

Early Engagements with the Bible among the Gogo People
of Tanzania: Historical and Hermeneutical Study of
Ordinary “Readers” Transactions with the Bible

By

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work. Sources used for the construction of this thesis have been duly acknowledged. This thesis, 'Early Engagements with the Bible among the Gogo People of Tanzania: Historical and Hermeneutical Study of Ordinary "Readers" Transactions with the Bible', has not been presented to any other university for examination, and is submitted for the first time in the School of Theology, Faculty of Human and Management Sciences of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, for the degree of Master of Theology.

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Mote P Magomba

September 2004

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the memory of ordinary readers of the Bible who have gone to be with Christ, holy angels and all saints, Secelala Nhonya, Debora Mwaka, Andrea Mwaka, Damary Vigoa, Mtemi Maswaga, Mariamu Malanda, Daudi Malanda, Madari Muluu, Daniel Mbogo, Loyi Mbogo, Yohana Malecela, Persisi Stamilei, Kwenjema Balisidya, Elieza Balisidya, Mtemi Mazengo, Mtemi Lenjima, Mtemi Cipanjilo, Mtemi Magunga, Elieza Magomba, Raheli Mtambo (Sembalinga), and all readers of Kongwa, Kiboriani, Mvumi, Buigiri, Mpwapwa and Dodoma, catechists and ordinary teachers of the Bible, whose trust in the Word of God and interpretations have kept the faith and life of the Church in Tanzania down through the decades and years. These ordinary readers and many others whose names and lives are not recorded, faced hardships, trials and tragedies with extraordinary confidence in the efficacious, mysterious power of the Bible, *Nghani yo Mulungu*, 'the Word of God'.

ABSTRACT

This study falls within the area of the Bible in African Christianity, particularly ordinary readers' appropriation of and interpretation of the Bible. It seeks to explore, firstly, the processes of the encounter between the Bible and the indigenous people of Tanzania, specifically the Gogo in central region. Secondly, this thesis seeks to identify some interpretative resources and emerging interpretative practices that have continued into the present of ordinary readers of the Bible. This exploration is done by tracing the mission activities of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Tanzania, which began in 1844. The work of the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) is also examined, particularly the role it has played in making the Book "open" to the indigenous, through translation.

Although there is continuity between past and present readings, this thesis demonstrates that ordinary readings are not static, they are dynamic; and over the years neo-indigenous interpretative moves have emerged which are a combination of both missionary and indigenous interpretative resources and methods. This reality is evident in the contemporary phenomenon of women and youths' songs in central Tanzania. These songs are creative interpretations of the Bible from an ordinary readers' perspective. There is a challenge to trained readers of the Bible to realise that biblical interpretation is not the preserve of the "professionals"; ordinary readers in the parishes, in cities, towns and villages, do interpret the Bible as well.

To be relevant to the Tanzanian context, academic interpreters have to consciously take into account the resources and strategies of ordinary readers, which are demonstrated in their vernacular languages, oral narratives, religious experience, songs, proverbs and wise sayings. This will mean deeply understanding the local languages, Cigogo and others, listening to ordinary interpretations of the Bible, listening to the music and tunes of ordinary readers, as well as reading the vernacular Bible. Lastly, this study offers some suggestions for further research which, I hope, will bring refreshment and renewal to Tanzanian African biblical and theological scholarship.

ING'ANI ISITALA

(Abstract in Kihehe)

Ing'ani se nzadike mono sesene setwitigila miigiso ga Biblia mu Wukristo wa pa Afrika ndawe lwevapulike avayetu valongola neke peye vapulike vavanzile kwuyigisa vavene. Ing'ani se silongwa mono sikona ng'ani sivili: Lumwi, ndisaka vanu valukagule ulwa ndauli Biblia yasile mung'i yetu ya Tanzania na ulwa ndawuli vanu va Kuwugogo vavanzile kwiigisa. Ulwauvili, ifinuki fyavantanzile Vagogo valukagule lukani lwa Nguluvi. Ing'ani sesilongwa mono sikono ifipigo fya chama cha UMCA, fye fyavanzile umwaka ugwa 1844. Twikona na ifipigo fya chama cha UMCA; chama iki chatutanzile wehwe twe vanyang'I ukwandika Ulukani Ulunofu lwa Nguluvi mumilongele jetu.

Ing'ani sevavanzile kudalika avalongolo peyevanuche Ulukani lwa Nguluvi, na ing'ani setwidalika filo ifi sesimwi. Ndala nave ing'ani savalongola na salino sikali sisilaga, nangi imidalikile ijetu filo ifi givandamitimbule na ija Vamishonari, avasungu, na midalikile ijetu vanyang'i. Uwutimbule uwu uwamidalikile, tukuguwona na kugupulika munzimbo sa vamama, vahinzi na vanyilambo sevakwimba pevakwifunya mumakanisa ga Kuwugogo. Ndala inzimbo iso sasilonga wunofu ing'ani sa Biblia mumihosekese ija vanyawingi. Ndiwenda vapulike avigisi va Biblia ulwauta ukwimba na kudalika ing'ani sa Biblia sikipigo cha "vatambule" hela, vala vevimbite hilo; ndala migo iyi ya kwimba na kusikagula ing'ani sa Nguluvi ya mbetuli, mumakanisa getu, mufijiji, mumaboma na mbali mbesili.

Wone avigisi va Ulukani lwa Nguluvi wiwenda ng'ani sevilonga sikagulanike lunofu, ndiwona lwauta vapulikisage na vanu vangi lwe vidalika, mumilongele jawa, mumafunyo, mumikalile jawo, na munzimbo. Nachene, viyigisage kulonga na kulukagula lunofu milongele ija Kihehe, Kigogo na milongele mbegili. Vapulikisage lunofu nzimbo sa vanyang'i, kangi vimbage na Biblia mumilongele ija vanyang'i. Ndonzile nzolofu, lino lusige lukani lumwi hela; mukitabu iki ndilonga na ng'ani singi sesindonge hilo, sendiwona lwauta wone pambele tuwusilise wonofu kuvayetu mbevali, tuhwanite tusikagule nga'ani nzolofu sinyakutupela mahosa manofu kangi mapya, petwiva tukwigisa Biblia na ing'ani singi mbesili sa Nguluvi.

WULOLOSE WE NDUMULA

(Abstract in Cigogo)

Nghani zono zilimucitabu cici zo munga na zono zikuchemwa mafundo ge Biblia mu Wukristo wa Aflika nha vyono vagalolosa vayetu vekatali vamusi yetu. Citabu aci cikulolosa nghani nyejete: wuzize we Biblia na kanyhi vyono Wanyawugogo wabocela Nghani. Yekejete, citabu cici cikulolosa nzila zono vetumamila vayetu vyanyawugogo kuzilolosa no kuziganula nghani zo Mulungu. Kanyhi citabu cici cikulolosa mulimo wono wetumwa na CMS musi ayi wulawa mwaka we 1844. Mulimo wa UMCA nawo ukuloloswa, soko “wacigubulila” Citabu co Wumi, Biblia.

Zinzila zono wetumamila wayetu wekatali kusoma zo monga na ze vilo avi; ninga zevilo avi zikuwahapa, zikujendela kumwande, hamba sizitulile yaye. Kanyhi, soko myaka yapuluta minji wulawa wuzize wemisheni, gejala mafundo ne miganulike mipya yono ikuhanza miganulile yakatali na yevilo avi. Nzila cici mhya ze miganulile zikijela hamba muzinyimbo ze wadala, wahinza ne wazelelo muyisi ayi ye cisolo ce Tanzania. Nyimbo zizo zikucilajila wumanyi muwaha munomuno we miganulile ye Biblia nha vyono wakuyilolosa wanhu du wonosiwasomi yaye. Nyimbo zizi zevilovi zidahice wafunda wasomi wawaha we Biblia vyono usomi no wuganuzi simulimo we wasomi wawaha du; wanhu wose mumakanisa getu, mumijini, muvijiji vyetu, wayimanyile Biblia, wakuyisoma no kuyilolosa.

Wasomi hono wakusaka nghani zao zibocelwe viswanu ne wahu, nao wefunde nghani ne nzila zinji za wahnu wa muvijiji du; soko wanhu awa nawo wasomi yaye; wakuyilolosa no kuyifunda Biblia munonga zao, simo zao, mikalile yao ye cimuhe, muzinyimbo zao mbazi ne nonga nyinji. Wasomi wefunde viswanu nonga ye Cigogo, nonga ye Cihehe ne nonga zinji za wanyawusi; kanyhi, wahulicize miganulile ye Biblia, nyimbo ne ving’ozi vyose vya wembizi; wasome ne Biblia mu nonga zawanyawusi. Muwumalile we citabu cici nololosa nghani zono khuwona zinojeye zilondolwe; ziwuzilizwe-wuzilizwe nghani zizo soko zidahice cipela mahweso maswanu muwusomi wetu we Biblia ne nghani zose zo Mulungu.

UTANGULIZI MFUPI

(Abstract in Kiswahili)

Andiko hili ni sehemu ya somo litwalo Biblia katika Ukristo wa Afrika, na hasa katika ufafanuzi na uelewa wa wasomaji wa kawaida wa Biblia. Andiko hili linakusudia kuchunguza, kwanza, hatua za jinsi wenyeji walivyokutana na Biblia, na hasa katika eneo la Ugogo. Pili, andiko linadhamilia kubaini zana, hazina na mbinu za ufafanuzi, ambazo zinajitokeza kwenye hatua za historia, na ambazo zinaendelea miongoni mwa wasomaji wa kawaida wa Biblia siku hizi. Uchunguzi huu utazingatia kazi ya chama cha CMS iliyoanza mwaka wa 1844. Kazi ya chama cha UMCA pia itazingatiwa, kwa kuwa kazi hiyo iliwezesha kuliweka Neno la Mungu “wazi” kwetu kwa njia ya tafsiri za Biblia. Ingawa kuna mwendelezo wa tabia za wasomaji wa Biblia hapo zamani na sasa, andiko hili litaonyesha kuwa tabia za usomaji na ufafanuzi sikitu kilichodumaa ni kitu kinachokwenda mbele. Na baada ya miongo mingi sasa, tayari kumeshatokea tabia na mbinu mpya za usomaji wa Biblia, ambazo kwa kweli zinaunganisha mbinu zilizoletwa na wamishonari na zile zenye asili yetu. Ukweli huu unajidhihirisha kwenye nyimbo nyingi zinazoimbwa na akinamama na vijana kwenye makundi yao ya kwaya huko Kanda ya Kati ya Tanzania. Nyimbo hizi ni ubunifu mkubwa wa ufafanuzi wa Biblia kutoka katika mtazamo wa watu wa kawaida kabisa. Hii ni changamoto kwa wasomi wa Biblia, na wapaswa kufahamu kuwa ufafanuzi wa Biblia si kitu kilichotengwa rasmi kwa ajili ya “wanazuoni” tu; na ya kuwa watu wengi wa kawaida tu, katika makanisa, mijini, katika majiji na vijijini, pia hufafanua Biblia.

Ili ufafanuzi wa wasomi wa Biblia uwe wakufaa katika mazingira yetu, wasomi wapaswa kuzingatia pia zana na mbinu za wasomaji wa kawaida ambazo zinajitokeza katika matumizi yao ya lugha za asili, hadithi, uzoefu wa kidini, nyimbo, methali na misemo. Hatua hii inamaana pia wasomi wajifunze lugha za asili, Kigogo, Kihehe na lugha nyingine, kusikiliza ufafanuzi wa kawaida kabisa, kusikiliza muziki na mahadhi ya nyimbo, na pia kusoma tafsiri za Biblia za wenyeji. Jambo la mwisho katika andiko hili ni kutoa mapendekezo kwa ajili ya utafiti zaidi ambao, ninadhani, utaleta mawazo mapya na uamsho wa kitaaluma katika umahiri wa usomi wa Biblia na theologia.

ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	– Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANGP	– All Nations Gospel Publishers
ANITEPAM	– African Network of Institutions of Theological Education Preparing Anglicans for Ministry
BFBS	– British and Foreign Bible Society
BSK	– Bible Society of Kenya
BST	– Bible Society of Tanzania
CACS	– Centre for Anglican Communion Studies
CDA	– Capital Development Authority
Cf.	– compare
CMS	– Church Mission Society
CTP	– Central Tanganyika Press
DUP	– Dare es Salaam University Press
EAEP	– East African Educational Publishers
Ed.	– Editor
Edn	– Edition
Eds	– Editors
ELCT	– Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania
Ex	– Exodus
FES	– Fredrich Ebert Stiftung
Ff.	– and the following
GDP	– Gross Domestic Product
GEAR	– Great East Africa Revival
Gen	– Genesis
GNP	– Gross National Product
HGF	– Holy Ghost Fathers
HIV	– Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ISB	– Institute for the Study of the Bible
ISITAP	– Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa

n.d.	– no date
NIV	– New International Version
NIV	– Revised Standard Version
OUP	– Oxford University Press
P.	– Page
Pp.	– pages
PCMS	– Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society
SBL	– Society of Biblical Literature
TAC	– Tanganyika Africa Church
TEC	– Tanzania Episcopal Council
TNC	– Tanzania National Church (another name for TAC)
UBS	– United Bible Societies
UMCA	– Universities’ Mission to Central Africa
Vol.	– Volume
WCC	– World Council of Churches

PICTURES:

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CHAPTER 1

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

In his article, 'Reading Texts through Worlds, Worlds through Texts', Vincent Wimbush analyses the historical and hermeneutical dimensions of the early encounters with the Bible among African Americans. According to Wimbush, the Bible needs to be studied as a separate entity. It should not always be subsumed under the reception of Christianity. The Bible can have an impact of its own on people's lives, even if there are weaknesses in the methods of communicating the message. Wimbush depicts how African Americans arrived in the 'New World' (America) as slaves and how they encountered the Bible in the hands of their slavers. In the first place, the Bible seemed to be a tool of oppression; but later, the Bible started to impact on African American lives, regardless of how the slavers interpreted it. The liberation narratives of the Old Testament as well as the stories of the suffering but victorious Jesus, captured the collective imagination of African Americans.¹ In the end, African Americans embraced the Bible and transformed it from "a white people's book" into a source of spiritual power, inspiration, learning and hope for their liberation. Early readings of the Bible were 'foundational' for all subsequent hermeneutic practices of African Americans.² This means that early African American readings of the Bible have, as Wimbush puts it, 'functioned as phenomenological, social-political and cultural foundation for the different historical "readings" of the Bible that have followed'.³

Gerald West, in his article, 'Early Encounters with the Bible among the BaTlhaping: Historical and Hermeneutical Signs', has also pursued an interesting study of the early transactions between the Bible and the BaTlhaping people of Southern Africa. From West's study, it is palpably clear that in the encounter between the BaTlhaping and

¹ Wimbush, V.L., 'Reading Texts through Worlds, Worlds through Texts', *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.131.

² Wimbush, V.L., 'Reading Texts through Worlds, Worlds through Texts', *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.131.

³ Wimbush, V.L., 'Reading Texts through Worlds, Worlds through Texts', *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.131.

explorers and missionaries, the Bible is a separate object of power. This means, as West writes, 'while the Bible occupied a particular place in the constellation of the meanings the missionaries embodied, ...the Bible as a distinct object took on a different order and fresh significations among the Tlhaping – significations that may be considered foundational for subsequent moments in their history'.⁴

The aforementioned biblical scholars, and particularly West whose research has been done in an African context, form a background to my study on the interface between the Bible and the Gogo people in the early missionary endeavours in central Tanzania. The early engagements between the Bible and the Gogo are vitally significant if we are to analyse and come to grips with the prevailing interpretative practices of ordinary "readers" of the Bible in Tanzania. Presently, in Tanzania, it has become a common practice for Christians, and even people of other faiths, to keep Bibles in their houses even though they do not read them. Scriptural verses are written or inscribed on doors and on the walls of lounge rooms. Words of the Bible are written on buses and lorries. More often than not, "Bible men" and "Bible women" walk with their Bibles, even if some of them are illiterate. Sometimes the Bible is placed on a sick person for healing. During the night, some people put their Bibles under their pillows. Others have been buried with their Bibles.⁵ In fact, the Bible has become the book of Tanzanians, and Tanzanians "the people of the book". The Bible is dearly embraced and "read" by many. Some "Bible people" would claim that they do not just read the Bible, but also "the Bible reads them"!⁶ What is the Bible to these ordinary "readers"? Why do they treat, read and interpret the Bible the way they do? What resources do they have that facilitate their reading and understanding of the Bible? What place, if any, can the ordinary "readers'" methods and/or resources have in the academic biblical and theological studies in

⁴ West, G.O., 'Early Encounters with the Bible among the BaTlhaping: Historical and Hermeneutical Signs', 2003, p.1 (unpublished); also see, West, G.O., 'Unpacking the Package: The Tlhaping Engage with the Bible', in Justin S. Ukpong, et al, *Reading the Bible in the Global Village*, p.84ff.

⁵ Maluleke, Tinyiko S., 'The Bible Among African Christians: A Missiological Perspective', in Okure, T., ed., *To Cast Fire Upon the Earth: Bible and Mission Collaborating in Today's Multicultural Global Context*, Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 2000, pp.91-92.

⁶ See the wood sculpture, by an unknown Tanzanian artist, which is reproduced on the cover of Hans-Ruedi Weber's book, *The Book that Reads Me: A Handbook for Biblical Study Enablers*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1995; also, see explanations on page ix of Weber's book.

Tanzania? To answer these vital questions, and indeed, to understand the aforesaid phenomena, we need to analyse the history of the early engagements with the Bible in Tanzania, and in our case among the Gogo people.

But, why have I decided to study the Gogo people, and not others in Tanzania? These people were among the first people of Tanzania (then Tanganyika) to encounter the Bible and they played a significant role in the spread of the Word and the growth of the church in Tanzania.

1.2 QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

Given the aforesaid background and motivation, my thesis seeks to address the following questions:

- (1) What are the historical processes of the early engagements between the Bible and the Gogo people?
- (2) Was the engagement between the Bible and the early “readers” different from their engagement with missionaries and/or Christianity?
- (3) What was/is the Bible to these early “readers”?
- (4) What were the interpretative resources, and emerging method/practices which facilitated the processes of engagements with the Bible?

The hypothesis, the guiding thought and/or the assumption, of this thesis is that in all the historical and hermeneutical processes down through the years, the Bible, at least among ordinary “readers”, is a distinct object that contains mysterious (magic!) power. A related element in my research is that there is a continuity of interpretative practices from the past to the present, and this is why contemporary ordinary “readers” interpret the Bible the way they do.⁷

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

This thesis is divided into two parts, namely, the historical and hermeneutical parts.

⁷ See, the preceding discussion in this chapter.

For my historical descriptions of the early engagements between the Bible and the Gogo people, I have worked with secondary literature, archives and local fieldwork. My literature survey has focused on those books and other sources dealing with the history and mission work, particularly, the work of the Church Mission Society (CMS) in central Tanzania (then Tanganyika). CMS missionaries were the first to reach the Gogo with the Bible, and their archives provide us with accounts of the earliest encounters with the Bible among the Gogo. Given that the available books (as indicated in chapter two) have only hints and, or, implicit accounts of the effect of the Bible, I have attempted, where possible, to 'read between the lines' in order to chart the historical processes of the Gogo engagements with the Bible. The archival research and local fieldwork have been done in the earliest mission centres in Mpwapwa, Kongwa, Mvumi, Buigiri and in Dodoma. All these places are within Gogo land in central Tanzania. In my research in Tanzania, I found that some archival resources at St. Philip's Theological College Library provide rich information on some of the earliest Gogo 'Bible men and women' dating from the 1880s. The information includes the earliest photos of 'Bible people' with short notes, or testimonies on them. These resources have been studied carefully and I have also scanned the photos for illustrative use in the historical analysis of this study.

In using history of Christianity and mission sources, I do not intend to write another piece of Christian history; but my aim is to attempt to construct a historical analysis of the processes of the transactions of the Bible out of the available historical and mission sources, both written and oral sources. Because there is a strong oral tradition among the Gogo, in my local fieldwork I conducted interviews with some Gogo elders in Kongwa, Mpwapwa, Mvumi, Buigiri and Dodoma, in order to get some comments on the arrival of the Bible and how they received and used it. I collected some Gogo proverbs and sayings, old hymns and songs, conversion stories and inscriptions on very early missionary and Gogo tombstones. Also, I visited village offices, in the places that I have identified above, so as to get more information on local Gogo history, instead of relying only on books; for books very often give us the view from the mission compound, and they overemphasise the official aspects of Christianity, leaving us with very little

knowledge of the unofficial, the ordinary life of the believers: their Bible “reading” habits, prayers in the home, local ceremonies, rites of passage, traditional weddings and funerals. Local fieldwork was vitally significant for unearthing the hidden history of the acceptance of the Bible among the Gogo.

The earliest translation of the Bible into Gogo vernacular language, and its present re-translation, is another important source for my research. I visited the Bible Society office in Dodoma, Tanzania, to get more information about the Gogo Bible. Also, I conducted literature research in respective libraries of St. Philip’s Theological College, Kongwa, Tanzania and St. Paul’s United Theological College, Limuru, Kenya, as well as Dodoma Regional Library, Tanzania.

For the hermeneutical part of my research, I collected and/or recorded sermons, speeches and Bible studies, which were given, or, led by evangelists, catechists, elders and other ordinary “readers” around Kongwa area, and in the other places that I have mentioned above. Having lived in Kongwa for almost nine years now, I have actively been involved in the ordinary lives of the Gogo, and so I have had some experience of their ordinary lives, their understanding of the Bible as the Word of God, and even their interpretative practices. This will also contribute to my analysis of the interpretative practices of the present Christian communities in central Tanzania. The interpretative aspect of my research will try to answer the question of continuity between the present interpretative practices and the early engagements of the Bible in Tanzania, and in this case, in central Tanzania, particularly among the Gogo Christian communities.

