching the true gospel of Christ and their doctrine not being of man but of Jesus Christ as fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. Bindura sacred place lies in Mashonaland Central of Zimbabwe. However various shrines have been discovered and are followed for a period of time and as time passes the sharing of sacred shrines becomes unique as other churches are not allowed to use the shrine by the rightful owners.

Sacred shrines in the past have been eluded as evil and they had restrictions to the indigenous Africans. Missionaries however signifies a loss of tradition and an acceptance of the superior white faith this as a result led to the rise of monotonous sacred shrines in Africa and globally. Christians go to Israel and Muslims go to Mecca. However the rise of many churches led to the establishment of many sacred shrines in the provinces of Zimbabwe. Philip notes that some sacred shrines came as a result of invasion of Christians' to the sacred shrines of the African tradition.<sup>4</sup> The Johane Masowe Chishanu ye Nyenyedzi and the ACC of Paul Mwazha have their sacred shrines which they invaded from the locals in Chirumanzu. Those shrines are in form of a sacred pool called the (Gonawapotera). This pool is used for baptismal of their followers and also cleansing of evil spirits in addition the cave is also used for their night prayer.

The research therefore seeks to establish the factors leading to the founding of Bindura sacred shrines and how the church has benefited to the people around the area. It also seeks to bring about the vision of the ZAOGA church in making sure that there is a sustainable history through the shrine. This study has been necessitated due to the reason that scholars like David Maxwell have criticized as a pagan myth yet the founder argues that the pattern is from God that he met in Bindura.

The research also seeks to explore the sacredness of the Bindura sacred shrine. Thus analysing if it is a myth which has been taken for reality indeed the place is sacred. Therefore the methodologies used in this research are to help the researcher accessing the correct information on our case study undercover.

### **Statement of the problem**

The growth and development of sacred shrines in Zimbabwe is so puzzling for both Christian and Traditional believers. The rate at which these sacred places are increasing day by day with the advent of Pentecostal churches has left more question than answers. Sacred shrines were known as spectacles which led people in seeing the unseen and hearing the unheard. Myths have also declared that problems and misfortunes vanish into air thereby leading to blessings and spiritual gifts falling into the palm hands of the believers. However some church shrines have been turned into a hub of leading people astray and followed other paths instead. This has come into light as other shrines have been accused of shifting their sight from spiritual gains to monetary gains and deviation from their primary objective of spiritual growth, praying for the cursed and problems and misfortunes vanishing into thin air. Some church shrines are charging exorbitant fees and making it difficult for locals have access to these sacred shrines.<sup>5</sup> Therefore the rise of sacred shires now carries different interests than those laid on the roots of secrecy. This research therefore seeks to bring about how the

Bindura sacred shrine has handled these problems into holding a good grip of the history of ZAOGA.

This research is also going to explore the ills brought out of the sacred shrine of Bindura thereby analysing if it is really sacred or it was just politically calculated so as for the church to have a good grip in its making of history. The gap in this research is also identified by lack of not knowing if the fees paid for visiting is genuine for repair of the structure or it is now religious business.

### **Research objectives**

The study seeks to bring about the following objectives

1. To establish the reasons which led to the rise of the Bindura shrine.
2. To bring about the sacredness of the shrine which attracts people.
3. To explore the effectiveness of the shrine to the community and in the history of the church
4. To trace challenges that the authorities face in the management of the shrine people.

### **Research questions**

1. What led to the establishment of the Bindura sacred shrine?
2. What are the impacts that the shrine has to the community?
3. What shows that it is a sacred place and the testimonies?
4. What are the challenges that the authorities face in the management of the shrine?

## **Background of study**

Sacred shrines were discovered way back before the coming of Europeans in Zimbabwe. The indigenous people had sacred forests, mountains, hills, caves and pools. During the colonial struggle in 1960 Bindura sacred shrine was born. It was established by Ezekiel Guti the founder of ZAOGA. Therefore over the years ZAOGA has been recorded to have expanded its wings to 138 nations in all continents.

Sacred shrines are regarded as sanctified, holy and dedicated places. Eliade argues that a sacred place is different from an ordinary space because on sacred shrines are manifestation of the divine.<sup>9</sup> Therefore Eliade sees sacred places as places which are always considered as authentic sacred places are long term sites which generations and generations will get information from it.<sup>10</sup> Thus sacred places have got rules and regulations, thereby any human being who break the rules faces consequences. Therefore a sacred shrine is a place where divine manifestations meet human.

Bindura sacred place is located in Bindura Zimbabwe. It is a town in the province of Mashonaland central, located in the Mazowe valley about 88km north-east of Harare. The sacred shrine in Bindura was established by Ezekiel Guti the founder of the ministry. The church's history book notes that the shrine was established during the colonial era when missionaries and the white rule did not approve the rule of an unlearned black man.<sup>11</sup> Rodney also argues that it was only education which could lay the base for a smooth functioning of their system of administration.<sup>12</sup> Therefore the rise of an unlearned man became a threat to the missionaries. According to Ezekiel Guti it was the Lord who told him to go to Bindura.<sup>13</sup> The gum tree in Bindura shrine gave birth to the ministry in 1960.

This started with a few people and mysterious things happened as noted by the founder. In the Bindura shrine there is a cave which is in the mountain.<sup>14</sup> The cave has been recorded to be

the place where Ezekiel Guti had divine visitation. Adding on to this it has been argued that this is the place where Ezekiel was taught the tongue of the learned by the Holy Spirit.<sup>15</sup> A big church is built around the area and it is called a Cathedral. Zaogians have noted that they still see angelic visitations in that place.<sup>16</sup>

The believers still visit the place especially on their annual ten days fasting in January and on anniversary. It has been recorded that even people from other churches go to pray in the shrine. Also some prominent people in Zimbabwe such as Strive Masiyiwa have been noted to have been going to the shrine for prayer.<sup>17</sup> Bindura sacred shrine has recorded the divine manifestations and there are rules that people should report to the caretaker before entering the shrine. Therefore the study seeks to elaborate how sacred shrines have been more significant in churches with a special case study of Bindura sacred shrine of the Zaoga Forward in Faith International Ministries.

## **Literature Review**

The word “Sacred” comes from a Latin word “Sacer”, meaning to make holy. According to the oxford dictionary it simply defined as consecrated to, esteemed especially dear or acceptable to a deity set apart or dedicated to some religious purpose. It is further defined as made holy by association with a god or other object of worship. Holy is defined as free from sin and evil, morally and spiritually perfect and unsullied. Therefore this adds to the notion that sacred places are holy dedicated places or places considered to be spiritually vacuumed. Sacred places were setup as means of drawing religious people closer to the spiritual world they believe in, though some atheist have argued it to be hallucinations. According to Norbert, seekers in the shrine encounters the holy and, through rituals, meditation and revelation experiences.



Time immemorial before imperialism sacred shrines was an important aspect of African traditional religion. During times of civil wars and drought traditional leaders would visit the sacred shrines to appease the ancestors or for seeking protection from their gods .Some of the traditional shrines such as Njelele were believed to be shrines of rain, thereby the leaders would visit during times of drought. The chronicle also notes that the sacred place such as the Njelele have rules as being noted by one of elderly Thobela Ncube who argued that it was a taboo for one to point his finger at the sacred mountain of Njelele, breaking the law leads to drastically things happening to the person life. Atheist regard this as pagan therefore the locals would be regarded as believing in myths and not facing reality. Thus, Mrs Joyce Moyo was blaming the disturbances of the closure of the sacred shrine if they are not to get enough rain for that year. As result one can support that sacred places exist and are sacred to those who believe in them.

