

**THE NECESSITY OF THE SECOND PHASE OF
EVANGELIZATION AMONG VAMBUNZA IN THE BUNYA
AREA OF THE NORTHEASTERN PARTS OF NAMIBIA**

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ABSTRACT: “THE NECESSITY OF THE SECOND PHASE OF EVANGELIZATION AMONG VAMBUNZA IN THE BUNYA AREA OF THE NORTHEASTERN PARTS OF NAMIBIA”

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In this study we address the issue of the necessity of the second phase of evangelization among Vambunza people in the Mbunza area. Mbunza is an area in the Northeastern parts of Namibia. The majority of people living there are called Vambunza. The Mission Christianity has left the local people with unclear consciences. There is a tension between Christianity and culture. This is due to the fact that many cultural and traditional objects were never taken as a starting point of evangelization among the people of this area.

This study aims at showing that the Vambunza culture and tradition, imperfect as they are, are the manifestation and revelation of the presence of God among them. In this study some concepts will be suggested and incorporated in re-evangelizing them. The study aims at showing that there are many Christian values which could be explained easily by deriving examples from Mbunza tradition and culture, which was not the case in the first evangelization.

This is an attempt to make the Church like a mirror in which Vambunza see themselves and recognize their true face and feel completely at home in their Christian faith. It is suggested that the Vambunza should appreciate being Christians, while not rejecting their African religious and cultural

roots. The study suggests that the Vambunza should own Christianity in such a way that it becomes a genuine answer to the totality of the way of their life. Therefore, there is an urgent need to reconcile the Gospel and the Vambunza culture so that Christianity can become an inculturated part and parcel of their lives.

The study will also underline new challenges, which would cause new methods and approaches of evangelization in the same area. The Church cannot simply continue with the same methods and approaches that they used 72 years ago when the mission station was founded. This study will challenge people to study more about Vambunza and to know more about their needs, beliefs, ethics and aspirations. The study will show the importance of Vambunza oral literature and oral tradition, which can help them to preach the Gospel within their own context as African Christians.

This argument is developed and supported by five chapters.

Chapter 1 will give background information about the study. This includes stating the purpose of the study, reasons for considering the study important, statement of the problem, the scope and limitations of the study. Chapter 2 shall deal with the Vambunza: their cultural, social and political life. Chapter 3 will be on the impact of Christianity among the Vambunza: both positive and negative ones. Chapter 4 is about the traditional and cultural concepts to be utilized in re-evangelization for a second phase of evangelization. Chapter 5 shall provide the conclusions and summary of the study.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis, entitled *The necessity of the second phase of evangelization among Vambunza in the Bunya area of the Northeastern parts of Namibia*, is a true reflection of my own research, and has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution of higher learning.

.....
Innocent Mojau Phangwa

Windhoek, Namibia

16 January 2002

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the Vambunza people whose culture and tradition are partial revelation and manifestation of the presence of God among them.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The theological problem of inculturation is centered on the relationship between culture and Christian Revelation. It is about the encounter of two apparently different, if not opposed, “texts”: culture and Gospel and what happens or should happen during this encounter. It is my contention that Christianity, in particular the Roman Catholic Church, has still a long way to go before it can understand culture in all its dimensions, including its importance for pastoral and mission theology, and accept it without reservation as already a disclosure of the God of Salvation, despite the obscurity and the limitations this disclosure may have. Now, if the saving God discloses himself in culture, we ought to accept that each culture is in some way or another, a means of Salvation. At least, we have to admit that culture and Christian Revelation cannot be completely foreign to each other. This should be the reason why inculturation, i.e. the penetration of culture by the Gospel, is not only possible but also necessary.

As an African missionary who worked for seven years in the Roman Catholic Mission Bunya, in Rundu Vicariate, the issue of a dialogue between Christianity and culture developed in me an academic interest and curiosity. I suspected a big gap between Christianity and Mbunza culture. The Vambunza lived with unclear consciences on issues, which concern their social, cultural and political life in relation to Christianity.

There are so many questions, which creep in their life, which remain unanswered. I decided to make a positive contribution by lodging a study (mini thesis) focusing on the importance of Mbunza culture in evangelizing them. The introduction will deal with the background, purpose and importance, methodology followed, scope and limitations of the study and the chapter plan.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Church as an institute needs to serve people in their cultural context, according to the demands of the time. This is due to the fact that her mission is for the people and among the people. The Church's aim and task is to prepare people to gain salvation. In order to achieve this aim she needs to be in the world and be part of this world, though not of this world (John 8:23). The world that the Church serves is dynamic and historical and therefore, she needs also to be dynamic, in order to serve the people efficiently.

In Namibia the Roman Catholic Church has existed for 106 years. There are so many achievements and good works she has done in education, health, social development and many other areas of life (Beris 1996:380). However the missionaries who brought the Gospel together with these developments came with their own cultures and traditions from their own countries of origin. The Christian message was completely enrobed in the

European cultures of a century ago. This makes the very urgent task of inculturation here very difficult.

In this study we address the issue of the necessity of the second phase of evangelization among the Vambunza. Mbunza is an area in the northeastern parts of Namibia. The majority of people living there are called Vambunza. Mission Christianity has dominated this area like many other areas in Africa and such Christianity does not have deep roots. This is due to the fact that many cultural and traditional values and practices were never taken as a starting point of evangelization among the people of this area.

It is in and through cultural and traditional values and practices that Christianity can have roots among them. The second phase of evangelization by the Roman Catholic Church is meant to incorporate cultural and traditional values in evangelizing people. Therefore, there is an urgent need to reconcile the Gospel and cultures of the people so that Christianity can become an inculturated part and parcel of their lives. Put differently, it is my surmise that Vambunza do not yet own Christianity. It is not yet Vambunza property. Bediako (1997:60) says that Christianity becomes an African property when it becomes a genuine answer to African religiousness in African life. The Vambunza will own Christianity when it becomes a genuine answer to the totality of the way of life of the Vambunza. I accept the idea of Bediako (1997:204) in saying that if Christianity becomes people's property it should confer a freedom from an inner dependence on European token of graces or favor. Gibson et al; (1981:94) expressed the same idea that once the people own

Christianity it sets them free from fear. When it becomes Vambunza property Christianity should set Vambunza free from “fear of witchcraft and power of darkness,” according to Gibson. It becomes Vambunza property once it unwrapped the Western swaddling clothes in which it came to Africa. A big challenge in this area is to go beyond the rules and regulations of the Western Theology to a complete transformation of the Gospel in African context Healey (1996:18). There is no way in which Christianity can be sustained in this area unless it is married with the culture and traditions of the Vambunza. On its own it cannot exist.

1.2 THE PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

This study proposes ways in which Vambunza may deepen their faith by highlighting the importance of the culture and tradition as a starting point of evangelization among them. This can be achieved by emphasizing the importance of an African culture and tradition that brings African values, such as community, hospitality, the living dead, patient endurance in adversity and holistic healing Healey (1996:20).

This was not the case when evangelization started 72 years ago among the Vambunza. Most of the people, due to what Christianity taught them, regarded their culture as inferior, useless and even sinful. This study intends to help them to see their culture with different eyes and approaches. The study attempts to help the Vambunza to appreciate their

culture, the role and importance of which they have doubted since the introduction and grounding of Christianity. Christianity forbade them certain aspects of their culture and tradition. There was no dialogue because they were made to accept blindly what Christianity taught them. Even Christian values, which could be explained easily by deriving examples from Mbunza tradition and culture, were neglected and ignored.

This study will suggest that the Vambunza should appreciate being Christians, while not rejecting their African religious and cultural roots. Those who did not see the richness of their culture because of the way it was humiliated will hopefully begin to appreciate it. This study is an attempt to make the Church like a mirror in which Vambunza see themselves and recognize their true face and feel completely at home in their Christian faith.

In supporting the idea of feeling at home, Healey (1996:19) says that feeling “ at home ” is an important metaphor of inculturation. Genuine inculturation goes far beyond translation and adaptation models of contextualization to get into the heart and soul of the African people. The priority is to be an African Christian rather than a Christian African Healey (1996:19).

The study will try to show that Vambunza culture and tradition are the revelation of God. Vambunza acknowledge the presence of God in any actual human activity. The saving God of revelation has been present to all human activities since the beginning of the world, even after what we call the fall. These human activities have their shortcomings, they err, but just

the same God is there, his Spirit works in them and pursues the original and genuine Plan of God. Having said these in favor of Vambunza culture, I am not prepared to affirm, on the other hand that Vambunza culture is self-sufficient for the full disclosure of the God of salvation.

The study will try to show that culture, any culture, witnesses to God's actions, manifests his will, which he can be reached in some way through it. I acknowledge the fact that God's full manifestation and even for being able to identify him specifically as the saving God, we need the Christian revelation as the Bible presents it, especially in the New Testament.

In this study we shall see that Vambunza culture is not completely foreign to Christian Revelation. On the contrary, it is already a preparation for the acceptance of the Christian proclamation, the difficulty being how to present that message in a way that it may incarnate itself in culture.

It is hoped that the study will give a new theology, with new symbols, insights, emphases on some practices and some points of doctrine. This is due to the fact that accepting culture without reservation in the proclamation of the Gospel calls for the birth of a multiplicity of theologies. It is my contention that a particular culture implies a distinct and complete system or set of symbols different from that used by the Bible. The new theology should not contradict the other ones, but it is different. To be different, to use another system of symbols is not necessarily to contradict another explanation which uses its own set of symbols. Diversity is compatible with profound unity.

The study will also underline new challenges, which would cause new methods and approaches of evangelization in the same area. The Church cannot simply continue with the same methods and approaches that they used 72 years ago when the mission station was founded. This study will challenge people to study more about Vambunza and to know more about their needs, beliefs, ethics and aspirations. The study will show the importance of Vambunza oral literature and oral traditions, which can help them to preach the Gospel within their own context as African Christians.

The study is important for the mission of the Church and for understanding the impact of and the dynamism of changing evangelizing practices over long periods of time. This study will be based on the responses expressed by and needs of people. The study will suggest how the Church can continue bearing witness to the Gospel and accommodate Mbunza culture in its future activities. This will help the Church to be relevant to the lived experiences of believers.

1.3 THE METHODOLOGY TO BE FOLLOWED

Interviews will be done in seeking information on this topic. All these interviews will be done in Rugwangali. Since the aim of this project is to help people to discover where they are with their Christian faith and also to find different ways to help them to deepen Christianity among themselves, I shall use both structured and unstructured interviews. I shall use

structured methods with the aim of reaching a kind of consensus. I plan to collect some general data. Unstructured interviews will be done mainly among the senior citizens that cannot reach the centers that will be selected. Since Bunya Mission is big, it is divided into 28 small communities called outstations. It is not possible to interview everyone in this area and therefore the following method will be followed in the interviews:

The interviews will be conducted among the communities of the following mission centers: Sambusu centre, Gcagcawe centre and Gcugcuma centre.

- ❑ Sambusu centre is made up of 14 communities with more than 200 people in each community. The communities are Sambusu RC, Karangana RC, Halili RC, Pomba RC, Siya RC, Gcamade RC, Ruuga RC, Matende RC, Sivara RC, Kasivi RC, Ntara RC, Muveve RC, Haisisira RC, and Mayenzere RC. There is a group of 50 people who form a coordinating committee for the smooth running of the health, social, economy and spiritual affairs of these communities. The total number of Catholic Christians in this centre is 2,800. The centre will be divided into four sub-centers to make it easier to meet people. Each sub-centre will have 700 people who will be represented by 63 people. The centers are Gcamade R.C., Sambusu R.C., Kasivi R.C. and Mayenzere.

- ❑ Gcagcawe centre consists of 7 communities with fewer than 100 in each community. The communities are Gcagcawe RC, Gcangcu RC, Naucova RC, Sau RC, Davare RC, Etenderera RC, Mutorwa RC and Katope RC. Forty (40) people help run this centre. The total number of Christians in this area is 700. This centre will have 100 people to represent it in this study.

- ❑ Gcugcuma centre is 70km from Sambusu centre, and 50km from Gcagcawe centre. It also has 7 communities of 70 or less people in each community. 35 people represent it. The centre has 490 Christians altogether. 70 people will represent it.

1.4 SCOPE AND LIMITATION

The thesis serves as a limited introductory literature and resource about the necessity of evangelization among Vambunza. The thesis is in no way a comprehensive study on the Vambunza and their religion and culture. It is against this background that structured interviews and a questionnaire to collect more information from the Vambunza, including the Church and government officials and traditional leaders, will be done. It should be strongly noted that we shall make use of interviews and will consult written information and books less, and will refer to such books only when it is most needed. It should be also strongly noted that the study focuses only on some similarities between the Vambunza traditional and cultural concepts and Christian concepts. But the study is not a comparative study between the two religions.

The study will confine itself to the mission work of the Roman Catholic Church in Namibia among the Vambunza during the period 1929 to 2000. Despite the limitations, it is hoped that this first academic study on the role of the missionary activities among the Vambunza, will serve as a stimulus for further reflection, planning, structuring and action for both the Namibian Churches and any other relevant authorities.

1.5 CHAPTER PLAN

After the first chapter in which the background, purpose and importance, scope and limitations, methodology of the study are outlined.

The second chapter the thesis will focus on who the Vambunza are: their cultural, social and political life. It is not a full presentation of their history, just a short background of who they are.

Chapter three will concentrate on the impact of Christianity among the Vambunza: both positive and negative ones.

Chapter four will concentrate on the traditional and cultural concepts to be utilized in re-evangelization for a second phase of evangelization

Chapter five will provide the conclusions and summary of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

THE VAMBUNZA

2.1 CHIEFTAINSHIP

It has been very hard to get proper information from the royal family. Those who are able to furnish information are few. I found Nehova, the Mother of two Chiefs: Homba Leevi Hakusembe and Homba Frans Muronga. Unfortunately even Nehova herself could not manage to give much information about the former chiefs and how they succeeded one another. She only remembered a few names of the people during her time. Another person interviewed was Mr. Haiyengo E. Sigweda, the Headman and the chief's adviser. He grew up in the royal family himself and therefore had been working closely with four chiefs (Homba Muduni, Homba Kasiki, Homba Leevi Hakusembe and Homba Franz Haingura) plus the present one. He gave information regarding the royal family and succession of chiefs. In this area he is seen as the important source of information and a legend on the royal family's affairs. He presented the same history to the people present for the official inauguration of the new chief of Mbunza, Alfons Kaundu on the 13 October 2001 at Kapako Tribal Offices.

The *uhompa* (chieftainship) of the Vambunza originated in the Kwangali area called Makuzu where the entire royal family stayed together. They Vambunza are originally from *Emanya lyankumbi*¹. According to Haiyengo Sikweda, both Kavangos and Ovambos in their different tribal groups came from the same source, *Emanya Lyankumbi*. According to him legend has it that after *Karunga* (God) created everything he assembled them in one place. The reason is that on that stone there were different marks from animals, birds and people. As to how God created everything, he said they were not told but he thinks that after God created everything in heaven, he sent and placed it at Emanya lyankumbi. This is a place where all different tribes lived and they were not yet divided into tribal groups at that time. They were just one group. This Emanya lyankumbi is situated between Botswana and Zimbabwe.

It is commonly held that they had to leave that place since it could not accommodate all of them together with their cows. They found cows grazing while they were hunting. One of the men suggested that it was better not to kill them but take them home. The cows attracted them by their gentleness and their beauty and they decided not to kill them but to rear them. These cows multiplied quickly and hence had more than enough to eat. They brought these cows from Emanya lyankumbi. From Emanya lyankumbi they went to Makuzu, in the Kwangali area. Some say that other ethnic groups did not reach the Kwangali area, and remained along the way. Though they believe that other tribes (Sambyu, Gciriku and Mbukushu) in Kavango have the same origin, other sources state otherwise. This is proved by the history of Sambyu. According to their oral

¹ This is a stone where they originated. It is in between Botswana and Zimbabwe.

traditions, the Sambyu people were originally hunters living in the vicinity of the Mashi (Kwandu) river in southwestern Zambia. They moved from there to Okavango.

When they reached the Okavango they explored westward along the river until they met the chief of the Mbundza people in the vicinity of Mupini on the south bank of the river. Their reception by the Mbunza was friendly, and from these people the Sambyu bought a valley in which they settled and where they lived chiefly on fish and game (Gibson et al; 1981: 99). They left this area when the Mbundza chief insulted them and they found a place at the site of present day Uvungu-Vungu.

Regarding the Sambyu and other tribes in Kavango nothing is mentioned about emanya lyankumbi and Makuzu as is the case with Kwangali and Vambunza. Only the Vambunza, the Vawovambo and the Vakwangali went together to the Kwangali area, Makuzu and they were under the same leadership. That is why when they praise themselves, both Vakwangali and the Vambunza call themselves “ *Vakwangali vaKapango gaMukuve, wokomakuzu gamutenda, wokomanyandi ganguranene, komupumpuru naMpepo, komutima nakatanga*”.² (They praise their origin by mentioning the names of their former leaders).

How they divided into their ethnic groups is still out because they do not know. Their parents knew their history from Hompa Kapango, the young one, but not Kapango the Great as they called her. What they could still

² This praise is mentioning the names of their Leaders in succession

remember was that Hompa Kapango the Great had her sister Mate. They came together from Emany Lyankumbi to Makuzu, in Kwangali. The two sisters separated due to two main reasons: first, both had sons who did not understand each other, so their parents had to separate. Secondly, Kapango the Great had many cows, which she did not want to share with her sister who had none. As to when did they separate? Nobody knew. Who took the leadership of the Vambunza when they separated? They do not know as well. Apparently in the year 1880 the Vambunza were ruled by the queen “ Kapongo” (Gibson et al; 1981:83), very likely the same Capango whom Paiva Couceiro (Ibid) found as the head of the tribe in 1890 and describes as an old woman. She bore the name of the legendary founder of the Vambunza who, according to Kampungu (1966:396), lived about 1600. As to whether there were two Kapangos or not, there is no clear answer. There is a lot of confusion on this point. But personally I believe that there were two, Kapango the great, the sister of Mate, who ruled both the Vambunza and the Vakwangali till they separated later. This means that the founder of the Vambunza is the one who lived about 1600, and she cannot be the Kapango the great. I still need more information and clarity on this issue.

It is said that Kapango the second , the founder of the Vambunza came to Sofwe, opposite Bunya Mission, in Angola, just three kilometers from Bunya Mission. People have just left the place year 2001 because of war between the Angolan Government Forces and UNITA³. Kapango the second married Haikera and they had two daughters; Naita, Kalira and

³ It means Uniao Nacional da independencia Total de Angola (United National Independence Total of Angola).

two sons, Nampadi and Karupu. Kampungu (1966:399) says that Hompa Nampadi followed Hompa Kapango the second in 1903 while Hompa Karupu followed Nampadi. His own brother Karupu killed Hompa Nampadi. Nampadi was a dictator, who took people's property by force and he abused people immensely. He was guilty of many atrocities and eventually people hated him so much that they proposed to put his own brother Karupu on his throne but Nampadi refused.

The battle between the two brothers broke out and Karupu went to the Kwambis, who were in Kwangali, (while other Kwambis were in Ovamboland) asked for assistance to fight his brother, Nampadi. He fought and killed him at Sofwe. Then he succeeded him on the throne.

Apparently Nampadi had Portuguese friends who used to share the natural resources with him and when they passed Sofwe on their way to Kalai, opposite Rundu town, they did not find Karupu the estranged brother. They informed his workers about their plan to kill him. Karupu came to Dudu, fleeing the Portuguese who wanted to avenge the death of their friend. It was the same Hompa Karupu who transferred the "Mbara", palace, from Sofwe to Dudu, which is three kilometers from Bunya Mission, and on Namibian soil. His nephew, Mburu, poisoned Hompa Karupu. His nephew was in good terms with the late Hompa Nampadi who was killed by Karupu. Then Hompa Muduni followed him. He also transferred *the Mbara*⁴ to Kapako. He went together with Kalira. But it is said that Kalira stayed at Sigoni while Hompa Muduni went to stay at Kapako. When Hompa Muduni died in 1940, Hompa Kasiki his own brother succeeded him.