1.4 LIMITATIONS

In my literature study, I learned that there are many references to the diaries, letters and other documents which are in CMS archives held at the Central Library, Birmingham University, UK. Other materials are in the CMS-Australia headquarters, in Sydney, as well as in the office of the Anglican Church of Canada. The material in Canada contains

a lot of Thomas B.R. Westgate's letters, Newsletters, diaries, mission reports, etc. But due to financial constraints I was not able to access most of the overseas material.

The lack of existing literature which specifically deals with the early engagements with the Bible among the Gogo is another limiting aspect. In terms of literature, this research relies on historical, missiological, anthropological and historical books.

Another issue, which might have limited my findings, relates to my personal identity. I come from the Hehe people of Tanzania, but I am writing about the Gogo and their reception of the Bible. I have lived among the Gogo and learned their vernacular, Cigogo; but not being a Gogo person, I must admit that I may not have been able to fully understand some of the very deep, phenomenological aspects of the Gogo culture, which might be vitally significant for their appropriations of this mysterious (magic!) book, the Bible.

Yet, another thing that could limit this research is its nature. Being research for a Masters, it is obviously limited by its level and requirements. Had it been research for a doctorate I presume more time and more archival research and local fieldwork would have been required of me. Given this level of study and its restricted focus, my research was done within a short period of time, including holiday time in December 2003 and January 2004.

1.5 RESEARCH ETHICS

My research work consistently follows academic research etiquette, and all writing conventions, as outlined by J. Mouton.⁸ This includes professional confidentiality, where required, proper citations or quotations, acknowledgement of sources, correct references, etc. The rights of the interviewees, and all the people that I met in the field, were respected. The privacy and personal space of the people in the field were also respected; there will be no harassment of any kind, of anybody involved in my research.

⁸ Mouton, J., *How to Succeed in Master's and Doctoral Studies: A South African Guide and Resource Book*, Pretoria, van Schaik, 2001, p.238ff.

Interviewees were given freedom to choose as to whether their names should appear in the thesis or not.

1.6 OUTLINE OF THESIS

As is already clear, Chapter 1 covers the statement of the research problem, its questions and hypothesis as well as motivation for the study and delineation of my objectives. Methods and procedures for data collection, and the research limitations have also been included in this chapter.

My aim in Chapter 2 is to try to locate my thesis within appropriate existing literature. I also dialogue with some of the scholars who have written about ordinary “readers” of the Bible, for example, Vincent Wimbush (1993), Teresa Okure (1993), Musa Dube (1996) and Gerald West (2002, 2003). These scholars provide a theological, scholarly background for my study of the ordinary African “readers” transactions with the Bible.

Chapter 3 provides background information about the people of Tanzania in general, and the Gogo in particular. The social, political and religious dimensions are discussed, as all this played a role in the Gogo’s engagement with the Bible.

My focus in Chapter 4 is on the arrival of the first missionaries and the earliest presence of the Bible in Tanzania. It is a synopsis of the different stories that have been told or written about the coming of the first missionaries and explorers and how the Bible was introduced to the indigenous people in different places in Tanzania.

Chapter 5 is divided into two parts. First, it concentrates on historical descriptions of the early missions in the Gogo land and the presence of the Bible. It focuses on the early mission work of E.J. Baxter, J.C. Price, J.H. Briggs, E.W. Doulton and T.B.R. Westgate, among the Gogo. This section of the chapter also tries to chart the early phases of engagements and how the Gogo received the Bible and appropriated it into their lives. This first part covers what I call the first period (1876-1914). The second part of this

chapter deals with the period from 1915 to 1970s. This period is characterised by the translated Bible, the Bible as a text. The main aim here will be to see how the people engage with the text and how they make sense of it. In this period, European missionaries were still present, building an indigenous church; but already there were catechists, teachers and many “readers” of the Bible. What emerging interpretative practices were there? This section of the chapter is intended to provide hints.

Having developed a historical perspective of the Bible, and the phases of appropriations, Chapter 6 will then specifically attempt to answer the question, ‘what is/was the Bible to the early ordinary “readers”?’ First, I will start with what my study has discovered as ordinary “readers” interpretative resources and practices among the Gogo. Second, I will attempt to depict the ordinary “readers” understanding of the Bible. Then, I will try and put forward a verdict as to whether there is any continuity between the early “readers” and contemporary ordinary “readers” of the Bible among Christian communities in central Tanzania.

Chapter 7 will deal with neo-indigenous interpretations of both ordinary “readers” and trained readers. The two contexts and their interpretations will be considered. Is there any interaction between the contexts? If so, is there any enrichment between the ordinary “readers” and the trained readers? What place, if any, do the ordinary “readers” resources and practices have in the academic biblical studies in Tanzania? The intention of this chapter is to raise more questions than answers, specifically for further research.

I will conclude my thesis with a summary of my research and suggestions for further research.

1.7 KEY TERMS USED

My intention in this section is to explain these four key phrases: “Ordinary readers”, “trained readers”, “interpretative practices” as well as “interpretative resources”. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English*, a ‘reader’ is ‘a person who reads, especially one who reads a lot or in a particular way... [Also] a person who reads a particular newspaper, magazine, [science fiction] etc’.⁹ In this thesis, this term “readers” refers to “readers” of the Bible; those who have the habit of “reading” their Bibles, either ‘a lot or in a particular way’. These readers might be “reading” other books too, like magazines, stories, fiction, etc., but our concern here is to look at their habit of reading the Bible. They are presently studied as “readers” of the Bible. In this paper, the term “readers” has been put into inverted commas because throughout this paper it is used both literally and metaphorically. That is, some readers of the Bible can literally read the Bible. They do have the ability to read the words in ‘the book with the black cover’. They are literate. Other “readers” are illiterate, but they read through hearing and remembering the Bible. In fact, they ‘listen to, retell and remake the Bible’.¹⁰ These “readers”, together with all those who can literally read, are real “readers” of the Bible.

Another significant term, which explicitly defines the aforesaid “readers”, is “ordinary”. This adjective denotes the type of these “readers” of the Bible. They are “ordinary readers”. Generally, this implies all those, poor and rich, employed and unemployed, farmers and business people, peasantry and urban dwellers, prisoners and free people, who read the Bible ‘pre-critically’.¹¹ The use of this phrase, ‘Ordinary readers’ in this paper does not, in any way, intend to undermine or under-grade their “reading”, but instead to recognise it as another particular way of reading the Bible, and that the academic reading is no longer the norm. Ordinary “readers” do also “read” critically, but

⁹ Hornby, A. S., *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English*, 6th ed., Oxford University Press, 2000, p.970.

¹⁰ West, G.O., *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible*, Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 2nd ed., 2003, p.x. Also, West, G.O., ‘Mapping African Biblical Interpretation: A Tentative Sketch’, in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, eds, *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends*, Leiden, Brill, 2000, p.44.

¹¹ West, G.O., *The Academy of the Poor*, p.x.

in a different way from that of the biblical scholar or the theologian. As West puts it, 'Ordinary readers do have resources to read texts critically, but they do not use structured and systematic sets of resources that constitute the craft of biblical scholars'.¹² So, ordinary "readers" of the Bible, men and women, young and old, girls and boys interact with the Bible. Unlike trained readers, ordinary "readers" engage the Bible in their churches, in their homes, in the market places, on the roads, in communal gatherings, etc.

Trained readers are found in parishes, Bible schools, Bible colleges, seminaries, and in theology departments in universities in Tanzania, East Africa, South Africa and elsewhere. This thesis paper mainly focuses on trained readers in Tanzania. Trained readers are all those who have had theological training, whether in the West or here in Africa.

Tinyiko S. Maluleke expresses caution concerning these phrases, 'ordinary readers' and 'trained readers': he says, 'the term "ordinary people" or "ordinary readers" is particularly ambiguous on race, gender and economic location'. Hence, Maluleke puts forward his five-part critique:

- (a) ...the adjective "ordinary" in the phrase "ordinary readers" does not communicate useful, key or decisive information about the subject it qualifies. Anybody can be and even look ordinary depending on what we are talking about or doing.
- (b) While "ordinary" and "trained" are power-relation categories, the tentative, evasive and "innocuous" nature of the terms tend[s] to obscure, trivialize or palliate the economic, race and gender... basis of the power discrepancy concerned.
- (c) An unmasking of the essential basis of the power discrepancy between so called "ordinary" and "trained" people in South Africa will lead us back to race, gender and class as "allocators" of privilege wealth and opportunity...

¹² West, G.O., *The Academy of the Poor*, p.x.

- (d) It is not good enough for a hermeneutic of liberation simply to posit and accept the existence of “trained” and “ordinary” readers as a starting point...
- (e) ... the formulation “ordinary versus trained” when used as a hermeneutical starting point, is probably based on an (uncritical) acceptance of the ideologies, choices and commitments inherent in the “training” of the so-called “trained”.¹³

Maluleke seems to argue against proponents of ordinary African “readers” of the Bible;¹⁴ and this is why I have quoted him at some length here. However, Maluleke’s caution needs to be heeded. We must be careful that the terms we use do not obscure helpful insights or undermine the potentiality of the wider meaning. Our terms should not minimise the massive contribution of ordinary people. Surely terms like “non-trained” or “un-trained” need to be avoided as the “non” or “un” implies that the trained reader is the norm before all others.

Another key phrase in this thesis paper is interpretative practices. These are modes of interpretation; they are ways and methods in which readers, whether ordinary or trained, interpret the Bible. Interpretative practices are means of reading the Bible. Justin S. Okpong states that

Reading practices involve the use of reading methods. No readers read the Bible without using some method whether scientific or unscientific, albeit unconsciously, even if they are untrained Bible readers. A *reading method* embodies a procedure along with a conceptual apparatus with its particular set of cultural (political, social, economic, etc) and interpretative interests. It comprises theoretical assumptions about the meaning of texts, the nature and purpose of reading, and the world of the reader. It is a child

¹³ Maluleke, T.S., ‘The Bible Among African Christians: A Missiological Perspective’, in Teresa Okure, ed., *To Cast Fire Upon the Earth: Biblical and Mission Collaborating in Today’s Multicultural Global Context*, Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 2000, pp.93,94.

¹⁴ E.g., Gerald O. West, Teresa Okure, and Musa W. Dube.

of a particular culture and is founded on a particular conceptual frame of reference.¹⁵

So, interpretative practices as used in my thesis entail methods and procedures as well as reading interests and the reader's worldview. Interpretative practices rely on interpretative resources, or tools with which people interact with the Bible.

The term "resources" denotes tools that facilitate the ways in which ordinary African "readers" engage with the Scripture. Indigenous languages, songs, dramas, oral narratives, proverbs, wise sayings, symbols and visual arts: all these are but a few significant resources of ordinary "readers" as they engage with the Bible. African ordinary "readers'" resources are based on rich African traditions and culture. Beside the aforementioned, there are many other "cultural interpretative resources".¹⁶

The phrases: ordinary "readers", trained readers, interpretative practices, and interpretative resources, need to be born in mind as we continue to build up our case about ordinary "readers" transactions with the Bible among the Gogo people of Tanzania. Before introducing the Tanzanian people in general, and the Gogo in particular (in Chapter 3), the following chapter seeks to locate the whole discussion within the existing literature regarding ordinary "readers".

¹⁵ Ukpong, J.S., 'Reading the Bible in a Global Village: Issues and Challenges from African Readings', in Justin S. Ukpong, et al, *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Cape Town, Atlanta*, Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), 2002, pp.13,14.

¹⁶ Adamo, D.T., 'The Use of Psalms in African Indigenous Churches in Nigeria', in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, eds, *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends*, Leiden, Brill, 2000, p.336,337.

CHAPTER 2

2.0 ORDINARY “READERS” AND THEIR READING OF THE BIBLE: A DEBATE

2.1 PHASES AND SCOPE OF THE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE BIBLE

Since the concern of this thesis, which is an historical and hermeneutical analysis of ordinary readings of the Bible among the Gogo people, falls under theological and biblical scholarship, it is appropriately significant to locate this paper within the wider theological debate regarding ordinary “readers” of the Bible. A review of Wimbush’s article, ‘Reading Texts through Worlds, Worlds through Texts’, will help to set the context of my study.¹⁷ Then, I will also look at the works of Teresa Okure, ‘Feminist Interpretation in Africa’, Musa W. Dube, ‘Readings of *Semoya*: Batswana Women’s Interpretation of Matt 15:21-28’, as well as Gerald O. West’s study on early encounters with the Bible among the BaTlhaping.¹⁸ Also, Anderson’s *History of the Church in East Africa*¹⁹, and other works on the history of church in Tanzania, will be considered.²⁰

2.1.1 Vincent L Wimbush Early Encounters with the Bible Among Afro-Americans

Cultures steeped in oral tradition generally find the concept of religion and religious power circumscribed by a book at first frightful and absurd, thereafter, certainly awesome and fascinating.²¹

¹⁷ Wimbush, V.L., ‘Reading Texts through Worlds, Worlds through Texts’, in *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.129ff.

¹⁸ Okure, T., ‘Feminist Interpretations in Africa’, in Elizabeth Schusster Fiorenza, ed., *Searching the Scriptures: A feminist Introduction*, New York, Crossroad, 1993; Dube, M.W., ‘Readings of *Semoya*: Batswana Women’s Interpretation of Matt 15:21-28’, in *Semeia* 72 (1996), pp.111-129; and West, G.O., ‘Early Encounters with the Bible among the BaTlhaping: Historical and Hermeneutical signs’, 2003 (unpublished); also, West, G.O., ‘Unpacking the Package: The Tlhaping Engage with the Bible’, in Justin S. Ukpong, et al, *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Cape Town*, Atlanta, Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), 2002, pp.84-94.

¹⁹ W.B. Anderson, W.B., *The History of the Church in East Africa*, Dodoma, Central Tanganyika Press (CPT), 1981.

²⁰ Westgate, W., *T.B.R. Westgate*, Massachusetts, Education & Research Group, 1987; Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain the Gospel in African’s Uplands before the First World War*, Canberra, Acom Press, 1991; and Sahlberg, C., *From Krapf to Rugambwa –A Church History of Tanzania*, Nairobi, E.P.H., 1986.

²¹ Gill, Sam D., ‘Non-literate Traditions and Holy Books: Toward a New Model’, in Frederick M. Denny & Rodney L. Taylor, Eds, *Holy Books in Comparative Perspective*, Columbia, University of South Carolina

Thus, an oral people's engagement with the Bible often proceeds in two phases, first, a phase of forced engagement, then a phase of conscious engagement.

Forced Engagement

The drama of African Americans' engagement with the Bible began with their arrival in North America as slaves. This is different from the African story, where the encounter of the Bible started with the coming of the explorers and missionaries.²² The African Americans' encounter was not only with the Bible, but also with a new culture. This engagement was a forced one, because the slaves were pressured 'to convert to the religions of the slavers'. They 'were forced to respond to the missionizing efforts of whites'.²³ In this situation, the Bible became, borrowing West's phrase, 'an object of power',²⁴ and in fact, a tool of oppression. This context of oppression led to an ambiguous perception of the Bible.

African Americans encountered the Bible through catechetical training and Bible studies. They saw the Bible as they worked for their slave masters. In this initial phase, they learned about the Bible through hearing, as it was read or preached by their slavers. However, '[the] formality and the literacy presupposed by the religious cultures of slavers...clearly undermined efforts to convert the Africans in significant numbers'.²⁵ So, Christianity, as a religion, in this initial encounter, did not have much appeal to African

Press, 1985, p.126f, as quoted by Wimbush, Vincent L., 'Reading Texts Through Worlds, Worlds Through Texts', in *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.131.

²² See, West, G.O., 'Early Encounters with the Bible among the BaThaping: Historical and Hermeneutical Signs', 2003 (unpublished); Maluleke, Tinyiko S., "The Bible Among African Christians: A Missiological Perspective", in Okure, T., ed., *To Cast Fire Upon the Earth: Bible and Mission Collaborating in Today's Multicultural Global Context*, Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 2000; Mojola, A. O., 'The Swahili Bible in East Africa From 1844 to 1996: A Brief Survey With Special Reference to Tanzania', in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, eds, *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends*, Leiden, Brill Academic Publishers, 2000, pp.511-523; also, Stanley, B., *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant missions & British imperialism in the nineteenth & twentieth centuries*, Leicester, Apollos/Inter-Varsity Press, 1990, pp.11 ff.

²³ Wimbush, Vincent L., 'Reading Texts Through Worlds, Worlds Through Texts', in *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.130.

²⁴ West, G.O., 'African Biblical Hermeneutics and its Relevance for Biblical Translation in Africa', 2003, p.2 (unpublished).

²⁵ Wimbush, V.L., 'Reading Texts Through Worlds, Worlds Through Texts', in *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.130.

Americans. But, through 'catechetical materials' or 'elaborate doctrine statements and preaching', the Bible started to have an indirect impact on the lives of African Americans.²⁶ They began to relate their 'world' with the 'world' of the Bible. The different Old Testament narratives, and the various stories of the New Testament appealed to the minds of African Americans. This initial, indirect impact subsequently resulted in direct and even conscious encounter of the Bible among African Americans.²⁷ This is the focus of the next section.

Conscious Engagement

From the late eighteenth century, African Americans began to engage with the Bible 'on a large and popular scale'.²⁸ This fresh engagement began with the new evangelical revivalist movements, which presented Christ 'in vivid biblical language and earnest emotion and fervor'.²⁹ African Americans started engaging themselves fully in the Bible story-line. Old Testament narratives, such as the liberation of the Israelites from slavery, spoke directly to the plight of African Americans, who identified themselves with the liberation stories. The New Testament passages of Galatians 3:26-28, Acts 2, and 10:34-36 also sparked particular interest. From this new reading of the Bible, African Americans learned that God has no favourites but treats all people equally. Black and white, slavers and slaves: all are equal in the sight of God. These phases of engagement of the Bible among African Americans reflect changes of self-consciousness and orientations.³⁰

²⁶ Wimbush, V.L., in *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.130. David Tuesday Adamo discusses a similar situation in Nigeria. When missionaries brought the Gospel, Nigerians were asked to throw away all their customs and traditions. They were not taught to relate the Bible to their context and situations; but gradually, they, Adamo writes, 'recognised the emptiness of their ways, we began asking questions about how to read the Bible with our own eyes, to meet our daily needs as African Christians' ('The Use of Psalms in African Indigenous Churches in Nigeria', in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, eds, *The Bible in Africa*, 2000, pp.336ff.). Similarly, 'the evocative power of the Bible', as Wimbush calls it (*Semeia*, 62 (1993), p.130), enabled American Christians to read the Bible with their own eyes, not with the eyes of the oppressors.

²⁷ Wimbush, V.L., in *Semeia* 62 (1993), pp.129, 130.

²⁸ Wimbush, V.L., in *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.131.

²⁹ Wimbush, V.L., in *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.131.

³⁰ Cf. Wimbush, V.L., in *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.131.

According to Wimbush, the most popular 'reading' of the Bible was developed in the nineteenth century and continued into the twentieth century. This 'reading' provided 'overtly political rhetorics and visions of prophetic critique against slavery'.³¹ In their new reading of the Bible, African Americans interpreted the Bible in such a way that they brought to light issues of social and political peace, equality, integration and personal salvation. Their reading mandated racial justice and harmony, and challenged discrimination.³² They began to argue that the 'Christianity of Christ' is good, pure, peaceable and impartial.³³ They saw the understanding of Christianity as 'impartial' to be a vital factor for 'true Christianity'.³⁴ Another essential aspect that surfaced in African American reading of the Bible was unity. They argued, using the Bible from their own African context and worldview, that Christianity should be 'understood above all to represent the unity of races'.³⁵ All these implications of the Bible as seen from the perspective of the oppressed, demonstrate that African Americans were engaging not only with the Bible but also with a new culture, a different world. So, the issues of freedom, equality, justice, integration, peace and harmony, all formed a socio-political context for African American interpretation of the Bible. They read the Bible from their real situation of slavery and oppression.

African Americans' reading of the Bible is an interpretation of the Bible which reflects a social and ideological location "from below". It starts with the context; the real situation of the people, their joys, sorrows and temperaments. This reading arises from the people's experience and how the Bible relates to it. This kind of engagement of the Bible was powerfully reflected in African Americans' songs, poetry, conversion stories and diaries.³⁶ African Americans embraced the Bible and transformed it from a white book into a source of spiritual power and inspiration, learning and hope for the universality of salvation.

³¹ Wimbush, V.L., in *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.131.

³² Wimbush, V.L., in *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.133.

³³ Douglass, F., 'Slaveholding Religion and the Christianity of Christ', in Milton C. Sernett, ed., *Afro-American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1985, p.104, as quoted by Wimbush, V.L., in *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.133.

³⁴ Wimbush, V.L., in *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.134.

³⁵ Wimbush, V.L., in *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.134.

³⁶ Wimbush, V.L., in *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.132ff

The Bible as a Source of Power

At this point we should ask ourselves: how can oppressed people embrace a book of their oppressors as authoritative and valid? How can a people culturally imbedded in oral tradition engage with a book as a source of their spirituality and power? This is a vital question as we deal with the engagement of the Bible among ordinary African “readers” of the Bible. In fact, the question is primarily about “phenomenological changes” among people and not just historical upheavals.

Initially, in the forced engagement, African Americans understood the Bible as an oppressive tool. One can argue that in this initial encounter, the Bible was not yet ‘opened’ to African Americans; it was an ‘unopened Bible’.³⁷ When the Bible was opened to them, they started relating the Bible story to their story. African Americans identified themselves ‘with the protagonists of the biblical dramas’.³⁸ The biblical salvation history spoke directly to the Africans in the New World. The Old Testament narratives and the Gospel stories of and about Jesus captured the African American vision.³⁹ This was a foundational step for all African Americans’ readings of the Bible that followed later.