David Bell argues that what may or not be regarded as holy or sacred is a question which will be answered in different ways but it is convincing that, in principle anything can be considered as sacred or holy the holiness or sacred exist in the eyes of the beholder therefore he argues that the attribution of sacredness does not simply depend on opinion of free choice , and is not arbitrary at all, but relates to behaviour therefore one can argue that from this notion David is simply disputing the fact of natural divine manifestation but rather it's from the imagination of people or belief in myths. Bart believes that sacred places are made of time. Thereby he simply meant that gone are the days of living in archaic. All that is solid melts into air and modern life is (unbearable ) 'light,' since it has set itself free from the constraints and the weight of tradition. He goes on to say it is undoubtedly true that the modern conditional systems have replaced the old systems but at the same time achieving the same goal. Science provides what can be considered as the world view and orientation in time and space, science and technology makes people believe that they have a grip in life therefore

magic and secrecy loses its importance or role in the modern society. Therefore, the study seeks to find out if sacred places are really “sacred.”

According to Pierre the sacred places in the world are without doubt because sacred places where found in the bible. He goes to give examples of the king Solomon who built the house of the lord in Mount Haram. Thereby through the bible the Jerusalem temple remained central and although by all means sacred whether real or imagined. Thomas goes on to argue that the accent is both on buildings which once were erected on sacred places and on the interaction between a place and a building. He goes to say buildings are made of man with the intention to make the sacredness of the place visible and develop a human presence on a place. He goes on to say erecting a building on a sacred place is one of the various acts of appropriation or colonization of the place by man. Therefore from this one can support Maxwell’s view of these churches as cultic.

In the liberation struggle indigenous people in Zimbabwe are argued to have been hiding in the sacred shrines for protection against the white enemies. The elders and the indigenous people would pay their respects and they would find protection. Therefore this was the strength that the indigenous people had in fighting their counter parts. It has been recorded of other white commandos who disappeared in the sacred forest and hills of the African people therefore according to comrade Shambakumanja the sacred forest they had actually passed on their way to Mozambique gave them a dog. It has been recorded that this dog only barked when it wanted to alert them of the enemy. Therefore, with this the researcher is in depth of wondering if the sacred places are really sacred.

In Mhondoro near Chegutu it has been discovered that there is a sacred forest which has strict rules and regulations and if one fails to abide he or she disappears and never to be found

again. Most of the mysterious things happen in these places because of the tourist and other strangers in this place. Some even argue that one is not allowed to comment bad of fruits found in that place therefore the chiefs urge that one has to report first when visiting the area. Reporting to the elderly or chiefs in that area helps the authorities in informing the ancestors in that area that you mean no harm. Thereby with all this it has been undisputable that the Mhondoro sacred forest is not a myth or a superstition but rather is a religion that has super powers that exist. Therefore, it is clear that traditionally many sacred places are effective even up to date.

Therefore this research seeks to explore how the Christian sacred places have its roots in the indigenous tradition. Most of the sacred mountains such as the Domboshava and the Mhondoro mountains where Christians now visit for special prayers has been argued by Philip that the traditional sacred places are the same sacred places that are now occupied by Christians for example Chishanu ye Nyenyedzi. Hence leading to a rivalry between the two religious groups there by this simply noted that the sacred places can be shared and as a myth it works for both religions

## **Methodology**

Various tools were used in acquiring data. The researcher highlights a number of methods that were used and why the methodology was considered to be the most suitable for the information needed in bringing a solid argument in the subject area. A case study approach has been one of approach used in targeting people with the information needed on this subject. This method allows the researcher to get details in depth without any limitation.

The researcher is going to use various methods such as views of various individuals and also it is going to be subjective in getting view from different angles and analysing the acquired information. Some of the information was acquired through the use of interviews and oral

meetings. This gave the researcher a chance to having a clear picture of the secrecy of the Bindura shrine. Some of the people participating in the meeting were elders, deacons of the church and pastors.

The researcher also made use of other materials in carrying out the study. These included the information taken from the Cathedral offices which are the responsible authorities of the shrine. The information helped a lot in bringing a background of the shrine and more information on the required subject. This helped the researcher in analysing and surveying information gathered in oral meetings conducted and in the end bringing about a comprehensive research.

The researcher also made use of gathered sources which included books, newspapers, articles, journals and e-books. This enabled the researcher to have valuable information after being exposed various schools of thought.

Attendance in the ministry was also another key in acquiring the information as it made the informants eager to exhausts more data. To avoid bias the researcher made sure that the information acquired from another part did not leak to another person so as to avoid risk of getting distorted and biased. The researcher also acquired information from those who were willing and as a result giving respect to parties involved.

## **Dissertation layout**

### **Introduction**

It will focus on the introductory analysis to the research and also includes justification of the study and the methods used in the collection.

## **Chapter 1: Historical background of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa**

This chapter is going to bring about the historical background of the ministry. It is also going to explore the founder of the ministry and how it has expanded

## **Chapter 2: Historical Background of Bindura sacred shrine**

This chapter is going to bring about the history of the establishment of the sacred shrine with the case study of Bindura.

## **Chapter 3: Sacredness of the Bindura sacred shrine and its impact to the people.**

The chapter will comprehensively bring about the role played by the sacred shrine of Bindura to the livelihood of the indigenous people. This chapter is also going to air out the secrecy of the shrine.

## **Chapter 4: Challenges faced by the local authorities in the management of the shrine**

This chapter will bring an analysis of the challenges faced by the local authorities at the Bindura sacred shrine

## **Conclusion**

It concludes by providing a summary of evaluations and arguments of the research. It also highlights major findings and aims of the study.

## END NOTES

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# **CHAPTER ONE: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ZIMBABWE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD AFRICA CHURCH**

## **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter seeks to bring about the history of the establishment of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa church prior to colonial period. It is to bring about the roots of the founder leading to the founding of sacred shrines of the church. Particular attention will be on Bindura sacred shrine which is the sacred shrine understudy. This chapter is going to make an analysis of the factors that led to the formation of sacred shrines by their responsible authorities. Much emphasis is going to be put on the origins of the Assemblies of God Africa (AOGA). This chapter is also going to bring about the effectiveness of the church economically to the local people and their followers at large.

Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa is a Pentecostal church found by Ezekiel Handinawangu Guti in 1960. It is now recognised internationally as Forward in Faith Ministries International (FIFMI). This church has expanded into branches to more than 138 nations in all continents.<sup>1</sup> The founder of ZAOGA, Ezekiel Guti has been recorded to have been born on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 1923 in Chipinge Manicaland, Zimbabwe.<sup>2</sup> He was born in a family which believed in ancestral spirits but which knew that there was a creator in heaven but did not know how to reach him. Despite him coming from a poor background it did not stop him to his calling of serving souls. Through his charismatic leadership Guti runs the church tirelessly despite his old age. He oversees many pastors and evangelists all over the world in the church. The church being born during colonialism it has been argued by Biri that ZAOGA is an Indigenous African Independent Church which refused to be colonised or penetrated by western missionaries.<sup>3</sup>

The day to day running of the church is controlled by the church's doctrine which is prepared by the church Council. Guti says that if one fails to comply by the rules of the church he should leave the church. Nhumburudzi argues that Guti has all the titles given to him in the church.<sup>4</sup> These titles shows that he already attained respect and he has authority and command over his followers in the ministry. Due to the expansion of the church the founder delegated some powers to the executive of the church. According to the Zaogian history book, the history of ZAOGA has reconstructed its roots to be located in Chipinge rural where the founder was born. Guti who was a young boy by then started to have his visions and divine visitations in the bushes alone. The Zaogians have argued that Guti noted that he began preaching on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 1960 which also noted the birth of the ministry.<sup>5</sup> The first preaching was not in a building but under a gum tree (eucalyptus tree) in Bindura. Bindura is located in Mashonaland Central Province of Zimbabwe. Maxwell puts an emphasis in the roots being from his rural home in Chipinge.<sup>6</sup>

## **1.2 Origins of the church**

The origins of ZAOGA church remains debatable. During the era of colonialism it has been noted that Christianity spread from South Africa where there were migrant labour mines to southern Rhodesia.<sup>7</sup> Due to quest of power Ezekiel speaks more of his divine encounters and the assurance he had from God in opening the church. However some critics have noted that in 1959, the leader Ezekiel Guti was followed by the members of the prayer band after being expelled from the church, it has been noted that even before forming their own ministry they later joined the South African Assemblies of God being led by Nicholas Bhengu in association with the Pentecost Assemblies of Canada.<sup>8</sup> Maxwell notes that once again they left the ministry leading to them forming Assemblies of God in Africa ministry, though all the credit is given to Ezekiel Guti as for the (AFM ) Church only a little credit is awarded to



Enock Gwanzura who baptised him.<sup>9</sup> This has been criticised by many scholars as it hides the origins of the ministry.

The author Garley who had his interest on the work of the origins of the ZAOGA church has been criticised by many theologians that he was under the Zaogian influence and the source of his information thereby disqualifying him in being a scholar as he had an influence from the authorities.<sup>9</sup> The theologians in ZAOGA politically brain washed its followers through their books of the church history. The book of remembrance justifies the founders calling from his mother Mbuya Dorcas who shared with the family the news of the punishment of all sinners that she had heard when she had visited another place.<sup>10</sup> The message from his mother acted as have been the push factor to his calling. The history of Zaoga was greatly edited by the genius theologians at the headquarters the stereo typed set up of their sacred places in the periphery such as Ngaone, Bindura and Vumba mountains easily convince the followers of the ministry. Biri argue that this was a calculated political move to shape the theology of the movement to authenticate and booster the controversial origins of the movement in order for Guti to have a firm group over the expanding movement thereby thus the co-founders were either purged, silence or left the ministry.<sup>11</sup> In the preservation of the church history sacred cities such as Bindura, Ngaone and Cottage 593 have been one of the instruments used in the lubrication of the church system. Even up to date the followers visit these places for divine manifestations as it has been recorded that those were the places were God would communicate with the founder. The Zaogians usually visit these places crucially on their annual ten days fasting and during anniversaries. The vaapostori people who used to share the sacred mountain of ZAOGA have been chased away there of leading to Zaogians tacking full control of the places.<sup>12</sup>

### **1.3 Socio-economic development**

The ministry has also played a very crucial role in the economy of the country as it continuous to grow with its vision. The church shuns laziness and poverty and therefore the believers are taught to work very hard. Guti implemented the issue of working, talents which he claimed that God had told him when he was in America.<sup>13</sup> This was after the encounter of Ezekiel Guti with a rich white man who wanted to offer him wealth but denied as God had instructed him not to. The hope of the followers is boosted by the words of God towards Ezekiel that he was going to be his money. Thereby the church members worked a lot to their ability so as to fund these projects. These talents are not only believed to be benefiting the founder but it also create a middle class people in the church. Therefore the church members are instructed to use their hands in form of working talents, for their upkeep as entrepreneur and also to the coffers of the church projects.

Handinawangu has been argued by Takavarasha that his name meant not of your own and the sacred place by the name 'Mutema' meant black. Therefore this was prophetic as it simply described Ezekiel as bringing light to the Dark Continent. Thus the black people only believed being under the white supremacy.<sup>14</sup> Therefore Ezekiel being the charismatic leader he raised as a black icon in refusing reliance to the white rule. The ministry shuns laziness, thus most of the church projects creates job opportunities to the church members depending on the acquired qualifications.

The church has established two schools in Bulawayo which are Eunor Guti Academy which is located in Kingsdale suburb and Ezekiel Guti Primary School in Cowdry park suburb. These schools are of a high grand and are argued to be of a true reflection of the ZAOGA brand. This hence forth is regarded as family property though believers regard themselves as owners of the property. One of the daughters of the founder has been recorded saying that the

church was their family business, this results in the notion of profits and propherts.<sup>15</sup> However due to the growth of the ministry the leaders has been argued to have been engaged politically and has an influence to its followers. Therefore in return the responsible authority are argued to have been receiving favours for instance the former president of Zimbabwe gave the church land for the construction of the university.<sup>15</sup> The church has also been argued to have copied the political style of praises through does and regalia zambiyaz the followers stampeded in buying these at higher prices (making business through innocent believers). As result economically the church has both negative and positive impacts to the people and community at large.

#### **1.4 Formation of the Bindura sacred shrine**

Bindura sacred shrine is located in primitive area of Bindura in Mashonaland Central of Zimbabwe. Guti as a prophet he became the voice of all matters which were to be taken seriously without question or resistance. The founder notes that in 1960 God told him to go to Bindura where he was not going to face any persecutions from the missioneries.<sup>16</sup> This was due to the fact that in the urban centres of Rhodesia in high fields he faced persecution from the missionaries who felt threatened by him doing the work of God.<sup>17</sup>

In 1960 Guti took the African tradition flavour and cut all western links. The followers till date make reference to the God of Guti. Thus, the God whom the leader testifies to have seen in Bindura. Therefore, as a result all the followers are eager to visit Bindura shrine this place is believed by the theologians in ZAOGA to be manifesting angels and it's a centre of redemption. The Bindura sacred shrine being the birth place of the ministry according to the history book of (ZAOGA) has become the hub of the ZAOGA's history.<sup>18</sup> A cathedral has been built in that place in addition there is a cave which the followers call it (bako) and not forgetting the gum tree where the story of ZAOGA begins.

This place has been recorded as a hub of miracles for instance the crippled are healed and the dead being resurrected. Thereby the meeting with the divine manifestation also has qualified the Bindura sacred shrine in being sacred. The rules and regulations in the place has also made the place sacred there are boards of notice that one has to report first before entering the premise therefore making the place sacred. Therefore the birth of the ministry at Bindura marked the place as sacred.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

IT can be noted that various factors socially politically and economically led to the formation of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Church Africa. Some factors have sympathised with the church while some have regarded the church as traitor to its followers. The invention of this church has a huge mark in Zimbabwe as it has led to development of various systems which include the education system, infrastructure, hospitals among other changes. One negative impact of this church is the cultic worship giving reference to their leader and also seeing the church as a family business leaving the disadvantaged people poor as church mice. The Bindura sacred shrine is a result of threats posed to the leader by the missionaries.