⁴ Means a royal palace where a chief stays.

After Hompa Kasiki's death, Elizabeth Nepemba, his own sister followed him as regent. The plan was that she should lead the Vambunza while the Hompa-elect Leevi Hakusembe, was still at school in Ovamboland. Indeed it happened that , Hompa Leevi took over from his grandmother after his studies. Hompa Leevi ruled for more than twenty years and after his death his own brother Frans Haingura Muronga followed him. Hompas Leevi and Frans are the sons of Nehova (still alive at Kapako). I was fortunate to meet him (Hompa Frans) during his solemn inauguration ceremony in 1998 at Kapako Tribal Offices. He died in 2001. His successor Hompa Alfons Kaundu was inaugurated on 13 October 2001 at Kapako Tribal Offices with a big crowd in attendance.

Chieftainship is seen as very important in this culture. It plays a very important role. A chief (Hompa) is seen as the representative of God (Karunga) among them. He or she is an ambassador of Karunga. The chief is considered a demi-god, for he or she serves as the intermediary through whom appeals are made to the royal ancestors and to Karunga, the high god (Gibson et al; 1981:92). He / she has to see to it that everything runs well in his area. Therefore it is said that if the relations with the Karunga are not good, the area will always have difficulties. He / she is forced to maintain a good relationship with the other world in order to ensure rain, fertility of the land and its inhabitants, success in hunting and fishing, safety and booty in war (Ibid: 92). A weak chief would either be replaced by electing a new one or by killing him / her because he is not fit for the office. He or she is seen as a burden to the tribe and seen as the source of all problems in the tribe. The people themselves give enough

support to strengthen him / her to fulfill his / her duties. It is against this background that in assuming the duties a *nganga*⁵ should be consulted to make sure that he is strengthened. To show his strength a new chief, upon succeeding to power, would kill an ox and one of his subjects during a special dance, traditional dance (*kambembe*) (ibid:92).

2.2 CLIMATE

There is a long dry season with a short rainy season from November to March. On average there has been 487,7-mm rain/year in the last ten years. The temperature ranges approximately between 0 and 38 degrees Celsius. The vegetation is that of dry Savannah. Thanks to the Kavango river there is still grass and a lot of trees.

2.3 POPULATION

Kavango has one of the fastest growing regional populations in Namibia, with an estimated 150,000 people (UNFPA: 1995). It constitutes about 10 per cent of the national population. Seventy per cent of the people live in rural areas (UNFPA :1995).

⁵ Means a traditional doctor.

It is estimated that the total population in the Bunya area is 35,000. People live in villages and smaller settlements. People belong to different tribes: the major tribes being the Vambunza and the Kwangali who are to be estimated eighty per cent, Others are San, Tjokwe, Nyemba, Simbundu and Owambo. Each tribe speaks its own language, except the Vambunza and the Kwangali who speak the same language Rukwangali. It is said that the Vambunza spoke their own language but it got lost. Few people speak the Namibian national language English.

2.4 SOCIAL LIFE

We have seen that the tribe has its chief who is called Homba. There is a headman in every village. Furthermore, community leaders and elders are found in different villages. The majority of people are subsistence farmers who cultivate millet, maize and sorghum. Most of them also raise cattle, goats, sheep and chicken. Only the poorest (about 25%) do not have any source of meat. The animals are also used for trading and ploughing the fields. There is no paid employment, therefore any money. Some men work in the mines, diamond industries and public services in Rundu, Windhoek, Swakopmund, Oranjemund or Walvisbay and other places. Unemployment is very rife in the area.

There are a lot of health problems. Firstly seventy five per cent (75%) of the total population in this area depends on water from the Kavango River, while those in the bush get clean water from bore holes which the government has provided. Water from the Kavango River is used for different purposes like drinking, washing and cleaning and is not clean. This makes their life very difficult. Some try to boil the water for drinking purposes while others have just given up find it hard to cook it. The second health problem is malnutrition, which is caused by object poverty. There are families, which spend days without food. They depend sorely on their neighbors who are employed and the extended family with their limited income. This year 2001 Bunya clinic attended a significant number of patients with malnutrition and related diseases. The third health problem is Malaria. It is common mostly during summer when it rains. Other diseases like tuberculosis, diarrhea, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS cause havoc on health. There are few cases of mental illnesses.

2.5 EDUCATION

Education is accessible to everyone. In the remote bush areas, schools only go up to grade 2, others up to grade 4,6,8 and 9. Only one school goes up to grade 10. No school goes up to grade 12, which is needed for university entrance. The drop out rate at school is very high even after grade one and two it is about 20%. Up to 15% of the girls leave school due to pregnancy. Some children leave school without any reason. There is

lack of motivation among the Vambunza in general due to problems of poverty where it becomes difficult to further one's studies after matric. It is also important to note that facilities in most schools in this area are not sufficient. Teaching materials are often not adequate for learners. Though the government is trying hard to build classrooms some schools do not have adequate classrooms for all the learners. In some areas the lessons are still done outside under the trees. Local communities have tried to build additional classrooms from grass but this is just for temporary use because in rainy season they do not last. There is a big problem of furniture and other equipment.

2.6 RELIGION

The majority are Catholics (75%). Lutherans are about 20% and the other 5% belong to other religions. In my investigation I concluded that all people in this area are deeply religious and that religion do play central role in all their daily activities. Christianity is firmly established and the Church should continue bearing witness to the Gospel and accommodate Mbunza culture in its future activities.

2.7 PREGNANCY AND CHILD BIRTH

Young girls were formerly married at the a very early age without an elaborate puberty ceremony. The Vambunza do not accept abortion. It was considered a great misfortune. Premarital sex and related practices were strictly discouraged. They would try by all means possible to prevent anything that jeopardizes life. The pregnant woman would be encouraged to abstain from all those things, which might put the life of the fetus in danger. Albinos were usually considered as an indication of abnormalities in the process of life. When one gave birth to an albino, it was posed as a big question mark. This sometimes led to the husband divorcing his wife. In general, the albinos were not accepted like any ordinary children. Gibson et al; (1981:84) says that albinos were usually put to death by burial in a termite mound.

The Vambunza did not accept complications in giving birth. Abnormalities in birth were considered a great misfortune. For them a child should be born normally. A normal birth indicates the presence of the ancestors who are involved in every event of people's life. Gibson et al; (1981:84) says that a deformed child was considered a bad omen and, according to the severity of the deformity, was either allowed to live or was buried in a termite mound. Twins were considered lucky and were called " children of Karunga," i.e., of God. Formerly in the case of royal twins, one was killed to ensure an uncontested succession to the throne. In times of famine one of the set of twins would sometimes be killed, though it was not a common practice (ibid:84). In the case of fraternal twins of opposite sex, the girl

would be allowed to live while the boy would be buried in an aardvark's hole. When one twin died naturally, the other was expected soon to follow (Forg op.cit.:52-53).

The Vambunza were very strict in observing cleanliness and marital celibacy. They have still strict laws and punishments to inflict on one who commits adultery. The culprit often is brought before the local authority having to pay the fine of the cows. Normally the relationships between the families concerned become sour, a kind of tension prevails for sometime. Though in previous times polygamy was not regarded negatively, it is now discouraged. Only few still practise it. The Vambunza completely discourage extramarital relations. If either spouse of a married couple has extramarital relations while the woman is pregnant, it portends bad luck or death during birth for the mother or the child (Gibson et al; 1981:84). To avoid these consequences a woman who has committed adultery during pregnancy will seek treatment by a traditional healer (nganga) before the birth and confess her guilt. A woman may also confess and be treated to ease a difficult birth (Forg op. cit.:47).

2.8 TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE

The traditional marriage that was practiced was not different from what the Kwangalis practiced. After both the boy and the girl have agreed to enter into matrimony, the boy informs his own grand parents because normally he is afraid of his own parents. He can also relate more easily with the

grand parents than his own parents. The grandparents then inform his parents who will go and ask for the girl from her parents. Once there is an agreement, then the boy's parents will give her an engagement necklace.

How is the marriage celebrated?

When the time for the marriage arrives, they would hide her in what they call *musetete*, her private room. She was not supposed to be seen by any one and she needs to isolate herself completely from the rest of her peers and neighbours. Even when she goes to bath at the river, she has to make sure that she hides somehow, so that people do not see her. If boys saw her they were allowed to beat her up. On the day of the wedding, women would take her early in the morning to the river to wash. If she is *mulingiling⁶*, they will let her stay for some time in the boat and even pretend that she is leaving with the boat. The understanding is that all she had done before the proposed marriage, even the previous love relations with others, should flow away with the water. Whatever defilement she experienced previously should give way. Her impurities should go along with the water as she starts new life.

Then they would wash her thoroughly and bring her back home. She is clothed with traditional attire and then the couple would be taken out to the public where the husband sits in front and the wife behind the husband on the same chair. The family would now start teaching and instructing them how to run their family and their relationship as husband and wife. Later on the husband will stand in front of his wife and shoot with his traditional gun

⁶ It means a girl or woman going around with different boys or men. A prostitute.

between the legs of his wife. This symbolizes that he does not want to share her with any one, meaning “ *ogu mokadi kwange, nyamelike, kutupu hena kumwe*” “ this one is mine and no one else”.

The shooting is immediately followed by another important part of this marriage process: the entering of the couple into their own house. Before they consummate the marriage they will exchange gifts, which will enable them to call each other by names. Without these gifts they cannot call each other by name. They will only say “ *ove*” meaning “you”. Early in the morning their grandparent would wake them up. They cannot get out of their room without the permission of their grandparents. Then they would go out and sit while the parents would continue teaching them. This is the concluding rite, and now they are legally married.

2.9 DEATH AND BURIAL

The Vambunza did all in their power to prevent disease and all that causes illness. In the past, an invalid who showed no improvement was taken into the woods or to an island in the river to remove him or her from witchcraft. If there was still no improvement, the invalid was brought back to the village and placed on a mat in a hut, *rutambo*, or in a sleeping hut, or might be laid out in the open within the confines of the village (Gibson et al; 1981:85). A sick man with many wives was usually cared for in the hut of his head wife, *the mugolikadi* (ibid:85).

The Vambunza believe that God (Karunga) is the giver of life and has the right to take it back. God (Karunga) is considered responsible for death in general. There are a few cases whereby Karunga is directly blamed. For example, if someone is in full possession of his/her faculties just before his or her death, a witch will be sought out as the cause of the death. However if someone is crippled or aged and helpless dies, then it is said that the Supreme Being took him or that he died a natural death (Zwart 1999:115). If he or she dies a slow death, however, the Supreme Being is symbolically given the blame, e.g. as in the expression "God tortures him", but in fact a witch is thought to be the guilty party (Ibid:115).

The Vambunza believe that if someone loses consciousness, he or she is nearly towards the end of life, often there is no hope. It is against this that those present sometimes begin to wail as if he or she were already dead. They strongly believe that the ancestors have called him or her to them. It is not clear as to whether he or she is called as a punishment or not. However looking at the way they perceive death, one can conclude that death is like a punishment to them. It sounds harsh, but through the interviews that I contacted I did not get the impression that death is seen very much as a passage to another life as it is among other Africans. If one regains consciousness, it is believed that he or she was dead but heard the voices and returned to life. Some believe that the ancestors disapprove it, meaning that they do not accept him or her among them. It is very common among them to blame some one for every death. They do not accept easily that death is normal and part and parcel of one's life. This occurs mostly in the case of the death of a young person. One who is dying is placed in sitting position for it is inconsiderate to allow someone to

die lying down (Gibson et al; 1981:85). It is also the custom for the one who is dying to confide his last wish to a trusted relative who makes them known to the rest of the family. A family will conform to these wishes for fear of the wrath of the dead (Forg op. cit.: 54-55).

When death comes those who are close to him or her will start weeping and normally the elders are around to talk to them and cool down the situation. With ordinary people the death is announced immediately, while the death of a chief is not announced for some hours. At the death of a chief the best medicine men are called in to prevent the chief's spirit from returning in the form of a dangerous beast, a sign of bad luck for the land. The fire in the royal village is extinguished and a messenger is sent through the land to announce that "the fire is out"(Gibson et al; 1981:85). When children ask about death, they are told that, "a hyena took him away" or "he chases antelopes", i.e., he is very far away.

The body of the chief is buried with the eyelids not shut. A small piece of wood is also placed between a chief's jaws so that he can continue to give aid to his people in word and deed. The meaning behind this is that he should continue looking after his people and the land. The chief who sleeps will lose his land to other chiefs. Before they had cattle they used to wrap their bodies in old reed mats especially the poor ones, while others would use the skins of various as shrouds. Like the Basotho, who may not come into contact with anyone else before they are cleansed, the Vambunza believe that those who got involved in the preparation of the body are not clean and therefore they need to be cleansed of their ritual impurity.

Normally burials are done in the morning or late afternoon. The burial rite is done differently. If someone has been brought to an island in the river during an illness and dies there, the body will very likely be buried there. The remains of those who have died by drowning or who have been killed by a crocodile are buried on the banks of the river unless the village is nearby, in which case they will be buried in the normal graveyard. They distinguish between ordinary people and the chief. The ordinary people are buried with their heads to the west so that when the sun sets it can remove everything that caused death. For the Vambunza “the west” plays a vital role.

The living sleep with their heads to the east so that they can get up. It is believed that those who sleep with their heads to the west will dream of death, evil and fall ill. The digging of the grave of an ordinary person is done by everybody in that village. But mostly members of the royal family do the digging of a chief's grave. It is also believed that the chief's grave is often difficult, for the earth changes into stones due to the strong magical powers of the chief, and digging must be begun elsewhere. A chief is buried by members of his clan (Vakwasipika, Hyena). Only those of the clan next in rank to the royal one (Vakwanzovu, Elephant) can help with the burial of a chief (Gibson et al; 1981:87). The successor may in no way come in contact with the body. He is not present during the preparation of the body and does not take part in the general mourning. The members of the royal family are buried in reserved grounds in Kapako.

It is worth noting that burials very much depend on the type of life one lived. The corpse of a sterile man or woman has a piece of charcoal placed in the anus with words, “you, who brought no children into the world, do not return to (haunt) us, we who are blessed with children” (Gibson et al; 1981:86). If someone is killed in the forest, the remains are returned to his or her own village if not too distant. If elderly people without families die of hunger, they are thrown without ceremony into the river to save the area from famine. The deceased pregnant women, whose deaths are thought to harm the chief, are usually wrapped in an ox hide and tied to a tree trunk under the water level of the river, otherwise a small incision is made in the body to protect the chief from misfortune or death, and the body is buried in a grave. If a subject has an affair with one of the wives of a chief, he is strangled and thrown into the river and his mistress often shares the same fate (Forg op. cit.:60). Some of these traditions do not exist any longer.

When the grave has been filled to the point that the body can no longer be seen, everyone present throws in a handful of earth. Even infants have earth placed in their hands to throw in the grave. Some of those present may speak a word or two of farewell. Orphans at the grave of their parents tell one another, “ from now on you yourself must use your own hands, and for the ones who have nourished you are dead” (Forg op. cit.: 61). Very often this period becomes very touching and hard for them.

2.10 MOURNING (*ETAMU*)

This is still very strong among the Vambunza. Every family has to do it. This happens mostly after the funeral. Silence is maintained on the way to and from the grave. On the return journey to the village, after the funeral, a ritual wailing, *nonkali*, begins, and continues through the mourning period. Neighbours who hear the wailing set out for the village of the deceased. At the entrance of the village the usual announcement of the visitor does not take place; rather the visitors enter silently, ask for the residence of the deceased, and go there as though the deceased were still alive (Gibson et al; 1981:89). Then follows the normal long greeting ceremony, *musingu*, in which more distant relatives give the news. Though some of these traditions are not observed, there are some families whose children are mourned for about three days while others are for five days. A tribal chief is mourned for one month.

Gibson et al; (1981:89) says that when everyone has returned to the village after a burial, the fires of all the households are extinguished. In the evening an elder of the group starts a new fire by twirling fire sticks. According to the social standing of the deceased, one or more oxen are slaughtered to prepare a meal for the visitors. The heart and lungs of one of the beasts are given to a grandchild while the spouse receives the haunch (ibid: 89). Normally during this period, people abstain from alcohol and many other forms of socializing to be fully in the mood. It is common

that people in the village come and help out with tasks like collecting wood and water.

The widow and those who were actively involved with the preparation of the corpse and the burial do not eat with the rest, but eat at one side of the group with their meal served to them on pieces of a broken calabash. Children and nursing women also eat apart from the guests (ibid:89). Even if she does not feel deeply saddened by the departure of her husband, the widow must pretend to be sad or otherwise she will be suspected of bewitching him. As a sign of her sorrow the widow must not have much appetite lest she be thought guilty of the death of her husband (Ibid 89)

The end of this period is marked by sweeping away the ashes of the fires that were extinguished on the night of the death. These ashes and the remaining unburnt logs are taken, by an appointed person, outside of the village on the west side. This person, *go kulya mutwe*, "one who eats the head" , is the one who during the lifetime of the deceased received the heads of the latter's slaughtered cattle. It is also this person's responsibility to bury the worn out clothes and unusable objects of the dead in a pile by the river (Gibson et al; 1981:90).

Though it appeared uncommon, it is said that if the surviving spouse is a man, his hair is either shorn completely or shaved in a type of tonsure. If a widow is left, her usual head ornament, *yihihhi*, is removed. Her clothes, except for her leather apron and some jewels (beads, etc.), are set aside as a sign of grieving (Forg op. cit.:63-65).

2.11 THE CLEANSING CEREMONIES

The Vambunza are quite sensitive with life. Anything that jeopardizes life is treated like an enemy. They will do all in their means to preserve life from any harm. They have a cleansing ceremony to protect life. Death is a great misfortune. The cleansing ceremony is meant to cleanse and protect those alive from any harm. There are different ways of cleansing. *Editayiko* is one of the most important kind of cleansing ceremony. How is it celebrated? This ceremony takes place four to seven days after the death. The aim is to clean everything that was in touch with the deceased. This includes both humans and objects. All people who were involved in the preparation of the corpse for burial, those who dug his grave and those who touched his objects.

The objects include sleeping material, dishes which he or she used, his or her hut where he or she slept and many others. It is believed that if those objects are left without cleansing they may cause harm to those who use them after him or her. They may also cause death to those who use them. They are believed to be contaminated by the same evil spirit, that killed him.

The deceased is believed to be in touch with all those who utilize these objects. To be in touch that way is not accepted traditionally. It is considered bad while a good contact is like that of the (ancestors) *Vadimu*,

who are seen as the protectors and guides in life. Thus, often they are venerated in order to keep in touch with them.

As we have already indicated there is no way in which any traditional ceremony can be done without shedding blood. The ceremony commences with the slaughtering of an ox whose blood is used to sprinkle all those objects that we have mentioned above and also people who were directly in contact with the body. The blood in this case washes off any kind of defilement. The Vadimu are invoked by the shedding of blood. The ritual is not only celebrated by those who are physically present but it includes both the living and the dead, especially those who have died long ago, and are seen as protectors of the family. Different parts of the meat serve different purposes. The lungs and heart are placed in a wooden container. Fat is taken from the stomach of the ox and neck and arm bands are made of it (Gibson et al; 1981:90). Men wear these on the right wrist, women around their neck, and children on both wrists. The widow or widower throws a coal toward the setting sun to remove all bad luck associated with the death (ibid:91). Three days after the ceremony, the fat strips are removed and roasted. The roasted fat is placed in a mortar and pounded with red pigment. The paste thus obtained is used for another cleansing ceremony (ibid:91).