Do the encounters with the Bible among African Americans have any implications, or validity, for our current study of ordinary African “readers” of the Bible? Yes, of course. Firstly, the people’s engagement of the Bible cannot always be subsumed under the acceptance of Christianity as a religion.⁴⁰ The Bible, when it is “opened” to people, has an efficacious power of its own even if Christianity is being misrepresented. People can reject Christianity as a religion but still accept the Bible and its teachings as a source of their spirituality and power and authority. Although initial missionary efforts of the

³⁷ ‘Open’ Bible refers to the Bible as a text, and an ‘unopened’ implies the Bible as a ‘sacred object and icon’ (see West, Gerald O., ‘Mapping African Biblical Interpretation: A tentative sketch’, in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.48.

³⁸ Wimbush, Vincent L., in *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.138.

³⁹ Cf. Wimbush, Vincent L., in *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.131.

⁴⁰ West, G.O., ‘Early Encounters with the Bible among the BaTlhaping: Historical and Hermeneutical Signs’, 2003.

slavers did not have much appeal to African Americans, the Bible, in West's words, "as a separate object of power",⁴¹ had its evocative impact on the people.

Secondly, the Bible as a liberating power sets people free. The engagement of the Bible among people makes them conscious of their history, customs and culture. As people read the Bible from their own African worldview, they recover cultural elements, rituals and symbols that can enrich their Christian spirituality. Thus the Bible becomes an inspiration for a new Christian imagination by providing new expression of some African cultural aspects in the context of Christianity and outside. This fresh realisation of some native customs and traditions through the reading of the Bible, particularly in people's mother-tongue, according to Lamin Sanneh, and also Kwame Bediako, is a revitalisation of culture; it is also a recovery of history that has been damaged by colonialism.⁴² The Bible, as an object of power, becomes a means of recovery and healing. And conscious engagement with the Bible liberates people mentally, spiritually, socially and politically. The African American historical encounter with the Bible proves its transforming power. The history of the Bible in Africa also proves the vitally transforming power of the Bible.

Thirdly, African Americans' encounter with the Bible, as we have seen in Wimbush's analysis, is similar to many African historical encounters with the Bible. Here one can think of the arrival of the Bible among the BaTlhaping, the Nigerians, and others.⁴³ Another example is the arrival of the Bible among the Swahili-speaking people in East Africa;⁴⁴ as well as the arrival of the Bible among the Gogo people of central Tanzania.

⁴¹ West, G.O., 'Early Encounters with the Bible among the BaTlhaping', 2003, p.1f. For a discussion of how the Bible can have an efficacious power of its own among people, see Adamo D.T., "The Use of Psalms in African Indigenous Churches in Nigeria", in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, eds, *The Bible in Africa*, pp.336ff.

⁴² Sanneh, L., *Translating the Message: the missionary impact on culture*, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1989; Bediako, K., 'Epilogue', in Schaaf, Y., ed., *On their Way Rejoicing: the history and role of the Bible in Africa*, Carlisle, Paternoster Press, 1994, pp.243-254.

⁴³ West, G.O., 'Early Encounters with the Bible among the BaTlhaping', 2003; Adamo D.T., "The Use of Psalms in African Indigenous Churches in Nigeria", in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, eds, *The Bible in Africa*, 2000, pp.336ff.

⁴⁴ Mojola, A. O., 'The Swahili Bible in East Africa From 1844 to 1996: A Brief Survey With Special Reference to Tanzania', in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, eds, *The Bible in Africa*, 2000, pp.511-523

The phases of engagement may be similar to African Americans' phases;⁴⁵ however, it is palpably clear that the contexts are different. Wimbush is writing from a North American context. He charts the interpretative history of the Bible among African Americans. Wimbush's historical and interpretative analyses of the reading of the Bible show, explicitly, a continuity between early readings of the Bible and subsequent ones. Wimbush does not go further to discuss the interface between ordinary "readers" and trained readers. In an African context, the issue of the interface between ordinary and trained readers has a vital place in the interpretative history of the Bible. My next section looks at Teresa Okure's argument, which is from an African women's perspective. African women are part and parcel of ordinary African "readers" of the Bible, and their inclusion in any Biblical and theological debate is vitally significant. I now turn to Okure's argument.

2.1.2 Teresa Okure: the 'Non-Scholar' and the 'Scholar'

Okure's argument concerns the debate of the interface between the 'non-scholar' (ordinary "readers") and the 'scholar' (trained readers). Unlike Wimbush, Okure presents her argument from an African woman's perspective of the Bible. Her main concern is 'to bring about a complete and balanced' reading and understanding of the Word of God, which is 'fully human and truly liberating'. According to Okure, patriarchy is a key problem in the Bible. By patriarchy, she means that the Bible was written for the most part by men, 'most specifically *for* men ("my son," "your wife") in male-dominated cultures'.⁴⁶ Also, for many centuries the Bible has been interpreted in a way that legitimised sexism and so the subjugation of women.⁴⁷ This is part of the assumption that guides Okure's argument for a liberating, balanced and fully human interpretation of Scripture. Okure's case for an inclusive approach to the reading of the Bible needs to be heeded. As we chart the contours of the encounter with the Bible, in

⁴⁵ As we will see in our analysis of the ordinary Gogo readers of the Bible in chapter four and five of this paper.

⁴⁶ Okure, T., 'Feminist Interpretations in Africa', in Elizabeth Schusster Fiorenza, ed., *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Introduction*, New York, Crossroad, 1993, p.80.

⁴⁷ Okure, in Fiorenza, ed., 1993, p.76.

any part of Africa, we need to bear in mind that the Bible is “read” by both men and women in the every day struggle for life.

An inclusive approach to the reading of the Bible includes the poor and the rich as well, with all their different perspectives and methods. As Okure writes, ‘African women’s approach is inclusive of ...the rich and the poor; it is inclusive of ‘the scientific’, the creative, and the popular methods’.⁴⁸ It is not clear as to what Okure means by ‘the scientific’ and ‘the creative’, but the overall implication is that if we are to have any balanced and in fact liberating interpretation of scriptures, all of us, the trained, the ordinary “readers”, the rich and the poor, men and women, need to cooperate in our reading of the Bible. We need to read ‘with new eyes’.⁴⁹ But why does Okure insist on her women’s inclusive approach to the reading of the Bible? Here are four reasons from Okure, which are worth considering.

Firstly, in inclusive reading of scripture, men and women, trained and ordinary “readers” together, enrich each other in their understanding and thus they can see how the Bible speaks to their own life concerns. Thus, all people in their various social political situations constitute the process as well as the product of interpretation and its interpretative history.⁵⁰

Secondly, the struggle against African socio-political and economic problems, such as poverty, civil war, and HIV/AIDS, involves all people, the trained and the untrained, men and women. Similarly, Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike writes,

African women together with their African brothers suffer hunger and thirst continuously. Their main struggles are against the forces which rob them of

⁴⁸ Okure, in Fiorenza, ed., 1993, p.77.

⁴⁹ Okure, in Fiorenza, ed., 1993, p.77.

⁵⁰ Cf. West, G.O., ‘African Biblical Hermeneutics and it Relevance for Bible Translation in Africa’, 2000, p.7 (unpublished)

control over their destiny and which do not enable them to fulfil their God-given potential.⁵¹

So, Okure's inclusive approach is also based on the survival of the African peoples.

Thirdly, Okure takes the African cultural context as a basis for her inclusive approach. She argues that in Africa 'full human undertakings are done conjointly by men and women'.⁵² Traditionally, African priesthood is both for men and women. Okure is right, because even the traditional healers, the *waganga* (in Swahili) or the *sangomas* (in Zulu), are both men and women – of course, the literate and the illiterate, the educated and the non-educated. Some *Waganga* in Tanzania do use the Bible in their healing practices; and these people, whether men or women, have great impact in their respective societies. Okure also points out that in the Ewe culture of Ghana women have higher status and respect than they do in their churches.⁵³ This implies that their reading of the Bible in their daily walks of life might be more influential in their society than what the trained pastor says in the church. Thus, an inclusive approach from its African cultural basis can bring about a liberating reading of the Bible. Any analysis of African reading of the Bible has to consider the whole range of readings of the Bible in a community.⁵⁴

Fourthly, Okure's approach is based on Jesus' inclusive "methodology": that he interacted with all kinds of people, "Pharisees and publicans, women and men, the rich and the poor, the healthy and the sick, nationals and foreigners."⁵⁵ Okure admits that while women's approach is inclusive, it is a distinctive way of doing theology; for women have a distinctive way of viewing reality, which is different from men's. Okure does not mean that women's interpretation is better than men's; she means that men and women, in their different ways of viewing reality, complement each other.⁵⁶ For today's Church to have a

⁵¹ Nasimiya-Wasike, A., 'Christology and an African Women's Experience', in J. Schreier, ed., *Faces of Jesus in Africa*, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1991, p.71, as quoted by Okure, in Fiorenza, ed., 1993, p.78.

⁵² Okure, in Fiorenza, ed., 1993, p.78.

⁵³ Okure, in Fiorenza, ed., 1993, p.79.

⁵⁴ This point is picked up later in Chapter Seven of this thesis.

⁵⁵ Okure, in Fiorenza, ed., 1993, p.80.

⁵⁶ Okure, in Fiorenza, ed., 1993, p.80.

fully human understanding of Scripture, the women's viewpoint is required in theological and biblical works.

Okure cites her theological work, in which she argues that it is a woman's contribution to the understanding of John 4:1-42, and the whole Gospel. For Okure, the Samaritan woman is a missionary model which male disciples need to follow.⁵⁷ This is a woman's interpretation. Hence Okure argues that women should not only engage in dealing with women's issues, but also with interpreting Scriptures as women, from their female perspective. This understanding, according to Okure, is essential in doing theology from women's perspective.⁵⁸ Women's inclusive approach identifies women's situation in culture and society, and then it turns to the Bible to see how Jesus dealt with similar situations. Also, the approach looks at women's experience in the church throughout history, and how liberation can be sought in the light of the Gospel. Okure's point about women's experience in history is worthy of notice for our current study of ordinary African "readers" of the Bible, and the Gogo "readers" specifically. That is, our study of interpretative history of ordinary "readers" cannot be complete without a careful consideration of women's experience and their engagement with the Bible. What we have actually seen from Okure's argument are but a few ways in which African women read scripture. Okure, however, does not explicitly demonstrate how African women contribute to African biblical scholarship; for her concern is to show how much place women have in the interpretative process of the Bible. In the following section, we have some clues from Musa W. Dube.

2.1.3 Musa W. Dube: Ordinary African "Readings of *Semoya*"

Musa W. Dube gives us a good example of how ordinary African women contribute to African biblical scholarship.⁵⁹ Dube presents some interpretations of Batswana women readers of Matthew 15:21-28. For some women, the passage is a case of racism; others

⁵⁷ Okure, in Fiorenza, ed., 1993, p.81.

⁵⁸ Okure, in Fiorenza, ed., 1993, p.81.

⁵⁹ Dube, M.W., 'Readings of *Semoya*: Batswana Women's Interpretation of Matt 15:21-28', in *Semeia* 72 (1996)

see it as test for the woman's faith. But the common thing Dube sees in the interpretations is that Jesus came for all. Through his Spirit, *Semoya*, he empowers non-academic readers, "women and men to be prophets, church founders, and leaders in the service of life". For ordinary women (and men as well) the biblical text is not the only Word from God. The Word of God also comes to God's people through the Spirit. This is evident in the answer of Bishop Virginia Lucas, when she was asked why she is a female leader while the Bible does not suggest women's leadership in the Church.⁶⁰ She replied in these words:

I always tell people that when God spoke to me through the Spirit, God never opened the Bible to me. Instead, God's Spirit told me to begin a church and heal God's people, which is what I am doing.⁶¹

For ordinary Batswana, Gogo and others, the Word of God is not confined within the covers of the Bible. What the Spirit speaks to the Christian is tantamount to God's Word. What the Spirit says can even help to interpret the text. The text can also be interpreted selectively to attend to the issues that face the readers in their socio-cultural context. As Maluleke writes,

[African Christians] are actually creatively pragmatic and selective in their use of the Bible so that the Bible may enhance rather than frustrate their life struggles.⁶²

Ordinary African "readers", whether they are literate or illiterate, have a particular way of reading the Bible, which can contribute to African biblical scholarship.⁶³ This cannot be discussed in detail at this point; but later in this thesis, I will demonstrate how much

⁶⁰ Virginia Lucas is a founding member of the Glory Healing Church in Mogoditshane, Gaborone (Dube, W. D., 'Readings of *Semoya*', in *Semeia* 72 (1996)

⁶¹ Dube, W. D., 'Readings of *Semoya*: Batswana Women's Interpretation of Matt 15:21-28', in *Semeia* 72 (1996)

⁶² Maluleke, T. S., 'Black and African Theologies in the New World: A Time to Drink from Our Own Wells', in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 96 (1996), p.13.

⁶³ E.g., Holter has written about popular and academic contexts of biblical interpretation (see, Holter, K., *Yahweh in Africa*, New York, Peter Lang, 2000, p.51ff).

ordinary women, together with all other “readers” of the Bible, contribute to the development of African biblical and theological scholarship.

In order to identify the contribution of ordinary “readers” of the Bible to the overall theological academy, one needs to chart the historical and hermeneutical contours of earliest encounters with the Bible among Africans in their different regions and contexts. This analysis of the early African encounters with the Bible is vitally significant for characterising the interpretative modes of ordinary “readers”. In fact, contextual factors have an impact on people’s interpretations of and attitude to the Bible.⁶⁴ The encounter of the Bible in Southern African is different from that in East Africa and West Africa and vice versa. The BaThlaping of Southern Africa engaged with the Bible in a different way from the Yoruba of Nigeria or the Gikuyu of Kenya. These different ways of reading the Bible form a rich resource of ordinary African “readers” of the Bible that can be utilised in African biblical and theological studies. So, regional studies of early encounters of the Bible are vitally important as one of our biblical and theological tasks in Africa. West’s study of the BaThlaping readings of the Bible, which is the focus of our next section, is an appropriate example of how early African encounters with the Bible can be pursued.

2.1.4 Gerald O. West: Early Encounters with the Bible among the BaThlaping

West, who according to Holter is a leading exponent of contextual, ordinary reading of the Bible, has carried out research on the early encounters with the Bible among the BaThlaping in the early 1800s. West’s findings show that the encounters with the Bible cannot be subsumed under the encounter with Christianity. The BaThlaping received the Bible as a separate object of power, along with the guns, watches, telescopes, mirrors, tobacco, beads and other objects that missionaries brought. The Bible was among the ‘goods of strange power’.⁶⁵ As West puts it,

⁶⁴ Cf. Holter., K., *Yahweh in Africa*, New York, Peter Lang, 2000, p.53.

⁶⁵ West, G.O., ‘Early Encounters with the Bible among the BaThlaping’, p.2.

In these pre-literate days the Bible begins to be appropriated via a range of interpretative moves yet to be documented and analysed, laying a hermeneutical foundation for successive generations of African interpreters in a context (like South Africa) in which what we have done and what we do with the Bible really does matter.⁶⁶

As is clearly stated in the above citation, what Africans do with the Bible in the present South Africa, and elsewhere, has to do with how the Bible was initially received and appropriated. Early engagements of the Bible, and their significations, are foundational for subsequent ordinary readings of the Bible in people's history. So, it is essential to study, according to our regions and countries, the early African encounters of the Bible, and in our case the Gogo encounters, so that we can identify "the continuity of appropriation" and be able to learn more about present ordinary "readings". The study of the early encounters of the Bible may also involve stripping the Bible of its western cultural baggage; for first missionaries brought the Bible among the BaThlaping, the Gogo and other African people, as part of their western package.⁶⁷ Thus, the Bible has been appropriated by African Christians as part of a larger package from the hands of the missionaries. As Tinyiko S. Maluleke puts it,

...the manner in which Black Christians relate to the Bible has been to view the Bible as part of a larger package of resources and legacies which include stories, preaching and language mannerisms, songs, choruses, ecclesiologies, theodicies, catechism manuals and a range of rituals and rites.⁶⁸

One of the tasks of an African theologian or biblical scholar is to unpack the package. West, in his study of the Tlhaping, makes significant attempts of 'unpacking the package'; he charts the contours of the Tlhaping's earliest encounter with the Bible.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ West, G.O., 'Early Encounters with the Bible among the BaThlaping', p.2.

⁶⁷ Cf. West, G.O., 'Unpacking the Package: The Tlhaping Engage with the Bible', in Justin S. Ukpong, et al, *Reading the Bible in the Global Village*, pp.84-94.

⁶⁸ Maluleke, T.S., 'The Bible Among African Christians', in Teresa Okure, ed., *To Cast Fire Upon the Earth*, p.95.

⁶⁹ The Tlhaping are the southernmost group of Southern Tswana people, in Botswana.

The transactions between the indigenous Africans and the Bible take place in the “long conversation[s]” between the people and the missionaries.⁷⁰ As the indigenous and the missionary meet and try to know each other, as they share their stories and exchange goods, the story of the Bible is also there, fascinating and awesome. The Bible is not separated from other books. The Bible, together with other missionary books, puzzles the indigenous.⁷¹ Mmahutu, the senior wife of the chief of the Tlhaping, is astonished at how the letter as text can convey message in a person’s absence. As West puts it, ‘from her perspective text has power, with some appearing to have more power than others, hence “many a look” at the Bible. Text can reveal and text can hide; text can be manipulated...text contains knowledge/power’.⁷²

In West’s analysis, one sees the Tlhaping’s recognition of the Bible’s power, which may not necessarily be recognised by the missionary. Those who own the Bible have knowledge and power; the Tlhaping tries to wrestle the Bible from the hands of the bearer. This understanding of the Bible as knowledge and power still continues among African Christians. And so, to understand the depth of this phenomenon one has to go back to the past. The case of the Tlhaping demonstrates that one cannot successfully ‘unpack the package’ without going back to the history of the indigenous early encounters with the Bible, and Christianity as a whole. Similarly, in order to understand the present ordinary Gogo “readers” of the Bible, one has to go back to the history of the reception of the Bible among the Gogo people, in Central Tanzania.⁷³ The next section looks briefly at the reception of the Bible in Tanzania, particularly among the Gogo people.

⁷⁰ West, G.O., ‘Unpacking the Package’, in Justin S. Ukpong, et al, *Reading the Bible in the Global Village*, p.85.

⁷¹ West, G.O., ‘Unpacking the Package’, in Justin S. Ukpong, et al, *Reading the Bible in the Global Village*, pp.90,91.

⁷² West, G.O., ‘Unpacking the Package’, in Justin S. Ukpong, et al, *Reading the Bible in the Global Village*, pp.92,93.

⁷³ The literature review on Tanzania and the Gogo people will be brief, as most of the material will be dealt with in detail in the following chapters.

2.1.5 The Dawn of Ordinary African Readings among the Gogo in Tanzania

The Earliest reception of the Bible among the Gogo people began with the coming of the first missionaries in 1876; but to understand clearly this earliest encounter with the Bible, a panoramic view of the general history of the church in Tanzania is vitally significant. The history of the church in Tanzania starts in 1844, with the work of the Church Missionary Society (CMS); and there are many historical details. W.B. Anderson's *The History of the Church in East Africa* covers a wide range of missionary proceedings, the work of CMS and other mission societies, the growth of the Church and its impact on socio-political upheavals.⁷⁴ Anderson starts with the earliest missionaries in Tanzania, and East African in general. These were Johann Ludwig Krapf and his wife Rosine, who arrived into Mombasa harbour in May 1844. In July 1844, they built a mission station at Rabai near Mombasa. Krapf did not confine his mission at Rabai. He visited Kilimanjaro and Usambara areas in Tanganyika. Krapf focused on language study, and started translating the New Testament into the Kimvita dialect of Swahili.

By 1846, when his colleague John Rebmann arrived, Krapf had done most of the Swahili translation of the New Testament.⁷⁵ Also, liturgies and hymnbooks were translated for use in worship. These earliest Swahili translations of the New Testament, liturgies and hymnbooks could give the earliest ordinary African "readers" access to the Word of God. Yet the dawn of ordinary African reading of the Bible had not started. In their earliest mission work, Krapf and Rebmann had no converts; for even when Rebmann left in 1876, there were only six Christians at Rabai.⁷⁶ The dawn of ordinary African reading was yet to come. As Anderson writes,

It was not the dawn for these pioneers. Krapf died on his knees in prayer in 1881. Neither he nor Wakefield [another missionary] saw the dawn. 'They

⁷⁴ W.B. Anderson, W.B., *The History of the Church in East Africa*, Dodoma, Central Tanganyika Press (CPT), 1981.

⁷⁵ Anderson, W.B., pp.1,3,4.

⁷⁶ Anderson, W.B., p.16.

died in hope, not having obtained what was promised, but having seen and greeted it from a far' (Hebrews 11.13).⁷⁷

Yet Krapf's Swahili translations had set the stage for future ordinary African (Tanzanian) reading of the Bible. Krapf's work had cast light on Tanzania for the dawn of ordinary reading. Later in Anderson's historical accounts we see *watoro*,⁷⁸ 'refugees', in mission villages, reading Krapf's translation of the New Testament. We see these Christians, who took refuge in mission stations, interpreting the Bible against slavery and other evils.⁷⁹ For freed-slaves, *watoro*, and other African Christians, the Bible was a symbol of freedom, liberation from slavery. It gave the indigenous Christians courage to resist slavery, even if it meant death.⁸⁰

On August 24, 1876, another team of CMS missionaries, Mr Mackay and others, started mission work at Mpwapwa, in Gogo land. They started mission villages and they had 200 converts in 1899. Like their predecessors, Krapf and Rebmann, these missionaries in Central Tanzania, also felt the need to translate the Bible into the language of the indigenous. The Bible, *the Book of Common Prayer* (1662) and *Ancient and Modern Hymns* were translated into the standard dialect of Swahili and also into the Gogo language (Cigogo) of the people of central Tanzania. Later these translation works gave rise to *Soma* (read, study) Christianity, as well as a deeper appropriation of the Bible among the Gogo people.