## END NOTES

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## **CHAPTER TWO: HISTORY OF BINDURA SACRED SHRINE**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter seeks to bring about the history of the establishment of Bindura sacred shrine in Chipindura Mountain and also the roots of the sacredness. Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Church had a number of sacred places such as Ngaone and Cottage 593 Highfields but particular attention will be on Bindura sacred shrine as it is the sacred place under study to the history of ZAOGA. Therefore this chapter is going to make an analysis of the factors which led to Bindura being considered as a sacred shrine by the founder of the church and the followers. Much emphasis is going to consider the sacredness of the place. It is going to bring about how the history of the church has preserved in that place.

### **2.2 History of Bindura Shrine**

Bindura sacred shrine is located in the Mashonaland Central of Zimbabwe. According to the Zaogian theologians Bindura sacred shrine is regarded as the birth place of Zimbabwe Assemblies of God in 1960. Guti claims that he did not know the place but it was due to the trials and tribulations that he faced from missionaries during the colonial era and God instructed him to the Bindura Shrine. Biri argues that Guti shared the Chipindura Mountain with the Vapostori where he used to pray after his break away from the African Apostolic Faith Mission.<sup>1</sup> Due to the characteristics which are put on the sacred place, Bindura sacred shrine also qualifies to be a sacred place because of its characteristics.

It embodies several spaces that are argued to be holy. There are taboos avoidances in the cave and the mountain. Therefore, the Bindura shrine hold more water in the history and formation of the church. The Bindura sacred shrine is regarded as the mountain the mountain of prayer. It is at the mountain that Guti prayed the famous prayer for the whole continent of Africa. However McDonough argues that the church incorporated such divine claims sometimes

propagated such divine claims by rumours to widen Guti's authority.<sup>2</sup> Biri goes on to argue that the Bindura sacred shrine was politically calculated in suiting the history of the church.<sup>3</sup> Thus every second Sunday of May the history book of the church is read to all men so that they know where they are coming from, where they are going so that they might not be misled. The history book contains all the information about the experiences that Guti came across in Bindura leading to the birth of the church are used as an instrument in dealing with the issue of leadership, church building and integration. During the church anniversaries women would compose songs singing that it all started with Ezekiel Guti and his wife. The shrine is believed to be holy and miracles happen as Guti claims that he could meet with angels and the Bindura cave is saturated with the divine manifestation. The Bindura sacred shrine is viewed by theologians of ZAOGA as a remarkable place where generations and generations will always reread Guti's past.

### **2.3 Sacredness of the Place**

A sacred place according to Kuper is a particular place of social place, a place socially and ideologically demarcated and separated from other places.<sup>4</sup> As such it becomes a symbol within the total and complex system of communication in the total social universe. Biri goes on to argue that the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa has socially and ideologically set aside for pilgrimage that are theologically significant to the movement and have become symbols of communication systems.<sup>5</sup> Therefore the Bindura sacred shrine is documented in the sacred books of ZAOGA as places where Guti had a divine encounter with the sacred. The history book notes that Guti had several encounters with the divine even up to today. When visiting the place people expect to have an encounter with the divine the same way their leader did.



In the African culture mountains are believed to have an occupational of the divine manifestations. Maxwell notes that the mountains are places of pilgrimage for Pentecostals but among the Shona people they are associated spirit mediums and burial sites for the chiefs.<sup>6</sup> Thus the Johane Masowe Chishanu ye Nyeredzi have their sacred shrine which they invaded from the Chirumhanzi locals. Thus in this mountain there were mountain chiefs were buried and it was regarded as sacred. However with the Bindura shrine it is argued by Maxwell to have been used by the Vapostori and later taken by the ZAOGA ministries.<sup>7</sup>

The Bindura shrine is embodied with many holy place. There is a gum tree were the birth ministry took place according to Guti. This gum tree is regarded as sacred because the leader claims that people in 1960 testified to have seen angels standing next to him as he was preaching. Testimonies of the lame and sick being healed have been recorded in the history book. Therefore the manifestation of the divine under this gum tree is holy.

There is also the cave recited by believer as (bako). This cave is recorded as an intercession section where Guti made the famous prayer for the salvation of Africa. The history of the ZAOGA also markets the cave as the place where Guti was taught how to read and write English by the Holy Spirit. It has been claimed that he was given the tongue of the leaners as he was giving to preach in my nations.

In this cave there is also a chair of Guti which no one is allowed to sit. Biri argues that probably it's because of age. At the foot of the mountain there is cathedral. This is the biggest building which has been regarded as sacred due to the angelic visitation noticed at that place. The mountain as well has been regarded as sacred.

The Zaogian believer all endeavour to visit there Bindura mountain even people who are not Zaogians. Biri notes that mountains areas are more mythical as people got there during the holiday to perform their rituals.<sup>8</sup> The Bindura Mountain brings a deep meaning and

significance to the belief of the Zaogian followers. The leaders at the ministry usually visit the mountain during their leaders' conference as individual or groups. One respondent has noted that the place is overcrowded during Fridays or the church annual conferences, prayer chains of the first ten days of the year and also during anniversaries of the church. Many people from the walks of life have been also attracted by the Bindura sacred shrine. They mythical testimonies of the sick being healed and the barren being pregnant after the visit to the shrine. During the period of the ten days most believers visit the place. Most prominent figures such as ambassadors and CEO of companies have been noted to have visited the sacred shrine of Bindura.

#### **2.4 Gender Dimensions in Bindura Sacred Shrine**

Women play an important role in visiting the Bindura Shrine. Most women who visited the Bindura shrine claim to have testimonies. This has however been argued that the women exaggerate and glorify their leader a lot. A responded testified that most women who are barren and those single ladies after visiting the area they exhaust testimonies. The glory that is given to the shrine by single ladies hold water as elders in the church sometimes arrange marriages for their children in church. Biri argues that the Bindura sacred shrine has become the place has become the place where most women grown in faith and it has become a place to retreat and regain their strength.<sup>10</sup> Most women have argued to be seeking 'here and now' solutions. Draper argues that in terms of salvation the Bindura sacred shrine has 'here and now' salvation from traditional rituals.<sup>11</sup> Women in ZAOGA are seen as the backbone of the church as these are dominate interns of contributions as well as attendance numbers at church gatherings.

There is a certain group of women called the gracious women who usually visit the place to intercede for their leader Ezekiel Guti in his spiritual journey. Through this interceding they

believe that if they do God's agenda their problems would be solved also. It can also be argued that women are regarded rumours propagates therefore they tend to lie from their hallucination which they get in this shrine. As a result myths still reign in keeping the Bindura shrine sacred. Ordinary women in church usually go to Bindura sacred so as to seek solutions to their answers. Most marriages when facing problems, women are always the first to seek solutions so as to avoid their marriages from breaking up. Due to traditional belief of witches and wizard most women have fled to sacred shrines so as to seek protection. Therefore the followers of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God church have their belief in the sacred place of Bindura. A lesser number compared to women visit the Bindura sacred shrine. There is an imbalance in the gender visitation at the shrine. The imbalance shows that women are the most influenced in the church. It has been recorded that most of the people that visits this place are leaders for instance deacons, overseers, elders, pastors and bishops. These leaders are advised to visit the Bindura so as for them to remember where the church came from and to avoid power struggle and for them to submit to a certain authority. Looking at most churches the largest population consist of women this is due to reason that most man are not idle but are busy chasing their dreams and money. Therefore it is crystal clear that women have exaggerated the sacredness of the shrine and have given all the praise to their founder instead of God thereby leading to some scholars viewing ZAOGA as a cultic church.