The second rite follows some days after the *Editayiko* rites. It is said that the relatives of the deceased go with the widowed spouse and a traditional doctor (nganga) into the woods for another cleansing rite. In this it is the responsibility of the doctor (nganga) to cut down a tree so that it falls close to the widow or widower, thus blowing away the spirit of the dead with the

wind generated by the fall (ibid: 91). It is said that if it is not done , the spouse will continue to mourn the deceased and a future mate will be drawn into the domain of the dead. Once back in the village, they pound some (*mupako-tree*) bark into the powder to be used in a rite which takes place late in the afternoon of the same day. For this rite everyone goes with a doctor (nganga) to the river bank, carrying the mupako powder in a calabash (ibid: 91).

At the river bank two holes are dug in the earth and the surviving spouse must stand in them. The nganga makes small incisions in the legs of the bereaved spouse until blood has dropped into the wounds. The nganga then rubs the mupako powder into the wounds. This rite is performed to prevent one from swelling up. The river washes away the contamination in the drawn blood. In the case of a widow, her breach cloth is removed and given to her mother to prevent future infertility and she is dressed in a new cloth. This symbolizes a new life completely after being cleansed from any defilement from the former relationships. The *nganga* then takes the calabash in which the *mukapo* meal was kept, places it on the head of the widow or widower, and breaks it into pieces with his hands. On the path back to the village the patient must not turn back toward the river (ibid:91).

It is said that the mourning period may be nine months to one full year. Some prefer to live in the husband's village while others prefer to leave after some months even before seven months. This occurs mostly in cases whereby relatives from both sides are not in good terms. It is common that after the burial, relatives, even the remote ones who did not

have good relations with the deceased, come strongly against his wife. This occurs to those who claim property especially from those who were rich. The widow will be chased away from her house. Her property will be divided among the relatives of her husband. Children may even go without any thing to live on. This goes as far as asking for even the bank accounts. The dividing of the property among relatives has caused unnecessary fights and tensions in many families which were friendly. Lazy relatives who never worked in their lives usually are the ones who benefit most. In most cases they are so merciless that they do not care about the children left behind. This is so cruel that as a result the children have to stay without education and even the benefits which their father had prepared for them.

It does not seem that the people are happy with this way of doing things but at the same time it does not seem that there is any attempt to challenge it. For me this is one of the big pastoral challenges that need to be addressed before it goes too far. The Vambunza have enslaved themselves in a practice which they cannot change any time of their choice.

At the end of the whole rite, there are *ekokoto* rites, which are meant to complete the mourning period. This rite allows the widow to resume normal social relations. She can socialize with others. It is said that her body will be rubbed with the ox fat-red pigment mixture. Her hair is braided into a new hairdo. The *ekokoto* ceremony is the responsibility of the deceased husband's family. It is accompanied by singing, *marunkalinkali*, and by cries of joy from the women present (ibid: 91). It is said that the widow can

marry in the same family or go to marry outside the family of her former husband. The opportunities are created for them to decide on their own. It seems that if the widow refuses to marry, it is also acceptable. If the man decides that they will not marry, then he must give her a gift, e.g., an ox or an ostrich egg shell necklace. They indicate their decision either by sitting close together on a mat outside the hut if they plan to marry, or on opposite ends of the mat if they do not wish to marry (Forg op. cit.: 64-68).

CHAPTER THREE

CHRISTIAN IMPACT AMONG THE VAMBUNZA

3.1 POSITIVE IMPACT

I often marvel at the dichotomy of impact rain has. While there is no doubt it provides water and avails farmers the much-needed moisture for the planting season, too much rain destroys and causes destitution. In the African context, Christianity, like rain has had both gratifying positive impact and the displeasing negative impact. In this chapter we shall firstly attempt to explore the positive impact that Christianity has had among the Vambunza and then extend our exploring on to the negative impact.

3.1.1 EDUCATION

When the missionaries came among the Vambunza education was part and parcel of their evangelization ministry. Their approach was to take a human person in totality. This approach was a holistic one. This holistic approach was due to the fact that the missionaries identified that people were living far below a normal standard of living. And there was a need for

development. They had to work on education as a means of eradicating ignorance as a cause of different problems. The holistic way was therefore needed also because evangelization cannot be done in isolation, but it has to take entire human person not only the spiritual part. In order to achieve this, they started building a school and gave lessons even before the buildings were completed. The old church, for example which was built by Father Lohschelder in 1931, two years after their arrival, was used in the afternoon to give catechetical instructions and classes. Other classes were attended under the trees.

He organized the German sisters for the teaching ministry. It is worth noting that boys seem to have been the first ones to start with education in this area. Only ten years later did girls go to school. The history shows that the girls' hostel in Bunya started working in October 1938. The number of girls had increased from the first five girls who started schooling (Beris 1996:453). The missionaries sponsored the development of schools without government's contribution. The Church solely carried out the administration and the burdens of education in this area. It is only later that the government decided to take the entire responsibility in education. Even after taking over, the government could not manage efficiently and therefore the Church had to play a role still.

The Church organized and identified men who were sent to Dobra for teachers' training and catechetical work. Most of the senior teachers who are nearing retirement were the first lot to be trained and formed at Dobra. Today the Church provides a hostel for approximately four hundred learners mostly from the bush where there are no upper grades (5-10

grades). The mission has also built seven teacher's houses teachers because government is unable to offer them accommodation. In addition, the Church provides other facilities for use by the school. (parish meeting hall, vehicles and tractors).

This mission school has produced many important men and women who have key positions in both civil and ecclesial sectors in Namibia. It is therefore regarded with respect for spiritual, moral and academic formation received from her. They share with nostalgia different stories about the former missionaries who first trained them. Most of them bring their children to mission hostel in order to receive the same training and formation. Obviously, though the Church is no longer directly involved as in the past, she however still plays a vital role where government fails.

3.1.2 HEALTH

The Bunya Health center belonging to the Roman Catholic Church, is situated in Rundu District, Kavango Region in the Northeast Health Directorate of the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MOHSS). It is situated 50 km west of the regional capital Rundu, along the main dirt road from Rundu to Nankudu hospital. Other roads near Bunya are also dirt roads (sand). The villages along these roads can only be reached on foot, four wheel drive vehicles or ox sledges.

The Benedictine Sisters (O.S.B) of Tutzing founded this Bunya health centre in 1930. During that time they operated from two thatch huts built of stones. One hut served as the pharmacy, while the other one served as a dressing room. It only operated as an outpatient clinic. Seriously ill people rested in the dressing room. Between 1951-1955 additional buildings were erected. The year 1975 saw new developments springing, with sleeping rooms, bathrooms and toilets being added. The local people started step by step to assume some duties in the administration of the center.

3.1.3 SPIRITUALITY

The Vambunza used to pray in their special way. Prayers were said occasionally in the sense that they would come together for a specific intention like praying for rain. Christianity taught them the necessity to remember God (*Karunga*) at all times not only when there are problems or needs to pray for. They have learned different forms of praying like thanksgiving, petitions, intercession, adoration and praise. Important people in the Catholic tradition like Mary and saints, and their contribution in Christianity, were unknown to them. Now Christianity has introduced different ways of forwarding their prayers to God. Now people know how to build a relationship with Christ. Christianity has broadened their idea of God whereas their understanding and knowledge of God were mainly from their traditional revelation, which we have seen its incompleteness.

The sacramental life being an indication of the presence of God among people and an accompaniment in the spiritual journey was, unknown to them. It is Christianity, which brought them this missing aspect. Traditionally they had nothing like sanctification as received through the reception of the sacraments. Grace was also completely unknown to these people. Christianity brought a completely new element, the role that Jesus Christ plays in the sphere of salvation. In their religion the ancestors were doing everything. Retreats and many other spiritual exercises to accompany Christians in their spiritual journey were missing.

3.1.4 CIVILIZATION

The Church missionaries being the first Europeans to interact with people at the grassroots level brought western civilization. Hygiene was the most important that missionaries utilized all the available apparatus at their disposal to instill. Beris (1996:453) says that by the 1st September 1938 most of the Christian women had agreed to cut their hair and to wear clothes! Apparently they were advised to abandon the so-called pagan hairstyle if they wanted to be Christians. That was the biggest challenge facing these people.

The Vambunza were still wearing traditional clothes. The issue of where to obtain clothes did not crop up as the missionaries brought modern clothes. The mission workers were the ones who largely benefit from the modern

clothes. Those who were preparing to receive sacraments were also availed the modern clothes. Due to poverty people could not afford to buy these clothes hence they only wore them on special occasions such as weddings and other sacraments. It was not out of the ordinary to find a woman owning only two dresses and perhaps the first one was given as a present. (ibid: 453). Under this heading of civilization let me proceed and discuss the following three issues:

➤ **MARRIAGE**

With civilization and the Christianity came the issue of polygamy, which the missionaries condemned strongly. They explained that polygamy is debasing to women and it seems a kind of human experimentation whereby women are used as animals to gratify the insatiable sexual needs of a man. Polygamy was not practiced out of love but to satisfy the sexual needs of a man who could not be satisfied by one woman/ wife. The missionaries distanced themselves from the polygamists and it was a known fact no polygamist would be served or helped in times of need. The traditional marriage was fiercely dissuaded by the missionaries subsequently leading to the perception that it was the most distasteful state of affairs for one to remain in that marriage.

Catholics were also prohibited to marry a non- Catholics or non-believers. Those engaged were not allowed to stay together till they were officially married. Thorough preparations were made. The Church would prepare the couple separately not undergoing catechetical instructions together. The woman was always required to stay at the mission for the instruction,

functional literacy (basics like reading and writing), lessons on health matters and hygiene, sowing and cooking. The Church was so strict that there was no communication between the engaged. The two catechists, Maurus Mipasi and Magnus Haupindi attested to this. They grew up in the Catholic Church assuming duties and responsibilities in the Church. Before their marriages, their wives had to undergo the catechetical instructions for years since they were not baptized. The wives stayed at the mission till they got married. Since the men were working, whenever they needed to see the women they had to ask permission from the priest or the nun. The nun would give the respected party a few minutes to talk with his partner in her presence! She would not leave them alone and this procedure they appreciated and they were immensely proud of it. They were proud of their Christian marriages than their traditional ones and even today the same applies where Christian marriages are taken to be more significant than the traditional ones due to the Church influence in the beginning.

➤ **WITCHCRAFT (URODI)**

This is one area where Christianity launched a total onslaught. Both the Church and the state exerted a lot of effort eradicate witchcraft. The state inflicted heavy punishment to all those were involved in this practice. The Church on the other hand taught people the sinfulness involved in witchcraft and encouraged those who were both directly and indirectly involved to confess their sins before God. Direct involvement meant bewitching others, while indirect involvement meant labeling one a witch or helping in these practices. Unfortunately the state and the church failed dismally to curb the practice of witchcraft. The people, due to fear of

retribution did not practice it publicly but exercised its rituals secretly. Witchcraft was a hazardous practice as many people died, bewitched and others tortured because they were believed to be involved in witchcraft.

➤ **ABORTION**

From its beginnings, it was clear that Christianity was unreservedly against abortion as it against the laws of the Church and God. If one looks at the status quo of abortion, it was not a common phenomenon in this area. Even today when civilization and urbanization have swept people from traditional beliefs, abortion is still not widespread. A few people engage in it but it certainly has not reached alarming heights at all. The Church's message on abortion was easily accepted because culturally it is not accepted too. Though premarital sex was forbidden, parents would however not abandon their pregnant daughter or inflict severe punishment on her because of pregnancy. It was considered scandalous, sinful and shameful in the family, however the young woman would be cared for. Today the same attitude is still adopted hence the alarming rate of teenage pregnancies.

3.2 NEGATIVE IMPACT

In as much as Christianity has brought a lot of good with it, it however has brought what can be termed a potentially harmful situation among the Vambunza, the situation that has frustrated the efforts of Christianity to

truly evangelize. It must be noted that Christianity in its purest form has done nothing to bring about this impairment. The bringers of Christianity did not bring it in its purest form; otherwise we would not be traveling this road, the road that many have traveled before. Christianity was brought wrapped in the culture of the people who brought it. It was then difficult to draw a line of demarcation between Christianity and the culture of the messenger. It is against this backdrop that we shall explore where the missionaries, in the name of Christianity, have wittingly and unwittingly plunged the African, in this case the Vambunza into identity turmoil of such magnitude our eloquence even fails to put across.

Without fear of pointing the obvious, the missionaries over utilized the term “pagan.” Any aspect of the Vambunza culture and traditions that contravened the laws of nature as understood by the missionary from his cultural viewpoint, earned this term. Refusal to comply with the Churchmen’s opinion disqualified one to be accepted into Christianity. This state of affairs created two distinctly separate worlds; the pagan world and the Christian world, and no grey areas. It was just a matter of choice between Christianity and ‘paganism.’ Need it be repeated that what did not conform to the missionary’s understanding of *Christian*, was vehemently rejected? It was because of the same rejection that finally the gospel ran parallel to these people as a people.

Christianity became regrettably superficial, failing to penetrate their lives. Put differently, Christianity could have been easily accepted by the people, had the missionaries utilized their cultural and traditional values to convey the gospel. I shall mention some of the traditional and cultural aspects that

were out rightly refused as pagan. I will deal with them in detail in the fourth chapter and shall spend time showing why they should not have been rejected. I shall also suggest milestones where these can be incorporated into Christianity, which should have been done in the beginning, launching the second phase of evangelization that can contribute very well in the evangelization work in this area.

3.2.1 VENERATION OF THE ANCESTORS (*kuzamba kovadimu*)

One area, which was completely refused by the Church as 'pagan', is veneration of the ancestors (*vadimu*). Even today there are still missionaries who fail to understand the *vadimu* and their relationships with people. Most of the missionaries blindly refused to allow people to honor their ancestors. There were many false theories about the *vadimu* from foreigners who do not understand the Africans on this topic. Some think that the Africans actually pray *vadimu*, which is not the case. Ancestors play an intermediary role as we shall see in detail on chapter four.

Sacrifices to the ancestors continue to be done by both Christians and non-Christians alike among the Vambunza. The slaughtering of an animal, takes place during important occasions including, funerals, marriages, birth, illness, family feuds, and many others. These reveal how the Vambunza react to and how they handle their limit-situations. Their sacrifices to ancestors also inform us about their belief system, their attitude towards the Sacred, their belief in life-after-death and the perennial

need for communal reconciliation and well-being. These rituals are performed at home by the entire family, sometimes even after the Christian celebration of the Sacrament e.g. baptism, marriage. Here the missionaries failed to prohibit this ritual completely. As mentioned even practicing Catholics, like catechists perform these rituals.

During the interviews some people indicated that they see both their traditional religious practices and the Christian practices as reinforcing each another. The ritual of slaughtering a sacrificial animal is deeply ingrained in the Vambunza culture, as the ancestors are close to the living. They remain family and are a doorway to God (*Karunga*).

Communication with the ancestors requires that blood flows into the ground. The blood, after slaughtering an animal, is offered to the ancestors because blood is the symbol of life. "Blood represents the most precious gift one could offer. It symbolizes in its fullest extent the life of the individual"⁷. The blood offered to the ancestors brings them back to life. It is important to note that sometimes blood is offered for expiation, propitiation, thanksgiving or reconciliation. The missionaries did not comprehend this whole area of ancestors and therefore labeled them 'pagan', which created a double existence. People were not expected to even believe in the *vadimu* if they were Christian, but still this did not happen. Chapter four will demonstrate how ancestors can be incorporated into the Christian liturgical celebrations.

⁷ H. Sawyer. "sacrifice" K.Dickson and P. Ellingworth (eds) Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs. Lutherworth Press. London. 1972. p. 77

3.2.2 BELIEF IN WITCHCRAFT (*KUPURAYONOMPERO*)

It was very common to hear the Vambunza saying, “*ogu ana kara nonompero dendi*” meaning “he/she is a witch.” As already seen, the Church worked hard to convince people not to believe in witchcraft to no avail. Even the state was dismally defeated in its efforts to put a stop to this practice by inflicting punishment to those who were involved in witchcraft. It was taken for granted that people stopped it but it went underground (Beris 1996:449).

There are two points to take note of; the first being Christianity and the second one about the ritual itself. Christianity as we have already espoused is against witchcraft. It has condemned all those who associate themselves with its activities. The Church’s expectation that people should not believe in witchcraft needs to be examined. I think the expectation that people should not believe in witchcraft is not realistic. Their daily life experiences dictate otherwise. They believe what they see happening in their day-to-day life experiences. They are confronted with these evil and threatening realities of life and therefore react accordingly. These people are shaped psychologically by these daily challenges. No one can remain intact in such a challenging situation. The Church, granted, should not comply with evil powers, but it has to deal with them and not turn a blind eye to them and ignore people’s reactions to them. The Church has to be careful not to impose only its abstract ideas on people’s lives. My impression during the interviews was that the Church demanded an

impossible reaction from them by telling them not to believe in witchcraft while not suggesting any solution to the problem and just advised the people to rely on the Lord. Dealing with the Lord meant condemning the traditional ways of dealing with the evil powers.

Scripture verifies to the existence of witchcraft (Acts 8:9). A man called Simon bewitched the people of Samaria, proclaiming that he was the great one. It defeats reason to stubbornly believe that witchcraft does not exist, especially when the Vambunza consider it as reality and a sin, a sin that disturbs the harmony and peace of the community; the cause of misfortune, sickness, and death; prolonging hatred among families and suspicion among members of the same family or clan. Witchcraft therefore has terrible repercussions on the lives of the Vambunza and represents the dark aspect of the human condition; violent urgings that lie at the heart of humanity being the product of hate, envy, revenge and malice. It threatens the very fabric of society.

On the other side of the spectrum, it is the mission of the Church to challenge such beliefs and batress faith in God. Therefore it would have been failure on the side of the Church to ignore this situation without teaching people the importance of believing in God. One finds that existence of witchcraft promotes fear of ghosts and evil spirits of every kind among the people. Any belief that maintains suspicion and fear is detrimental to community life. The proclamation of Christ who has subjected all powers and principalities, the revelation of the filial Spirit which is given us and which puts us under the protection of a loving and

merciful Father, should gradually, free our Christians from this almost instinctive and destructive fear.

➤ **TRADITIONAL NECKLACE** (*Kudwara mudi*)

Kudwara means to dress and *mudi* means medicine. *Nomudi* means medicines. In the past the Vambunza women wore this traditional necklace for purposes of adornment. Later some women used the same necklace for concealing *mudi* (traditional spells and charms) from their husbands. The reason for women to wear these charms and spells was to rule in the house and ensures that she twists the man around her small finger, completely divorcing him from the influence of his relatives. In most cases women would resort to this mechanism of controlling the man due to jealousy, when the husband had interests elsewhere. As a result of this jealousy and fear of losing the husband, she would put these charms secretly in her necklace, thus becoming the controller over the entire domestic domain, rendering the husband submissive and obedient. The other purpose of this *Mudi*⁸ was also to attract and win the favors of men.

It was said that a man who was put under this spell exhibited symptoms that would alert his family that he was not normal. Some of the tell tales included visible submissiveness and total distancing from them. His parents and relatives, who expected help and support from him would detect it if no such assistance was forthcoming. They would then spring into action to reverse the situation. A medicine would be sought to make him vomit the *mudi*, restoring his normality. They would call the man to his

⁸ it means a medicine which woman puts in her necklace. It should not be known to the husband because it is meant to tame him, to make him obedient to her especially when she feels insecure about him.

parents' home and surreptitiously put medicine into his food and drink. When he started vomiting, he would know that his wife has put him under a spell. Vomiting freed him from the charms. Once normal he would start caring for his family members well. As for the wife, she would be sent back to her parents to teach her proper manners.