Other significant sources for the history of Church and mission in Gogoland are *T.B.R. Westgate*, by W. Westgate (1987),⁸¹ and *Signal on the Mountain*, written by E. Knox (1991).⁸² The latter, specifically, focuses on the missionary endeavours: How the missionaries arrived in Tanganyika from their countries, their impulses, visions and

⁷⁷ Anderson, W.B., p.8.

⁷⁸ This is an old Swahili word, meaning "refugees". *Wakimbizi* is a commonly used word in modern Swahili.

⁷⁹ Anderson, W.W., pp.11,15.

⁸⁰ See the story of David Koi, a freed-slave, catechist-evangelist, in Anderson, W.B., pp.16-17.

⁸¹ Westgate, W., *T.B.R. Westgate*, Massachussetts, Education & Research Group, 1987.

⁸² Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain: The Gospel in Africa's Uplands Before the First World War*, Canberra, Acorn Press, 1991.

limitations; what they achieved and what they did not; the difficulties they faced under the Arab, German and British rules in Gogoland. The former, being a biography, deals with the work of a Canadian who was a missionary, and founder of St. Philip's Theological College in Kongwa area, within the Gogoland from 1902 to 1917. The biography sheds much light on the sociological, cultural, political and religious dimensions of the Gogo history. Also, there are some details about Westgate's sermons, where he preached, when and on which text. In these historical and missionary accounts, the interface between Christianity and missionaries and the Gogo people is explicitly evident. It is through these accounts that I will chart the initial engagements between the Bible and the people, and how these people, steeped in their oral tradition, make sense of 'the Book with a black' cover (as some would call it, or 'the black Book'). Indeed, the presence and the role of the Bible, and how the indigenous interacted with it, are not excluded in the interface between Christianity and the indigenous people. C. Sahlberg's *From Krapf to Rugambwa – A Church History of Tanzania* gives some information about a man called Mandara, a chief of the Chagga people, near the Kilimanjaro mountain. In 1878, Chief Mandara sent a letter to Mr Charles New, who, in 1871, had visited the Chagga land as a missionary, and ascended Kilimanjaro. Mandara wrote:

Now I want to ask you a question. If you want children to teach, we shall give them to you. And I shall follow you to learn with all my people, if you really want. Meanwhile, send me a Book.⁸³

Some people have been inclined to think that the Chief thought that the Bible had some magic power in it that could make him equally as powerful as the armed Europeans who had conquered other chiefs in Tanzania (then Tanganyika).⁸⁴ There are many hints, like this one of Chief Mandara, which need further historical and hermeneutical analyses.

⁸³ Sahlberg, C., *From Krapf to Rugambwa – A Church History of Tanzania*, Nairobi, Evangel Publishing House, 1986, p.45.

⁸⁴ Cf. Lema, A., 'The Influence of Christian Mission Societies on Education Policies in Tanganyika 1868-1970', (unpublished Thesis, Hong Kong, 1980).

A.O. Mojola, having worked for a long time among the Gogo people in Dodoma, has produced magnificent articles and books on the Bible in Tanzania.⁸⁵ But his main interest has been in translation; and in his recent article, 'The Swahili Bible in East Africa 1844 to 1996: A Brief Survey with Special Reference to Tanzania', he points out that 'the impact of the Bible...on early Christian communities... and on the contemporary church...' and society in Tanzania remains as 'an interesting subject of further study and research'.⁸⁶ Mojola's point is worthy of notice as we seek to analyse the encounter with the Bible in Tanzania.

2.2 A WIDER PERSPECTIVE

The analyses of the works of Vincent L. Wimbush, Teresa Okure, Musa W. Dube, and Gerald O. West provide a significant theoretical framework for mapping the contours of the early engagements with the Bible among the Gogo people of central Tanzania. The articles by Wimbush and West, respectively, demonstrate the vital significance of historical analysis for our understanding of current ordinary interpretative practices. The article of Okure and that of Dube help us to have a balanced perceptive of ordinary readings of the Bible; that is, ordinary African women were among those many ordinary (and trained) readers who make tremendous contributions to African theological and biblical scholarship. This means that the analysis of the Gogo's encounter with the Bible will not be complete without full consideration of ordinary women's interpretative practices. As this thesis revisits the historical accounts of W.B. Anderson, *The History of the Church in East Africa* (1981), C. Sahlberg, *From Krapf to Rugambwa* (1986), W. Westgate, *T.B.R. Westgate* (1987), E. Knox, *Signal on the Mountain* (1991), and others, the readings of both men and women will be carefully analysed. We now turn to the Tanzanian context in general, and the Gogo people specifically.

⁸⁵ LeMarquand, G., 'A Bibliography of the Bible in Africa', in G.O. West & M.W. Dube, eds, *The Bible in Africa*, pp.749-750

⁸⁶ Mojola, A.O., 'The Swahili Bible in East Africa from 1844 to 1996: A Brief Survey with Special Reference to Tanzania', in G.O. West & M.W. Dube, eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.522.

CHAPTER 3

3.0 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 THE PEOPLE OF TANZANIA

Tanzania covers an area of 945,087 square kilometres, with a population of 34,569,232, of which 45 per cent are Christians, 35 per cent Muslim, and 20 per cent are indigenous religionists and other religions. Tanzania has twenty-six regions, and one hundred and thirty districts, including Kongwa and Mpwapwa.⁸⁷ Mvumi and Buigiri, which are frequently mentioned in the paper, are not districts but they are, together with Kongwa and Mpwapwa, significant historical CMS mission centres in central Tanzania. Although rich in minerals such as gold, diamonds, tanzanite and various other gemstones, Tanzania is a land crying out to pull itself out of the mire of being a highly indebted poor country, officially only richer in the world than its poorer neighbour Mozambique.⁸⁸ About 50 per cent of the population of Tanzania are living below the poverty line. This poverty situation is only an estimate for the whole country, but some parts of the country, for example, the central regions of Tabora and Dodoma, are poorer than others. It is in this context of poverty and mere survival that ordinary “readers” interpret the Bible.

Although it is poor as compared with other regions, Dodoma is the country’s political capital and Dar es Salaam is the commercial capital. Other important towns include Arusha, Iringa, Kigoma, Mbeya, Morogoro, Moshi, Mtwara, Mwanza, Pemba, Tabora, Tanga and Unguja. Tanzania’s urban population is growing rapidly, but 80 per cent of people still live in villages.⁸⁹ Swahili and English are the official languages of the United Republic of Tanzania, though there are also tribal languages. However, Swahili is practically the *lingua franca*. Swahili is predominantly for public communication,

⁸⁷ 2003 Tanzania Population and Housing Census: General Report (www.tanzania.go.tz/census); also, see Mmuya, M., ‘The Tanzania Civil Society’, in his book, *Government and Political Parties in Tanzania: Facts and Figures*, Dar Es Salaam, DUP/FES, 1995.

⁸⁸ Per capita GNP is estimated at US \$ 246 (in 2001) and per capita GDP is US \$ 251 (in 2001) (US \$ 1 = Tsh.800 in 2003) (www.tanzania.org.za, www.tanzania.go.tz).

⁸⁹ Edward Lowasa, a speech on 25th August, 1999 (source: *Radio Tanzania Dar Es Salaam*).

especially in urban centres. But in the villages, native languages are still very much in use. Different ethnic people in their respective villages and townships use their vernacular languages in local gatherings, ceremonies, festivals and in funerals. So Tanzania has diverse languages and ethnic groups.

Tanzania is a multi-tribal society with more than 130 ethnic peoples of Bantu, Nilotic, Cushitic and Khoisan origins.⁹⁰ Bantu people form 90.9 per cent of the population of Tanzania. The Bantu are over 127 groups; and the Gogo, numbering 1,300,000, are among the largest groups.⁹¹ It is worth noting that these names, Bantu, Cushitic, Nilotic and Khoisan, are more linguistic rather than physical.⁹² Also, the names by which ethnic groups are known, for example, Gogo, Chagga, Hehe, are not based on physical appearance, but rather on geographical area, history, language as well as traditions and culture in general.

Traditionally, each tribe has its own land, and people always want to remain in the land of their ancestors, build houses, farm, die there and be buried there. Even most of those who move into towns and cities do not lose contact with their relatives in the villages. This means that the traditional, indigenous ways of life still have impact not just in the villages, but also in towns and cities. So one can comment that even in urban centres indigenous ways of life and beliefs still influence how people define their lives, and even the way they "read" their Bibles. In towns, ethnic groups form parties or societies so that members of each society can help one another in times of joys (e.g., weddings) and sorrows (e.g., bereavement). In Dodoma municipality, there is, in Swahili, '*Chama cha*

⁹⁰ There are two groups of Khoisan origin, namely, Sandawe, which are about 70,000, and Tindiga about 4,000. Those people are related to San (Bushmen) of Southern Africa. The Khoisan are 0.3 per cent of the whole Tanzania population. Six groups are Cushitic, of which the Iraqw, numbering 365,000, are the largest. The whole Cushitites are 2.2 per cent. Also, there are eight Nilotic groups, which form 4 per cent of the Country's population. The Maasai and the Luo are the largest Nilotic groups. For further details, see Odhiambo, E S, *et al*, *A History of East Africa*, London, Longman 1977, pp.10-14, 35-37, 58, 72-80; Johnstone, P., *Operation World: Pray for the World*, Carlisle, OM Publishing, 1993, p.527.

⁹¹ Of other largest Bantu ethnic groups, Sukuma number 5,000,000, Haya 1,200,000, Chagga 990,000, Nyamwezi 926,000, and Makonde 900,000; also Ha, numbering 800,000, Hehe 650,000, Nyakyusa 600,000, Bena 568,000, Nyaturu 556,000, Shambala 550,000; others are Ruguru, numbering 520,000, Asu 400,000, Mwera 400,000, and the Rangi 310,000 (Johnstone, P. *Operation World*, p.527).

⁹² As Odhiambo, *et al*, cautions: 'we depend upon the work done by linguists for principal method of classifying and grouping the peoples of East Africa' (*A History of East Africa*, p.4.)

Wahehe cha Kufa na Kuzikana.⁹³ A similar group has been formed by the Gogo people who live in Iringa town, for supporting each other as a tribe away from their homeland.⁹⁴ There are many other tribal parties and societies in Dar es Salaam, Arusha and in other towns and cities in Tanzania. In these tribal groups, when a member of the tribal group dies, other members will make sure that they take the body to their home and bury it properly among the graves of their forefathers and ancestors. Christians and indigenous religionists would all prefer to be buried in their home areas and villages. Taking the body to be buried in its tribal area is traditionally regarded as a sign of love for the dead person and the bereaved.⁹⁵ This practice, at present, has found some biblical support among ordinary “readers” of the Bible. Although most trained readers are unaware of this ordinary “reading”, some ordinary Christians have sometimes commented that Israelite ancestors, Moses, Jacob, Joseph, were not buried in Egypt, but in their ancestral tomb in Canaan.⁹⁶ So, as the evidence shows, traditionally in Tanzania, each tribe has its own geographical region for cultivation, grazing, hunting, burial, etc.

People of each tribe, in Mbiti’s words, ‘share a common history, which is traced at least mythologically to either the first man created by God, or [historically] to national [or tribal] leaders responsible for establishing a particular structure of the society concerned’.⁹⁷ For example, the Luo consider and respect Ramogi as their first ancestor. The Hehe consider Mkwawa as the one who established their society. The Maasai have Laibon as their first ancestor. The Gogo had *Mtemi* Mazengo as their traditional founder.⁹⁸

⁹³ Meaning, ‘the Hehe Society for Funeral and Burial Planning’ (Hussein Magomba, an ex-chairman of the Society, an interview at Makatapura on 7/5/2001).

⁹⁴ Philemon Chilloleti, an interview at Kongwa on 22/6/2003.

⁹⁵ E.g., When *Mwalimu* Julius K. Nyerere, the first President of Tanzania, passed away on 14/10/1999, his body was taken to his home area Mwitongo, at Butiama in Mara region. *Mwalimu* is a Swahili word, meaning “teacher”. Tanzanians preferred to call Nyerere, *Mwalimu*, because he was actually a teacher at St. Francis Secondary School, Dar es Salaam, before he started actively involving himself in the struggle for Tanzania’s independence. Nyerere liked the title.

⁹⁶ Cf. Gen. 33:19, 49:29-33, 50:1-14, 15-25; Ex. 13:19; Jos. 24:32.

⁹⁷ Mbiti, J.S., *African Religions and Philosophy*, London, Heinemann, 1969, pp.102-103.

⁹⁸ *Mtemi* is a title, which comes from Cigogo, e.i., the Gogo language, meaning, king or chief.

The people of Tanzania are also classified according to their languages. The Hehe speak Kihhe; the Kaguru have Cigaguru; and the Gogo, as it has been mentioned earlier, speak Cigogo. Each of the over 127 tribes has its distinctive mother tongue. Many of these tribes encountered the Bible, for the first time, in their mother tongue through the means of translation. The Gogo were among the first Tanzanians to have a mother tongue, Cigogo, translation of the Bible, so their vernacular language, as one of their interpretative resources, has had a vital role in their “reading” of the Bible in the past as it is today.⁹⁹ Beside languages, tribes have their respective religious beliefs and customs, and social organisations. At present, traditional tribal social organisations are being weakened by national unity, but it needs to be noted that religious indigenous traditions and beliefs still permeate the lives of people in their respective villages and townships.

Each people group of Tanzania has its vernacular language, which by and large, has had a significant place in the way ordinary “readers” interpret their Bibles. Besides, indigenous religious beliefs and customs, together with all the other features of the tribes, form a background to and a context of engagement between the Bible and the people of Tanzania. Having discussed the people of Tanzania in general, we now turn to the Gogo and their context; for the Gogo, like other Tanzanians, did not encounter the Bible in a vacuum. They encountered it in a specific cultural context, and in a particular historical moment.

3.2 THE GOGO PEOPLE

Historically the Gogo are inhabitants of the central part of Tanzania, which is now known as Dodoma region. The Gogo are 78.7 per cent of the whole population of Dodoma region, which is 1,698,996.¹⁰⁰ The official language of Tanzania, as indicated earlier, is Swahili; but most of the Gogo people, even in towns, speak their own tribal language, Cigogo.¹⁰¹ Apart from being the first people to have a vernacular translation of the Bible,

⁹⁹ Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages: Over 150 years of Bible Translation in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda*, Nairobi/Dodoma/Kampala, Bible Society of Kenya/Tanzania/Uganda, 1999, p.80.

¹⁰⁰ For Dodoma population, see ‘Dodoma’ in 2002 Tanzania Population and Housing Census (www.tanzania.go.tz/census/dodoma.htm); cf. Johnstone, P, *Operation World*, p.527.

¹⁰¹ *Kigogo*, in Swahili.

the Gogo have long had a hymnbook and a prayer book in Cigogo.¹⁰² In the villages, Cigogo dominates the daily lives of the people, socially, economically and spiritually. So, Cigogo is one of the significant aspects as we discuss the engagements with the Bible among the Gogo people.

Other aspects to consider as we look at the Gogo in relation to their encounter with the Bible, are their history, social organisation, traditions and culture. The Gogo people have a long history, going back many hundreds of years, to the time when great African migrations were reshaping the continent; but their name, Gogo, or *Wagogo* in Swahili, is only about one hundred and fifty years old. Oral tradition has it that the name Gogo derives from the Swahili word for a log, 'gogo'. An early Nyamwezi caravan is said to have come across a group of people camped by some fallen trees near the present Dodoma municipality, thereafter referring to them as 'the people of the logs'.¹⁰³ Possibly the same name could also refer to the Gogo style of building houses which uses much timber.¹⁰⁴

Before they became a unified tribe under *Mtemi Mazengo*, the Gogo were divided into three groups, possibly based on clans. These groups were the Tumba, the Ng'omvya and the Nyehelu. For generations, these clans developed a way of life which suited their environment. They adopted a semi-pastoral existence, with frequent moves, which was forced on them by the need to find grazing for their cattle, or, more starkly, to escape famine. Using their traditional knowledge as pastoralists, they prevented overstocking by making rules such as this: if a chicken from one house could lay an egg in the next, then the houses were too close.¹⁰⁵ This made their region sparsely populated as the clans were

¹⁰² Mojola, A O, *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, p.80. *Cigogo Prayer Prayer Book* was a verbatim translation of *The Book of Common Prayer* (1662).

¹⁰³ Odhiambo, *et al*, *A History of East Africa*, pp.12,72-80; also see Capital Development Authority (CDA, Dodoma), *Dodoma*, Dar es Salaam, National Printing Company, 1975, p.9.

¹⁰⁴ A similar example of how tribal names began would be the Hehe people who originally were not known as Hehe, but they were fifteen clans with different names; later they became three main groups, the Gongo, the Ndevelwa and the Solwa. These groups united as one people under chief Mkwawa, but maintained their three group names. Hehe was apparently 'a name used first by European visitors in the nineteenth century to describe the way they went into battle shouting 'Hee, Hee, Hee!' (Odhiambo, *et al*, p.75).

¹⁰⁵ CDA, *Dodoma*, p.9.

widely scattered. Each clan had a leading figure known as *mtemi*.¹⁰⁶ *Mtemi* derived his authority from an earlier priestly role, which, according to oral tradition, had evolved over the centuries into a "secular" one.¹⁰⁷ Although the Gogo land was divided among clans, each clan having its own chief, these clans allowed communal use of pasturage and water. There was a spirit of self-reliance among clans, but within the framework of mutual help between them. As their saying goes, '*cidole cimonga siciwulagaga mhani*', meaning 'one finger cannot kill a louse'; also, they say, '*mhinza yakwe kebatilagwa*', meaning 'a person who skins his own cow, still needs someone's help'. Because of this community ethic, the Gogo clans help each other in searching for lost cattle, clearing forest for farming, weeding, harvesting, and threshing and even in house building.¹⁰⁸ People worked successively on each other's fields, receiving food and beer (*ujimbi*, in Cigogo) for compensation.¹⁰⁹ This practice is still prevalent among the Gogo today.

Because their area had no grass suitable for thatching, the Gogo developed houses known as *tembe*. The *tembe* is normally roofed with sticks and clay, which are supported inside by poles placed symmetrically to serve the extra purpose of baffling intruders. *Tembe* houses have survived to this day; for most of the Gogo land, Dodoma, is a semi-arid region, with only one rainy season. In good years, rains start from mid November until the end of April. In normal years, the rainy season starts in mid December until mid April, but in one in every five years it is prone to fail completely.¹¹⁰ The story of the Gogo land is one of uncertainty. When the rain fell plentifully and evenly, food was abundant and life was quite good. But when the rains failed, famine or even starvation followed.¹¹¹ The sixth and seventh month of the dry season was the most difficult time for pastoralists; they wandered from one side of the land to another. There was shortage of water and pasture. But once the rains came the scene was transformed altogether; 'all

¹⁰⁶ Often referred to by early European explorers as chief or sultan, see CDA, *Dodoma*, p.9.

¹⁰⁷ Here "secular" does not strictly mean non-religion, or unreligious.

¹⁰⁸ Koponen, Juhani, *People and Product in Late Pre-Colonial Tanzania: History and Structures*, Finland, Finnish Society for Development Studies, 1988, p.273.

¹⁰⁹ Burton, R.F., *The Lake Regions of Central Africa*, London, 1860, II, pp.29, 286, as quoted by Koponen J., *People and Product in Late Pre-Colonial Tanzania*, p.296.

¹¹⁰ CDA, *Dodoma*, p.11.

¹¹¹ The dominating influence of the climate on life in the Gogo land is recorded in oral tradition, as well as in the statistics of later years, and there is a long catalogue of descriptive names attached to the seasons stretching back to the *mpingama*, or 'hindrances' famines of the pre-18850 period (CDA, *Dodoma*, p.11)

is different, the whole country is green and verdant and large expanses are covered with *matama* [millet (sic)], pumpkins and tobacco'.¹¹² This abrupt change of weather was a source of wonder to the nineteenth century explorers, travelling through the Gogo land. In 1882, Master Mariner Hore, on his way to Lake Tanganyika, said, 'It is generally called "desert", but as long as the rainy influence remains it is in fact a most beautiful and verdant tract of country'.¹¹³ And earlier in 1859, Richard Burton said, 'There is no little doubt that the land, if afforded good shelter, purified water and good diet, would be eminently wholesome'.¹¹⁴

The alternating cycles of periods of fat and years of lean made the Gogo entirely dependent on divine providence. When the rain was not enough they sacrificed their animals to God, called *Mulungu*, so that they would get more rains. In good harvests, they thanked *Mulungu* through celebrations, feasting and drinking Gogo local beer.¹¹⁵ These celebrations among the Gogo were not mere events, they were religious practices, just like rituals for a child's birth, funerals, or the official end to the mourning period.¹¹⁶ The Gogo were, and are, religious people, and their religious beliefs were intertwined with their traditions and culture. The Gogo indigenous music, which was, and still is, of exceptional quality, their oral culture with proverbs, wise sayings, puzzles, jokes and legends, all reflect something of their religion.¹¹⁷

In their indigenous religion, the Gogo have had a very strong awareness of God's existence. For the Gogo, God is *Mulungu*, a name that comes from the word *lungu*, which implies "divine". Also, etymologically, the word *lungu* is related to another root word *lunga*. *Lunga* basically means "put together", or "join"; hence *Malunga*, which also is another name for God. As the forefathers of the Gogo reflected upon their life

¹¹² Commander Cameron in 1873, as quoted in CDA, *Dodoma*, p.12.

¹¹³ CDA, *Dodoma*, p.12.

¹¹⁴ As quoted in CDA, *Dodoma*, p.12.

¹¹⁵ Koponen, Juhani, *People and Product in Late Pre-Colonial Tanzania*, p.296.