## **2.5 Significance of the Sacred Shrines**

Zimbabwe Assemblies of God has many sacred shrines. The sites have been noted by Biri as bill boards that show all the trials and tribulation that Ezekiel Guti went through as a result making him a living saint. Achunike argues that this has given Guti chances off abuse of authority that no one could question him.<sup>12</sup> The history of Guti through these sacred sites has enhanced his status to such an extent the political calculations of the theologians has

succeeded to a greater extent. Thus most of the properties have been named after him and his family. One pastor argued that the naming of the properties after him and his family was first a way of appreciating him. A good example is Mbuya Dorcas hospital named after Guti's mother because she was well known for hospitality.<sup>13</sup> There are some scholars who beg to differ as they argue that ZAOGA is simply a family business for the Guti's.

The sacred centres are also politically calculated thus the primitive set up of Bindura and Ngaone. Therefore these pilgrimages sites have been argued by Max as another form done by traditional people in going their rural areas so as to perform their rituals.<sup>14</sup> Thus Guti did away with the colonial westernisation and built his status coming from the primitive sites thus becoming a nationalist. The leaders in the church have been urged to visit the sacred shrine so as keep in mind the centralisation of authority and the awards given to Guti, At the cave in the mountain there is a chair which belongs to the founder no one is allowed to sit. Biri argues that probably it might be because of old age of the founder.<sup>15</sup> This however a symbolism of his leadership and authority in the church is. Guti did not want history to repeat itself like he did breaking away with a group of people to form (AOGA). Therefore his visit to Dallas opened his eyes and he made sure that everyone was under him. The ZAOGIANS believed that visiting the Bindura shrine was a way of uniting the people in the ministry. A huge cathedral at Bindura with a thirty six thousand seater is also believed to be politically calculated because the place due to testimonies generated it has attracted huge numbers of people.

The Bindura sacred centre is regarded to be sacred as it has rules and regulations to be followed. The entrance of the people in the shrine is being recorded. The vapostrors who used to occupy that place were dismissed therefore showing the miscalculation of the ZAOGA in possessing the place. No litter is allowed around the premise; hence the upkeep of the place totally turns it to be sacred. The calculated history of the gum tree and the old church which

they took from the Salvation Army is also evidence produced by theologians of ZAOGA in convincing people of how sacred the place is. During anniversaries of ZAOGA and their prayer weeks people travel from all spheres of continents hoping to encounter what their leader encountered .the indigenous people are believed to have a way of convincing the visitors for insane the wearing of regalia which has messages and the face of their follower. This as a result has shown Guti as a genius in making the sacred shrines to be always connected to him and his life experiences.

## **2.6 Other sacred shrines in Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa**

Cottage 593 in High fields is one of the shrines which are intertwined with Bindura in the making of the ZAOGA's history. This cottage is unique from other sacred shrines in ZAOGA which are located in the primitive areas of Zimbabwe. This cottage was initially the home of Ezekiel Guti which has been later turned to be a museum or a pilgrimage for the followers. This place is recorded to have been seen divine manifestation it has been recorded in the history book that once they was an incident when the whole house was there was manifestation in the house when Guti was transfigured. This cottage has become a pilgrimage centre where most of the followers testifies of the prayers answered at that place and also healing which has taken place at that place. Therefore as many believed that Guti saw visions and met God at this place they also believe that they will have an encounter with God at that place. Draper argues that most Pentecostal churches have created sacred places so as to create value to their church. Therefore the cottage sacred shrine has been strongly linked to the sacredness of the Bindura sacred shrine as it was house where he is claimed to have been instructed by the divine to go to Bindura a primitive area.

The Vumba Mountain is also an additional sacred place of the ZAOGA ministries thereby all this adding value to his life experiences in connection with the founding of the ministry. The

most crucial sacred place is the Ngaone the birth place of the founder where he heard the preaching for repentance from his mother in a small round house. The most recognised of them all is the scene sighted at the bush when God showed him the stars just as Abraham in the bible. This therefore has made the sacred shrines to have a stronger influence in the history of the church and the questions remains debatable if these places are really sacred as some has been turned to be tourist attraction where people who visit are now made to pay two United States dollars.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

ZAOGA has many sacred places such as Mutema, Ngaone, Bindura and the cottage in high field. All these sacred places are being questioned if they are really sacred or it was just a political calculation made by the theologians in ZAOGA. This is due to the reason that the responsible authorities in the ministry are avoiding the dividing of the ministry as it is rapidly growing. Sacred has a very big impact in the history of ZAOGA and therefore are considered as pilgrimages. These sites therefore have a good grip of the Zaogian leadership as these sites are clear billboards of the doctrine of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa.



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## **CHAPTER THREE: SACREDNESS OF THE BINDURA SACRED SHRINE**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter is going to focus on the sacredness of the Bindura sacred shrine. It is also going to air out the impacts that it has to the people. These impacts consist of both negative and positive impacts to the locals, to the city, to the nation and to the world at large. It is also going to show its impacts politically socially and economically has to the people.

### **3.2 Socially positive impacts**

The Bindura sacred shrine has not only been of great impact on the religious side but it has also played a crucial role in the social life of the people. As Bindura is regarded as the birth place of the ministry it has been a harbour of many activities benefiting the church, the founder and the country at large. On the social side it has been the root of the channel called the Ezekiel TV where many miracles have been recorded. It has been the root of for health sector e.g. the Mbuya Dorcas Hospital and it has also has been the root for the education sector the Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University (ZEGU) which is situated just next to it the sacred shrine has also been the tourist attraction for pilgrims. The university has also been of great help to the government of Zimbabwe in reducing pressure on government tertiary academic institutions.

### **3.2 Ezekiel Channel**

The channel is of great root from the Bindura sacred shrine. The shrine holds a very good grip in the origins of the church superiority. As the locals in the church ministry claim to have witnessed divine things at the site they have also claimed to have witnessed unbelievable miracles. This place was likened to Israel where there are such encounters of all Christians. The channel is not only for advertisement it has also become a source of entertainment. There

are gospel songs, sermons, inspirational talks and other programs. This have become of great advantage to the viewer's one viewer responded that he uses a kwese satellite therefore even if all the channels are closed for not subscribing he watches the Ezekiel channel which seems to be for free to him. The channel has been of paramount important as it also claimed by the Zaogian followers as a strong weapon of winning souls through the testimonies being paraded on air. Most of the Pentecostal churches adopted this gospel channel for example the Yadah TV. At the PHD ministry there is the holy ground which has attracted thousands of pilgrims to the site. Their channel emphasizes on the greatness of stepping in that place. Testimonies are aired on the television miracles claimed to have happened .Therefore it has also became a source of entertainment to the locals and the world at large. The SCOAN CHURCH in Nigeria also emphasize and attracts thousand s of people to visit the one on one with the pastor so as to receive their miracle. Thereby it has been argued by one responded that the prophet uses a diplomatic way of announcing that distance is not a barrier. All this happens in these gospel channels.<sup>1</sup>

The government also benefits on this as it also taxes these broadcasters. It has been noted that at the Ezekiel channel a fee of two US dollars is charged to the subscribers therefore the government also charge its tax revenue.<sup>2</sup> These channels have also created employment for both in the studio and also at the shrine where tourist come expecting the same experiences that Guti experienced. Therefore, the Ezekiel channel is of great importance to the nation as it is mostly nationalistic driven. They celebrate independence and also during Easter they acknowledge where the church came from. This is done through them lifting the Zimbabwe flag during the Easter conference on their opening day. The Zaogians have also inspired many people to pray for our country and the leadership, this also corresponds to the scandal of inspection that the founder was involved with the former president as he was given land which belonged to someone to build the ZEGU.<sup>4</sup> The channel has also been used in

advertising some really crucial announcement of the nation for instance when they appealed to the people to pray for March 2019 Cyclone Idai which killed people in the Chimanimani District of Zimbabwe and some parts of Mozambique.<sup>5</sup> Therefore the Bindura gave birth to the most crafty and important instrument which has been of great use to the locals, nation and world at large.