The second *mudi* that a woman could use entailed enslaving the man to herself only. With this *mudi*, if a man slept with a woman who had administered these charms, would never sleep with any other woman. He will cling to her till his death. Woman wanted to stop her husband fooling around. The medicine would block him to go anywhere. This is the one that the Church stepped its foot down in rejecting it as outright pagan. When one looks at the necklace, there is nothing wrong with it being used as an ornament. The only problem is the intention of the user. If the intention is not good then it is the intention that is awful not the necklace itself. Even though the Church blocked wearing of the necklace, people still use them. It depends on the couple, if the husband is happy with it then the woman can gladly wear the necklace. During the interviews it was clear that the Church's reaction in rejecting and condemning the necklace, even for purposes of adornment was wrong, considering that a few people might have been using the necklace wrongly.

3.2.3 INVESTIGATING WITCHCRAFT (*kuzanegeda*)

As we have shown witchcraft had terrible repercussions on the people. The Vambunza had their ways of investigating who was involved in bewitching others, with a view of bringing the culprit to book and bring justice to those harmed. When a culprit was discovered, she/he was punished heavily by fining him/her cows. This was viewed as a mechanism to stop these people from practicing witchcraft. Different methods were used to investigate and detect those involved in witchcraft and we shall explore some of them.

➤ **INVESTIGATION: SPRINGBOK HORN** (*Kuzanegeda katemba*)

Katemba is an apple-like-fruit. It is cut and opened in the middle. The seeds are then extracted. The traditional healer then inserts the horn of a springbok in the fruit. The medicine man mentions all the names of the suspects on witchcraft, one after the other. When he mentions the name of the culprit, the horn stands erect confirming that the name called belongs to the person involved in witchcraft.

➤ **INVESTIGATING BY HOE** (*Kuzanegeda-kanzimbu*)

Here an investigation is done through *kanzimbu*, a hoe with a thin metal blade. The medicine man would place the hoe on the floor in the midst of the people who were suspected of witchcraft. The *kanzimbu* would then be asked to reveal the perpetrator. The traditional healer would start calling the names of those present one by one to give the *kanzimbu* the chance to

reveal the witch or wizard. He would pause between the names and after calling each name he would lift it. The *kanzimbu* refused to be lifted from the ground on the name of the guilty party as an affirmation that the person was the one bewitching others. The *kanzimbu* did not confuse similar names even among the relatives. It would be glued to the ground till the culprit had accepted his/her guilt and accepted to pay. After the process, it could be lifted from the ground! The same investigation was done using not the metal blade, but also the wooden handle (*mupini*) for the hoe. The same procedure was followed. (See figures 6 and 9 on pages 60 & 61).

➤ **INVESTIGATION: HANDS IN HOT MEDICINE** (*Kutereka-masoma*)

This is another method of investigating witchcraft through *masoma*, a concoction of different herbs and charms. When the mixture boils all the suspects will put their hands into the concoction. Those innocent would not burn, while the culprit would burn immediately. The Church out rightly banned this process. This was a difficult way of finding out who the witch was and cruel but it was the most effective method. It minimized witchcraft in this area because people feared the consequences.

➤ **INVESTIGATION: DRINKING POISON** (*Kunwa- mwade*)

The Traditional healer making a poisonous mixture, which all the suspects drank to prove their innocence, cooks mwande-nondandani zomutji zomupako- "the roots from a tree called mupako". If found innocent, the suspect would vomit. The guilty part would not vomit and would eventually die after some days. The interwees explained that this way of investigation was too complex and the medicine men among the Vambunza did not

have expertise in it, therefore they took their people to Angola for this method of investigation. It is just four kilometers from the mission station, Bunya. They just go and come back the same day.

➤ **INVESTIGATING BY BONES:** (*Kuhekurangombo*)

Kuhegura means to twist the different bones that are in the basket made from grass. The *ngombo* is the basket itself. The doctor puts different kinds of small bones like those from chicken and many other small animals in the basket. The medicine man can see exactly who bewitched whom and how in the basket, as the bones in the *ngombo* give details of the problem. This method led to healing which followed the investigation. Healing is done differently depending on the healer. (see Figure 3 on page 61).

➤ **INVESTIGATING DEATH**

A death case is investigated in many different ways. I shall mention only one way which was common, though it is no more used: is the consultation of the body itself (*sintali/muemba*). Before burial, the body is placed on a bier, and is then asked the question, “Tell us who killed you. If it was Karunga (God), tell us, but if it was a sorcerer, show him to us.” If the body remains immobile it means Karunga is directly responsible for the death. If a sorcerer is responsible for the death, the body will “lead” the bearers to this sorcerer among all present and the sharpened ends of the bier will stab him (Gibson et al; 1981:95). In both cases the body is then asked where it would like to be buried, in the cattle kraal or in the open fields. When the bearers arrive at the desired place, the body pulls the litter downward and the bearers stop. The grave is dug there (ibid.).

➤ **THE METHOD OF HEALING.**

Finding the witch is one part of the problem. The next step is to heal the sick person. The doctor would ask the family or the sick person to bring a chicken and a goat. Everyone is invited to participate in this healing ceremony, which takes place at the house of the sick person in the evening. Hot water is boiled in the cooking pot. Then the medicine man slaughters the chicken, cutting it on the neck and pours blood into boiling herbs. Meanwhile people are singing and beating drums and the doctor sprinkles the sick person with the medicine all over. This whole continues the whole night with short intervals of an hour or so.

Early in the morning, the second phase of healing starts. The goat is now slaughtered and some parts of the meat are put into the same pot that has medicine. The whole group now accompanies the sick person to a particular tree where the final rite will be performed. No one knows exactly where this tree is situated, even the doctor himself does not know. Where the sick person falls, that is where the healing will take place. This is the place the ancestors have selected. When he falls, then the doctor will immediately start washing him with the medicine and the people will continue drumming and singing.

It is believed that it is the disease that makes him fall down as it leaves him. The same disease will be left at that tree. The now healed person will be helped to get up and will walk by himself back home. When they get home, where the rest of the meat has been cooked, the doctor will give the

patient some intestines to eat. Then those who participated in that ceremony eat the rest of the meat. The Vambunza believed that this method was effective, yet the missionaries stopped it without giving them an alternative. They do not see anything wrong with it and do not understand why the missionaries rejected it.

3.2.4 TRADITIONAL SONGS (*Nonsumo dopampo*)

When the missionaries arrived, they did not accept the Vambunza traditional songs for no apparent reason. It was almost a move to inject total assimilation into western culture. The missionaries then taught them songs with melodies from Europe. This has contributed to uniformity of singing in the Catholic Church. Interestingly, when one goes to different parts of the world the hymns are in different languages, but the melodies are exactly the same. They use to have different songs for different occasions. There was a particular song which was commonly sung among the Vambunza, which, like other songs was rejected by the Church. Looking closely at the song this is how it goes:

“tukatende ndongo, ndongo noisima, kuverera mberera, tjikiri Karunga, Karunga mwene Karunga.” 3x.

Kutenda means to work; *Ndongo* is a kind of food; *Isima* is traditional porridge either from mahangu or maize; *Kuverera* means to dip into source; *Mberera* means either meat or vegetables; *Tjikiri* means together .

This is translated “ let us work for our food together with God.” This song is sung mostly when they relax and socialize. Singing is an integral part of this culture. The Vambunza sing in every occasion; in moments of sadness, joy, praise etc. They express their sentiments and emotions through singing. They also sing this song in October during the dry season when they pray for rain. Even with the present atrocities brought by UNITA in planting land-mines, bombs and killings of innocent civilians, they will tell you that God is there among them with his power: “ *Karunga pweli, yige munankondo.*” They will sing and praise Almighty God.

One then wonders why a song that involves God was discarded as pagan by the Church. Perhaps it was the whole question of misunderstanding. The message behind the songs was not clear to the missionaries and they did not lift their finger to make enough effort to study and understand them. The Church should only refuse those songs, which do not promote positive atmosphere among the people. It is only through knowledge of the culture deeply that we see the damage that our Church has done on the pride and ego of the people. It is only acknowledging that we were wrong that we can move forward and inject evangelization that will bear fruit this time. In the area of music as we will see in chapter four, we need to integrate songs like this in the liturgy to make contribution into meaningful merger of the two entities.

3.2.5 TRADITIONAL NAMES (*Madina goupagan*)

Names are important among the Vambunza. These people do not give names for the sake of giving but names have a message to convey. The missionaries also rejected their names without studying what names meant and why they were given. This was never taken into consideration. Even those who were not yet baptized were given European names. It was commonly held that the missionaries forced people to get Christian names because they could easily pronounce them easily. The issue of names has been an African experience, where people were given foreign names against their wishes. The South African poet, Magoleng wa Selepe in the poem, Nomqibelo Ncamicile Mqhibisa where a Xhosa woman is flabbergasted because a white civil servant changed her name that she was proud of, illustrates this. She has this to say:

“Look what they have done to my name....

The wonderful name of my great-great, grandmothers, Nomqibelo Ncamisile Mnqhibisa.

The burly bureaucrat was surprised

What he heard was music to his ears,

“Wat is daai? Sê nou weer?”

I am from chief Daluxolo Velayigodle of emaMpondweni and my name is Nomqibelo Ncamisile Mnqhibisa !

Messiah, help me!

My name is so simple, and yet so meaningful,

But to this man it is trash....

He gives me a name convenient to answer his whim:

I end up being Maria.....

I, Nomqibelo Ncamisile Mqhibisa.”⁹

The area of names has been severely abused in Africa, as the poem illustrates. The Church was more instrumental in enforcing foreign names than any other institution. This was done in the name of God! Unfortunately these so-called Christian names, like Maria in the poem, did not make sense and were meaningless. There are no links with her ancestors and relations. In some cultures like the Sesotho culture, there are names which express negative feelings of dissatisfaction in the family. This happens mostly when a child is born out of wedlock and these children are given names which depict circumstances under which they were born. Examples include; “*Mosenyehi*,” meaning “the messed up one” usually a child born out of wedlock; or “*Kemang*” meaning “Who am I?” indicating that the father denies paternity.

The Vambunza, unlike the Basotho do not have such names. Their names indicate positivity yet they were refused in the Church. They were forced names of foreign saints who they did not know. Due to illiteracy they could not even read about the saints, which could motivate them to emulate them in their Christian journey. To name someone Innocent is not appealing like naming him Mojau, after his grandfather. Even if he does not know Mojau personally, his parents and relatives who gave him the name convey

⁹ Taken from: a Century of South African Poetry, introduced by Michael Chapman, 1983.

information about him. This therefore instills pride and dignity associated with the name unlike the name that does not mean anything.

Another problem with names of saints is that authors write and give unrealistic information about them. They are often presented like superhuman and angels who never lived on this planet, who had no taste of what earthly life is all about. In most cases the human side of some saints remains unearthed, very difficult to understand and complicated for an ordinary person to follow or imitate. Even for a devoted Christian sometimes it is very hard to follow the life saints lived. Saints are important in that they show that the Gospel can be lived and it is practicable. It should not only be their names that dominate the Church. What they (saints) lived, the Vambunza can also live. Not being canonized or officially declared saints does not mean they are beyond this holy life. Just as the names from the saints are expected to motivate them, the Mbunza names can do the same.

The second evangelization among the Vambunza suggests that traditional names and their significance be utilized. The same names should be used when they are baptized. Those who choose to remain with western names can still do so. It is a matter of choice. In chapter four we will deal with this issue.

Figure 6
Kanzimbu (Axe)



Figure 3.
Nsuko
(Traditional Basket)



Figure 9.
Mupini
(Wooden handle)



CHAPTER FOUR

THE CULTURAL AND TRADITIONAL CONCEPTS TO BE UTILISED IN RE-EVANGELIZING THE VAMBUNZA

INTRODUCTION

It has been demonstrated that the Vambunza culture and tradition are a clear indication of God's presence among them. God reveals himself in and through them. This revelation notwithstanding, it should be noted that both the Vambunza culture and traditions are not self-sufficient revelation of God. They are complemented by revelation through the Bible.

This chapter is aimed at showing in much detail how God is present in the various Vambunza rituals and traditions. He has been among the Vambunza long time before Christianity. I will further indicate how the various rituals can be incorporated in the Catholic celebrations of different liturgical events. These same concepts can be key elements in re-evangelization work among them. They cannot simply be ignored and refused only because they do not immediately show the presence of God as understood through the experience of a Christian. This is whole study is referred to as **inculturation** by some Theologians. I will therefore explore this concept of inculturation before we delve into the different traditional rituals that should be utilized in the second evangelization.

INCULTURATION

There are different definitions of inculturation. Inculturation is the genuine and original response that a given culture gives to the first and the on-going proclamation of the Gospel. It is also a process undergone by a culture receiving and accepting the Gospel that acts as indigenous factors and transforms it from within. The above definitions indicate that inculturation is a smooth process through which both the culture and the Gospel come together and interact with each other in a dynamic and a fruitful manner. Through the process of inculturation, there should be some painful experience. There should be some pains in any kind of transformation where changes are involved.

But I understand culture as being already the product of the action of the Holy Spirit in a group of people to whom God has always been present from the beginning of their history. From that point of view, culture cannot be conceived as acting against the Gospel. This does not mean that they are identical. The dynamism of culture, its symbolism and its content may be very different. To try to discover in culture and to see in it similarities with the Gospel may be useful for the first proclamation of the gospel, for a first approach in order to hook the Gospel to the values, symbols and the deep expectations of the evangelized people. But the culture cannot be reduced to the similarities with the Gospel and inculturation cannot be reduced to the assumption of cultural elements that are similar to those of the Gospel.

When we speak of inculturation we should as well understand culture in a very holistic way or in an embracing way. Culture is a way a more or less homogeneous group of people experiences, perceives, understands, expresses and lives its relationship to the world of nature, to human beings and to the transcendent. This definition includes all: language, thought, symbolism, social and political organization, economic and also religion, which, for us here, seem the important elements to be considered. It is only by understanding it in this way that we can truly speak of true inculturation. This chapter is meant to show how inculturation occurs by utilizing some traditional and cultural the Vambunza concepts. Our focus is mainly on the effectiveness of these concepts in evangelization work.

4.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF HEALING AMONG THE VAMBUNZA

There are three main forms of healing among the Vambunza that were identified through the research. They are Traditional healing, Faith healing and Western “modern” healing. It is worth noting that healing is a necessary ingredient to instill equilibrium in life that is often distorted by evil spirits. The Vambunza strongly believe that the evil spirits that are evoked by witchcraft causes sickness. Not only does witchcraft cause illness but also a violation of taboos. These taboos are there to be respected and honored by everybody. Those who ignore them experience health problems. The violation of these taboos can be done directly (Zwart 1999:84). It is against this backdrop that the different forms of healing will

be explained. These healings are meant to protect life. Healing is sometimes understood to have a boomerang effect where witchcraft will revert to the sender/owner. All the various forms of healings are meant to alleviate sickness in any form.

4.1.1 TRADITIONAL HEALING

The majority of people in this area have tremendous faith in and rely entirely on traditional healing. The interviews revealed that the Vambunza consult with their traditional healers for any health problem regardless of its nature. If this method fails then they explore avenues like health centers and Christian faith healing. Obviously traditional healing plays a vital role than any method of healing as it the first reference point. Other forms of healing are there to complement it or to assist it mostly in cases, which the traditional healing cannot help. In South Africa, a Human Resources Consultancy, conducted a survey among South African organizations and found that 75% of the African population consult traditional healers, a significant number of the workforce. Some Medical Aid Schemes even provide cover for “alternative medication” which includes traditional healers and homeopaths.

The Vambunza strongly believe that which is foreign is not adequately effective. The people who live in the rural areas do not consider hospitals or clinics as an valuable institutions. Some of them do not even accept to be taken to a hospital or clinic when they are sick due to the perception

that they are slaughterhouses as illness worsens due the terrible treatment administered by the hospital staff. It is presumed that if one goes to a hospital, chances of coming back are slim. Apart from the inhuman treatment, people are unable to maintain who they are. The issue of respect and dignity comes as it is a scandal for instance for a young woman to wash an older man. So psychologically they are thrown in a situation which does not give them internal peace and balance. One school of thought proposes that healing is more psychological than physical. If this idea is taken as a possible truth no wonder most of them die in hospitals as the psychological mechanism to fight is completely eroded.

Hospitals are also seen as institutions where their *vadimu* (ancestors) are not there to help in the healing process. They assert that in hospitals there is nothing traditional, and therefore they feel out of place. They cannot even drink their herbs, which make them susceptible to defeat. Any mechanism excluding their ancestors is completely unacceptable because it does not join them with the forces and people who should be involved in the healing process. A similar conviction is found in African culture at large (Magesa 1998:51). Like a fish out of the water, the foreign nature of hospitals including language is overwhelming.

During the interviews one of the reasons cited for preference of traditional healers is that they are affordable vis-à-vis the Western doctors who are expensive and one is unable to negotiate the prices. Also there is too much structure denying flexibility. One is unable to receive any assistance unless money is paid upfront. This is not always the case as traditional healers are expensive themselves. Traditional healers are said to be

negotiable even in terms of payment. As was found out in terms of cost they are much more expensive as they sometimes charge cows, sheep or goats or the equivalent in cash. It is far too expensive than what the clinics charge for consultations. In the past the traditional healers were cheap and nearby whereas the clinics were very far. Today they are expensive but seemingly cost is not the issue as they the preferred mode of healing because of faith and trust. All forms of healing that we have seen in chapter three are still strong and effective in the community. Since they are not harmful and dangerous to anybody, they need to be strengthened and we shall see later how they can be strengthened.

4.1.2 CHRISTIAN FAITH HEALING

Another method of healing is Christian faith healing. There are four Churches in this area. They are the New Apostolic Faith Church (NAFC), the Gospel Outreach (GO), the Nyambi-Nyambi Church (NNC) and the Apostolic Church of God (ACG). From these four Churches there are two that specialize in healing. These are *The New Apostolic Faith Church (NAFC)* and *The Apostolic Church of God (ACG)*. Regarding *The New Apostolic Faith Church*, the majority of the people interviewed were former Catholics and they left the Catholic Church because of illnesses that this church could not sort out. They specifically came for healing but were attracted to this church's way of worshipping and praising God and henceforth converted. When questioned on the form healing takes, the

pastor advised that he uses prayer, water, laying on of hands and oil. Not every pastor can bless the oil and water but the senior pastor in Rundu town. Once water and oil are blessed the pastor keeps them in his house in a sacred place where the wife and children do not even touch them.

Relatives bring a sick person and stay with him/her at the pastor's house for a few days. Prayers for the sick commence the same day. If the sickness is of serious nature all those involved in prayers do not sleep. They pray for the whole day and night fasting. Fasting is meant to cleanse them from their sins, thus rendering their prayers effective to the Almighty. Some of the people interviewed testified that after two days or so they often see a positive change. During the time of the interviews there was a sick person who was discharged from hospital as his case was hopeless. He was deranged and there was nothing the hospital could do for him. He was unable to speak for five months. After the "serious" prayers were invoked he started speaking to the bewilderment of all. Relatives and the wife testified this miracle. After a few days the "healed man" started praying with them.

Still on the process of healing, after prayers the pastor reads the Word of God. He uses different biblical texts. The Word is followed by the anointing with oil on the fore head, hands and feet. The patient is given some oil to drink as well. During the treatment, the patient is put on a special diet prescribed by the pastor. However this does not meet with the approval of those put on this diet and they even comment that "this is not a hospital!" The relatives who hang around for support supply the required food. What is quite interesting is that the Bunya health centre, which is situated five (5)

kilometers from this church, refers difficult cases to this Church, recognizing that there are more than one way of healing.