¹¹⁶ *Kumala ifwa*, in Cigogo, and *matanga*, in Swahili

¹¹⁷ Here are some examples of Gogo proverbs and wise sayings: *Hamba umbulaje, ulanga ulalanga*, meaning 'Even if you kill me, the heavens/sky will tell others about your action'; *Kuulanga kusina mbejele*, meaning 'God/heaven has no favourites'; also, *Mulungu yo mutazi*, God helps all indiscriminately/God is the helper of all'.

experiences (such as epidemics, diseases, birth, death, wars, famines), the powers of nature (such as thunderstorms, earthquakes), and the whole universe, they saw the presence of *Malunga*, the One who puts things together, the Joiner. From time immemorial, the Gogo, as their oral tradition indicates, have worshiped God as *Mulungu* in various ways and in different places. On mountains, hills, river banks, in caves and in big trees, especially baobabs. In the premises of St. Philip's Theological College, at Kongwa, Dodoma, there is a huge, weird baobab tree. This baobab tree, before the coming of the first missionaries in Kongwa, about 1902, was regarded as a place of ancestors, and occasionally the Gogo worshiped *Mulungu* under the tree. It is not clear as to when the Gogo started using the Kongwa baobab as a place of worship, but it is reasonable to say that down through many centuries Gogo indigenous belief in *Mulungu*, as handed down from one generation into another, moved the Gogo into awesome worship of God in different places, including big trees. In fact, many tribal myths, traditions, customs, music, dances, wise sayings, proverbs and riddles, echo the Gogo indigenous beliefs, of which belief in *Mulungu* is central. Parents named their babies *Ilumbo* (thanks be to God), *Chipegwa* (God-given), *Ihewa* (God's grace), *Manyakuulawo* (we only know the past, but the future is God), and many other names that reflect the Gogo's knowledge of God. There are other ancient Gogo names for God, such as *Magava*, meaning the one who gives, or more precisely, the giver of all; also, *Mdahavyose*, that is, the one who can do everything. So *Mulungu* is the Supreme Being, the Transcendent. When the missionaries translated the Bible they could not but adopt the Gogo name for God, *Mulungu*. And when the Gogo "read" their Bibles, the God of the Bible was not an alien God, but *Mulungu* whom they knew and worshipped from time immemorial.

There are also Gogo beliefs in ancestors' spirits and other spirits, both good and evil. *Malunga* (plural), *ilungu* (singular) are the spirits of the departed. This belief is based on the Gogo understanding that there is life after this world's life. At death, world life vanishes, but the "person's spirit" continues to exist. The Gogo call this "person" *ilungu*.

The *ngu* at the end of the word implies divine characteristics, for God is *Mulu-ngu*.¹¹⁸ So when good persons pass away, they are transformed into divine status; and when bad people die, they become bad spirits. Good spirits of the departed, the *malungu*, the forefathers who long passed away, protected and gave help to the families and clans concerned. When the *malungu* felt neglected, they could withdraw their protection for the clans and families and thus let calamities befall the society. In this situation, the families concerned, and sometimes the whole society, had to hold a remembrance ritual called *ikumbiko*. If not remembered, the *malungu*, the ancestors, could do various noticeable things like make noise, rattling, crashing of things, make people shake, tremble or shudder; they could appear in temporal forms of a bird, animal or insect. So, according to the Gogo, the dead never completely disappear. They exist, very near to us, in an invisible world. Thus, 'they [the ancestors] are involved in monitoring our daily activities in accordance with the culture; since this is so, *malungu* are given a very special position in [the] life [of the Gogo society]'.¹¹⁹ *Malungu* were intermediaries between the Gogo and *Mulungu*. Sacrifices and other rites were performed in honour of *malungu*. They were venerated because life and wisdom came through them; and when honoured, they provided protection for the people and punished witchcraft and other evils in the society.

Knowledge and the skills of the medicine people, which helped other Gogo people to defend themselves from wizardry and wild animals, was believed to come from ancestral spirits. The medicine men and women made various *ndima-miwili* (protective charms), such as *mhiji* (a small piece of wood), *ipozo* (a mixture of meat with herbs), *mapande* (water with herbs), *suwa* (herbs for cattle keeping), and *madimilo*. *Mhiji*, *ipozo*, *uyeyi* and *madimilo* charms are still in use among the Gogo today. *Mhiji* was a charm that one had to swallow so as to protect themselves from witchcraft, accidents and untimely death. *Ipozo* was a protective charm for one's whole family; once it was installed in a house, it was believed to protect all family members from witchcraft and other snares that could be

¹¹⁸ Chambala, I N, 'A Historical Study of the Biblical Theology of Spiritual Powers and Fear in an African Context (Tanzania-Gogo Perspective)', Cheltenham, University of Gloucestershire, 2000, p.19 (unpublished dissertation).

¹¹⁹ Chambala, I N, 'A Historical Study of the Biblical Theology of Spiritual Powers and Fear in an African Context, p.19.

devised by bad people. Traditionally, *ipozo* charm was buried in a house. *Uyeye*, or *ununguli* was used by hunters as a protection from fierce wild animals and snakes. *Madimilo* (plural) were a mixture of herbs used as charms to secure properties from theft and robbery. In general, the giving of *ndima-miwili*, protective charms, was accompanied by certain taboos, named in Cigogo, *miko*. When the *miko* were not kept, the charms became ineffective. For some charms, *ikumbiko*, remembering the ancestors through libation, could become one of the taboos. So, ancestral spirits, *malungu*, played a significant part in the daily lives of the Gogo.

Other categories of spirits were *milungu*, *macisi* and *masoce*. *Milungu* are different from *malungu*. *Milungu* were nature spirits; for they controlled nature. They could be found in huge trees, thick forests, on hills, mountains, in wells, river sources, caves and dams. Unlike *masici*, they did not possess a person, but they could be contacted. They did not belong to a clan but to the whole Gogo tribe, and even to other peoples. There were both bad and good *milungu*. When angered, e.g., by felling trees in traditional "sacred" forest, *milungu* could cause calamities. However, there were bad *milungu* that could cause disasters, even when there were no violations of the principles of nature. *Macisi* (plural), or *icisi* (singular) was a spirit which could possess a person, but for a purpose. *Macisi* possessed people to make them diviners, medicine people, witchdoctors, healers, or prophets. *Macisi* were held in high respect, because of their message and the healing they provided through possessed people. The possessed acquired a respected status in the Gogo society, because of their spiritual relationships with supernatural powers.

Masoce (*mahoka* or *mizukule* in Swahili) were believed to be persons who were made dead through witchcraft; they were seen dead before naked eyes, but they were not really dead.¹²⁰ They were changed magically into a spiritual status known by the Gogo as *soce*. They were believed to eat human flesh as the condition for their continuation in their *soce* state. *Masoce* were owned by witches.¹²¹ Hence, the dreadful fear of witchcraft, and the

¹²⁰ *Masoce* are known as *mahoka*, *mizukule* or *syuka* in Swahili; but, the word *syuka* is becoming most popular due to the release of a famous Swahili movie, *Syuka* (2003).

¹²¹ Chambala, I N, *A Historical Study of the Biblical Theology of Spiritual Powers and Fear*, p.35f

Gogo hated, and still hate, witches very much. Real witch-hunting is still practised in some Gogo villages to this day.

One may wonder why I have to write all this regarding the Gogo? In fact, it is vital in order to understand the context in which the Gogo encountered the Bible. The Gogo people, like other peoples of Tanzania, engaged with the Bible in accordance with their cultural-religious situations. When they accepted the Bible they were not empty-handed. Nevertheless, the cultural religious milieu of the Gogo was not the only factor that shaped their reading of the Bible. External influences, such as colonial occupations, were also part of the background against which the Gogo came to "read" their Bibles. Our next section attempts to present the socio-political situations which, in one way or another, formed part of the context in which the Gogo engaged with the black Book, the Bible.

3.3 SOCIO-POLITICAL SITUATION

The earliest external influences in the Gogo land in particular, and in Tanzania in general, came from the Arabs, who initially traded on the Coast, but later started penetrating the rest of the country. The presence of Arab traders, together with the Greek and Egyptian traders, on the Tanzanian coast goes back to the first century of the common era.¹²² Arab travelling merchants came seasonally to the Tanzania Coast from Yemen, Oman and the Persian Gulf. Some of the traders decided to settle permanently, but many others continued to travel seasonally to buy gold, ivory, leopard skins, rhinoceros horn, turtle shells, aromatic gums, ambergris, palm oil and slaves. At this time slaves did not play a major part in trade on the coast, but still there is evidence that 'there was a steady supply of slaves from the Horn of Africa to Arabia and states bordering the Persian Gulf'.¹²³

Initially, these early Arab traders did not go into the interior of Tanzania, they obtained goods right from the coast; these goods came towards the coast through a gradual process of barter trade among tribes. As Arabic settlements and towns grew on the coast, there

¹²² *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, which was written by a Greek merchant from Alexandria in the first century A.D., has direct references to people and places of Eastern Africa. These are references to 'Azania' (East African Coast) and 'Zenj' (Zanzibar), see Odhiambo, *et al*, *A History of East Africa*, pp.15-16.

¹²³ Odhiambo, *et al*, *A History of East Africa*, p.20.

emerged rulers who claimed descent from Arabic or Persian ruling families. These rulers were called sheikhs or sultans. Under the sultan, there was a small council of advisers, the *kadhi*, who were in charge of the courts and the *sharia* (Koranic system of law); also, the *muhtasib*, the head of the police force, and *wazir*, who dealt with the administrative affairs of the state. This socio-political organisation on the coast led to the growth of the earliest trade centres and towns on the coast. Arabic rulers and traders as well as local dignitaries were linked to each other by common interest in trade and Islamic religion. Arabic influence politically and religiously may well have been extended beyond the coastal areas, to the Gogo land, and even to Lake Tanganyika.¹²⁴ The process of Arab penetration of the interior was interfered with by the Portuguese, but it was resumed later after the defeat of the Portuguese in the nineteenth century.

3.3.1 The Portuguese and Arabs

The coming of the Portuguese marks the dawn of the process of the penetration of the interior, Gogo area included, by foreign powers. The Portuguese were the first European power to start a sea route to India. The purpose was commercial, but also they saw this as an opportunity to spread Christianity to the East. However, they needed to take control of the East African coast as supply bases for their sailing vessels; and so Vasco da Gama sailed up the Coast in 1497. He destroyed many Muslim strongholds. In his second voyage, in 1505, da Gama attacked Kilwa, near Zanzibar. An eyewitness gave an account of the Portuguese occupation of Kilwa:

The Vicar General and some of the Franciscan Fathers [who travelled with da Gama] came ashore carrying two crosses in procession and singing. They went to the palace and there the Cross was put down and the Grand Captain prayed. Then everyone started to plunder the town of all its merchandise and provisions.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ This assumption has no adequate historical support prior to 1800s, see Odhiambo, *et al*, *A History of East Africa*, p.81.

¹²⁵ As quoted in Odhiambo, *et al*, *A History of East Africa*, p.83.

The Portuguese attempted to force their religion upon all people of other faiths, Arabs and indigenous. They also tried to suppress any resistance and rebellion. All this earned the Portuguese the undying hatred of the coastal people. The Arabs and the indigenous people became threats to the Portuguese rulers and the Portuguese missionaries. In 1587, the Zimba tribe, who were known as man-eaters, threatened the Portuguese. Also, the Segeju, another warlike tribe, was a great internal threat to the Portuguese. Yet in 1585 and 1587, there came a Turkish naval force on the East coast, according to its Captain, Ali Bey, to deliver their fellow Moslems from their Christian masters. More attacks against the Portuguese came from Oman Arabs between 1652 and 1687. By 1729, the Portuguese were expelled from the Tanzanian coast by the Oman Arabs.¹²⁶ After the expulsion of the Portuguese, it took Oman Arabs almost a century to completely occupy the coast and penetrate the interior of Tanzania.

In 1806, when Seyyid Said became absolute ruler of Oman, he strengthened Arab colonies on the coast and re-conquered old ones, which were lost to the Mazrui dynasties of Mombasa.¹²⁷ Said's intention was to create a great commercial centre; so he moved his capital from Oman to Zanzibar. Thus Seyyid Said became the Sultan of Zanzibar. From Zanzibar Said wanted to secure control over trade centres and routes. About 1830, Arabs started to penetrate inland as far as Ujiji on Lake Tanganyika, seeking ivory and slaves. By 1850, Arabs had already established themselves in the trade centres on the mainland. The Sultan claimed the whole of the mainland, from the coast to Ujiji, as part of his empire. Mpwapwa, in Gogo land, became one of the trade centres, because the central caravan route passed through Mpwapwa, parts of Kongwa, Dodoma municipality and other places of Gogo land. Said revived trade between Zanzibar and the interior by using the central trade route, and other routes to the mainland, as far as lakes Tanganyika and Victoria (Nyanza). By the eighteenth century, slave trade had grown to a greater extent; but it grew even more with Said's establishment of the trade routes from the coast to the lakes.¹²⁸ There were Arab and Afro-Arab traders and slave traders. They were ruthless and cruel to the indigenous, and their slaves. One famous trader, known as

¹²⁶ Odhiambo, *et al*, *A History of East Africa*, pp.84-88.

¹²⁷ Odhiambo, *et al*, *A History of East Africa*, pp.87-88.

¹²⁸ The central caravan route, passing through Gogo land, was the most popular (Odhiambo, *et al*, p.92).

Tippu Tip, is remembered for his 'great cruelty and ruthlessness'.¹²⁹ There were also African traders from the Yao and the Nyamwezi tribes. Nyamwezi always came in conflict with the Gogo as they travelled through the Gogo land.

3.3.2 The Slave Trade

On the East African coast and Islands, there was a great demand for slaves in the nineteenth century. Arabs needed slaves to work in their clove and coconut plantations. Other slaves were shipped to Arab states. Also, as the supply of slaves from West Africa diminished, many other slaves were transported to Reunion and Mauritius islands to work on French sugar plantations, as well as to Brazil, where slaves worked on Portuguese plantations. By 1839, it is estimated that about forty to forty-five thousand slaves were sold at the slave market in Zanzibar per year. Twenty years later, the number of slaves sold in Zanzibar increased to seventy thousand.¹³⁰ Slaves were brought from different parts of Tanzania, including the Gogo area. The process of capturing slaves was terrible for the Gogo and other indigenous people. The process included killings. Those who tried to escape, or those who could not continue due to their diminishing health, were killed. As Livingstone wrote,

He passed a woman tied by the neck to a tree and dead... We saw others tied up in a similar manner and one lying in the path shot or stabbed for she was in a pool of blood. The explanation we got invariably was that the Arab who owned these victims was enraged at losing his money by the slaves becoming unable to march.¹³¹

Like other places of the country, slave trade had horrible effects on the Gogo land and the Gogo themselves. Slave trade caused immediate human suffering and misery. In the

¹²⁹ Odhiambo, *et al*, *A History of East Africa*, p.93.

¹³⁰ Odhiambo, *et al*, *A History of East Africa*, p.96.

¹³¹ Livingstone, D, *Last Journals*, London 1874, I, p.56, as quoted by Oliver, R, *Missionary Factor in East Africa*, London, Longmans, 1965, p.32.

capturing process houses were destroyed, and families lost their relatives. People lost confidence; fear and suspicion grew.¹³²

In the areas, which were most affected, the slave trade even demoralised people's belief in their indigenous African religion. Economically, slave raids led to famine, poverty and destitution among the indigenous people. Because of fear, in some places there was much loss of agricultural production as villages and fields were laid waste. Politically, the Gogo, like some other tribes in Tanzania, organised themselves. Instead of continuing to maintain only clan chiefs, there was a move towards a centralised political authority with *Mtemi* (chief). Clan chiefs had to work under the *Mtemi*. In later years, these unified political organisations among tribes helped them to defend themselves against other indigenous peoples, e.g., the Nyamwezi, who collaborated with the slave trade as well as against foreign powers.

So, Arab occupation of Tanzania precipitated the increase of slave trade, which in turn had serious effects on the Gogo and other tribes. It was in this context of slavery, foreign oppression and exploitation, that the first CMS missionaries, Krapf and Rebmann translated the Bible and taught its words. It was in this same context that the Bible was first encountered by ex-slaves and other indigenous on the coast. The Bible came in as a sign of liberation indeed. But again, it was in the midst of this dire plight of slavery that the first German and British explorers came to prepare the country for yet another political occupation. For the Gogo land, the missionary followed immediately after the heyday of slavery and the brutal explorations of some Germans, like Carl Peters; all this will be depicted in our next section.

3.3.3 European Occupation and Indigenous Resistance

Before complete political occupation, there were explorers and representatives of some European countries who came to Tanzania. These travellers had a wide variety of

¹³² Those under powerful leaders, like Mkwawa of the Hehe people, or those far away from the slave trade routes were less affected.

reasons. Scientific and/or geographical exploration was a major reason. The information they provided helped their governments, business people, and missionaries. On the whole, this was part of the process of foreign intervention and conquest, which culminated in the complete occupation and colonisation of the whole of Tanzania. From 1853 to 1856, David Livingstone made a trans-Africa expedition. He was in search of the source of the Nile. Also, stories of great inland seas, as well as the news that Krapf and Rebmann had seen snow-capped mountains in East Africa, made Livingstone set out on his expedition. Livingstone's reports stirred not only the British government but also churches. The Universities' Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) was formed as a result of Livingstone's famous speech at Cambridge University in 1857, when he made the following appeal:

I beg to direct your attention to Africa. I know that in a few years I shall be cut off in that country, which is now open; do not let it be shut again. I go back to Africa to make an open path for commerce and Christianity; do you carry out the work which I have begun. I leave it with you.¹³³

Livingstone's speech combined religious and business interests; and, thereafter, more travellers came to Tanzania, passing through Gogo land.¹³⁴ In 1856, two army officers, Richard Burton and John Hanning Speke, sent by the Royal Geographical Society of Britain, led an expedition from Zanzibar to Lake Tanganyika, via Gogo land. These officials were among the first Europeans to visit the Gogo country. Burton commented that the Gogo land is beautiful and its people welcoming and hospitable.¹³⁵ Speke also visited Lake Nyanza and named it after his Queen, Victoria. So expeditions also involved the naming of places and even peoples! So Nyanza/Ngwanza became Victoria, Cisokwe (in Mpwapwa) became Chamuhawi (a place of witches), Masalakulangwa became Charles, and Manyesela could be named Bell.

¹³³ As quoted by Odhiambo, *et al*, *A History of East Africa*, p.102.

¹³⁴ In his expeditions, Livingstone did not enter Gogo land, but when he died in Western Tanzania, his body was carried to the coast via Mpwapwa and other centres of Gogo land.

¹³⁵ Dodoma Regional Office, 'Hali ya Uchumi Maendeleo ya Jamii Mkoa wa Dodoma', 2000, p.1 (unpublished report for Dodoma region).

After Burton and his colleague, more travellers came, with their foreign occupation campaigns. In 1889, Henry Morton Stanley came and looked at Gogo land and its people 'with desiring eyes' and said, 'there is no country in Africa that has excited greater interest in me than this'.¹³⁶ In 1873, Commander Cameron visited Tanzania; Gogo land was one of his resting places. Cameron admired the weather of Gogo land for its drastic change in the rainy season, when it becomes aesthetically pleasing. Also, Master Mariner Hore, on his way to Lake Tanganyika in 1882/83, spent some days in the area to the east of present-day Dodoma.

By the 1880s, the influence of British travellers and missionaries in Tanzania, and Gogo land in particular, was becoming powerful. In 1884, when the Germans sought to secure a 'place in the Sun' in East Africa, they deemed it sensible to act secretly so that Britain, and the Sultan of Zanzibar, might be confronted with established facts.¹³⁷ Three German representatives, Count Pfeil, Dr Carl Peters and Dr Julke, reached Zanzibar, on November 14, 1884, as deck passengers, dressed like mechanics. 'Officially discountenanced by the German consul, they, nevertheless, left at once for the interior'.¹³⁸ The aim was to sign treaties with native chiefs and to hoist German flags in native chiefdoms. In some areas there were agreement and submission to the German colonial campaign, but in other places there was fierce resistance leading to battles and wars. The first treaty was signed with the native chief of Uzigua in November 19, 1884, and a German flag was hoisted. Other treaties were signed with chiefs in Ukaguru, Usagara, Ukami and elsewhere, and an area of 60,000 square miles was placed under German control. Peters rushed back to Germany for the Berlin Conference, and on February 12, 1885, he transferred his treaty rights to the German East Africa Company, which he had founded.

On February 27, 1885, Tanzania was placed under the "protection" of the Emperor of Germany, and all British representatives were instructed by the Emperor to support Germany. The Sultan of Zanzibar's authority was then to be limited to a strip along the

¹³⁶ CDA, *Dodoma*, p.12.

¹³⁷ Westgate, W., *T.B.R. Westgate*, Massachusetts, Education & Research Group, 1987, p.29.

¹³⁸ Westgate, W., *T.B.R. Westgate*, p.29.

coast. But on August 16, 1888, when the German East Africa Company took over the administration of the mainland of Tanzania (then Tanganyika), the Sultan's authority had to be confined only to the island of Zanzibar. In 1889, Arabs, led by Bushiri, rebelled and turned against all Europeans, including missionaries. Gogo land became even more disturbed; the first church building in Mpwapwa was burned and missionaries had narrow escapes from death. One missionary in Gogo land reported, 'Native reports, both false and true, caused innumerable scares and the missionaries did not know from day to day but that they might be killed'.¹³⁹

After the Arabs' rebellion, the Germans also faced fierce resistance from many tribes, which had developed centralised military powers. Mchemba, the ruler of the Makonde people, defeated several German troops before they captured him in 1899. In Tabora, Chief Isike fought German soldiers when they tried to take over the city. When the Germans attempted to seize him, Isike killed himself with his powder magazine. In 1891, Mkwawa, chief of the Wahehe people of Iringa, with his fierce warriors, ambushed and killed two hundred and ninety German soldiers. Chief Mkwawa remained independent for three years until a large German troop encircled and stormed his capital at Kalenga on 30th October, 1894. Mkwawa escaped and fought as a guerrilla for four years. In June 1898, when Mkwawa saw that a German patrol was approaching his hiding camp, he shot himself. By overcoming Mkwawa, who was one of the strongest tribal leaders of Tanganyika, the Germans succeeded in taking control of the whole country. Nevertheless, this was not the end of the resistance. The *Maji Maji* war was still to break out later.