### **3.3 Education**

The Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University was also born out of the Bindura sacred shrine.<sup>6</sup> This University is situated in the same area with the shrine. As the church claims that they care for the welfare of the students and citizens in and out of Zimbabwe. They create the university which has been of great help to the nation and the locals. Most of the students ended up not doing their desired programs as most of the institutions in Zimbabwe would be full therefore the university has also been of great help to the people as they now study as the new door was opened to them. The Ezekiel Guti is also a Christian based church just like the Reformed Church University and the AU of the Methodist. This ZEGU University was opened in the year of 2012.

The locals and all followers around the world worked talents so as for the establishment of that university. These talents are adopted by the followers as an instrument of avoiding idleness and also of encouragement of working for themselves making good money. Maxwell notes that it has created a second class of people in the community.<sup>7</sup> Women were encouraged to sell items instead of doing nothing .the founder encouraged them that they shouldn't worry about the economy as their God was a stable God. Therefore many cross boarder traders were manufactured at the ministry. Thus after working the ZEGU talents the church continued working the home talents enhancing themselves one of the congregants gave a testimony of how developed he and his family have become because of the lesson of

talents they had learnt from their follower who claims to have got the vision from his God.<sup>8</sup> Therefore most of the people now have their companies according to one pastor in Gweru through the working of the talents therefore this erases the issue of the economic crisis in the church and the followers abroad. Hence the Bindura sacred shrine gave birth to the university which formulated a lot of empowerment to the followers. The university has also been used as a way of creating employment to the locals therefore this created a society of working class people. A society with people who are busy is a peaceful society as it does away with violence, prostitution theft and witchcraft. Hence this as a result has created a crucial role in the livelihoods of the people in and around the community.

### **3.4 Tourist Attraction Centre**

As the site is believed to be the birth place of the church the Bindura sacred shrine has been the most visited area by the pilgrims. Most followers in the church are encouraged to visit the Bindura sacred shrine as it holds the history of the church which is undiluted, as a result most of the pilgrims they believed to have the same divine manifestation as which are claimed to have been seen by their leader Ezekiel in this place it has been claimed that the founder saw the second coming of Jesus in this place. This place is usually visited in the annual prayer days of the ministry and also during the church anniversaries. The cathedral is believed to be full and the first church which was acquired from the salvation church is said to be filled with people some even would resort to sleep in nearby resting place. Therefore this has been a good result of justifying the Bindura sacred shrine as one of the places which attracts people from all over the world even the most prominent people. One responded noted that he saw an ambassador from an unnamed country visiting the shrine expecting to meet his miracle.

The issue of pilgrimages has not only started in the Bindura sacred shrine only but also from other continents of the world, Moslems visit Mecca annually and all Islam make it a point to

visit the place before they die. Therefore this boost the tourism in the continent as people would be migrating from one place to another. Christians also visit Israel as they believe this is where the roots of their faith is formulated. Hence it is of paramount important to note that not only the Zaogians have these sacred shrines. The UFIC church also have an encounter of tourist as they come for the judgement night. The PHD ministries also has a high rise of tourist from Botswana south Africa Zambia Mozambique and some of the countries all over the world. Ropafadzo a journalist argued that in 2014 Minister of Tourism Muzembi argued that globally they have an encounter of 1, 1 billion arrivals and out, from that 300 million are religious tourist. This therefore made the government to create a religious desk in the parliament that carries the main status of tourism.

The church is regarded as big market for the business, Muzembi argued that the government has to incentivise these shrines as it accumulates revenue to the government. He also gave an example of the thousands found flocking at the waterfalls area of the PHD ministries church and saying if water was to be sold at a dollar per bottle a lot of money will be made.<sup>9</sup> Hence the Bindura sacred shrine is regarded as one of the most visited tourist areas it has been of paramount important to the locals and the world at large. Some of the visitors bring gifts to the local people. Some of the people have now been employed to host some of the visitors thereby it does not only promote the religious sector of the church but it has also empowered the youths and all able bodies citizens to work and have their own income.<sup>9</sup> Therefore it is crystal clear that the Bindura sacred shrine has a great impact to the livelihoods of the people. Though most of the people have argued that it is the political calculation of business formulated by the founder.

### **3.5 Health Sector**

The birth of the church at the shrine has also empowered the construction of the hospital thus the church have been performed healing miracles in Bindura discovered that some situations need medical attention. Therefore the Mbuya Dorcas hospital has been a harbour of all kinds of treatment there is the medical wing and the spiritual wing. This has been made so as to deal with the sicknesses of all spheres of life if the medical side fails the spiritual manner is used as there are pastors appointed to perform such activities.

The hospital is not only of benefit to the sick people but also to the creation of employment to the people such as nurses, doctors, midwives, general cleaners, drivers, cooks, security men, caretakers, administrators and all kinds of jobs in the hospital arena. This as a result brings a thumb of applause to the people and the government at large as they are benefiting although most scholars argue that the hospital is a family business made from the money siphoned from the poor people. There is also a clinic which helps the children and elderly at the orphanage and even the surrounding people benefit from it. Therefore it is crystal clear that the sacred shrine believed to be the root of this whole development did contribute a lot to the people in the country and out of the country.

### **3.6 Migration Influence**

The Bindura sacred shrine has also been one of the key roots which influenced migration. As it is the birth place of the church the people carried the belief of the experiences faced by their founder to the foreign countries in which they went in search of greener pastures. The archives of the church argue that the church abroad was created by the members of the church who went abroad. This has also been of great impact to the people as most of them are encouraged to invest back to their homeland. There are some prophecies noted that the founder of this ministry prophesied that all those in the foreign countries would come back in their home country. The followers believe in this as one of the respondents argued that their

founder talked to God even time immemorial and all the prophecies were fulfilled.<sup>10</sup> Therefore in foreign countries when a ministry is founded they start as a cell group and as it grows big a pastor is sent to that country by the authorities.

A ministry of the family builder was formed as the church is against divorce, these divorcees were argued to have been stimulated by the distance or gap made in families through the issue of Diasporas. Thereof the church now urges the church member to migrate together with their families. Thus the Bindura has been the birth of sound marriages and has cemented the families of people thus for the church to grow well in is made by families. Therefore this has promoted peace and family stability in and out of the country as the shrine bore unity and love. Hence the shrine has been of great positive impact to the church and to most marriages as the fear of divorce has been overcome.

### **3.7 Politically**

The sacred shrine of Bindura has been also argued by Chitando as politically calculate by the church theologians.<sup>10</sup> The founder is captured as a liberator of churches from the missionaries. Thus the history book noted that the missionaries felt threatened by the preaching of Guti thereby giving him an ultimatum of leaving their churches. The white historians always regard the black minority as unlearned and barbaric. Therefore, arguing that a blind man cannot lead another blind man to the well as they will all fall. However, through the history found in the sacred site it has been noted that the founder was brave enough to listen to his God therefore leading to the formation of the church. Therefore politically the founder is regarded as a nationalist who was against the western rule. There is the story of him in the history book when he met the rich white man who wanted to put him under his authority but however the ministry theologians argue that the founder listened to his God who

prohibited him. Therefore leading him to come back home as the son of the soil and teaching self-empowerment to his followers.

