

MISSION TO THE MAKUA

Cultivating Christian Communities

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A church that cries, "Uncle!"



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Towering at 6'10" the Smith boys stroll through the house

Just how different are the Makua people from us? This is a question that affects our daily life and ministry here in Mozambique. So many times we catch ourselves saying, "Why would they do it like that?" or "That just doesn't make sense!". So now we extend a brief invitation to enter the context in which we live.

The Makua as a people fall into a group that anthropologists call matrilineal. In laymen's terms it means that Makua people trace their family lineage through their mother instead of their father. What is the significance of this?

Westerners would say a family is made up of the father, mother and children but for the Makua all the relatives on the mother's side constitute a family. You could be a cousin three times removed and the Makua term would still be translated brother or sister.



Because the mother's family is the one they claim and trace their lineage through, this means that when a Makua boy (let's call him Antonio) marries a Makua girl (Maria) they will move close to Maria's family. Antonio will keep the name of his mother's clan while Maria will do the same with her mother's name. It also means their children will belong to her extended family and not to Antonio, should something happen to Maria.

Young Antonio is still the "head" of the house in terms of caring for Maria and the kids. But when big decisions come their way it is Maria's oldest uncle (on her mother's side of course) that will decide. In fact, the decision for young Maria to marry at all was that of her uncle to make. Not only that but Maria's uncle can tell them whether or not to divorce, claim ownership over their things (even a house), and give any type of advice to the young couple which they should follow. The uncle's word is law. Put another way, Maria's relationship with her uncle is more important than her relationship to Antonio or even her own father.

The implications of the matrilineal culture and how it affects our ministry is not entirely clear. In stark contrast to many western nations it is easier to bring young Makua men into the church than the women. It seem like we will need to reach the women and their uncles in order to make a great impact in the society for Christ.

This has likely left your head swimming and made you very glad that it was us and not you that moved to Mozambique. There are many other implications that we are only now discovering and likely a host of others we will discover in the years to come. Just know that our heads are constantly dunked in the ocean of culture here among the Makua. We are grateful to the Lord for letting us come up for air in moments of clarity only to be dunked again!



“[She] Treasured all these things in her heart...”



Upon our return to the Muahivire Church in Nampula they approached us with the desire to have a special time of blessing for Andrew. We arranged to have snacks and a time of fellowship together.

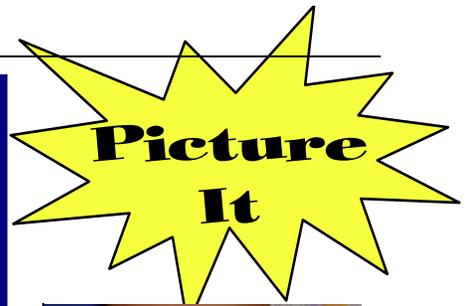
I treasure several things from this time of blessing. Several men and women prayed over Andrew. One young man shared scriptures about how children are a blessing from the Lord. The church presented our family with three gifts that would have been quite expensive for them. Finally, the whole church filed past our family shaking our hands and kissing us to “greet” Andrew and congratulate us. During this time one old lady took Andrew and began dancing around with him to the beat of the song everyone was singing.

This whole event truly was a blessing to us. The church showered us with love and we will treasure this for many years to come.



ON OUR PRAYER LIST

- **Continue to pray for open doors to return to live and work in Montepuez (and for patience and strength as we work with the government)**
- Health on the team, especially for the children
- Team unity and closeness
- The Westerholms and Howells as they prepare to return to the U.S.
- Safe delivery of the new Holton baby
- Perseverance and clarity for language and culture learning
- That God would use our team to bless the churches and other Makua people while here in Nampula



Andrew gives a big smile for the camera during his bath.



Luke enjoys a small plot of grass by the house we are renting.



Our family in Nacala during our team retreat in April.



Andrew naps on our “couch”.