3.3.4 The Maji Maji War

The overall purpose of the Germans in taking control of Tanzania was to seek raw material for their industries in Germany. In 1900s, one spokesman of the German government put it this way, 'we have gone to East Africa to find raw materials and create markets for German trade and German Industry'.¹⁴⁰ In order to achieve this goal, the

¹³⁹ Westgate, *T.B.R. Westgate*, p.30.

¹⁴⁰ Odhiambo, *et al*, *A History of East Africa*, p.137.

German rulers established coffee, cotton and sisal plantations mainly in the Usambara, Matumbi, Meru and the Kilimanjaro areas.

With a ruthless hand, the German rulers took the native people from all over the country to work in their plantations. This forced labour was badly organised. As John Iliffe writes, '[people] had to work for five cents a day under harsh discipline and to the detriment of their fields'.¹⁴¹ Many natives hated this harsh behaviour and cruelty of the Germans.

In late 1904, a traditional medicine man, in Swahili, *mganga*, called Kinjeketile Ngwale, of Ngalambe village, to the south of the River Rufiji, declared that he had found some medicine which would protect people against the German bullets. Kinjeketile built a huge shrine to the deity Bokelo, where he summoned warriors from all over the country to take 'water' (in Swahili, *maji* – hence *Maji Maji*) mixed with millet and maize. Kinjeketile sprinkled the concoction over the warriors as protection against the bullets of the Germans. In order to quicken this exercise Kinjeketile send his representatives to various parts of Tanganyika to sprinkle the *maji* on the natives.

In the night of 31st July 1905, the Matumbi people who were working in cotton plantations to the south of the River Rufiji, near Ngalambe village, launched the *Maji Maji* war.¹⁴² The Matumbi speared all the German officials, missionaries, planters and traders in their area. Then the Matumbi neighbours, the Kichi, the Mbunga and the Ngindo peoples joined the fight against the Germans. After a few months many other tribes had joined the battle and each tribe was trying to attack any German centre in their area. The warriors were going round the country singing *Maji Maji! Homa Homa!* the Germans!¹⁴³ The *Maji Maji* rising was a countrywide popular resistance.

¹⁴¹ Odhiambo, *et al*, *A History of East Africa*, p.168.

¹⁴² Iliffe, L, 'Maji Maji War', in Iliffe, L & Saul J, eds, *Socialism in Tanzania, vol.1:Politics*, Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1972, p.10.

¹⁴³ Iliffe, J, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p.170. *Homa*, in Matumbi language, and also in Cigogo, means "stab".

Initially the Germans ignored the reports of the killing, but a few weeks later, burning villages could be seen a few miles south of Dar-es-Salaam, the capital of their colony. Again, a report came that five missionaries were speared in the Ngindo area. The resistance became so intense that the governor reported to Berlin that 'Fear [was] bordering on panic'.¹⁴⁴ The governor asked for military support from Germany to suppress the uprising. German troops went about all the places where the rebellion had spread, searched out the warriors and killed them, burned the farms of the natives and fired with bullets at the villages where the rising was so intense.

3.3.5 The Aftermath of the War

This war left about 250,000 people dead and many others severely wounded. Thus Kinjeketile's ritual proved a failure. In January 1907, the last warriors of the Wangoni, who had fought longest and hardest, were suppressed. After the fighting came famine. The natives resorted to eating insects and wild berries. More people died of the hunger than those who were killed on the battlefield.¹⁴⁵ In the regions of the Ngindo the natives were almost wiped out. Forests began to take over the maize fields of the natives and the plantations of the foreigners. Elephants, buffaloes, rhinos and many other wild animals started moving into the forest. As Pakenham writes, 'In due course the hills of Ungindo [the Ngindo area], once teeming with people, became the largest game park in the world'.¹⁴⁶

The *Maji Maji* event was a lesson to the natives as well as to their colonial rulers. The Germans had to reconsider their attitude towards the Tanganyikan people. The *Maji Maji* event reshaped the history of Tanganyika, religiously and politically. After the war, there emerged a popular reading of the Bible, which was both religious and political. Even the Nationalist Movement of the 1960s can be traced to the spirit of the *Maji Maji* resistance. Most of the nationalists were "readers" of the Bible. They went to mission schools, and read the Bible christianly and politically.

¹⁴⁴ Iliffe, J, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, p.170.

¹⁴⁵ Iliffe, J, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, p.202.

¹⁴⁶ Pakenham, T, *The Scramble for Africa: from 1876 to 1912*, New York, Avon Books, 1991, p.622.

The *Maji Maji* was the dawn of the nationalistic spirit. Before the *Maji Maji* war each tribe lived by itself. They were very few contacts, which, very often, involved civil wars. Each tribal leader was trying to extend his chiefdom as far as possible. Because of that situation, missionaries in their travels were very exposed to swords and spears. For the first time, during the *Maji Maji* rising, almost all tribes of Tanzania were brought together and fought as one people. During the *Maji Maji* rising the plant of Tribalism was uprooted and the seed of unity was planted. After the rising a person could travel safely from Dar-es-Salaam all the way to Lake Tanganyika.

The *Maji Maji* event marked the end of Tanganyikan military resistance to foreign rule. People started seeking new ways of life; ways of survival which would lead them to their self-identity, victory and independence. Regarding indigenous religious expression, the war caused a spiritual void. There emerged a general feeling among the indigenous that the new religion (Christianity) is more powerful than their indigenous religion. This sense of dissatisfaction enkindled a desire for that power of the new religion. But how could that new power be obtained? It seemed that the only way to gain new power and ability would be through obtaining the knowledge of the Book (the Bible) through reading it. The widespread acceptance of the Bible, and a great desire to read it, that began after the *Maji Maji* war was a new strategy for survival, socially, culturally and politically. There was a new attitude towards the new religion and its book, the Bible. This change of attitude was the reason for the pressing desire for education among Tanzanians early in the twentieth century. The root of the later popular nationalist movement could only be traced to the *Maji Maji* war. As Julius Nyerere stated fifty years after the *Maji Maji* War,

It is important to bear this [*Maji Maji* resistance] in mind...In order to understand the nature of a nationalist movement like mine. Its function is not to create the spirit of rebellion but to articulate it and show a new technique.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ In Iliffe, L & Saul, J, eds., *Socialism in Tanzania*, Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1972, p.11.

Since the *Maji Maji* event religion has been considered as a unifying factor in our Tanzanian society and not a divisive one. Tanzanians have very often seen religions as means for socio-political success and stability. Very often, politicians, church leaders and many ordinary “readers” quote the Bible without any suspicion. The Bible is respected and “trusted” as a/the book with divine authority.¹⁴⁸ So, one can argue that ideas, attitudes and experiences of the people during the *Maji Maji* event shaped the subsequent interpretative history of the Bible among Christians, in the whole of Tanzanian society. Today, in order to understand the attitude of many Tanzanians towards the “Bible and politics”, the *Maji Maji* is one of the historical events to be carefully analysed.

The overall aim of this chapter has been to uncover the background against which Tanzanians, and the Gogo in particular, encountered the Bible. In different times of the history of Tanzania, the Bible had been encountered in a wide variety of socio-political contexts. These contexts, with their various historical periods, in effect represent different phases of engagement with the Bible among the indigenous. Even the presence of the Bible itself takes on different images, and implications, depending on the place and time it was encountered. Was the Bible encountered during the Portuguese and Arab years? Or was it engaged during German occupation and indigenous resistance? The presence of the Bible in Tanzania has had a wide range of significations in different times. A particular focus on the Gogo will be picked up later in chapter five. At this point it is significant to depict the presence of the Bible in Tanzania as a whole; for the Gogo engaged with the Bible in their own context but within the wider context of Tanzania. The next chapter aims to look at the presence of the Bible during the pioneer missionary period in Tanzania (1844 – 1870s), as well as how the people began to make sense of the Bible.

¹⁴⁸ For Tanzanian Muslims, the Bible is “a” divine book, equally respected along with the Qu’ran, whereas among Tanzanian Christians, the Bible is “the” book with final divine authority.

CHAPTER 4

4.0 EARLY MISSIONARIES AND THE PRESENCE OF THE BIBLE IN TANZANIA: AN OVERVIEW

4.1 ARRIVAL OF THE EARLY MISSIONARIES WITH THE BIBLE

4.1.1 From 1486 to 1612

The earliest presence of the Bible in East Africa is associated with the arrival of Portuguese missionaries. In 1486, a Portuguese named Bartholomew Diaz went around the Cape of Africa and sailed up to East Africa. Twelve years later, another Portuguese, Vasco da Gama, rounded the Southern edge of Africa, and on April 7, 1498 he reached Mombasa in East Africa. Vasco da Gama proceeded with his voyage to Calcutta, India. After four years, he made another journey. Vasco da Gama's journeys opened the way for many other Portuguese trading and missionary expeditions to India and the East. East Africa, particularly Mombasa, Kenya, and the Island of Zanzibar, in present Tanzania, became important stopping points. Soon these resting places on the East coast became Portuguese possessions.¹⁴⁹

In their voyages, Diaz and da Gama were accompanied by some Roman Catholic missionaries, who tried to make some contacts with the indigenous people in Zanzibar, Mombasa and in other places. This earliest encounter, between the indigenous and the missionaries, was not peaceful. The Portuguese employed military power to take control of the East African coast. In the process of conquering, demolishing the towns of Kilwa, Mombasa, Zanzibar, Vumba, Lamu and Sofala, the missionary, with his Bible, was there together with the conquerors.¹⁵⁰ What this collaboration meant to the local people of the

¹⁴⁹ Sahlberg, C., *From Krapf to Rugambwa – A Church History of Tanzania*, Nairobi, Evangel Publishing House, 1986. p.11.

¹⁵⁰ Sahlberg, C., *From Krapf to Rugambwa*, p.11.

Tanzanian coast must have had some implications for their later reception of the Bible and/or Christianity.¹⁵¹

Francis Xavier (1506-1552) is another example of the earliest missionary presence in East Africa. In 1541, Xavier traveled from Lisbon to India as a Jesuit missionary and Papal Nuncio, and as a representative of the emperor of Portugal.¹⁵² In his journey, Xavier stopped at Malindi, and spent some time there. The main aim of Xavier's mission was to reach those, especially in India, who had never heard the name of Christ. So, for Xavier, East Africa was also a resting place. After Xavier had left the coast of Tanzania, there came Goncalo da Silveira and two other Jesuit priests. These people were more concerned about mission in East Africa than their Portuguese contemporaries. In 1560, unlike their predecessors, Silveira and his colleagues moved from Sofala to other inland places where they tried to evangelise some tribal chiefs. The local people reacted negatively, and consequently they killed Silveira in 1561. In 1569, when another Jesuit missionary, known as Father Monclaro, arrived, he did not find any Christian presence.

Later in 1599, Augustinian and Dominican monks baptized the King of Mombasa, with other converts; they also established monasteries in Zanzibar, and in other places along the coast. The evangelization of the East African coast had now started. As Sahlberg writes, 'in 1612 a vicarage was organized which extended from Cape Guardafui to the Cape of Good Hope with the administrative headquarters in Mozambique'.¹⁵³ During this Roman Catholic missionary work, the King of Pemba, part of Zanzibar, was baptized and named Dom Filipe. It is reasonable to assume that the Bible played a role in those earliest conversions of the Coastal people. But what Bible texts these earliest missionaries preached, preferred most, or taught to their converts, is an area for further research. Although our information as to what the earliest missionaries taught is scant, we know that by the eighteenth century there was no Christian presence in any of the

¹⁵¹ Today, on the coastal areas of Tanzania Christians are in the minority; and in the Island of Zanzibar Christians are 2 per cent out of the whole population which is 981,754. Is this Christian situation a result of a result of early encounters between the indigenous and the missionaries? This is another area yet to be explored in further research.

¹⁵² Neill, S., *A History of Christian Missions: the Penguin History of the Church*, vol.5, London, Penguin Books, reprint., 1990, p.127.

¹⁵³ Sahlberg, C., *From Krapf to Rugambwa*, p.12.

earliest missionary centres of Zanzibar, Kilwa, Malindi, and others.¹⁵⁴ The discussion below provides some suggestions for the causes of the disappearance of this earliest Christianity in the coastal centres.

In these earliest missionary attempts, Christianity and/or the Bible did not have a lasting impact on the local people. The following reasons may account for the failure of the earliest missionary activities on the coast. Firstly, East Africa was only a resting place on the long Portuguese voyages to the East. Secondly, the initial militant arrival of the Portuguese on the East coast created a hostile attitude in the local people. For example, in 1587, the people of Pemba 'massacred in one night all the Portuguese living on Island – men, women and children'.¹⁵⁵ Some scholars suggest that this hatred might have been influenced by Arabs who were ruling the Island before the Portuguese defeated them.¹⁵⁶ Thirdly, Portuguese missionaries did not consider the specific cultural context of the East coastal people. They condemned most of their cultural values, including polygamy. Besides, the Catholic use of Latin as an official language of the Church in all matters of worship did not make possible a conscious engagement with the Bible among the people. Because Latin was considered the official ecclesiastical language, no Bible translation attempts were made until Krapf arrived on the East African Coast in 1844.¹⁵⁷ Language is crucial in any engagement with the Bible among any ordinary people. Any effective, or conscious, transaction with the Bible among ordinary African "readers" is through language. The failure to translate the Bible into vernacular languages of the Coast made the presence of the Bible almost non-existent in these earliest missionary enterprises in East Africa, and Tanzania in particular. But the Bible was there – we would be surprised if it was not – along with other objects.

4.1.2 From 1844 to mid 1870s

When Johann Krapf and John Rebmann settled at Rabai, they concentrated on the study of local languages. Krapf began translating the Bible, and erected a church building at

¹⁵⁴ Sahlberg, C., *From Krapf to Rugambwa*, p.13.

¹⁵⁵ Sahlberg, C., *From Krapf to Rugambwa*, p.13.

¹⁵⁶ Sahlberg, C., *From Krapf to Rugambwa*, p.13.

¹⁵⁷ Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, p.63.

Rabai. Before settling at Rabai, Krapf had stayed in Zanzibar, where he met the Sultan to talk about his vision of preaching the Word to the local people. The Sultan gave Krapf permission in these words:

This comes from Said Sultan, to all our subjects, friends and governors, our greeting. This Note is given in favour of Dr. Krapf, the German, a good man, who desires to convert the world to God. Behave ye well toward him, and render him services everywhere.¹⁵⁸

Thus, for four months, from January 7 to May 11, 1844, Krapf stayed on the Island of Zanzibar, preaching the Word to Africans, Europeans and Indians.¹⁵⁹ These Europeans and Indians, together with Arabs, were traders, exporting ivory, rubber, hides, cloves, aloe, coconut, cashew, and slaves to Asia, Europe and America. Also, they were importing into Zanzibar things like beads, necklaces, firearms, bullets, clothes, telescopes, looking mirrors, combs, etc. The arrival of Krapf added another foreign object among the natives; that was the Bible. Krapf brought the Bible and started translating it for the natives. From Zanzibar, Krapf went to Pemba, Tanga, and then he proceeded to Rabai (near Mombasa) where he established a mission base. In 1846, a German fellow missionary, Rebmann joined Krapf at Rabai.¹⁶⁰ Rebmann wanted to see the Gospel message spreading. From April 27 to June 11, 1848, he visited the people around the Kilimanjaro areas. In April 1849, Rebmann proceeded further, and reached Machame areas, to the southwestern part of Mt. Kilimanjaro, where, after several days, he met chief Mamkinga.¹⁶¹ The encounter and conversations between the Chief and Rebmann, with his Bible, need further analysis.

¹⁵⁸ 'East Africa Mission: Forty-fifth Report [1845]', pp.49-50 ('Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East From 1844 to 1921', CMS archives, the Central Library, Birmingham University, UK). Said Sultan is commonly referred to, in many historical books, as Sultan Seyyid Said of Zanzibar, see, for example, Sahlberg, C., *From Krapf to Rugambwa*, p.25.

¹⁵⁹ 'East Africa Mission: Forty-fifth Report [1845]', pp.49-51.

¹⁶⁰ 'East Africa Mission: Forty-fifth Report [1845]', p.50; also see Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, p.63.

¹⁶¹ Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, p.81.

Rebmann reached the court of the Chagga, Mamkinga, on May 13, 1849. He reported that the country was surrounded by a trench, fortified and guarded by *Wasoro*, native soldiers, so he had to wait until the chief was informed of his arrival.¹⁶² After one hour he was taken to the chief for a short introduction. On the next day, May 14, one of the chief's servants brought him *mawari*,¹⁶³ and then he was asked to explain the purpose of his journey. Rebmann declared that he had come to tell them about the will of God. He emphasized his point by alluding to the Bible stories about creation, the fall, and how Christ came into the world to save sinners. Rebmann reports that when he talked about sinners, people 'turned off their attention'; and abruptly the chief's people changed the subject by inquiring of Rebmann if 'he had any weapons which helped him to reach their country'.¹⁶⁴ He replied that he had an umbrella, and only trusted in 'Eroova' [sic] (God in their language).¹⁶⁵ It seems Rebmann did not want to declare his other things, including his gun. Knowing that the white man had more than what he disclosed, the chief astonishingly replied, '[you trusted] on nothing but Eroova?' Rebmann insisted, 'Yes, on nothing but on Eroova, for He is above all things; and wild beasts, as well as evil men, are all in His Hands'.¹⁶⁶ Still, the chief was not satisfied. Rebmann writes,

I next showed them my Bible, telling them that the Word and will of "Eroova" was written in that book in my own language, but that we were now writing it in Kinika, and intended to do the same in the Kijagga [sic], in order to make known to them the contents of the book.¹⁶⁷

When he promised that he would translate the Book in their language, so that they could know its contents, the chief and his people were satisfied and continued with further conversations. They wanted to know whether it was true that in his 'country', Europe, there were people tall enough to touch the Sun; whether there was grass in his country. Also they wanted to know whether it was true that 'Europeans were cannibals'.

¹⁶² 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fiftieth year [1850], p. ixxxix.

¹⁶³ 'A beverage prepared of bananas' ('East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fiftieth year [1850], p. ixxxix.).

¹⁶⁴ 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fiftieth year [1850], p. ixxxix.

¹⁶⁵ 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fiftieth year [1850], p. ixxxix.

¹⁶⁶ 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fiftieth year [1850], p. ixxxix.

¹⁶⁷ 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fiftieth year [1850], p. ixxxix.

According to CMS files (1850), there were protracted conversations, covering a wide variety of subjects; but the Bible occupied an essential place.¹⁶⁸

On May 16, the King wanted to scrutinize their visitor; he then paid a visit to Rebmann's hut. Rebmann writes, 'every little thing I had with me attracted his attention, especially my blanket, a candle and an umbrella'.¹⁶⁹ After inspecting them, the chief wanted to know where Rebmann obtained those things. Rebmann reports, 'I took my Bible in my hand, and said that it was to that book that we "Wasungu", Europeans, owed the things he had seen ... what I wished for was to teach him and his people the contents of that book'.¹⁷⁰ The chief drew nearer and took Rebmann's Bible in his hands, and started 'turning its leaves to and fro'; and, the chief seemed to be very much pleased with the experience of touching the Book and turning its pages!¹⁷¹ Hence, the chief allowed Rebmann to walk in his country (Machame areas). After a one-week mission in Machame, Rebmann needed to leave for Rabai, but he was supposed to meet the chief for a last interview and permission; but he had to wait until the chief called on him in his hut. Rebmann waited anxiously.

On May 24, in the afternoon, the chief made his appearance. Before he could be allowed to leave, the chief asked him to explain once more the purpose of his visit to Machame. As Rebmann himself put it, '[I] told [the chief] again that in coming to his country, I had no other object in view but to teach him and his people the words of the book I carried with me, which had made our ancestors intelligent and wise, and which showed us the way to heaven'. After these words, the chief took the Bible again in his hands, 'amusing himself by turning its leaves to and fro'. As the chief held the Bible in his hand, Rebmann continued to insist that he had not come to the chief in his own name, or in that of his king, but in that of 'the great "Mangi" (king) in heaven, whose name was Jesus Christ, and who was the Son of God'; and Rebmann himself was 'His "Msoro"

¹⁶⁸ 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fiftieth year [1850], p. lxxxix.'

¹⁶⁹ 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fiftieth year [1850], p. xc.

¹⁷⁰ 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fiftieth year [1850], p. xc.

¹⁷¹ 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fiftieth year [1850], p. xc.

[soldier]'.¹⁷² Then the chief and his advisers left the cottage to have a private conversation with Rebmann's guide. There are no details about the private conversation, but later Rebmann was informed that the chief wanted him or any of his European brothers 'as teacher [of the Book] into his country, and that, accordingly, [they] should not go into any other country [to teach the Book]'.¹⁷³ Also, the chief told Rebmann that he desired him to stay two days longer so that he could tell them more about the Book, and that he was free to walk into his country when he pleased.

Already, we can see that the Book had fascinated the chief. He had already been led to believe that the Bible has special knowledge. The chief did not want the knowledge of the Book to be taken to other people. If he alone, and his people, acquired the knowledge, he would be more intelligent and wiser than all other kings and chiefs in the region!