In terms of *the Apostolic Church of God* and how it administers healing, the pastor who was a former Catholic, explained that he went to this Church because he was sick and he needed healing which he could not get in the Catholic Church. Like the New Apostolic Faith Church they accept anyone who needs help. Sick people bring their own food and stay for the duration of the healing process. They have people specially designated for healing purposes. This "intercessory group" is always available to pray for a sick person. They have dealt with all sorts of maladies including 'madness.' They too engage in a dry fast in order to render their prayers more effective to the Lord. During the solemn service of praying for an extremely sick person, they give him/her some oil to drink and anoint this person with some on the chest. Oil is also put in the eyes of the sick person. The oil is blessed by a pastor who is more senior who resides in another town. It is kept safely in the house of their senior church leader. It was professed that people with serious cases get healed.

➤ ACTION FOR RE-EVANGLIZATION

Many scholars have written and explored how Christianity rejected the African Traditional Religion to the point that it sounds like a cliché and has a danger of lacking originality. Like in most African societies this was the case among the Vambunza. The question that we need to ask ourselves is how the Vambunza traditional way of healing can be accepted as a bona-fide health practice in the Christian circles and the Western medicine circles. It cannot be over-emphasized how black Africa has failed dismally to accept the west and all its practices (including Christianity) to the exclusion of the African worldviews and values. We have taken pains to demonstrate how the Vambunza in particular, like a drowning person, have clung to their own traditional forms of healing sometimes romanticizing it beyond its abilities.

Recognizing the futility inherent in separating these people's identity and their traditional practices will assist us in finding unique ways in which we can structure a new order, new evangelization, learning from the mistakes of the **first evangelization**. If their identity and culture recognize the traditional form of healing as **the** healing then it goes without saying that we need to create a synergy between these three forms of healing and establish a holistic and much more richer **identity**. That is the move towards realizing that "throwing the baby out with the bathwater" (in this case Vambunza traditions) does not serve any purpose and in fact it is seen as perpetuating domination of one culture by another, which is

against the Human Rights spirit of the new world order. It synchronizes with the spirit of reconciliation where we recognize where the past has been unkind to the Africans and attempt to heal this brokenness in a constructive manner.

Jesus' ministry proves that he was available to the needs of people. He considered healing as one of his main responsibility, and he was not deterred from his work of healing by religious laws of the Sabbath observance or by the opposition of religious leaders. Luke 4: 40-41 shows a big number of people coming for healing. Luke 13:11-13 presents a woman who was freed from her sickness. In fact when one looks at the synoptic gospels almost 50% of the Gospels is about the Jesus teaching His disciples and the other half about Him healing the multitudes. All the followers of Christ were given the power of healing by Him. In today's world there is a great hunger that will not be put off forever, a yearning that will not be silenced forever, a desire for health that must be satisfied. The people are in need of a Church that can accommodate their needs, especially a Church which can give them life, and alleviate them from their tensions and stress. Disease is not the ideal will of God for us. It follows from human ignorance, folly, and sin, all of which God is striving through diverse ways to replace by knowledge, wisdom and holiness.

Different Churches in this area could work effectively by coming together for ecumenical healing. The healing can be more appealing than when it is done by only one Church. This could also solve many unnecessary problems and suspicions among Christians from these churches. There are traditional healers who are Christians but they left the Catholic Church

because they were forbidden to do the traditional healing. They have become estranged from the Church because of the healing they practice. There is no reason why they cannot be accepted in the Church with what they are. Only when they are violating the laws of God that they should be approached. The Church should acknowledge their gift of healing. These healers could be approached to share a lot regarding health matters. They could be invited at same time when the Churches conduct the ecumenical healing.

The Catholic Church in this area has to acknowledge that the Vambunza traditional healer is not inferior to the western healers. These doctors should not be condemned a priori. Modern medical scientists are discovering more and more the psychic dimension of illnesses; they know that purely somatic medicine is inadequate for healing the whole man. We may admit that the nganga (traditional healer) often knows little or nothing of elementary hygiene and lacks knowledge and means sufficient to cure certain ailments. But to say that his medicine has no meaning, that is it is pure magic or witchcraft, is to make a serious error.

This point on healing is neglected very much by the Catholic Church. To take it seriously will motivate people and revive hope and faith in them. The Catholic Church should be humble enough to open up to the present challenges from other Churches, which are attending the needs of people. The local health centre can benefit a lot in exchanging some ideas with the traditional healers. Since most of staff members of Bunya health centre are foreigners, they may not be familiar with some local health problems. They can learn a lot from the local healers. The local healers also can benefit a

lot from the scientific methods from the health centre. Not only one approach in life is sufficient to attend health problems adequately. With this background let us now focus on some of the liturgical aspects.

4.2 LITURGY

No complete agreement has been reached in the Roman Catholic Church about the definition of the word liturgy. This is due to the fact that different elements may be stressed in the group of ecclesiastical institutions that are generally classed as liturgical. Some propose to understand liturgy as the outward forms of divine worship or the sum total of regulations that govern the Church's worship. Others say liturgy is the worship offered to god by the Church itself. I am not different from the above definitions but I would put it differently by saying that liturgy is the whole public worship of the mystical body of Christ, head and members. This public worship includes sacraments ,the Word of God and many others.

4.2.1 SACRAMENTS

The Vambunza are people who strive to receive **the sacraments**. They pull out the stops to participate in the active life of the Church, though this often pose a problem where this acts in contravention with their traditional rites. This section is aimed at showing how sacramental life presents

problems of such high magnitude they seem insurmountable in nature. This section will explore ways in which these challenges can be overcome in the true effort of re-evangelization.

➤ **CATECHETICAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This is one area that requires revolution and total revamping. In Bunya they still use the old out-dated methods of preparing people for sacraments. The content is the same for **all** Sacraments! If one has been prepared for the sacrament for baptism (adult) it will be the same content when the same person prepares for the sacrament for confirmation, the same for marriage etc. This material was prepared forty years ago and these people are still using it. This preparation is done in seven steps in seven months of instructions. The content is so outdated that it is completely irrelevant and does not address even one single issue of the needs of the person in need of that sacrament. Not only is the content archaic but also the instructors themselves leave much to be desired. They are unemployed and semi-literate people who cannot do instructions differently than how they were taught many decades ago.

Since this is one area that makes Catholics **catholic**, the Church needs to take it seriously otherwise the present situation of Catholics who do not know the Catholic Faith will prevail. In terms of the content, the Church has new catechical books and new methods of teaching this. The problem in Bunya is that the present caliber of instructors cannot be re-trained due to their literacy levels. Here the Church needs to work hard to impress upon people who are educated to help in the teaching of catechism.

Presently only 5% of professional people are active in the life of the Church. The older ones can also be trained to teach at the lower level. Unless young people see the church as theirs and take an active role in it people will receive half-baked instruction that in the end does more harm than any good as those who are instructed end not knowing their faith.

➤ BAPTISM

The Vambunza said traditionally they had baptism. Raphael, one of the community leaders says: *ekuho pwanare pampo yiko lyakere. Munona kumukurura mutengo tava dungu marovhu tava dipaga ngombe ndi sikombo, ndi nonhunhwa tava muruganene sipito. Gumwe gokumusimba posipepe ta seweke asi yige musukameni gwendi ana musikamene ezuva lyosipito sendi. Mukadona kumupa sikumbagona ano mumati kumupa utagona wonkanza.* It is translated “in our tradition we have baptism. One member of the family, who has been chosen among all the members, would come and shave a child on a head. Take him or her outside the house for the first time to show him the sun early in the morning indicating that he or she belongs to the world. He or she is taken back into the house again. Giving him or her different gifts follows this. There are two official gifts. To a baby boy, he gets a small gun and a girl gets traditional basket. This is followed by different gifts. They used to slaughter a cow or a goat and brew a lot of traditional beer. They would dance and sing”.

Baptism is not a new phenomenon brought by the Christian missionaries. The issue of mission is clear in this traditional baptism. When a child is born he/she is given a “gift” which symbolizes what this child should do in

the society. A baby girl is given *sikumbagona* (a grass basket) symbolizing a life dedicated to servitude. A baby boy is given a small gun to show that he is a warrior and he is tasked with the responsibility to protect. The gun also symbolizes the “hunter” and the sole duty of providing for the house falls on his shoulders. A gun is symbolic of power and conquering. This is interesting how the status of men in the society differs from that of women who are expected to serve.

The same message of mission is found in the Christian baptism. Christianity commissions one to go out and reach others. Christian baptism requires the baptized to adopt a position of messenger of “glad tidings”. How can the Christian baptism synchronize with the traditional baptism, where there can be cultural synergy between the two elements? Since baptism in the Catholic Church is done during infancy unlike in some other Churches in Bunya where it is done in adulthood, this can tally very well with the traditional baptism that is also done in infancy. Perhaps the traditional baptism can be seasoned with the elements from the Christian baptism like anointing with the different oils, the oil of the Catechuminate and Chrism oil. The candle that is lit in the Christian baptism can also be lit in the traditional baptism. By so doing the two can play a complementary role and create continuity between the two, not fragmentation as is the case presently. Instead of celebrating these two events at different uncoordinated times, the traditional baptism can be held on a Saturday preceding the Sunday when the Christian baptism would be held.

The same food that would be prepared for the traditional baptism would be used for the Christian baptism so that the two are seen as one occasion

with two faces. In the traditional baptism a godparent is chosen for the child. This *musikamini* (Godparent) can be used for the two forms of baptism as godparents are also required for the Catholic baptism. It is clear that while there are differences, there are a lot of similarities that should be harnessed to promote cohesion.

Regarding the issue of names, giving a relevant name is part of the traditional baptism as is the integral part of the Christian baptism. Among the Vambunza the children play an important role. Children preserve life force so that life of the family, community and clan may continue without end. This philosophy is the ultimate deciding factor between continuity and death of a particular family line or clan. One of the sons of this land wanted to become a Catholic priest. Being the only son in his family the family was completely devastated knowing that because of celibacy nature of the Catholic priesthood their son would not continue the line of the family. They were so shattered that they left the Catholic Church and made life difficult for their son, who eventually left the seminary for lack of family support.

When children are given names this mission of carrying the family line into the future is made clear. Naming involves the incarnation or actualization of a person (an ancestor), a certain desired moral quality or value, a physical trait or power, or an occasion or event. “. To confer a name is therefore to confer personality, status, destiny, or express a wish or circumstances in which the bearer of the name was born.”¹⁰

¹⁰ C. Nyamiti, “ The Naming Ceremony in the Trinity: An African Onomastic Approach to the Trinity”, in CHIEA African Christian Studies, 4:1(1988), p. 42.

Names among the Vambunza are usually connected with the ancestors who are still very much part of the community's consciousness. A newborn child will often be given the name of a recently deceased relative, like a grandmother, uncle or a well-known person in the family. In that way they want to keep their good memories of that person alive. The name of the deceased person lives on. The other names chosen are connected with the season of birth. If it is a baby boy born in the night he is called *Hausiku* (*masiku means night*) and a female will be *Kasiku*. If born during the day he is called *Hamutenya* (*mutenya means day*) and *Namutenya* to a baby girl. Others names chosen are connected with the feeling on the particular occasion such as *Haimbili*, meaning peace. A similar tradition exists in an African context at large (Mbiti 1975:88).

Unfortunately the Catholic Church here has not risen up to the occasion in acknowledging these names. Up to now these names are not used during the Christian baptism because they are considered pagan. The irony is that they use the same names after the Sunday services as they place more value on them. It would make more sense to use these names because not allowing or not encouraging people to use them at baptism diminishes the importance of the Vambunza's roots in their culture. The same traditional name can be used in Christian baptism. Maybe towards the end of the service the godparents can also be asked "*ava simpe posipepe, va powagese vanona mo ngereka*" the "Godparents can be asked to take out the children of the Church as they do at home to show the outside world". This is seen as a sign of sending or mission. So to doing it publicly would conscientise the community of the fact that the Church continues with what the family has already done.

➤ THE EUCHARIST AND THE ROLE OF THE PRIEST

The Vambunza have a lot to say about the importance of meals and sharing; *kupa munona kuzumba, mukurona mukweni kurugwida kowoko. ewoko limwi tupu kapi ali pandura udano. Dakapara kanantinda=domuzo nomuruguro*. It is translated: “ giving a child may be a lost while sharing with an adult is a reward. Only one hand cannot do it, but two hands can work better”. All these sayings have the same message. They encourage a support among them, they encourage one to share whatever he/she has with others. Tomorrow others will also share. They discourage selfishness and individuality in their community. They promote the whole ethos of "give and take" or reciprocity in the atmosphere of unity. This unity and communalism are the deep-seated worldviews and values that make them a people.

Having spent seven years of ministry among the Vambunza I witnessed this African culture of sharing. They express it in different forms, which may not be completely different from other African countries, where people eat from the same communal dish. In some areas all the boys in the village would eat together when they come back from tending their animals. They used to eat at different families. This however has disappeared. In Bunya while I was doing ministry I would never be given my own plate. Everything was served in one huge dish for all of us guests. If you are of a disposition where eating your own food is important, then the hosts would be offended or you would go with an empty stomach and it would be empty indeed as the option of going to the restaurant would be unavailable because it was right in “the bush”.

In their meals the Vambunza promote forgiveness because they cannot share meals with someone they are at odds with. Even where differences exist these cannot hinder the spirit of togetherness. This forgiveness inherent in sharing meals is similar to forgiveness that is part of celebrating the Eucharist. Forgiveness is dealt with during the Penitential Rite where reconciliation and forgiveness are promoted. In order for the Eucharist to make sense to the people the traditional values in sharing meals cited above should be incorporated into the celebration of the Eucharist. People should be made to understand that the Eucharist is similar to the meals that they share and the atmosphere is the same.

The picture in figure 4 on page 127 depicts the intimate link between the Eucharist and daily living. This two-part mural shows what the two aspects of the Eucharist. The inner circle portrays a Eucharistic banquet that brings humanity together to the feast of unity of all people regardless of their status or condition in life: rich or poor, healthy or sick, sinners or holy, outcasts, the marginalized, black or white. All are invited to share at the table of the Christian community where all share with joy and peace. The outer circle portrays small groups helping one another and serving one another. This is part of mission where after celebrating fellowship in Church, Christians go out to live it concretely. This living entails caring for one another, building each other's hope, caring for the sick including HIV/AIDS, protecting women and children from abuse, giving support and encouragement and carrying each other's burdens (cf. Matt. 25:31-46). The Eucharist sends the Christian community out in service and mission. As already mentioned this Eucharistic message is aligned with the

Vambunza's expectation of what constitutes good quality way of life. The African way must be holistic that its way and religion are one.

There are however problems around the Eucharist that need to be highlighted: The first challenge relates to the elements of the Eucharistic rite. The Roman Rite that has to be kept in this community is still questionable. It does not reflect anything of the Vambunza. It makes the Eucharistic celebration to become the locus of their daily alienation. It is not their celebration but something foreign to them. For instance, how is the **bread**, "the fruit of the earth and the work of human hands" in a socio-economic context where planting **mahangu** (millet) so deeply marks the life of the Vambunza whose life is centered on mahangu? Where is a space for mahangu?

In supporting the idea of using the local products from the local people, Ela (1986) says that the imported bread and wine are not only nutritive elements that enter into the composition of a European's menu; they are cultural elements with a meaning for a people and connections with its history. We must admit, then, that through the Eucharistic matter the Church is imposing western culture and its symbolic structure on us (Ela 1986:5). To refuse or ignore the local elements in the Eucharist does not pertain to dogma but it is just a question of discipline. To promote this discipline among the Vambunza makes the Eucharist meaningless. An ethnocentric interpretation of the Eucharistic species acknowledges the value of the sacramental sign only it draws its meaning from an assimilation of the symbolic structure of elements constituting the staple nourishment of a people (Ela 1986:5).

The second challenge is of course consecration of the bread into the body of Christ reserved only for a priest. The Code of Canon Law number 900 paragraph 1 states that the only minister who, in the person of Christ, can bring into being the sacrament of the Eucharist, is a validly ordained priest.¹¹ There are no sound reasons why the Vambunza Christians cannot experience salvation in Jesus Christ in a situation of independence. It is out of the question now to ask them to submit themselves to the unconditional submission to a theological schema that makes the priest the necessary minister of the Eucharist. This schema condemns the little communities on which much pastoral concern is currently concentrated to live in dependence on missionaries. Regarding the Eucharist it is the same and even more serious. As we have seen in the canon above, only a validly ordained male person can lead the community in the Eucharistic celebration.

Now here among the Vambunza there is no male, celibate and ordained priest. They have just one foreign Mosotho priest, from Lesotho for these 28 outstations to celebrate the Eucharist. In stressing the seriousness of throwing these people into the spiritual malnourishment because of bestowing the presidency of the Eucharist to a priestly class, Ela (1986: 3) says: “these communities are condemned ever to fall short of the full sense of community, since the Eucharist is reduced to the level of a simple incidental, celebrated episodically.”

It is impractical that the Catholic Church is still demanding that Christians be sacramental when there are not enough ordained ministers to

¹¹ The code of Canon Law, Collins Liturgical Publications, 187 Piccadilly, London W1V 9DA, 1983, p. 166.

administer the sacraments. The Church cannot reconcile what she teaches with the present grassroots situation among the Vambunza. On the same issue Healey (1996:278) says that a Church of Eucharistic Communities is impossible in the light of present Church legislation on male, celibate, seminary-trained priesthood.

Creative solutions necessarily require structural changes in the Catholic Church's laws and praxis. Eucharistic communities are held up as the ideal, but other small communities cannot realistically become these deeper communities without changing the Law on celibacy and allowing local lay leaders to celebrate the Eucharist in their own grass-roots communities

It is surprising to see a local lay minister of a community who is in charge summoning the people to hear the word of God, supporting them in their difficulties and joys, but not authorized to preside at the Eucharist. The word of God is more important to their situation of life. We shall see later how difficult it is for local people to listen and understand a sermon from a foreigner who struggles with the local language and concepts to help the community understand the word, while the local minister can do better. The understanding people have is that there is a line of demarcation between the ministry of the word and the ministry of the Eucharist. For instance they confess this sin: “ *na faura emisa lyakateketi*” “ Father I missed the mass said by the catechist”. Their understanding is that there are two different masses. One is said by a priest and in the absence of a priest, the catechist can say a half-cooked one. What is important is to note that there is a big gap created between the word and the Eucharist that is

wrong. This is what dogma has instituted as this dissociation is in the name of a dogmatized practice that reserves the presidency of the Eucharist on a priestly class.

The third challenge is presented by lack of vocations to priesthood among the Vambunza. There hasn't been any local priest from this mission since its inception in 1929. Parents are very reluctant to allow their sons to join the celibate priesthood as has already been mentioned. One of the reasons for this reluctance is poverty which parents expect their sons help alleviate by going into paid employment, not to do missionary voluntary work. Even those who have chanced their mind and gone for priestly training have not been successful due to lack of family support. From the Church's side foreign missionaries have done nothing to entrench localization in Namibia hence dependence on foreign priests. Re-evangelization requires a pastoral approach where dialogue starts with the communities about priestly vocations. Parents should be encouraged to motivate their own sons to join priesthood. The spirit of sacrifice has to be promoted and pastoral approach should intensify its efforts on vocation ministry.

The last challenge is that the Vambunza Catholic Church is still extremely "clerical". They rely on the priest for everything. Without a priest they are rendered helpless and powerless. They do attempt to do a lot of things without a priest but this a huge compromise. In most cases they walk long distances for problems, which they can easily handle on their own. Whatever the priest says is followed religiously without being challenged or

questioned. Muruti¹² should give all the answers. He is seen as a point of reference and is regarded as a king. This deliberate self-inflicted disempowerment mentality is self-limiting as a priest is in most cases unavailable and lives far. They do not use their own local mechanisms for dealing with problems and conflict as they do not have faith in themselves. I have been in situations where a particular church would wait for months for a broken window to be fixed as *muruti* needs to approve of the repair work. These people behave like this because the missionaries created this culture of dependency. *Muruti* would, in those days send some workers to repair everything without the community's involvement.