The country is against homosexuality which is practiced from other countries. Therefore the people in Zimbabwe who are homosexual are regarded as committing taboo to our culture and buntuism. Therefore one of the pastors Mr Gadzike notes to have criticized the issue of homosexuality.<sup>11</sup> The church regards this as demon possessed as a man is said to marry a woman in the bible and a women to be married to a man not a man to man or woman to woman. This therefore comes to the valuation that the sacred shrine has also played a crucial role in the conserving the constitution of the country thereby leading it to be of great positive impact.

### **3.8 Religiously**

The sacred Shrine has played a crucial role in the religious sector. A shrine is regarded as a holy place where all divine manifestation take place. The sacred place is believed by many Christians to be a place which is saturated by the presence of God therefore them visiting these places it has boosted their belief in the Christianity journey. It has been noted that not only Zaogians visit the place but people from various denominations visit those place to pray. Many testimonies have been witnessed of people who were barren, crippled in all walks of life, and disable being granted their desires of life. Most of the people who visit the Bindura sacred shrine claim that came back with testimonies hence this has been of great impact to the livelihoods of the people who believe though some have argued that these are myths taken for reality. The Bindura sacred shrine has also been regarded as a place of intercession. Thereby the famous prayer of Africa by the founder of the Zaoga ministry was made in it. Hence the Bindura sacred shrine has added a lot of positive impact in the livelihoods of the people and the government.



### **3.9 Negative impacts caused by the shrine**

As the shrine has become one of the most important places to visit it has now become a disadvantage for the poor to visit regularly. The Bindura shrine people now have or pay a sum of two us dollars. Comparing with the rates in this economy it can simply be exchanged to a sum of eight RTGS dollars. Hence some strive to get such an amount, the authority wrote clear billboards forbidding people to enter without reporting to the cathedral. Due to the founder being famous he has lost touch with the poor, thus for instance one respondent has argued that he knew that the founder was in the mountain praying so he wanted to see him but the authorities at the cathedral where he was supposed to report first denied him access to see him. So he claims to have waited for a very long time at the place until he came. Even in churches where the church branches have been expanded to the people deny access to the common people to see the man of God. Thus for instance when he came to Bulawayo some of the church members were encouraged that the ones who will pay more money to have that one on one with the man of God. Thereby many paid but they didn't get the access with the man of God. Thereby the responded claimed in an interview that it was only treachery that happened from the top authorities to the people.<sup>12</sup>

Due to the myths preached over these places many people have died due to their reason of denying medication and resorting to the shrine. Most of the HIV patients during the annual prayer meetings of the year such as ten days shy to tack their medication in fear of being stigmatized by people therefore this has led to a lot of health deterioration and the high rate of deaths. The Shrine has been of negative impact as it has been argued by the vapostori that there were the original holders of that place and they have been displaced by the ZAOGA people.<sup>13</sup> The biggest negative impact is that the ministry from the beginning was formed by the poor village as the church started in the periphery of Bindura hence now in these churches the most recognized and the most people who are put in the high positions are the ones who

are rich and known by the name 'BHOZIWERO' meaning the rich people.<sup>14</sup> This therefore has related to the poor people as cursed .one pastor was preaching that the God of Ezekiel blesses so why are you poor. This shows the class struggle within church.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

The Bindura sacred shrine has both the negative and positive impacts. most testimonies in the church glorifies the place and the founder but however some have viewed the shrine as a church business and also as an instrument used to have a good grip of the so called history of their founder and his experiences

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## **CHAPTER 4: CHALLENGES FACED BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE SHRINE**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter is going to focus on the challenges that the church is facing through the Bindura sacred shrine in making its history. Though there are bad encounters at the shrine which has been covered by the good stories found there. The authorities face a lot of challenges in their day to day running of the shrine which is holding a good grip of the Zaogian history. The church officials face challenges of poor sanitation, theft, deaths, inadequate accommodation for all their guest, vandalism of the art gallery property and stumped. This all will be highlighted in this chapter and the efforts that the authorities has done to solve these challenges.

As the followers and non-followers of the ministry visits the Bindura shrine there is shortage of accommodation and this therefore leads to desecration of the shrine. In an interview with a local pastor in Bulawayo he noted that on Fridays, on very month ends and during the ten days of the first month of the year crowds of people flock to the shrine for prayer and different agendas.<sup>1</sup> The money to book in local lodges thereby they resort to sleep in any place they think is convenient. This place is argued by an overseer explores and massive all nights of deliverance. The propagated testimonies found in this place have attracted a thousands of people to the extent that the cathedral of the thirty thousand sitter no longer contain them. People who visit this place especially during the ten days are people of different classes therefore some do not have that some because of shortage of space they end up sleeping in the first church which ZAOGA bought from the Salvation Army, however this has not been able to solve their problem of accommodation as some end up sleeping outside. Therefore as the church is expanding in all corners of the world the authorities at the sacred

shrine are now failing to handle the pressure that there are getting from the multitudes of believers and non-believers.

As this place is under a mountain this has become of great risk to the people who sleep outside the proper buildings made to shelter people at the shrine as there are vulnerable to snakes and all other crawling creatures this has become of a threat to the church history as the life of the people is at stake. This shrine is not to be a place of any misfortune but rather it is a place of good things only as the founder only talks of divine experiences that he made while at this place therefore lack of accommodation has become the biggest challenge to the authorities at the management of the shrine.

The people who visit these sacred place flock in their numbers a very good example is of the people at Yadah ministries. Most of the people visit the church at Zindoga Waterfalls, Harare this place despite its big land scape and a very big guest house it has failed to accommodate people who come for help and those who go to sleep there for the Sunday service. A case study is of a Mozambique lady who testified that the church authorities had turned her down and she stayed vulnerable for a week at the place without any food or money to go back to her country. These are cases that mostly happen to the vulnerable poor class due to their lack of funds. Even in zaoga the first guest to be accommodate are the prominent ones who are rich there are the ones that the authority recommends that they get the accommodation before every jack and jerry does. This therefore is of great challenge to the authorities as they are left not being able to satisfy everyone who visit the sacred shrine. Due to the land scape given to them by the city council of and the demanding number of people who visit the authorities are facing a great challenge in resolving the challenge.

#### **4.1 Vandalism of the cathedral property**

The shrine has a lot of property such as the cars, bulding, church seats and many more. As there are a lot of people who visit the place the place some are care free most of the seats in the church have lost its shape. Also most has gone beyond repair hence showing that the more people they visit the sacred shrine the more the chairs gets vandalized. This is caused by people who sleep on these seats during their stay at the cathedral .hence the property is left shapeless. Also as this area is visited by all age groups most of the children are naughty to the extent of vandalizing the property of the church. The windows have also been vandalized by the people and has paid back the damage. Thereby with the urge of wanting the state of the art gallery in shape the authorities have carried the burden of repairing the damaged property.

The challenge of repairing damaged property is one of the most sever challenges that the owners face a good example is of the Synagogue Church Of All Nations (SCOAN) in Nigeria when it got damaged and when people got injured. Whole world put its blame on the owner of the church, rumours' where propagated that he killed people so as to use them for his rituals in the vent of him to be more powerful in his ministry. Founder of the church had to syphon from his pocket to compensate on this disaster. Hence the secrecy of the shrine becomes a burden to the founder the sacred place. Most of the negative effects due to vandalism of the sacred shrine becomes a burden to the founder of the church or the ministry.