In 1851, Rebmann, with his Muslim guide, Bwana Heri, made another journey to chief Mamkinga's country, Machame. This was Rebmann's third journey westward.¹⁷⁴ This time chief Mamkinga again asked Rebmann what exactly he wanted to do in Machame. Rebmann held out the Bible to the chief and told him that his main occupation was only about the Book, 'which contained the Word of God', and about which he wanted to teach all nations. The chief welcomed him cordially; and it is reported that Rebmann stayed for several days, and again he had prolonged conversations with the chief, his advisers and other people in Machame. Then he went back to Rabai. After a few months he made a fourth journey; this time he intended to proceed further in the interior, as far as the Gogo people and Unyamwezi. Could the chief allow him to take the secrets of the Book to other tribes as well? Of course not, for the chief wanted the knowledge of the Book only for himself, so that he could be greater and more powerful than other tribes.

The chief demanded excessive gifts from Rebmann in order to grant protection to him in his missionary journeys in the interior. Rebmann gave many gifts; and, after this

¹⁷² 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fiftieth year [1850], p.xc.

¹⁷³ 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fiftieth year [1850], p.xc.

¹⁷⁴ 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fifty-first year [1851], p.cii

engagement in a sharing of gifts and/or trade, the chief promised ivory in return for the extra goods he had taken. Later when Rebmann asked for the ivory, the chief replied, 'a man of God ought not to wish for such things'.¹⁷⁵ Due to his reduced stock, Rebmann could not proceed with his journeys to the Gogo and the Nyamwezi peoples. Perhaps, one can assume, this was the intention of Mamkinga! Rebmann decided to return to Rabai.

Chief Mamkinga's reply to Rebmann's request for ivory provides some hints of how the local people started to make sense of what it meant to be "a people of God" and what is required of them – that they should not be obsessed with material gain. In general, we can note how the chief began to make sense of the Bible and its implications.

Like Rebmann, Krapf was not confined in Rabai. In July 1848, Krapf reached the Shambala people and their chief, Kimweri, situated on the Usambara Mountains in Tanzania. Krapf arrived at the palace while chief Kimweri was away. On August 10, 1848, Kimweri came, and Rebmann writes: 'on entering, he cast a powerful look upon me. I saluted him as quick as I could with the words, "*Sabaheri Simba wa Muene, sabaheri Zumbe,*" i.e. "Good morning, thou who art the Lion thyself".¹⁷⁶ Kimweri made no reply, but he went straight to take a seat on a native *kitanda*, bedstead; and the state herald, who sat in the middle, cried out in a singing manner, "*Eh Simba, eh Simba!*" i.e. "Oh Lion, Oh Lion!"¹⁷⁷ Then, Kimweri's reporter, who was his son-in-law, began to relate how the visitor (Krapf) came, and what he did and said during the chief's absence. The reporter explained in detail that the visitor wrote down some *Washinsi* words in his smaller book.¹⁷⁸ After the general report, the viceroy stated that he had inspected the visitor and his belongings, and that he was not '*emganga*', a traditional healer, but a 'book-man', who had come to tell the Shambala people 'to abstain from deceit, lies, intoxication, and violence'.¹⁷⁹ While these reports were made to him, according to Krapf

¹⁷⁵ Sahlberg, C., *From Krapf to Rugambwa*, p.27.

¹⁷⁶ 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fifty-first year [1851], p.ci.

¹⁷⁷ 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fifty-first year [1851], p.ci.

¹⁷⁸ *Washinsi* might be an old Swahili word for *washenzi*, meaning uncivilized and/or backward.

¹⁷⁹ 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fifty-first year [1851], p.ci. A 'book-man' here might mean one who has/possesses/uses the Book, a Bible-man; one who has the knowledge of the Book. Note, '[a] book-

himself, chief Kimweri unceasingly cast his eyes upon Krapf and his Book and/or his small book. After the reports, the chief announced that he had accepted 'the European' and that 'nobody shall do him [Krapf] any harm'. After the chief's announcement all people raised a cry of joy, '*Eh Simba, Eh Muene!*'¹⁸⁰ Having done all this, Krapf and the chief with his counselors had a long conversation. It seems this "long conversation" was centred on the Bible; as Krapf himself writes, '[a]fter this conversation, in which I endeavoured to give him a better view of the contents of my book [the Bible], he wished to see the presents which I had for him'.¹⁸¹ Conversations continued and Krapf asked the chief if he could be permitted to leave for Rabai the next day.

The next day, August 11, Krapf appeared before the chief; but before he could leave, the chief asked if he could explain again the object of his visit. Krapf made the most of this opportunity; thus:

I began by saying, "God, the Almighty, all-wise, and all-merciful God, has made heaven and earth, and every thing that is therein. He created, by His will, one man and one woman in the beginning in a state of purity, goodness, and happiness; but man, by Satan's subtlety, transgressed God's law, became His enemy, and a slave of Satan, following his devices, but thereby made himself most unhappy in time and eternity, as he brought by his transgression great miseries upon himself; for God, according to His justice, was obliged to punish the rebel-sinner. But being a merciful God, and disliking the eternal misery of man, He sent, 1800 years ago, His own Son Jesus Christ into the World, to make an atonement, through the effusion of His own blood, for the sinning man, to bear his guilt, and to procure for him the forgiveness of his sins before God, and a new spirit of life. Christ was thirty-three years in the

man [who had come to tell them] to abstain from deceit, lies, intoxication, and violence'. When one looks back in the history of mission, being a "Book-man" gave a person authority to speak such a message.

¹⁸⁰ That means, 'Oh Lion! Oh thou who art thyself!' ('East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fifty-first year [1851], p.ci.).

¹⁸¹ 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fifty-first year [1851], p.ci. Cf. Comaroff, J., & Comaroff, J.L., *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa I*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991, p.171, 13-36. Also see, West, G.O., 'Early Encounters with the Bible among the BaTlhaping' 20003, pp.24-25, 27-28; West, G.O., *The Academy of the Poor*, p.39ff.

world: He suffered and died, was buried, and rose from the dead on the third day, and ascended to heaven where he lives in glory, rules the whole world, hears the prayers of those who invoke Him, and shall return to judge the quick and the dead; wherefore He demands that every man shall repent of his sins, believe in Him alone, and receive a new heart from Him"... the king, who had listened very attentively, said, "I see what his words are: they are words of the book." This he said in a manner which showed that he was little affected by the importance of these words.¹⁸²

I have quoted Krapf at length here; for it seems Krapf gives us an example of how and what parts of the Bible early missionaries first preached to the indigenous people. After Krapf's preaching, Kimweri wanted to give Krapf ivory, cattle, and slaves, as a sign of his acceptance of 'the words of the book'. Krapf told the chief that he did not want a slave, or any thing, except a few free children to teach the Book at Rabai. The chief explained to Krapf that if some children were to be taken to Rabai, their parents and other people would think that they had been sold into slavery. He suggested Krapf come and teach him and his people in his own country and that he should not only teach the contents of the book but also other *misungu*.¹⁸³ Krapf agreed; and lastly before he left, as he had refused ivory, slaves and cattle, the chief decided to give him 'five goats to eat on the road'. He accepted the offer with gratitude and he went back to Rabai.¹⁸⁴

Krapf did not manage to open a station there; and in 1850, he travelled to England to publish some translations, but also to ask the CMS to start 'a chain of mission stations' starting from Rabai through Kilimanjaro, Shambala area, Gogo land, up to Unyamwezi.¹⁸⁵ Krapf's proposal was accepted by the CMS committee. When Krapf returned from England, two more missionaries, J.J. Erhardt and Johann Wagner, joined

¹⁸² 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fifty-first year [1851], pp.ci-cii.

¹⁸³ *Misungu* might mean, arts, sophisticated skills/knowledge, healing, divination, etc.

¹⁸⁴ 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fifty-first year [1851], p.cii.

¹⁸⁵ Anderson, W.B., *The History of the Church in East Africa*, Dodoma, C.T.P., 1981, p.5.

him at Rabai. Erhardt went to the Shambala people to try and open a mission station, but he also did not succeed; 'he stayed for three months and withdrew'.¹⁸⁶

Despite his failure in opening mission centres in Tanzania, Krapf continued to make the Bible available in Swahili and other languages of the East African Coast. Also, Krapf made a four-thousand-word Swahili-English dictionary. As Sahlberg writes,

From Swahili the Bible translation work proceeded to vernacular languages. By 1848 he had translated the Gospel of Luke into Kinyika, a language spoken around Rabai... in 1850 he presented to CMS a translation of the Gospels, the Acts and Genesis into the Galla language...[he also] prepared a Swahili grammar...¹⁸⁷

Krapf believed in the power of the Bible to change people's hearts, and so he did not lose heart in spite of hardships. Krapf saw the vital need for the indigenous people to "read" the Bible in their own tongues.

Another missionary worth mentioning, at least for our present discussion, is Thomas Wakefield, who was based at Ribe mission station. Wakefield was very careful and patient in his missionary approaches, and the people around Ribe named him *Pole Pole*, meaning slowly, gentle, or steady. Like his predecessors, *Pole Pole* tried to reach the Galla people through Malindi, but the Galla demanded too many gifts for his entry into their country. *Pole Pole* told the Galla that his main task was not to bring material gifts but the good news of Jesus Christ. For the Galla 'good news' meant their protection against the Maasai raids, and they asked if the missionary could give them protection. *Pole Pole* pointed out that the Word of God has power to protect them; they had to pray to God through Jesus Christ. Although the Galla had not yet accepted Christianity, they accepted prayers, trusting that words of God would protect them. The missionary prayed in English and the people prayed in their vernacular. According to Anderson, the people

¹⁸⁶ Anderson, W.B., *The History of the Church in East Africa*, p.5.

¹⁸⁷ Sahlberg, C., *From Krapf to Rugambwa*, p.5.

'were deeply impressed and several days later demanded that he conducted another prayer meeting'. The Galla nicknamed him, 'the praying man'.¹⁸⁸ *Pole Pole* had unwittingly established a point of contact between Christianity and/or the Bible, on one side, and the indigenous people on the other. The Galla, like other indigenous, are religious people. They had their indigenous belief in God and in times of calamities, shortage of rains, epidemic diseases, etc., they prayed to seek God's intervention. When the missionary, *Pole Pole*, communicated his biblical perspective of prayers, the Galla perceived it through their indigenous religious experience and understanding of prayers. An understanding of prayer and that felt need for prayer for God's protection must have formed some points of contact between the respective worldviews of the missionary and the indigenous. *Pole Pole* returned to Ribe, and it is clear from historical accounts that this "point of contact" was never followed up.

Charles New is another early missionary in Tanzania, and Kenya as well. In 1863, he joined *Pole Pole*. Unlike *Pole Pole*, New was very enthusiastic to see the Bible message preached beyond Ribe. He journeyed to different places in Kenya and Tanzania. One of New's remarkable journeys was one that he made to the Chagga of Moshi, living near Mt. Kilimanjaro. The details of the encounter between New and chief Mandara of Moshi, which is a significant part of this chapter, will be picked up in the next section (4.2). At this juncture, we still have to discuss other early missionaries who also provide some hints of the earliest presence of the Bible among Tanzanians.

UMCA missionaries were also among the first missionaries in Tanzania.¹⁸⁹ In 1861, the first UMCA group, led by Bishop Charles Frederick Mackenzie, landed at Cape Town and journeyed north up to the Shire Highlands in Malawi. In 1862, Bishop Mackenzie died and William George Tozer became his successor. In 1864, bishop Tozer moved the UMCA station to Zanzibar. In 1865, nine freed slaves were taught and baptized; among these first converts were John Swedi and George Farajallah. By 1869, the UMCA had won twenty-two converts. In 1873, Tozer resigned and, in the next year, Dr Steere

¹⁸⁸ Anderson, W.B., *The History of the Church in East Africa*, p.7.

¹⁸⁹ UMCA is an abbreviation for 'Universities Mission to Central Africa.'

became the third bishop of the UMCA mission in Zanzibar.¹⁹⁰ On June 8, 1879, John Swedi was ordained deacon and sent to Masasi, south of Tanzania.¹⁹¹

This is an explicit sign that the Bible message had started touching local peoples, at least among freed slaves. These people found refuge in the mission stations and so they converted to Christianity. Often, UMCA missionaries bought slaves and kept them in mission compounds. Then these converts were trained either for the profession of teaching or ministry. A similar mission pattern was followed by other missionaries; for example, Father Antoine Horrier, who began his mission work in Zanzibar on June 16, 1863, under the auspice of the Holy Ghost Fathers (HGF), bought children, boys and girls, at the Slave Market of Zanzibar and put them in mission compounds. Then the freed slaves were taught Christian faith and other useful skills.¹⁹² Thus, the Bible message brought liberation and dignity.

In 1873, the UMCA made possible the treaty for the abolition of the Zanzibar Slave Market. This treaty was signed by the Sultan. Bishop Steere bought part of the slave market site and built a church there, which presently is the Cathedral of the Anglican Diocese of Zanzibar.¹⁹³ Steere learned Swahili and in 1865 he translated the New Testament, a prayer book and a hymnbook into Standard Swahili. Steere advanced the translation work began by Krapf. Steere's 'grammar of the Swahili language is still regarded as authoritative today as it was when it first came out in printed form'.¹⁹⁴ Anderson designates the UMCA mission approach as 'civilising'.¹⁹⁵ At Zanzibar the UMCA started St. Andrew's College in 1864. The UMCA trained many people who, at

¹⁹⁰ Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, pp.64, 65.

¹⁹¹ Isichei, E., *A History of Christianity in Africa: from Antiquity to the Present*, London, SPCK, 1995, p.139; Lema, A.A., 'Historical Development of Christian Education in Tanzania' in Omari, C.K., *Essays in Church and Society in Tanzania*, ELCT, 1976, pp.28-32.

¹⁹² Lema, A.A., in Omari, C.K., *Essays in Church and Society in Tanzania*, p.31; Sahlberg, C., *From Krapf to Rugambwa*, pp.48-49. Father Horrier started some other settlements for freed slaves around Bagamoyo and another mission centre near Morogoro in 1877.

¹⁹³ Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, p.65; Sahlberg, C., *From Krapf to Rugambwa*, p.37.

¹⁹⁴ Lema, A.A., in Omari, C.K., *Essays in Church and Society in Tanzania*, p.31; Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, p.65.

¹⁹⁵ Anderson, W.B., *The History of the Church in East Africa*, p.49; Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, p.65.

the time of World War I, were 'the best-educated Tanganyikans'.¹⁹⁶ The UMCA won many converts from its boarding schools at Zanzibar and Newala. But in all missionary enterprises, whether in ex-slave settlements, mission compounds, mission boarding schools, "bush schools", or in Sunday services at slave markets, the Bible had a vital place as we will see in the next section.

4.2 EARLY PRESENCE OF THE BIBLE IN TANZANIA

Right from the beginning of missionary activities in East Africa, and Tanzania in particular, the Bible was present. In the fifteenth century, the Bible was already on the island of Zanzibar among the Portuguese missionaries and explorers, though the indigenous people had not yet encountered it. Even among those White Fathers' missionaries 'dressed in naval uniform' on Zanzibar harbour, the Bible was present.¹⁹⁷ In retrospect, the presence of the Bible became blatant with the coming of Krapf and Rebmann. Krapf set the beginning of Bible translations in Tanzania, and the whole of East Africa.¹⁹⁸ Krapf translated the Bible so that the message could be passed on to the people.

Krapf and Rebmann set up a school so that they could teach their converts to read and write by using the Bible as the textbook. The aim was to enable the converts to read the Bible by themselves. Earlier, before Krapf and Rebmann, the Arabs had started Quranic Schools, where Islamic converts learned passages from the Qur'ān. Through this approach Islam had attracted many people in Zanzibar.¹⁹⁹ Krapf's school, and later mission schooling centres, emphasized the learning of passages from the Bible. Because indigenous people desired the magic of literacy, these earliest missionaries hoped that people would accept the Gospel message as they learned to read and write using the Bible. This approach was later to be very successful, particularly among the Gogo.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Iliffe, J., *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979, [np], as quoted by Sahlberg, C., *From Krapf to Rugambwa*, p.39. Cf., Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, p.65.

¹⁹⁷ Sahlberg, C., *From Krapf to Rugambwa*, p.48.

¹⁹⁸ See Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, p.63.

¹⁹⁹ Lema, A.A., in Omari, C.K., *Essays in Church and Society in Tanzania*, p.34.

²⁰⁰ Lema, A.A., in Omari, C.K., *Essays in Church and Society in Tanzania*, p.27.

It is arguably reasonable to admit that Krapf and Rebmann opened up early possibilities of engagements with the Bible among Tanzanians. During the time of Krapf and his successors, we see the Bible being engaged, albeit partially, at least in the communities and centres of ex-slaves. Ex-slaves read the Bible and taught each other about its messages. Some of them were not ashamed of the Bible even in front of their former slave masters. The Bible 'brought with it freedom from slavery'.²⁰¹ The Bible had given them new identity; indeed they had obtained *uhuru*, freedom, though complete *uhuru* was yet to come. Some ex-slaves, like David Koi, who dared to witness to slave traders faced death.

David Koi was a Christian teacher evangelist at Fulodoyo ex-slave and refugee settlement. One day, in 1875, a group of slave traders came to Fulodoyo; they wanted to know if those whom Koi taught were his slaves. Koi told them that they were not his slaves and that he did not have any material gain from them; that he worked for himself and they worked for themselves, except that he taught them the 'religion of Bwana Isa (Lord Jesus)'.²⁰² When they asked Koi if he knows *Bwana Isa*, he told them that he knew him by faith, and that he had read about him in the *Torati* ('book of Moses') and *Injili* ('the books of Jesus'). Those Arab slave traders were not satisfied. They dug a hole outside Koi's house; they dragged him out of the house, buried him up to his neck, and cut off his head in front of his followers. So, 'David Koi died, almost two years before the first martyrs of Uganda'.²⁰³ In Tanzania, as elsewhere in East Africa, the presence of the Bible was a threat to slave traders, as well as to the colonisers. Colonial officials and settlers feared that the reading of the Bible among the natives would inculcate some ideas that could threaten their existence. For example, some colonial officials asked missionaries, 'are your people taught that all men are equal?'.²⁰⁴ Even if they could not be taught human equality, these early Tanzania Christians had started reading the Bible and working out its implications for themselves, in their settlements, and other mission

²⁰¹ 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Ninety-fourth year [1893], p.42.

²⁰² Anderson, W.B., *The History of the Church in East Africa*, p.16.

²⁰³ Anderson, W.B., *The History of the Church in East Africa*, p.16.

²⁰⁴ Stranger, R.W., *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa*, New York, State University Press, 1978, p.102, cf. Isichei, E., *A History of Christianity in Africa*, p.234.

stations. As time elapsed, the Bible did not remain in these ex-slave communities and mission stations, its presence began to be felt even among Tanzanian indigenous chiefs.

In 1871, Charles New visited Mandara, the Chagga chief of Moshi, in Kilimanjaro area. Among the things that New did was to ascend Mt. Kilimanjaro. The people living around the Kilimanjaro considered it as a place of God, hence the name Kilimanjaro, which came from two words, *kilima*, meaning “a hill or mountain”, and *njaro*, meaning “God”. So *kilima-njaro* means the “mountain of God”; consequently, no local person would dare to ascend the “mount of God”. By ascending the “mount of God” New was thought to possess a “strange power”. ‘Where does this power, ability, come from?’, the Chagga of Moshi would have asked themselves. The people considered New ‘a god’. As Sahlberg puts it:

On his safe return to the camp [right from the Kilimanjaro] the people were amazed and said “the white man is a god” (compare the events in Lystra in Acts 14 and Malta in Acts 28, where Paul after having performed miracles was called a god). After this event in Moshi – so to say Acts 29 – New spent many days in *conversations* with the Moshi chief Mandara.²⁰⁵

Sahlberg does not state as to what actually dominated the ‘conversations’; but it is palpably clear, from archival sources, that the Bible had a vital place in their discussions. The encounter between the Bible and chief Mandara, together with his people, is vital for our present discussion, and thus it needs further analysis.

After New had left, chief Mandara sent letters of requests to CMS and New, respectively, in 1878, 1883 and 1884. In his requests, Mandara includes items like paints, dyes, saws, a brace, bits, and a screw-making machine. But the book, the Bible, had the first priority. He seriously wanted the Book. He needed all of his people, and himself, to be instructed

²⁰⁵ [Emphasis mine] Sahlberg, C., *From Krapf to Rugambwa*, p.45.

in the knowledge of the Book.²⁰⁶ It is apparent that New did not go back to Mandara again; but the Book had to be sought from other missionaries and visitors.

After New's mission among the Chagga people, a person named Harry Johnson visited Moshi and he went to see chief Mandara. Johnson disregarded the people's traditions and culture; he openly accused them of various practices. This person set an unpleasant example of a missionary, though he himself was not a missionary; he was a natural scientist.²⁰⁷ In 1885, when another CMS missionary, James Hannington, wanted to start a mission station among the Chagga, at Old Moshi, chief Mandara was very hesitant. The chief questioned the integrity of the missionaries, but he trusted the "Book" and he needed it. The Chief then sold a piece of land for the mission work, presumably hoping 'to get firearms from the missionaries', and more "magic" from "the Book".²⁰⁸ Because the chief's interest was not as much in Christianity as in the power that the missionary book contains, missionaries lived with constant insecurity among the Chagga.²⁰⁹

In April and September 1890, CMS missionaries A.R. Steggall and W. Morris visited Mandara. He gave them a cordial welcome, and after a lengthy conversation, he insisted that he was 'eager to have a European resident among his people, and requested Morris to write to the committee to send him a teacher, promising to send many pupils'.²¹⁰ Morris and Steggall had a different plan; they wanted Mandara to give them children to be taught at Rabai. Mandara, however, wanted his children to be instructed within his chiefdom. Beside, Mandara did not want anybody to be instructed in the Book, before he himself had possessed it. It is likely that he wanted to know the Book, to acquire the knowledge and power before anyone else.

²⁰⁶ Sahlberg, C., *From Krapf to Rugambwa*, p.45.

²⁰⁷ Sahlberg, C., *From Krapf to Rugambwa*, p.45.

²⁰⁸ Sahlberg, C., *From Krapf to Rugambwa*, p.45.