The Christians need to be empowered. They need to be encouraged to stand on their own feet and to take their responsibilities seriously. As mature Christians they need to broaden their understanding of the mission which is not only confined to spiritual welfare but the mission which involves all sectors of human life as we have seen in definition of inculturation.

➤ MARRIAGE

Christianity teaches that marriage is a sacrament. The word sacrament means symbol or image, but a mystery one that brings people into contact with what it represents. In fact everything in the universe is the sacrament of God the Creator, especially the love relationship between people. Loving one another, human beings become the sacraments of God loving the world and caring for it. This is expressed very often in the Bible, God

¹² It is a title of a priest.

being represented as the bridegroom or the husband in love with his bride, the people of Israel. Marriage, therefore, becomes a means of salvation. God uses the love of husband and wife, of parents and children, to redeem and to make holy those involved in the family or who came into contact with it. For this to happen, the love of husband and wife must be deep, must be like God's love, a total giving of self to one another in a life-long commitment. Otherwise it would not be a true sacrament of God's unceasing love. When we read the Bible, we find that Jesus did not create a specific rite of marriage. He just accepted the conception of marriage that we find in the Old Testament, especially in Genesis 1-2. By his own ministry though, i.e. his death and resurrection, he showed that he was the bridegroom and the Church his bride, thus making marriage the sign of what he is for the Church (Ephesians 5:29-33).

In the Mbunza area there are many problems surrounding marriage because of two distinct and separate natures of marriage, the traditional marriage, which is not recognized by the Church, and the Christian marriage. Both forms of marriage have different requirements, which are as different and subsequently poles apart as east and west, north and south. The traditional marriage is polygamous (though it is not as strong as it used to be) in nature whereas the Christian marriage is monogamous in nature. This fundamental difference has created problems in Africa, of such magnitude it is impossible to surmount. These unassimilated differences cause a diversity tension that Theologians in Africa have attempted to smolder unfortunately rendering this an exercise in futility.

The futility of it is brought by the fact that this dichotomy acts in direct contravention of Civil law and in the case of the Catholic Church, the Code of Canon Law. Canon 1148 no.1 states, "When an unbaptised man who simultaneously has a number of unbaptised wives, has received baptism in the catholic Church, if it would be a hardship for him to remain with the first of the wives, he may retain one of them, having dismissed the others.

In the case of the above canon the "dismissed" wives are still married to the man by customary rites and unmarried to him by civil rights and subsequently in the eyes of the Church. Also one wonders what will happen to these "dismissed" wives as they certainly will find it difficult to re-marry as customary rites already marry them. What about the children of the "dismissed" wives? Where do they belong? This is one area where Christianity of the West does not fit in with the Vambunza values. It worths noting that the Vambunza still regard polygamy as part and parcel of their tradition. From an economic point of view, they believe that numerous offspring quarantee numerous work force for the better chance of survival. Boju (1990:110) sees polygamy having positive values. It stabilizes marriage. According to him in the past polygamy knew few divorce cases and less adultery. It used to promote also the value of woman by protecting her from prostitution (ibid: 112).

□ ***The Legislation of marriage***

We have seen what transpires when the Church imposes certain regulations for the celebration of marriage as detailed in the Code of Canon law. What the Church of Africa should do is to see how legislation

can accommodate African marriages. One way to make Christianity relevant is to “christianize” the African values by building on the existing structures. For instance, the celebration of the Vambunza marriage and Christian one should not be separated as is the current practice. The two must be seen as one element. The Church has a role to play in a marriage, which is a sacrament. She has to ensure that nothing contrary to faith touches marriage to ensure that the holiness of marriage remains. It is also important to repeat that the Church never imposed the jurisdiction over the celebration of marriages. As already mentioned, the marriages were celebrated according to the customs of each community.

This shows that the power of jurisdiction over marriage is not an absolute right of the Church, the reason being that marriage is first of all a natural right and a human reality. From that viewpoint, marriage differs thoroughly from other sacraments that are primarily Christian realities, for example Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation and Ordination. On the other hand, it must be remembered that, when the Church took over the jurisdiction of marriage, it did so at least at the beginning (during the feudal time of Europe) because the bishops became lords, i.e. political leaders as well as Church leaders. There are no theological reasons for that but only the political situation of the church leaders of the time.

When we come to the Church legislation on marriage it is important to note that it is very difficult for the Church authority to change the “unsuitable” legislation that has been in practice and developing in the same direction for centuries because of the extreme centralization of the Church. For the Church it is presented as venerable tradition, if not something belonging or

close to faith. This centralization in the Church thwarts the local authority to make their point of view perceived and understood. Adding to this the fact that the local Church does not even have legislation power in the Church. The local authorities are unable to realize the need for changing legislation of the Church not only on marriage but also on the aspects of worship, sacraments and ministries.

QUO VADIS? (Where to go?)

The Vambunza celebrate their marriage in the Church for practical purposes having been married customarily for years. In good theology and pastoral practice, there should be one celebration for the two forms of marriage, not two separate uncoordinated ones as is the current practice. To have two distinct celebrations, especially separated in time, gives a message that they are different and serve different purposes. Pastorally this requires correction if we are determined to bring the Vambunza cultural aspects together with the Christian values. To separate the two is a theological aberration. In good theology, a marriage is Christian not because it is performed in Church, but because it is done between two Christians. It is therefore a pastoral challenge to endeavor seeking a way of having a Christian marriage when two Christian Vambunza do it, not when it is done based on foreign idea of marriage.

The second pastoral challenge about marriage is receiving the sacraments when in a “non-Christian” marriage. In Bunya Mission 320 marriages were recorded from 1997-2000. This was considered a record high as there

were only 6-10 marriages annually since the foundation of the mission. Many people are still not married because they have not yet satisfied the traditional requirements. When it comes to the Christian marriages men always delay the process as they do not even attend the Church. A woman has to plead with a man to have a Christian marriage. It becomes difficult as the man does not see any benefit. The woman then, because of the man, cannot receive the sacraments. During this time she cannot receive the Eucharist according to some regulations. A lot of people fall into this category. What should the Church do in this situation? The Church should not penalize them for their husbands' misdemeanors. There is absolutely no reason why the wife should be excluded from sacramental life because of a husband who has no desire for sacraments in his life. Women should be allowed to receive the sacraments especially when the parish council or community leaders know that a husband refuses to marry in the Church. The same thing should apply to the infant baptism. Baptism cannot be postponed only because of a father who is irresponsible towards his child. A child should be allowed baptism because of his/ her mother who practises her faith.

The third pastoral challenge regarding marriage is the question of validity. Most Christians who married in the 1950's explained during the interviews that during that time marrying in Church was a "status thing." A person who married in Church was esteemed by others as someone of high social standing. It was therefore degrading to marry traditionally. When a couple had declared their intention to marry, the woman would be send to Bunya Mission for Catechetical instruction during which time the man was not allowed to see the woman unchaperoned. The Church marriage was seen

as a real marriage. The question to ask is , why should the Vambunza traditional marriage not be considered valid like civil and Christian marriages? Why should marriage only be valid when it becomes Christian? This is the paradigm shift that is required in order to bring about liberation of the mind and true emancipation of the spirit.

Having worked as a missionary among the Vambunza, this status associated with the so called Church marriage is so real that most couples do not marry in Church unless they have enough money to make a huge feast. The Church marriage is aligned with “money”. It was hard work to change their mindset that a Christian marriage is not to be identified with celebration. Very often they made excuses not to marry because they did not have a goat or millet (mahangu) to make a feast.

The fourth pastoral challenge that requires exploring is the *after marriage visits*. The Roman Catholic Church solemnizes marriages in significantly large numbers. While “missioning” in Bunya, I solemnized hundreds of marriages but I never followed up even one to monitor and evaluate how the couple is fairing in the Christian marriage journey. Once married, I seldom met the couples, unless by chance. This is one element in pastoral work that is taken for granted but which is critically imperative for voyaging in Christian life. Pastors should make a concerted effort to regularly monitor the married couples to see if they have problems that can be tackled on time before the situation deteriorates beyond repair. They can also be helped to know each other better and relate to each other with respect and understanding in order to alleviate the possibility of problems that emanate as a result of misunderstandings and end up growing out of

proportion to insurmountable heights. Contacts, sessions, retreats and seminars help to assist the couples to maintain their love. The unfortunate thing is that most of them lack mechanisms for effective communication that can assist them to learn more about marital relations and how to sustain them as many marriages are broken due to lack of assistance where needed. Support groups also can assist the couples to grow in love and understanding.

If marriage is first of all a human reality that reveals God's nature and love, this very fact indicates that it finds its primary meaning in cultures that are expressions of what being human is. Therefore, the Christian practice and understanding of marriage cannot be abstracted from its cultural situation. If the Vambunza celebrate their marriages in Church with difficulty and without enthusiasm, it is because this Christian celebration is cut off from its obligatory rootedness in and intimate association with the Vambunza culture. The celebration of marriage in Church being cut off from the local culture has no meaning and no attraction. To celebrate marriage in Church in that way is a chore, a burden, and a purely legalistic obligation, not an exalting, relevant and meaningful happening for the couple.

4.2.2 ARTISTIC TALENT AMONG THE VAMBUNZA

Many African artists of different genres have agreed in principle that the concept of “art for art’s sake” must be transformed so that Africa can celebrate art that “talks”. It is against this backdrop that we shall look at art among the Vambunza and the role that it plays in religious life. In this society pictures and drawings play a vital role in communicating about different aspects of life. All artistic effects that fall in this family like woodcarvings and statues are done with a view to communicating a message. They are more instructive and informative to the Vambunza. The Vambunza developed a culture of art that goes back to hundreds of years, which is more profoundly found in woodcarving, which is not so common in many African countries. They are so talented that they can carve anything out of wood and these carvings are of such high quality that nourished they propel these people towards economic emancipation.

➤ ART AND THE CHURCH

How do the Vambunza utilize art to convey religious life and truths? In the 28 outstations in Bunya, only ten outstations use woodcarvings in the churches. The rest of the works of art found in these Churches are western pictures and statues, especially the ones that have found their passage from the Roman/Italian art. Most of the statues found in these Churches are statues that one finds in the Italian art galleries and the great Basilicas of Rome. The people are so accustomed to seeing God portrayed as a white man that they shun anything that runs contrary to that. All the statues

are of white people through and through. Local pictures and carvings seldom find their way into the domain of God. This conditioning of the mind was brought about by the missionaries who brought their own artistic and visual aids to aid understanding of the abstract.

To paint a picture of how conditioned to that which is foreign the people are, one extremely poor community toiled through thick and thin, hail and storm to collect three hundred Namibian Dollars for two years in order to buy the statue of Mary in a Catholic bookshop in Windhoek, 800kms from their community. Regardless of their drudgery they could not reach their target price. They had to borrow additional money still in order to get their statue, which they eventually did. They were determined to collect more to buy another statue, the statue of St. Joseph, their patron saint. Their church walls are nearly full of pictures from the old catechetical book.

If we talk about an African Church then we expect African art to express Christian messages. This is where a lot of work needs to be done to emancipate people from the present blinkers that prohibit them from viewing their own as fitting in the Church scenario. A complete shift of paradigm is required to enhance their understanding of religious elements using their own works of art. Universality in the Catholic Church has gone beyond its jurisdiction where it has usurped the local right of being African Christians. It has left scars of dependency even in the most absurd situations, leaving little or no room for creativity, personal growth and initiative in a community. The figure 1, the Vambunza picture of Mary, could be used instead of the foreign one in figure 8, (see figures 1 and 8 on page 127 & 128).

➤ ACTION FOR RE-EVANGLIZATION

What needs to be done to put this situation right? What does re-evangelization require in this respect? Since the Vambunza are already exceedingly gifted in woodcarving, they should be encouraged to make carvings for their small churches so that the Churches reflect who they are as a people. Their Churches must differ from the Churches of Rome. Also they should be taught that their hard-earned money can wisely be spent, without wasting it in things they can do themselves. Examples of the Sacred Images that they can do themselves include; crosses, the Stations of the Cross, icons and statues, the tabernacle for the reserved Eucharist and processional crosses.

With regards to the vessels used in the Church there is no reason why they cannot use the African ones. The following can be done in an African way; the chalice, the ciborium, (for the bread), cruets for water and wine, candleholders, incense thurible or censer and bowels. Figure 7 is of the Vambunza chalice that could be utilized during the holy mass (see figure 7 on page 128). Figure 5 about Jesus, Mary and Josef could be used on the 26 December to celebrate the feast of the Holy Family (see figure 5 on page 128). Even vestments worn by priests or presiders can be made of the African fabrics and bear African art. It is critically important to promote autonomy in order to strengthen faith among people. This diversity would in a way reveal the richness of Christianity among the Vambunza. It will also enable them to realize that Christianity is more than observance of customs, human regulations and structures that are foreign to theirs.

4.2.3 EXPRESSION THROUGH MUSIC

The missionaries realized the importance of music in the whole process of evangelization. They therefore instilled music in the liturgical celebrations of the Church. Without music evangelization work would have been a tough nut to crack considering the significance of music in Mbunza tradition and culture. It is imperative to take into account the present situation when there is a great demand for the local Church to stand on its own and make a struggle for true inculturation. The winds of change have revolutionalised circumstances to the level wholly unexpected in the African Church. Music is one aspect where in many African societies the spirit of inculturation has been demonstrated with greater force and enthusiasm.

Different liturgical aspects have been brought to life through appropriate accompanying music. This is where the Church of Africa has succeeded to celebrate its diversity in a capturing manner. This is an area where the Church of Africa has also developed distasteful conflict. Some African Christians are at home with the European manner of expression in songs and music while others have embraced the African Renaissance and Inculturation that finds expression in the music that makes the Church truly African.

➤ ACTION FOR RE-EVANGELIZATION

Different people in different walks of life have worked hard to change the mindset of Africans towards appreciating their own music and using it to praise and worship God who loves them as they are. Studies including linguistic, socio-musicological, liberation theology, and many more have revealed the richness embedded in the African music. Music is considered the most vital feature of the Mbunza culture. It arouses and inspires them to profess faith and cultivate piety. In Church music is held with high regard to the extent that some even feel that “a good song is even more important than a homily”. Liturgical songs which have their (the Vambunza) own melodies and rhythms are prone to move them even more than a homily can do! Songs which still bear European melodies but translated into indigenous musical-forms have lost popularity. Using the Vambunza musical language can best arouse the religious sensibility of the Vambunza. The mother tongue is normally better understood in its wealth and abundance of expression, than any other language.

To make their liturgy more appealing they have to work hard to compose their songs, which can accommodate their sentiments and emotions, songs through which they can be themselves. Their musical instruments like *nongomas* {drums} are useful in re-awakening the spirit and putting people in the mode of prayer. Creativity needs to be encouraged so that different liturgical events can be celebrated in their own music. Education is also necessary to re-introduce their traditional music in the Church set-up which has not been the case for decades. Some as violating their inner peace during the celebrations for instance sees the use of drums in

Church. People who are schooled in liturgy need to assist these people to choose the appropriate music for the appropriate liturgies. It would not make sense to beat drums during the Penitential rite but very fitting during the Gloria and Holy, Holy.

4.2.4 THE WORD OF GOD

The Vambunza have accepted the word of God exceptionally well. They take the word of God as a guide for moral principles and a channel for leading good Christian lives. They regularly take it upon themselves to read the Bible at home even in the absence of a leader. When they celebrate their own social functions, they always bring in the word of God, even in the form of a song which has a biblical message. They translate the word of God into actions of caring for the sick, visiting old people and encouraging each other in their faith. In cases of death they visit the bereaved family and console them with appropriate texts from the Scripture.

➤ ACTION FOR RE-EVANGLIZATION

As already mentioned there are 28 outstations with one Parish- Priest to look after them. It goes without saying that the Holy Mass and other Sacraments can only be enjoyed once in three to four months. Celebrating the word of God on their own is therefore a daily phenomenon. Re-evangelization should therefore look at training the “Ministers of the Word”

adequately so that they deliver sermons that help the people to live their Christian values. Literacy should be a deciding factor as this is one ministry that depends on the written word. In explaining the Word of God the traditional concepts and sayings must be used to make the Bible understandable and relevant. Since the Vambunza are highly artistic people, the word of God can be brought to life by pictures and drawings, which appeal to people's senses to enhance understanding. Story telling is an integral part of the African culture and it can be utilized in preaching the word of God for making the abstract concrete. Some of the Vambunza stories have the same moral as some biblical stories. They can be used in the whole effort of bridging the gap and improving comprehension. Deriving examples from their common traditional and cultural stories will help to convey the message easily but strongly.

4.3 VENERATION OF THE ANCESTORS

According to the Vambunza, God listens to the spirits carefully. He does nothing on his own (Zwart 1999:113-114). The Vambunza do not mistaken Vadimu (ancestors) with Karunga (God). They give an example of how they venerate their Ancestors: *ogu nga limi unene mahangu, ose kumuhedera asi ngano atu kwafe nose tuvhure kuzangura mahangu*. " we normally approach those who used to produce a lot of harvest of millet (mahangu) to ask them for help so that we can harvest the same". The Vadimu (ancestors) are just mediators between them and God. They are

not God. In previous chapters we have seen that the *Vadimu* are working closer with God. Thus God cannot do anything on his own without them. A good example of how the spirits work is rain ceremonies. The Vambunza believe that rain is brought about by wind and *Nyambi-Nyambi* is present and takes a lead in this wind. He actually directs this wind. The spirits are present in this process as well. They influence the decision making process taken by God. The ancestors on the other hand, approve whatever decision God takes. Zwart (1999:113) says that *Nyambi-Nyambi* is influenced by the spirits not to bring rain because their living descendants have misbehaved. *Nyambi-Nyambi* will simply blow all the clouds away, or altogether be absent meaning no wind will bring the clouds.

Although *Nyambi-Nyambi* played a key role in bringing rain, no prayers or sacrifices were directed at Him. He only acted at the request of the good spirits who influenced him. The spirits in turn reacted on the behavior of their living descendants. If people annoyed their ancestors through misconduct, it was only through prayers and sacrifices to the ancestors that the people could secure their benevolence and receive the blessing of the spirits and the co-operation on *Nyambi-Nyambi* (ibid). God reaches them in and through the *Vadimu*. Thus when they are unhappy, they need to amend and reconcile with the ancestors otherwise they will never receive any assistance. Ancestral spirits, the *vadimu* are believed to cause illness but not death hence why offerings are made to appease these spirits when someone falls ill. Should an illness become critical, then it is blamed on witchcraft (Forg op. cit.:50).

The Vambunza believe that the intervention of the ancestors is very important. It is invoked at the time of the birth of a child, when there is sickness, when starting a journey, when making a fortune, at the planting season, at the harvest and at all times. Their ancestors are seen as part of their families who still influence the members' lives for good or evil. Healey (1996:215) says that for peace of mind and general well being, it is very important for Africans to have good relations with their ancestors. Thus, the necessity of ancestor veneration. When they come to confession they come to confess sin against believing in their ancestors because they were made to understand that it is wrong although proper veneration of the ancestors does not contradict the Gospel. The Pope John Paul the Second, delivered the following homily during the official opening of the 1994 African Synod:

*The Church of Rome salutes these (African) people, especially their religious traditions, in which is expressed the ardent quest for the one God through veneration of their ancestors. These traditions are still the heritage of the majority of the inhabitants of Africa. They are traditions, which are open to the Gospel, open to the truth... They believe instinctively that the dead continue to live and remain in communion with them. Is this not in some way a preparation for belief in the communion of the saints?*¹³

The head of the Catholic Church Archbishop Bonifatius Haushiku, here in Namibia emphasized the same point about the veneration of the ancestors. In his words the Archbishop Bonifatius Haushiku of Windhoek said: “*African Christians should be allowed to venerate their ancestors freely and*

¹³ John Paul 11, “ Homily at Opening Mass” L'Osservatore Romano, 15, 1336(April 13, 1994): 1.

openly as part of their Christian life so that they may be authentically Christian and authentically African."¹⁴ It is my strong hope that if the Church tries to reconcile what she celebrates in the feast of all Saints with what the Vambunza celebrate privately to their ancestors (Vadimu), this will make a great contribution to making their Christian life more appealing and solid. This will also make the Gospel more concrete in the sense that they will always feel that it is possible as Africans to be saints. This will strengthen their faith more because they have only been exposed to European saints. There are few African saints in the Christian calendar like St. Augustine and St Monica. Interestingly they were not even aware that they are Africans because of their western names.

