

**Institute of Anthropological and Spatial Studies - Scientific Research Centre  
Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts**

presents

**CHARISMATA:  
FROM BUSH SPIRIT TO HOLY SPIRIT**

Ambonwari village, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea, has encountered significant social and cultural changes over the last 10 years. On 4 December 1994 a statue of Virgin Mary was brought to the villages of Amboin Subdistrict. That was the time, as Ambonwari say, when the Holy Spirit entered their village and their bodies. People were falling into trance and beginning to speak in tongues. Bob Kanjik Anjapi, a big man and the most powerful traditional leader of the village, died a few years later. At the beginning of the new millennium the most experienced and influential traditional healer, Tobias Yangi Akawi, was also dead as was Bob's brother, Andrew Andari Anjapi, a specialist in bamboo divination. Ambonwari spirits – forest and water spirits, spirits from the men's houses and spirits of the dead – were blamed for all past sicknesses and deaths, for underdevelopment of the village, for persisting hostile relationships with their neighbours, and for the sealing of their cosmological life-world from the external world. When Ambonwari people decided to abandon their spirits and embrace God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit they simultaneously decided to abandon their customary rituals (in which spirits played the central part) and introduce new ones pertaining to Catholic charismatics. Women too became prominently involved in trance, prophecy, and speaking in tongues. By the end of 2003, Ambonwari had removed the most secret spirit-objects (spirit-crocodiles, slit-drums, flutes) from their men's houses, which were either left to decay or became meeting places accessible to everyone, including women and children. Besides ordinary Roman Catholic mass on Sunday charismatics began to organize sessions in private houses three times a week.



In March 2005, Ambonwari charismatic leaders began to talk about the necessity of changing 'boring' Sunday mass with a more lively service of the Charismatic Church.

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