Pentecostal churches such ZAOGA has a lot of spiritual beliefs and they believed that one has to get saved and get delivered from all the spirits of their families. Therefore some spirits are violent to the extent that they destroy properties around them. Hence this has been one of the factors which has led to the vandalism of property. There is an incident of a lady who had a spirit of witch craft and she was so violent that the ushers couldn't handle her and she broke windows. She got the deliverance but did not pay the window. Biri argues that people

mythicizes the issue of spirituality hence adopting it inside themselves.<sup>3</sup> Thereby the issue of vandalism of property has been one of the greatest which is doing more harm than good to the authorities.

#### **4.2 Stampede**

Stampede has become one of the ill factors that the ministry face at the sacred shrine of Bindura. This is due to the fact that most people believe that if they are touched or prayed for by the man of GOD all will be well. On the 29 of March 2019 all night of miracles was led by Moyounotsva more than 5500 kingdom seekers from Zimbabwe and abroad went to Bindura to experience their healing and miracles. Therefore with this multitude stampede happened because everyone was fighting for his or her breakthrough. This resulted in others being injured or losing consciousness. Stampede has not only happened in ZAOGA church there are cases of stampede at Zindoga, Yadah church of prophet Magaya especially at the overflow bay. Hence the challenge of managing people not to stampede has of little effect to the ministry as they continue to face such challenges.

#### **4.3 Theft**

Due to inadequate security reasons the people who visit the Bindura sacred shrine some have turned to be thieves who loot other people's belongings. One respondent argued that she had left her bags in the cathedral while he was going to the mountain for prayer chain routine. She never suspected that anyone could steal from her but she said that not everyone who come to Bindura is saved because she lost her bags and everything in it including the documents and her money.<sup>4</sup> Therefore theft has been one of the major challenges as it ends up forcing the authorities in compensating the victims with transport money. This has been one of the challenges as the money from the coffers church will end up catering a diverted to unplanned purposes. The Bindura sacred shrine has been one of the incentivized. This as

result has led to leaders facing financial constraint. The locals who are fearless has been one of the major problems as they go nicodemously conning people with all kinds of craftiness. Therefore lack of security for these thousands of people who flock to Bindura has been a major challenge that the authorities are facing.

#### **4.4 Poor sanitation**

The Bindura Mountain is on a cliff therefore the Town Council of Bindura has failed to provide water with pressure. Therefore the area is facing water problems this therefore has been a challenge to the authorities and the multitudes of people as the health rules are left unfulfilled. The shrine is visited by a lot of people therefore this area is expected to have a lot of water so as to be able to keep good sanitation. Due to lack of water people face a lot of challenges such as dehydration and poor sanitations. This thereof has been one of the challenges which the authorities are facing at the Bindura shrine.

Sacred shrine of Bindura has a lot of tourist who visit the place therefore there is need for water to bath, cook and all other errands in the arena. Especially during the ten day fasting most tourist do not do dry fast like what Africans do thereof there is need for a lot of water being provided to the site. The people there need water so as to keep their art in shape. Hence all this has become a challenge to the ordinary people and the authorities at large. Hence those who look at the welfare of the people have had difficulties in managing such a waterless environment. The church has tried to ask for more pressure but it has to be of no avail.

#### **4.5 Health deterioration**

Most of the people who visit the shrine are on medication. Thereby the people who come to the shrine due to the testimonies they hear they have become resistant to the medication they



are given at the hospitals. This therefore has disturbed their health as it leads to deterioration of health. Lack of understanding has led to immature deaths as they are not even sure if the sacred place is sacred for real or they are just myths or false testimonies propagated for the church to have a good grip on its history.<sup>6</sup> This thereby has been another serious challenge others have had encounters of postponing to take their medication on diseases such as blood pressure, asthma, diabetes and HIV. Most of the people end up collapsing as they would have forgotten to take correct precautions of their health. As a result all this has led to deaths at or after the visit to the sacred shrine.

Conclusively the Bindura sacred shrine authorities seem to be beaming on the outside But in the insight they are facing a lot of challenges in the day to day running of the sacred shrine such as deaths, stumped, poor sanitation and theft due to lack of security.

## END NOTES

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## CONCLUSION

The Bindura sacred shrine which is the billboard for the Zimbabwe Assemblies of GOD Africa has played a crucial role in the preserving its history. ZAOGA as one of the oldest Pentecostal independent churches has expanded its branches worldwide. This is due to the history propagated from its sacred places. These places are all in the periphery where caves bushes and mountains were found. The founder of the ministry is argued to have had encounters with God hence as resulting in these place being regarded as sacred as sacred places where the only places where divine manifestation where found.

The ministry has its roots from the Bindura shrine. This shrine is regarded as the birth place of the ministry in 1960. Therefore the case understudy was to examine if this place is really sacred or it was just a political calculation from the leader who has been regarded as a breakaway from the AFM church due to quest of power. The ZAOGA ministry has published its archives which has the testimonies of the sacredness of the place and the encounters that the founder did with his God. This however has come to a view that the sacred shrine of Bindura has been use as an instrument for its growth. The book of remembrance which is read more often in the church clearly clarifies that with the history provided at the shrine the church should not have any division or uprisings because the founder is the one who found the ministry with his God in the cave in Bindura.

The researcher went on to explore on the effectiveness of the shrine. Negative and positive impacts have been contributed by the shrine. On the socio-economy of the ministry the church has managed to build a second class citizen by the teaching of talents. The Bindura sacred shrine has become a hub of tourist attraction .People all over the world visit as pilgrims. Therefore funds are extracted by both the government and the church. The sacred shrine has not been only used as an instrument in having a good grip of the ministry's history

but it has also been used as a method of acquiring funds from the people as thousands of people flock to the shrine. The shrine has got to employ the locals in the management of the shrine.

A shrine is believed to have rules and regulations that guide them, therefore the Bindura sacred shrine also has rules and regulation that accompanies it. People are not allowed to enter the premises without consulting the cathedral officials. At the cave also there is a chair that no one is allowed to sit at. Hence all these rules has made the place to be of more value. Sacred shrines are also believed of having many mysterious things happening around therefore the Bindura sacred shrine has had also encounters of angels and mysterious thing happening at the site. It has been noted that during Guti's preaching angels were seen by the local people standing next to him, hence all these testimonies have made the place to be sacred and attracting pilgrims.

Spiritually the followers and non-followers of Guti have their belief at the shrine. They have visited the place during their anniversaries, exposé, ten day prayer and their Friday all nights believing for their miracles and deliverance from evil spirits. Some have also come expecting to experience the experiences that their founder had. The poor people have been disadvantaged at the places as the founder has now lost contact with them thereby analysing that in ZAOGA poverty is a sign of being cursed because the God in ZAOGA is said to be a blessing of mankind just like what he did to Abraham in the bible.

Conclusively, the sacred shrine of Bindura accordance to the founder historical experiences it has been used as a tool in parading the supremacy of the founder as some have called him a living saint. The shrine has also attracted a lot of people who come expecting to be helped from all kinds of troubles. Therefore the testimonies propagated have covered all the ills and

have manufactured the secrecy of the shrine which is argued to stay for generations and generations

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