➤ **ACTION FOR RE-EVANGELIZATION**

Regarding re-evangelization, the Christians can be advised to celebrate their ancestors a day before the official Church celebration, where possible, in an endeavor to discover a mutual way in which the two traditions can dialogue and communicate so as to strengthen and to complement each other. A message that the two exist to serve their needs must be strongly communicated. And indeed they have the same common goal, which is communion with God in and through ancestors or saints. The homilies, which try to derive qualities and good examples of the ancestors, will always challenge them and motivate them to emulate these good people. It is simply unappealing to use far-fetched examples of people completely unknown to them. Let it suffice to say that this veneration is not only important in their culture, but it is also indispensable.

¹⁴ Bonifatius Haushiku, 'Six General Congregation', L' Osservatore Romano, 17, 1338 (April,27,1994):14.

Without them, there is no life among the Vambunza. The veneration of the ancestors among the Vambunza is here to stay. The incorporation of this culture into Christian faith will strengthen their faith.

The cult of the ancestors needs to be purified from traces of fear that may have crept in. In our previous chapters we have seen how the ancestors need to be treated. There is a great fear among the Vambunza towards their ancestors. I did not get a feeling that they can relate openly and normally with their ancestors. Therefore the Christian message must play a peace-making role in what concerns spirits of all kinds which, as St. Paul says, are subordinate to Christ (Col. 1:16). Finally it will be good to give God (Karunga) the first place. It is to him that we pray through Jesus. In the Spirit and only afterwards, through those who are near him in heaven (Lapointe 1986:52).

4.3.1 MORE ON NYAMBI-NYAMBI (rainmaking)

All the interviewers gave the same explanation about Nyambi (God). Before Christianity came to Mbunza area, the Vambunza already knew about God and they called him Nyambi. They did not use the same name “Karunga” as is the case now because of the influence of Christianity which forbade them to use the name because it was regarded as *a pagan name*. Whenever they had problems they prayed to their Nyambi-Nyambi through the ancestors. The common examples being rain and diseases. When

praying for rain for instance, the headman would call all the people together and explain the situation. A date would then be set when all the community would assemble under a specific tree called "Muparara". The purpose of this tree being to influence and bring good luck hence why many people prefer to build their houses near or under this tree because of luck. It also brings about security and psychological safety. The usual practice is that at Christmas people pluck the branches of this tree and put them on the roofs of their houses. (see figure 2 on page 127). People respect such trees, mountains, caves and hills. They regard such places or trees as holy and sacred where people meet God (Mbiti 1975:19).

It is imperative that this tree be found in order to make the rainmaking ceremony effective. If it is far away they cut it and bring it home in order to conduct the service. The leader of the service covers himself with a black cow hide. Everyone holds a piece of wood where one end is put on the fire. Then prayers start with the presider commencing; " *Nyambi-Nyambi, tupa ko mvhura*" (God, could you give us rain) the people will respond "hmmm...hmm...hm..hmm." a kind of affirmation similar to "amen" in Christian language. This confirms that what he is saying is our prayer. The same procedures are followed when they pray for other intentions like healing. When they finish their prayer, the salvaged pieces of wood from the fire are thrown to the west because that is where the sun sets. According to the Vambunza everything bad and evil goes or ends where the sun sets.

In the case of praying for rain throwing away the burnt pieces of wood means throwing away draught along with those sins or weakness that blocked rain or brought the disease. After the prayers everyone goes home to sleep. There is no socializing in order to maintain the atmosphere of prayer. The interviewers said that the same evening it would rain.

If there is a problem in the community they always saw themselves as the cause of it. Hence they always feel that forgiveness of sins or any transgression should be exercised as it will hinder the blessings. In other occasions they had to send a cow to the chief of Mbukushu tribe, in Andara for rainmaking as he was believed to have extraordinary powers to make rain. The leader would send one man to take the cow to the Hambukushu chief. On the way back home, the messenger would be wet soaked from the rain.

➤ **ACTION FOR RE-EVANGELIZATION**

How can the Church then create a synergy between this rainmaking and the Christian traditions? In the Catholic Church people honor Mary during the month of October. In many places Christians have developed a tradition to also pray for rain during this month. Marian shrine is normally visited to honor Mary. In the attempt to build unity the Church could liaise with the traditional authorities to combine the two different rites twice a month. A specific location can be agreed upon (not the Church) and then Nyambi-Nyambi rite be celebrated with the priest blessing the wood. The presider should however remain the traditional leader. After phase of the traditional rite, then phase two of Holy Mass should follow. The first part of

the Holy Mass, the penitential rite and the Word of God, would have been covered through the prayers of Nyambi Nyambi. Therefore the second part should not start from the beginning of Holy Mass as usual but be introduced by the offertory part. My contention is that there is no reason why this traditional rite cannot be used when the Christian community prays for rain mostly in October when people are preparing their fields for ploughing which they cannot do without rain.

During the years I have spent in Bunya this area has suffered a severe drought. Not once did the people make an effort to pray for rain the traditional way or the Christian way. Understandably they desist from praying the traditional way as they told it is pagan. The traditional prayers to Nyambi-Nyambi and the Christian prayers would complement each other as the intention is the same. The voice from these two traditions will be strong and loud enough to be heard by Nyambi-Nyambi who is always attentive to the pleas of His people. It would make a big difference to also use the songs that they used when they prayed to Nyambi-Nyambi for rain in the Church.

4.4 GENDER EQUITY AMONG THE VAMBUNZA

We need to clarify the whole issue of equity in relation to gender among the Vambunza. What is Gender Equity? This relates to absence of discrimination on the basis of gender differences. Equity takes into consideration the structures that have been put in place by societies to thread acceptable treatment of men and women. When this treatment transcends into unfairness and discrimination is it required for voices to shout in unison on rooftops to reexamine the “acceptability” of acceptance. If imbalances and disparities negatively affect some of the community members to an extent that they are unable to experience the full potential of what it is to be a human being, are to conclude that there is no gender equity.

Gender Equity takes the experiences of both men and women and goes into the definition of being human. Feminism on the other hand highlights the woman’s world and her worldview as she struggles side by side to realize her full potential as a human being. It seeks to express what is not so obvious, that is male-humanity is a partner with female-humanity, and that both expressions of humanity are needed to shape a balanced community within which each will experience a fullness of being. It is against the backdrop of both Gender Equity and Feminist standpoint that we will examine how the Vambunza feature in this definition of humanity.

4.4.1 THE SOCIAL STATUS OF WOMEN

The social status of a woman among the Vambunza goes insofar as being defined in relation to others, mother and wife, not taking into account her own qualities or accomplishments. Achievements are perceptible only if they relate to her outstanding ability to care for her husband and children. That is their paradigm. Anything that falls outside this realm does not even earn the decency to be labeled an achievement.

The Vambunza are matrilineal unlike most African societies which are patrilineal. In this community children are seen as the “woman’s offspring”. A man however is tasked with the responsibility to provide for their needs. One may be deluded in thinking that women benefit from this structure. The truth of the matter is that what happens to a woman as an individual is never considered. The primary focus is on the offspring not the woman per se. Oduyoye (1986) observes that “matrilineal may give the impression of the structural dominance of women in certain parts of Africa, but (even where the marriage is not virilocal) no real power resides in the hands of the woman.”

Regarding the traditional religious functions, the Vambunza like the other African societies do not avail women the prominence that is afforded men. In the aforementioned rituals of venerating Nyambi Nyambi, women only play a role of a spectator unlike men who are at the centre of this solemn ceremony. Also it is customary in this society for a woman who is

menstruating not to touch anything holy including her husband's food! In the society where there are no restaurants, and where a man has been conditioned to believe that he can only prepare his own food in the utmost and extreme emergency, he gets around this problem by going into polygamy. This "supposed ritual impurity of the menstruating woman places her outside full involvement in religious ritual for almost half her life." (Oduyoye,1986)

Women among the Vambunza operate outside the mainstream economy. Even in the 21st Century the education of girls is devalued as she will get married and the benefits of that investment will accrue to her husband. How education will benefit her is of no consequence. Women are therefore unskilled and remain forever disempowered. They are so disempowered that they do not even see any evil in disempowering other women. Any woman who attempts to rise above the structural limitations and boundaries is seen by both men and women as "too manly".

In view of the aforementioned structural milieu of the Vambunza, it is concluded that the African experience that a woman is thrown into is not any different from **sexism**. Like all the "isms" of this world, this is self-limiting and prohibits some members of the society to reach their full potential as human beings. They operate as outsiders in a world structured by and for male human beings.

4.4.2 THE ROLE OF THE WOMAN IN THE CHURCH

Now that we have examined the African experience of women among the Vambunza, let us take a closer look at how women feature in the Church in this society. It is fitting to note that the struggle for Gender Equity is a global phenomenon. In the early history of the World Council of Churches it was a huge challenge to ensure inclusion of the “laity-women and men”. The male clergy saw this as a necessity. There is a strong opinion held by women and men in most Churches that women exert the last ounce of their strength to ensure survival of the Church but the Church does nothing to ensure the inclusion of women in the governance of the Church. It does not even lift a frail finger to include women in the power structures of the Church. Some Churches have crossed the rubicon in ordaining women to priesthood fighting and hollering while Priestly Ordination is still exclusive to male human beings in the Catholic Church.

The role of women in Church activities is a big challenge not only in Bunya but globally. The superiority of men over women grows from strength to strength unchallenged. For pastoral purposes, this issue needs a special attention as women in this area have accepted this image of female inferiority. In a way they have accepted male domination as the natural order, made by God. This skewed perception about what constitutes humanity is derived from twisted understanding of Scripture. The image of God in Genesis 1:26 is often misconstrued as excluding the women!

Genesis 2:21 is understood to mean that a woman was created in the image of a man and not of God.

From such an understanding women are not only inferior but also put in the category of children. When a Mosotho man says “ My children” the wife is also included in this profile. Equality with men is as foreign a concept as the people from across the oceans who espouse it. Jewish thought did not regard women as a necessity but merely as helpers of men. The Jews had a strictly masculine concept of God: we read of the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob and not of Sarah, Rebecca,, Leah, or Rachael.¹⁵ In their synagogue assemblies, they never counted women to make a quorum. This prejudice was crystallized in the miracle of feeding performed by Jesus. The figure of five thousand did not include **women and children**. Paul is perceived as advocating male domination and a text like 1Cor. 14: 34-35 bears testimony to this.

Looking at women in Bunya, one finds that in the 28 outstations, only 14 have accepted to involve women in their activities. In this area there are only three main functions of women: leading songs during the service, reading the Word of God during the service, and cleaning the church building. In most cases the women are forbidden to conduct Sunday services in the absence of a priest. Even in the presence of a priest, they are not allowed to serve at the altar. Funerals and major services are the exclusive domain of men. Only lower level of services like catechetical instructions fall on the shoulders of women as these tasks require patience and are time consuming. Women can afford these laborious

¹⁵ W.T. Davis, “Our Image of God and Our Image of Women,” ORITA, op. cit., 123-4.

tasks because of social stereotypes which portray women having been endowed with such qualities.

Even where women are supposed to have expertise men still play the role of *supervisor*. In this case coordinators (men) who are not even qualified to *supervise* due to illiteracy would check and approve what has been done before a sacrament can be administered. Checking is not done because women are incompetent but because their work has to be approved by men. I have personally witnessed many instances where the coordinators, who could not read and write, were given the high profile job of coordinating, checking and supervising women who were literate. This male domination in Church is expressed by Kee (1986:1) by saying that women do not live their own lives, but they must to look for men for food, shelter and almost everything. Even adult women are not free and responsible for their lives (ibid: 2).

4.4.3 DIVERSITY IS STRENGTH: WHY WOMEN ARE NEEDED IN BUILDING THE BODY OF CHRIST

In order to untangle oppression it is necessary to realize that both men and women are needed to build the Church. Men have been over utilized even in situations where they are ill suited whereas women have been so underutilized that their full potential has not been realized. The following

are some of the qualities which primarily reside in women but which societies and institutions have devalued:

□ **Co-creators of life:**

Women are the co-creators of life in the whole process of procreation. They have the capacity to live by hope in spite of delay, problems and trials. A woman has the propensity of an inner space to receive and protect life, to make it grow and give it to the world. A woman has the vocation of being both the memory of humanity and of conceiving the future. For centuries a woman has kept in her heart, has accumulated and transmitted traditions and wisdom to her children but most of all, she has been the carrier of faith in life. It is vital that she continues in this role of having faith in life in order to provide the roots that feed all society and cultures. It is necessary that she continues to cultivate these roots so that they become strong and deep and enable new generations to grow towards the future without losing their identity and becoming rootless.

□ **Devotion:**

Their devotion is highly spiritual and women are able to discern the aspirations and the distress of the people. They are able to maintain continuity and faithfulness in work. Experience shows that women have a great capacity for personal adaptation in the face of the varied and often unexpected needs of the real life of societies and churches. They are thus often in a position to ensure not merely the survival but even the progress of evangelization. It goes without saying that women have the necessary skills and talents to work for God just as men.

➤ ACTION FOR RE-EVANGELIZATION

A strict enforcement of traditional and cultural measures of social control (like treating women as children and thinking for them as it is often the case in African countries) may infringe upon the inalienable and fundamental human rights of the women. We need to support those cultural and traditional features which promote cohesion in the society. This current patriarchal approach in the Church activities as well as inferior view of women in religious matters can only hinder Christianity to progress in this area. It can lead to a disparagement of the efforts of women in the achievement of the work of God and evangelization.

Secondly, we need to make a concerted effort to heal our brokenness. The thread of oppressive structures finds root in our worldview which distorts the whole aspect of humanity. If we are to release women from our socially **accepted** oppression, women's experience of what it means to be an African Christian woman needs to be carefully examined. The tendency is to pass over as a joke what women say about the tribulation of oppression from their colonial, African, and Christian practices which, in unison work harmoniously together to reduce a woman to a level below that of true humanity.

Thirdly, both men and women must re-examine Christian Tradition and confront those aspects that justify the domestication of women. It will not be easy and natural as most women and men will resist this effort for it goes against "the use of nature". In order to begin the experiment of fully living our intended lives, we are challenged with a call to refuse to be

instruments of our social death. Women in particular need to be empowered with new knowledge that they must not acquiesce to their own marginalization.

Lastly, the Scripture which has been at the heart of the marginalization of women, needs to be *re-read and re-explained*. Women and men are depicted by Scripture as being equally the objects of God's love. They experience this love to the extent that their own personal likes and dislikes allow not in relation to their gender. As Oduyoye (1986:136) explains, "Being a little lower than the Gods' applies equally to both men and women, just as sin knows no gender boundaries" Christ is the model of our new humanity. Galatians 3:27-28 states;

"You were baptized into union with Christ, and now you are clothed, So to speak, with the life of Christ himself. So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free people, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus".

4.5 SUPPORT SYSTEM IN THE CHURCH (SODALITIES)

The Roman Catholic Church in different parts of the world has established lay apostolic groups whose main aim is to translate the work of Christ here on earth into a collective effort of the group instead of being an individual effort. These groups have different mandates and they sometimes align

their mission with the life of a particular saint. For instance the women of Saint Ann focus on strengthening the **family** aspect of living Christian values; men and women of the sacred Heart of Jesus focus on bringing Jesus to the poor by visiting the sick and revitalizing those who are tired; women and men of Saint Cecilia illuminate the liturgical celebrations with music just like their patron Saint Cecilia who spent her life singing for God. These apostolic groups are called **sodalities**.

The sodalities have proved themselves to be strong agents in evangelization work in the Church. These bodies are able to penetrate even the corners where priests and catechists are unable to reach. They are able to identify the needs of the people and act on them. Their structures and rules are able to keep good discipleship among the people of God. Many pastoral challenges and problems are handled in these bodies. Furthermore, they are very good in deepening the spiritual life of the people by offering retreats and sessions which enable people to grow in their Christian journey without depending on the Priest.

These sodalities are available at all levels of human development. From the young age of six years to adolescence these young Christians can join the sodality of the *soldiers of Christ* which will help them to grow in their Christian life. Some boys and girls join the *alter servers* to help the priests during the services. The *youth groups* and the *children of Mary* are available for *young adults*. After marriage there are many sodalities like, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Immaculate Mary, St Cecilia, St Anna, St Josef and others. In all these sodalities there are different structures and regulations which help the members to know more about their patron saint and

develop their spiritual direction. They read the Bible together and pray together. For re-evangelization purposes this structure of sodalities needs to be strengthened as it is the most effective way of reaching the grassroots and buttressing people's spirituality. As we have mentioned earlier, the priest is not always available due to a shortage of priests. Even where there are adequate priests, this is one way of deepening spirituality among people relying on each other. It also instills order in the Church as different groups can be reached through their sodalities for evangelization work.

4.6 ECUMENISM

The spirit of ecumenism is lacking in the Bunya area. All interwees spelled out clearly that it is one area they see no reason for at all. As Catholics they were oriented by the missionaries that being catholic means the "be-all and end all" The spirit they were bathed in presented Catholicism as an infallible and the only way to salvation. This superiority complex is acting as a hindrance towards accepting other churches as legitimate and bona fide instruments towards God and salvation through Jesus Christ. The Second Vatican Council recognizes ecumenism as a fundamental aspect of the Church of God:

*Individual bishops are the visible, fundamental principle of unity
In their particular churches. These churches are molded to the
Likeness of the universal (catholic) Church; ...for this reason
Individual bishops represent their own church; all, together with*

The Pope, represent the whole Church linked by peace, love and Unity (Lumen Gentium, 23) Also, “In these churches the faithful are gathered together by the preaching of Christ’s gospel...” (Ibid, 26)

Unfortunately the older people who are in charge of the matters of faith do not know what the stance of their Church is regarding ecumenism let alone the contents of the Second Vatican Council, which sat more than 30 years ago. So in Bunya when it comes to matters of faith it is very difficult and almost impossible to exchange ideas and even debate issues of Christianity among themselves as neighbours. They do not even dream of having ecumenical services on their common social problems in the area. In some regions people come together for events like funerals where members of the other churches play an active role. In Bunya if one is Catholic it means getting a pure Catholic service untarnished by other churches’ involvement. This whole approach is neither African nor Christian. It also contradicts the Vambunza culture of unity, love and acceptance.

➤ **ACTION FOR RE-EVANGELIZATION**

It is imperative to cultivate the culture of ecumenism in order to build unity among the different Christian bodies. Understanding of ecumenism and what it entails is therefore a key principle in building good discipleship. The unity which Jesus Christ prayed for and for which he came, “I pray that they may be one as you, Father, are in me, and I in you: I pray that they

may be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent me” (John 17:21) will be translated into reality.

It is right and salutary to recognize the riches of Christ and virtuous works in the lives of others who are bearing witness to Christ, sometimes even to the shedding of their blood. The Catholics in this area should learn to acknowledge and esteem the truly Christian endowments for their common heritage which are to be found among their separated brothers and sisters. They should also acknowledge the works of the Holy Spirit among their counterparts. It will broaden their spiritual understanding and afford them to taste the fullness and richness of Christian life. The ecumenical discussions will help them to create a common vision on faith matters and this will lead to accepting each other.

To create and promote unity among people is also an imperative for healing their brokenness that has entrenched itself and found way through our differences in religion, creed, cultures, race, gender and socio-economic status. In Bunya special attention should be paid to the leaders who hold the reigns of steering their people to a specific direction. As we have demonstrated these are the people who are not acquainted with the current waves of change and the new thinking of the Church. A significant number of them can hardly read and write, having been appointed catechists forty to fifty years ago because of their faithfulness and their obedience to the Church authority.

This depressed and undesirable state of affairs has a negative impact on progress of the Church in this area. It would be an exercise in futility to promote ecumenical atmosphere with the present caliber of leadership unless the Church exerts the last ounce of its strength in vigorously re-training these leaders recognizing that they command a lot of influence and respect among the people. It will certainly be a thorny assignment considering the earliest orientation they received during the foundation of their Church. Their formation and training had no space for ecumenism.

There are a number of areas where ecumenism can be implemented. Preaching of the Word of God is one example where the different Churches can assemble to hear the Word of God. This aspect is the most important taking into account the shortage of priests and the competence that other Churches have in sharing the Word of God. This can be linked with prayer and worship. All the ecumenical groups can also look into, the apostolate of the laity and the spirituality of married people. These activities are very strong in other Churches like the Apostolic Faith Mission, where the Catholic Church can learn to build their spirituality. They gather every evening for their prayers and their members do not drink alcohol. When these activities are done jointly they can promote unity among people. In most cases the Catholic Church has premises which they can share with the other churches which do not have simultaneously putting across the message that “we are one.”

Last question is about the sacraments. Under which conditions and circumstances can members of other Churches be admitted to Eucharistic communion in the Catholic celebration? Here we are referring to the New

Apostolic Faith Church (NAFC), Gospel Outreach(GO), Nyambi-Nyambi Church (NNC) and Apostolic Church of God (ACG). These Churches are in minority in this area. The Christians of these Churches are scattered and far from these churches where they can assemble together with others to pray.

The re-evangelization suggests that they be allowed to receive the sacraments like the Catholics especially when they meet the conditions which are stipulated in the Code of Canon Law. Some of these conditions are: those who can be admitted are those who have faith in the Eucharist, have proper disposition and experience spiritual need (Canon Law 1983:157).

They should not be made to feel that they are lost sheep without shepherds because of distances and lack of infrastructures in their areas. They should be assisted in such a way that they can feel at home. The Catholic Church leaders, especially the catechists and those in leadership should promote a freedom of religion in this area, and the non-Catholics should not feel pressurized to join the Catholic Church only because of distances to their Churches.

The next section deals with social problems which can be tackled jointly by the different churches reiterating that the mission of Christ is to evangelize the poor in their many faces.

4.7. SOCIAL PROBLEMS/ CHALLENGES

How do we as Christians translate the Good News into visible and tangible message that makes a change in today's world? We live in a world that is riddled by such problems we don't know where to start as they look like Augean stables. The situation is depressing to an extent of severely testing the faith of many people who struggle with the existence of God amidst such misery. Ministers of religion are faced with an insurmountable task of making known the existence of a loving and caring God even in the depths of the sea of troubles. It therefore goes without saying that as part of the proclamation of the Word, evangelization cannot hope to be meaningful unless it addresses the social ills of our society. Our task in this paper has been to demonstrate how the second evangelization is required among the Vambunza. We would have failed in our task if we did not highlight how this re-evangelization is going to turn the situation around and make a difference in people's lives recognizing that the moral fabric in the society has completely disintegrated. A summer salt of moral behavior is needed, which put evangelization on the agenda.

Some of the burning issues which have changed the surface of this part of the world include, but are not necessarily limited to: HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse, and rape. These social ills exist in a society that is embedded in extreme and abject poverty.

In Bunya, like most African villages the youth are in danger of infection. It is estimated that 20% population is infected though the health center in this area has only registered 13 cases for the year 2000/2001. The problem has moved from bad to worse because the morality has completely turned up side down. Most of the girls aged fourteen years live on their own outside of parental care and chaperonage. One can conclude that there is a movement among these young people to shun parental care, hence the seriousness of this issue.

Engaging in sexuality at the early age then makes these young people susceptible to infection by older men who see to their financial needs for exchange of sexual favors. Not only engaging in sexuality at the tender age produces a society torn and plagued by the scourge of HIV/AIDS but also a society which is characterized by teenage pregnancies. In Bunya teenage pregnancies are so rife that they are becoming all most a norm. The Health Centre in one sitting registered 31 teenage mothers. This gives rise to an escalation of problems, which mostly affects girls. Their schooling is permanently interrupted as they are unable to continue with their education once they have children to look after. Their children suffer from malnutrition and sometimes die of communicable diseases due to poor hygiene. Furthermore, children born from HIV positive mothers are born HIV positive themselves and die at an early stage having lost their mothers. The community is now faced with a problem of orphans, especially HIV positive orphans. To make matters worse in the teenage pregnancies, sometimes the father is not even known due to multiple sexual partners.

Substance abuse, especially alcohol, adds fuel to the already burning ripple effect of the brokenness of the moral cord. Alcohol consumption is a big problem not only for the youth but also for adults. This becomes a vicious circle as the parents due to a drinking problem, forsake their parental duties, which in turn frustrates young people who eventually engage in acts of hooliganism trying to make sense out of the cruel world. Some families do not practice family planning hence one finds a situation where there are ten children in a home where both parents are unemployed. The children have no choice but to inherit poverty where they are forced to forfeit the most basic human needs including education. As for women, they die young due to the problems related to pregnancy and childbirth where the body is excessively exploited in too many pregnancies which drastically weakens the body and henceforth the immune system.

➤ **ACTION FOR RE-EVANGELIZATION**

What then is the role of the Church in combating these social problems that make one's "heart beat against the use of nature"? Even better, does the Church necessarily have to play any role at all? Nolan (1988:209) reiterates that "the Church is defined and constituted by the gospel. The role of the Church is to preach the gospel...denouncing sin and announcing the hope of salvation, protesting about what is wrong and supporting what is right....the Church practices what it preaches by actions or campaigns and by social services...All of this is done by the Church,...in order to preach the gospel by example." If the Church has to preach the gospel by example, what can it do to address the social problems cited above? How can it make a visible difference? This can be realized in a

number of ways. Education and creating of conscience become the utmost critical weapons in fighting these social maladies, which are choking our society. The Church should vigorously plunge itself into on-going education campaigns that are aimed at creating awareness through action in collaboration with other organizations which are doing work in the same field. This would call for a different caliber of Church personnel to be trained to talk about sexuality with the youth and adults.

The Church should exercise its authority and influence to impress upon the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture to include issues of sexuality and substance abuse in the curriculum. If children are taught early in their development they will not do these wrong things out of ignorance. Furthermore, we have touched on the concept of sodalities, which can be channels of education on these social problems as well. The Church can take advantage of the already existing organized structures to hammer information. The priests themselves should be trained on how to tackle these issues as most of them were trained a long time ago without a necessity to address problems of this nature. Nolan (1988: 212) says “ We take refuge in abstraction when we divorce faith from life, or preach a ‘universal’ gospel, and most of all, when we engage in a ritual, liturgy or sacramental celebration that is separated from the hard realities of daily life.” Many a Catholic priest preaches from the abstract without transcending the abstract in order to touch the burning buttons in people’s lives. “The trouble with an abstract gospel or liturgy is that it brings God in but leaves out the picture – the events and struggles of our time.” (ibid:213) It is against the backdrop of this problem that the catholic priests need re-training in making relevant and *changing* homilies.

We have taken liberty to show how the Church can utilize the existing Vambunza cultural practices and traditional rituals in the liturgical celebrations. The second evangelization calls for this synergy of forces even in fighting the degeneration of our moral behavior which give birth to the ills cited above. One such traditional ritual that can be resurrected from the dead is *Sinyanga*¹⁶. In this *sinyanga* the parents would instruct their children about moral behavior and life using the art of storytelling. It was a guarantee that anyone who went for the *sinyanga* would be successful in life. Now parents lament with nostalgia that the present state of affairs is reigning unencumbered because children no longer go to the *sinyanga*.

This concept which shaped society's well-being has been eroded by social pressure, urbanization, industrialization and westernization. I recommend that parents continue addressing these issues at their respective homes, during *senyanga* time. Not only can traditional and cultural values help in minimizing these social problems but also play a vital role in reinstating the eroded moral conduct. In the case of HIV/AIDS the *sinyanga* would help in eradicating this problem, not condoms as most people think. For some people a condom is taken as the sole solution for all sexual problems. Experience has shown that distribution of condoms has failed to combat the spread of HIV hence the call to revisit our African cultural and traditional values and roots, which will create conscience. This is the journey to defeating the problem. What the Church can do is to bring this concept back into being.

¹⁶ Is a traditional school where parents sit with children to teach them about life, around the fire in the evening.

Figure 1
Traditional Maria
(Wood Carving)



Figure 2
Muparara
(Tree of Luck)

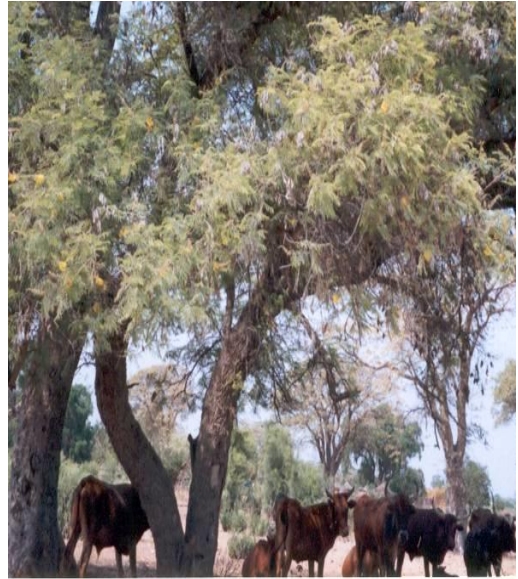


Figure 4
Vambunza Eucharistic
Community

The Picture is taken
from mural painting by
Claude Boucher, M. Afr.,
and Tambala Mponyani .

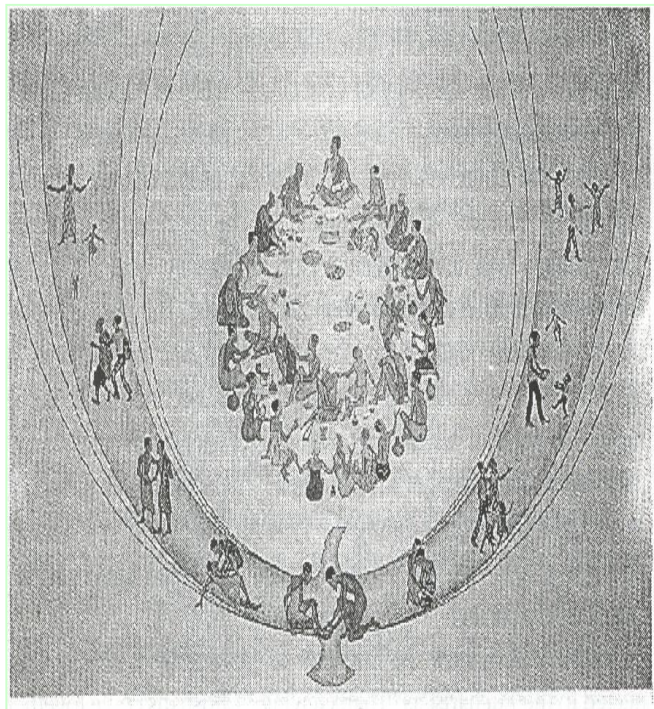


Figure 5
Traditional Holy Family
Maria, Jesus & Joseph



Figure 7
Traditional Chalice
(Wood Carving)



Figure 8
Western Maria



CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

I have attempted in this study to demonstrate the importance of the Vambunza cultural and traditional concepts and values and how these depict the revelation of God. Although God reveals himself in and through their culture, my assertion is that it is not a complete revelation and therefore the Bible is needed to complement and complete the divine revelation. I have, in this thesis selected certain traditional and cultural concepts which portray this revelation. These cultural and traditional rituals can be effective and strong means of conveying the word of God among them. I have shown that for the second evangelization to succeed where the first has dismally failed, the utilization of these rituals and practices in the arena of liturgical celebrations form a firm foundation and basis for true Christianity in this area. We have seen that unless the gap that exists between Christianity and the Vambunza cultural is bridged, true evangelization will forever be a myth.

I have shown that the gap also gives rise to a diversity tension, which turns itself into a psychological bone of contention leading the Vambunza to experience life in a permanent state of unclear conscience. This *tarnished* conscience emanates from sincerely believing in who they are as a people, which in many cases is in direct contradiction with the Christian values as espoused by the bringers of Christianity. To address this issue, the thesis has endeavored to identify areas of commonalities between the Vambunza

culture and Christianity in view of facilitating communication and synergy between them, attesting that evangelization work cannot be done in isolation without integrating people's cultures and traditions. It goes without saying that incorporation of the Vambunza cultural and traditional rituals into Christian rituals is not only necessary but indispensable in the evangelization work.

The thesis has suggested practical mechanisms to re-evangelize the Vambunza. The one mechanism is the training and formation of pastoral personnel. All Christians who are involved in the leadership of the 28 outstations (catechists, ministers of the Word, ministers of the Eucharist, catechetical instructors, choir masters and leaders of different apostolic groups) should undergo training to enable them to carry out their duties in the efficient manner following the spirit of inculturation and the principles of the Second Vatican Council. Training will upgrade and equip them with the knowledge, skills and attitude to carry out the mission of the Church in the correct context.

Secondly, this thesis has explored art among the Vambunza and how it can be promoted to cover new ground in the Church. Presently, the aesthetic beauty of this community has not found its way into the Church. The Church is still dominated by foreign artifacts, which are taken as the only accepted and 'holy' symbols. The universality of the Church has been translated into usurping the right of the local Church to utilize the spirit of incarnation, and allow Christianity to take the shape of the culture of the people. Re-evangelization means re-affirming the beauty of the Vambunza art, art that is even good for God.

Thirdly, the study has examined the area of music in this whole arena of re-evangelization. Music, it must reiterated, moulds the shape of the celebrations. If the choir sings the Gregorian chant, the service will take a different spiritual direction from the one steered by the choir singing the African melodies accompanied by drums and clapping of hands. It must be acknowledged that the area of music has caused such extensive conflict in the Catholic Church it actually threatened its peaceful countenance. Priests have been threatened with expulsion and at worst death for changing the face of the Church music from the Latin and European expression to the African contour. All these *ungodly* deeds have been made in the name of preserving the music of *God!*

What has become apparent is that millions have left the Catholic Church because of the 'boring' music. Not only should the Church incorporate the African music in the liturgical celebrations in order to strike the right cord, but should, without pride, read the writings on the wall and come to where the people are. If people make sense of liturgical celebrations in a particular way created by the African music, then so be it.

Fourthly, in this thesis I have delved into the whole subject of sacraments and the controversies presented by this necessity of the Catholic Church. What is foremost important to note and understand is that the Catholic Church requires the faithful to receive the sacraments or in the ecclesiastical phrase, to be a sacramental people. When these sacraments are thoroughly dissected, we found that there are numerous instances where the Vambunza cultural milieu have been completely

overshadowed if not overthrown by the western cultural practices which have nothing to do with the sacraments themselves.

In Baptism, for instance, many a priest have taken over the right of the family to choose an appropriate and meaningful name for someone who partakes this sacrament. The Church men flatly refused to acknowledge the African names and insisted that new names termed 'Christian' be adopted instead. The moment some names are given the label of *Christian*, its clear that others which do not fit this category are pagan or *unchristian*. *Christian* has been equated with *western*, thus skinning the African name of the right and privilege of this divine designation. The African Christian was then plunged into a dichotomy of existence, a *Christian existence* and an *African existence*. This dual life has unfortunately compromised the unwavering efforts of evangelization, thwarting its progress of genuine transformation. The thesis has therefore explored ways in which the different sacraments can eradicate elements of foreignness and instead clothe them with the cultural aspects of the people, making the sacraments truly theirs.

The Roman Catholic Church in Namibia should look very critically into the issue of vocations to priesthood and religious life. The recruitment methods which were applied ten years ago did not work. The Roman Catholic institutes could be utilized to answer this crisis on vocation. One catholic school could be reserved to cater for boys who feel called to priestly and religious life instead of catering for the boys and girls from rich families, some of which have nothing to do with faith.

The African bishops themselves should seriously look into the different pieces of legislation as detailed by the Code of Canon Law and ensure that the Church laws are aligned with the African Christian. Where the African is harshly and negatively affected by the same laws, they should influence change of legislation in order to accommodate the African Church. A graphic example is law on marriage when it comes to polygamy. In order to *Christianize* the marriage (one man, one wife), unprecedented acts of inhumanity in the African eye are implemented, where the other wives are stripped of their dignity and status of being *wives*. Unless the bishops in their African Synod unflinchingly exert their efforts to make the Church local, the African Christian will forever be a member of a Church where he/she adopts a status of a visitor not an owner. Re-evangelization looks at how the Vambunza, as Africans, can embrace a religion as a way of life, that does not separate them from themselves.

Fifthly, the thesis has looked at gender equity in the Catholic Church, and in particular the role that women play among the Vambunza. Women are still relegated to the positions stripped of authority, even where they are more qualified than their male counterparts. There is a mindset that women are only good insofar as bearing children and bending to the needs of men only. The Church must make a concerted effort to change this paradigm so that it can enjoy the fruits of the diverse faithful who will help the Church in its journey of re-evangelization. This becomes even more critical considering that the present caliber of laymen who are in the leadership are not at the right level of conceptual understanding and exposure. Women empowerment does not only have to do with men

changing their paradigm but women also, who believe that inferiority to men is endowed by Divine right.

Sixthly, I attempted in this thesis to explore the field of ecumenism. The current mentality of Catholics in this area is imperialistic and superior in nature. This mentality has made the Catholics to be aggressive in viewing the other churches, which are considered to be nothing except a farce in salvation. The Catholic Church is therefore, taken as the only church which offers salvation. This viewpoint has been inculcated by the early missionaries who succeeded beyond any doubt to create a paradigm of supremacy. Catholics, themselves seeing themselves invincible cannot find in their hearts anything they can learn from these churches. In fact, it should be the other way round. There are a number of areas where they can collaborate and share with the other churches translating the gospel into reality.

Lastly, the thesis looked at the social problems that have torn this area beyond recognition. We have shown that the Gospel without context is an empty Gospel and the one that revels in abstraction. Social ills in this part of the world can only be eradicated if we pull our socks and get the very Gospel to transform the society. This has the following implications: We cannot hope to reap any fruits of complete transformation unless the priests admit humbly that they need training and skills to change people's attitudes and behaviours in the current social scenario, otherwise we are failing in our mission of evangelization. The thesis has suggested practical and easy ways of bringing about the second evangelization.

APPENDICES

Appendix A is a research instrument in Kwangali

Appendix B is a research instrument English translation

Appendix C is a map of Bunya area

➤ **ABBREVIATIONS**

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (also HIV/ AIDS)
ACG	Apostolic Church of God
ELCIN	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia
MOHSS	Ministry of Health and Social Services
SCC	Small Christian Community
GO	Gospel Outreach
NAFC	New Apostolic Faith Church
NNC	Nyambi-Nyambi Church
OSB	Ordo Sancti Benedicti (Order of Saint Benedict)
PHC	Primary Health Care
UNITA	Uniao Nacional da independencia Total de Angola (United Nation Independence Total of Angola)

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