²⁰⁹ A similarly case is that of the chief of the Nyamwezi people, in Tanzania, who welcomed missionaries in his land as a protection against Arab slave raiders and other enemies.

²¹⁰ 'Eastern Equatorial Africa Mission: Annual Report, Ninetieth Year' [1890], p.51 ('Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East from 1844 to 1921', CMS Archives, the Central Library, Birmingham University, UK).

By 1890, Mandara had not yet decided for Christ, nor had he been given the Book. However, the missionary wanted to begin instructions for children. This strategy was not favourable to Mandara. For Mandara, missionaries' hesitance to give out the Book to him meant that it contained some vitally significant knowledge, or even secrets of the white people, which was worth obtaining. Later Mandara sent some children to Rabai to be taught in the book. Steggall and other missionaries paid occasional visits to Mandara, and they had discussions about the Bible and its truths. Because Mandara had not yet obtained the book, he did not want to see other children or adults being taught, apart from those he had sent to Rabai. When missionaries visited Mandara's chiefdom, the 'teaching of the book was done in a darkened room and in whispers for fear of detention'.²¹¹ Also, it is recorded that 'during [a missionary visit, in] February and March [1890] several boys, averaging as many as five daily, attended secretly for instruction'.²¹² Thus, the teaching of the Book was done behind Mandara's back! In a sense, the Bible became a secret book! As the secret teachings continued, the Bible began to have impact on both the people and the chief himself. In 1892, when Baxter, a missionary who was based at Mpwapwa in Gogo area, visited Moshi, chief Mandara professed that he believed in Christ.²¹³ As Baxter wrote in letter to CMS:

When I last saw Mandara, during conversation I urged upon him the necessity of at once deciding for Christ. He replied that he had already received Jesus as his Saviour, and prayed to Him daily... and added that if he had not decided for Christ he would not have sent several lads to live with Mr. Steggall and be taught.²¹⁴

As evidence shows, Steggall, Morris and Baxter were beginning to entertain hopes of Mandara's embracing the Christian faith.²¹⁵ They wanted Mandara to direct his attention to faith in Jesus, rather than to dignity, greatness and power.

²¹¹ 'Eastern Equatorial Africa Mission: Annual Report, Ninety First Year' [1891], p.51.

²¹² 'Eastern Equatorial Africa Mission: Annual Report, Ninetieth Year' [1890], p.51.

²¹³ In CMS mission reports, Baxter is commonly referred to as 'Dr. E.J. Baxter' ('Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East from 1844 to 1921').

²¹⁴ 'Eastern Equatorial Africa Mission: Annual Report' [1892], p.51.

²¹⁵ 'Eastern Equatorial Africa Mission: Annual Report, Ninetieth Year' [1890], p.51, especially section II entitled 'Chagga'.

The religion of the white people, and particularly their book, was believed to be more powerful, and a source of great knowledge and skills. To possess the Bible was to possess power and knowledge. The Bible was what the chiefs and their subjects needed most. It is true that the 'technological superiority of the Christians [missionaries] seemed to suggest that their religion was greater', and thus their book contained special power.²¹⁶ In this initial encounter of the Bible and the indigenous people, the Bible is desired not as a text but as an object of strange magical power that is greater than what the indigenous magician can provide! For native chiefs, and their peoples, the presence of the Bible, as an object, symbolized the superior spiritual power of the missionary's religion. Indeed, borrowing West's phrase, the 'unopened Bible' symbolized knowledge and secrets of the white people, the missionaries and the colonisers. But how did the people come to perceive the Bible, the "unopened Bible", as an object of power? To this question we now turn.

4.2.1 Unopened Bible

The people's understanding of the Bible as an object that contains power, and even secret knowledge, did not emerge overnight. They looked at the missionary as he handled his Bible; they listened to the "words" from the book, as the missionary narrated them. Beside the Bible they saw the telescope, the pen, the looking glass, and even the gun. The missionary could shoot animals with his gun; or when slave-raiders wanted to capture his porters or other helpers, the missionary used his gun to scare the slave-raiders, or he could even kill those who seemed not to be scared! On Monday, March 24, 1880, a native chief residing at Kidudwe (rather Tubugwe, not far from Mpwapwa), demanded cloth from E.J. Baxter. He refused and in his letter to CMS, he wrote, 'I took my guns and revolver and showed them to him'.²¹⁷ In the eyes of the natives, this power, force of arms, as displayed by Baxter, was apparently associated with the Bible. Hence, the Bible, the "unopened Bible", came to be considered as an object of superior magic

²¹⁶ Isichei, E., *A History of Christianity in Africa*, p.146.

²¹⁷ 'Eastern Equatorial Africa Mission: Annual Report, Eightieth Year' [1880], p.40.

power. It was superior to the native chiefs, and all Arab traders and slave traders. In their indigenous religion, the chiefs had their charms, *ndima-miwili*, and sacred objects for divination, healing and protection, but all these were found to be lacking. The chiefs, for example Mandara and Mamkinga, had all the necessary indigenous protection as Chagga native leaders, but yet they themselves and their people lived under constant threat of Arab slave-raiders, cattle-raiders, the Maasai and other external and internal enemies.²¹⁸ So when the missionary, New, demonstrated his physical power through the gun, and his spiritual potency through ascending “the mount of God”, *kilimanjaro*, his sacred object, the Bible, was therefore perceived to be more powerful than Mandara’s secret objects. Presumably, chief Mandara wanted to add the strange object, the Bible, to his other sacred objects. This assumption is grounded on the fact that the missionaries themselves, for instance Krapf and his colleague Rebmann, gave the impression that the Bible was the source of their power, spiritually and materially.

Krapf believed that the Word was the source of their European material blessings. Krapf’s view of the secret of European power and success is explicit in his conversation with the Queen of Shoa:

She asked me... how my countrymen [sic] had come to be able to invent and manufacture such wonderful things? I replied, that God had promised in His Word not only spiritual but temporal rewards to those who obeyed his commandments: that the English, Germans, and Europeans in general, had once been as rude and ignorant as the Gallas, but after their acceptance of the Gospel, God had given them with science and arts wondrous blessings of an earthly kind.²¹⁹

Krapf explicitly implied that European scientific advancement is the result of their embrace of the Bible. Similarly, Rebmann, in ‘his mode of imparting instruction’, was

²¹⁸ Cf. ‘Eastern Equatorial Africa Mission: Annual Report, Ninetieth Year’ [1890], p.51.

²¹⁹ Krapf, J., *Travels, Researches and Missionary Labours During an Eighteen Years’ Residence in Eastern Africa*, 1st edn, 1860, 2nd edn, Cass, London, 1968, p.89, as quoted by Isichei, E., *A History of Christianity in Africa*, p.84.

clear about the power of the Bible in transforming lives, spiritually and physically.²²⁰ Whenever Rebmann met the indigenous, he explained, and demonstrated, the purpose of his missionary journeys, as Rebmann himself writes,

by showing them my Bible, and telling them that this book contained the Word of God, which showed us the way to heaven. This book I would translate into their own language, instruct their children in reading, and acquaint old and young with its contents. Our forefathers had lived in the same condition as themselves until they had received that book, which transformed their darkness into light.²²¹

Rebmann would then tell his audience that he did not intend to stay with them long, but that he would rather send a friend to instruct them in 'the good Word of God'. After introducing his mission object, the people then would begin inspecting, as he says, 'the things about me, or enter into a conversation'.²²² The "things" would include clothes, an umbrella, a telescope, a gun, etc. All these things, together with the Bible, were strange objects to the natives. Rebmann's display of the Bible, as it is depicted in the aforesaid quote, made the indigenous think of it as especially unique, and its contents vitally significant. The way the missionaries treated their Bibles led to a particular indigenous perception of the Bible, at least in their own cultural context.

In 1878, on the shores of Lake Nyasa, in Southern Tanzania, another missionary, named Riddell, showed a Bible to the Ngoni people and he 'told them it was it that made our nation rich and powerful'.²²³ These claims, and the belief of the missionaries that the Bible was the source of their European power and success, struck home in the hearts of many indigenous, and their chiefs; for the nineteenth century was a period of political instability and social upheavals for the natives. Many indigenous societies had been defeated by ruthless foreign powers. The Arabs and the Portuguese, as we have seen in

²²⁰ 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fiftieth Year' [1850], p. ixxxviii.

²²¹ 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fiftieth Year' [1850], p. ixxxviii.

²²² 'East Africa Mission: Annual Report, Fiftieth Year' [1850], p. ixxxviii.

²²³ As quoted in Isichei, E., *A History of Christianity in Africa*, p. 140.

chapter three, had long settled on the coastal regions; and in the latter part of the century, the Germans were busy conquering lands and regions in mainland Tanzania. Things were falling apart, the centre of indigenous religious and political powers could no longer hold. New power and fresh knowledge was highly desired. The “white people’s Book”, the Bible, was found to be a promising source for this new power and knowledge. The power and knowledge of the Book could only be acquired through “opening” the Book itself, and trying to decipher its strange “drawings” (letters). During the German invasions in Tanzania, different people found refuge in mission stations, where they found the Bible and “read” it. People went to the mission centres to listen to the “reading” of the Bible. They learned Bible texts off by heart; for example, in mission week-day schools, each person had to memorise ‘100 texts’, apart from hymns like ‘Here we suffer grief and pain’, ‘Jesus, meek and gentle’, ‘I love Thee my Lord, for Thou hast loved me’, ‘Little drops’, ‘There is a green hill far a way’, ‘Around the throne of God in heaven’, ‘Holy Bible! Book divine’.²²⁴ So the early presence of the Bible did not remain just as an object of new power, an unopened Bible; the Bible also became a text, an “open Bible”. Our next section focuses on how early ordinary Tanzania “readers” of the Bible started engaging with the Bible as a text.

4.2.2 Open Bible

As preaching of the Word spread in various parts of Tanzania, the Bible became more than a strange object of new power to behold and revere; it became a text to be read; for, as the indigenous came to realize, it contained words of new knowledge and deeper understanding.

The transition from the people’s perception of the Bible as an object to that of the Bible as a text was further precipitated by translations of the Bible into Swahili and other vernaculars. In 1847, the book of Genesis, translated by Johann Krapf, was published in the Kimvita dialect of Swahili. In 1868, Bishop Steere translated the books of Ruth and Jonah into the Kiunguja dialect of Swahili. Also, in 1872, Steere finished translating the

²²⁴ ‘Eastern Equatorial Africa Mission: Annual Report, Ninety-Sixth Year’ [1896], pp.77, 78ff.

Gospel of Luke into Kiunguja. The Gospel of Luke was followed by translation of 1 and 2 Kings in 1875. The United Methodist Free Church, at Ribe, published a Kiunguja translation of Jonah in 1878.²²⁵ An interesting story about the Kiunguja translation of the Gospel of Luke is that a sheikh, named Abd al Aziz, was the one who originally translated it.²²⁶ This incident suggests that even among Muslims the Bible had begun to occupy a significant place, as a holy book, along with the Qur'ān. The present Muslim view of the Bible, especially the *Torati*, the *Zaburi* and *Injili*, substantiates the aforesaid point.²²⁷ These books of the Bible, for many Muslims in Tanzania, are sacred texts of *Allah*, God. So, through translations, the Bible was becoming open to Christian converts, Muslims, as well as indigenous religionists. In this initial engagement, Christian converts, whether in ex-slave settlements, in CMS or UMCA mission schools, encountered the Word of God through translations of various books or portions of the Bible, liturgies, prayer books, hymn books, catechetical lessons and sermons.²²⁸ Through the means of translation, converts, and other people, began to consciously engage with the Bible as a text. The Bible began to occupy a vital place in the understanding and general lives of the indigenous. But what the presence of the Bible, as well as the message, implied among the people, sometimes turned out to be different from the messenger's expectation. We have seen earlier how chief Mamkinga challenged Rebmann's understanding of godliness, that it does not mean excessive materiel gains. Another similar case is the encounter of the Mijikenda people and Krapf.

One day, in his first attempts to missionise, Krapf invited the Mijikenda to join him in worship. It is recorded that fifteen people turned up, but they were not happy with the worship because there was no rice and beef. For Krapf, worship meant only prayer to God; but, for the Mijikenda, worship had to be accompanied with feasting. This echoes

²²⁵ For details about these pioneering translation efforts, see Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, pp.63-67.

²²⁶ This Muslim religious teacher, sheikh, was assisted by a missionary, namely, Richard L. Pennell (Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, p.66)

²²⁷ For Muslims, *Torati*, means the Pentateuch; *Zaburi* are the Psalms; whilst *Injili* implies the Gospel.

²²⁸ In 1883, Canon W.E. Taylor translated the Anglican liturgy, prayer book, together with selections from the Gospels and Epistles for liturgy (Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, p.66; also, see Mojola, A.O., "The Swahili Bible in East Africa from 1844 to 1996: A Brief Survey with Special Reference to Tanzania", in G.O. West & M.W. Dube, eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.512ff.).

indigenous understanding of worship. As Anderson comments, 'the Mijikenda people praised God in their feasts. Indeed, the greatest blessing from God was a plentiful harvest'.²²⁹ Also, on another occasion, Krapf asked the Mijikenda to repent of their sins; but people felt insulted and asked, 'who has been defaming us to you'.²³⁰ Later Krapf decided to change the whole subject of his sermons and teachings; he started preaching more about 'the love of the Redeemer for his sheep lost and gone astray'.²³¹ Krapf's Bible message of God's love touched the people, and on one occasion an old man stood up and said, 'of course God loves us. He gives us rain, *tembo* (palm wine) and clothes'.²³² From the old man's response it is explicit that Krapf's message was interpreted in a particular way. The people engaged with the Bible message of love in a way that Krapf himself did not anticipate. For the Mijikenda, God's love is visible in what God does and gives in their daily lives. So the message of the Bible had a range of implications in people's lives other than those the missionary expected.

The indigenous interpretations of the Bible that they made for their lives depended on what translation(s), and portion(s), of the Bible they had; for up until the end of the nineteenth century, there was no complete Swahili or vernacular translation of the whole Bible. From the days of Krapf and Rebmann, in Zanzibar and Mombasa, to the arrivals of Baxter, Westgate and Briggs in Gogo region in 1890s, the Bible circulated only in portions.²³³ The first complete New Testament was published in 1879. In 1895, a complete Old Testament came out of the Zanzibar mission press. These were Kiunguja translations; for Kimvita translations, the entire New Testament and Old Testament, respectively, were completed and published later in 1909 and 1914.²³⁴ This means, from the earliest days of missionary enterprises, different peoples, tribes, engaged with the Bible differently, depending on what parts, or texts, of the Bible they first encountered. In-depth analyses of how different ethnic groups first encountered the Bible cannot be discussed in this thesis; in fact, this is also another area that requires further research.

²²⁹ Anderson, W.B., *The History of the Church in East Africa*, p.2.

²³⁰ Anderson, W.B., *The History of the Church in East Africa*, p.3.

²³¹ Anderson, W.B., *The History of the Church in East Africa*, p.3.

²³² Anderson, W.B., *The History of the Church in East Africa*, p.3.

²³³ Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, pp.63-72, 77-81.

²³⁴ Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, p.66, 67.

In short, to sum up this section, the presence of the Bible as an open book, in different parts of Tanzania, was made possible by the means of Scriptural translations. Through the translation principle, people began to utilize the Bible as a holy book with potent words. The indigenous started to take great interest in learning to “read” and write; and the Christian holy Book, whose portions and parts had been translated into vernacular languages, was the only logical and obvious reading material.²³⁵

Another impetus for the appeal of the Bible to the people was the failure of the *Maji Maji* war.²³⁶ After the war, there came about a general feeling that indigenous religious beliefs were insufficient; for indigenous force of arms depended on religious mystical power. After the *Maji Maji* war the natives realized that it was hopeless to attempt to overthrow colonial powers by force of arms. They believed that by mastering the Book, which was a symbol of superior power and religion, they would gain more power and knowledge that would make them as equally powerful as the white people.²³⁷ They believed that the ability to “read” the Book would open new avenues of knowledge and skills. The Bible had to be sought, and learning to read it became vital. People’s concern with Christianity was closely intertwined with the desire for new knowledge and power as well as status. As Isichei writes,

Concern with Christianity was sometimes an anxiety to acquire whatever magical power its mysteries provided. In Bonde [Bondei area] and Masasi many ‘converts’ ceased to attend church once confirmed.²³⁸

The main source of those Christian mysteries and power, as the indigenous came to believe and understand, was the Bible.

²³⁵ Cf. Mojola, A.O., “100 Years of the Luganda Bible (1896 to 1996): A General Survey”, in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.529.

²³⁶ See Chapter Three, ‘European Occupation and Indigenous Resistance’.

²³⁷ Isichei, E., *A History of Christianity in Africa*, p.110.

²³⁸ [This scenario still survives in Gogo areas and other places, even today] *Central Africa March 1893 and May 1899*, as quoted by Iliffe, J., *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, p.225.

Literacy itself was thought to contain an almost magical quality. A native Tanzanian Christian, Nicholas Mugongo, explained how he was magically, mysteriously, taught to read by Christ himself: ““courage” the vision then told me, “henceforth you will no longer need to learn from books; in three days you will know how to decipher all of them”. I believed it’.²³⁹ The next day Mugongo described the dream to other Christians who had learned to read, but they ridiculed him. Mugongo asked his fellow catechumens to give him a book, and they handed him a Bible. Mugongo continues to explain:

I saw only white and black. Next day the same failure. At last the third day arrived. I took the Book, made a large sign of the cross, and read fluently.²⁴⁰

This story of Mugongo, and other similar stories related to the Bible, shows that the presence of the Bible among early “readers” was also more than that of a text. The Bible was more than just a book; it was, as in fact it still is, a holy book with potent words; words that can impact those who “read” it. Filipino Njau, one of the earliest Tanzanian Christians, explains how the words of the Bible overwhelmed him:

Many boys came to instruction, to learn to read and write, things to their advantage. Then behold! In the midst of their craving to read and write, the Word of God in their reading books overwhelmed them... So it was with me.²⁴¹

The people’s encounter with the Bible as a text led to changed lives. In these early encounters, there were specific subjects that draw the attention of the indigenous. Alongside the subject of the indiscriminate love of God for all humans, early “readers” of the Bible were attracted by the teaching on creation and the purpose of humanity on earth

²³⁹ Mugongo ‘Memoires’ as quoted by Iliffe, J., *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, p.225.

²⁴⁰ Mugongo ‘Memoires’ quoted by Iliffe, J., *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, p.225.

²⁴¹ Filipino Njau, *Aus Meinem Leben*, Trans. B. Gutmann, Erlangen, 1960, p.13, as quoted by Iliffe, J., *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, p.225. Mojola reminds us that, ‘Filipo Njau is the father of artist Elimo Njau of the well known Paa ya Paa Gallery of African Art in Nairobi’ (Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, p.85).

and their ultimate end.²⁴² According to an early evangelist, named Fiwombe Malakilindu, the purpose of humans on earth is to 'get God's things done'.²⁴³ And Iliffe comments that this 'sense of purpose attracted many ambitious young people'.²⁴⁴

The message on heaven and hell was equally powerful. Hell was commonly translated by words for "fire". In 1906, a missionary, Johannes Kretschmer, sent evangelists from Mbeya region to different parts of the country. As they went into various villages the evangelists proclaimed, 'take heed ... consider that God will send fire to burn us all, all the men [sic] in the world'. A person named Asyukile Malango reported that 'when this message [of fire] was proclaimed my parents fled with me to Kukwe [another village]'.²⁴⁵ The message of heaven and hell became so attractive and prevalent that thirty years later, after Kretschmer's mission, a social anthropologist heard Christian women demanding of Nyakyusa villagers, 'Do you want to burn?'.²⁴⁶ In the early days of the encounter with the Bible, many people dreamed of a big and fierce fire, and they sought baptism. Nicholas Mugongo, whom we mentioned earlier, was baptized after dreaming vividly of hell.

The message of heaven and the incarnate Saviour was normally set against the fear of hell.²⁴⁷ The Biblical stories of Jesus, the incarnate Saviour, who saves people from the ordeal of unquenchable fire and its dreadful fear, caught the African imagination of early "readers" of the Bible. The first Moravian converts at Kiwele, in Iringa, 'repeatedly dreamed about Jesus'. Also, Ambilishye, an earliest convert at Kiwele, wrote, 'I loved Him [Christ] long before I was baptized'.²⁴⁸ Beside the message about the person of Jesus and his saving work, there was the message of the final resurrection of the dead.

²⁴² Mbise, A.S., 'The Evangelist Leveriya Kaaya', in Iliffe, J., ed., *Modern Tanzanians*, Nairobi, OUP, p.31 cf. Iliffe, J., *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, p.226.

²⁴³ Oskar Gemuseus & Joseph Busse, 'Ein Gebundener Jesu Christi: de Lebensbild de Fiwombe Malakilindu', Hamburg 1950, p.55 (unpublished), as quoted by Iliffe, J., *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, p.226.

²⁴⁴ Iliffe, J., *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, p.226.

²⁴⁵ Joseph Busse, 'Aus dem Leben von Asyukile Malango', ZES, XXXV (1949-50), pp.205-6, as quoted by Iliffe, J., *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, p.226.

²⁴⁶ Monica Wilson, 'An African Christian Morality', in *Africa*, vol. X (1937), p.281, cf. Iliffe, J., *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, p.226.

²⁴⁷ Iliffe, J., *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, p.227.

²⁴⁸ 'Moravian Church Extracts', September, 1903; Bachmann, 'Ambilishye', p.26, as quoted by Iliffe, J., *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, p.227.

This message answered people's question about death, and it helped to mitigate their fear of it. As an early CMS missionary noted in 1881,

the resurrection, I find, always secures their attention if nothing else will...This is just a kind of thing to interest this wonder-loving people with their ideas of magic, witchcraft and rain-making.²⁴⁹

Price is right in his observation, for even in today's sermons, teachings, songs, there is much stress on life, resurrection, and a blissful heaven for Christians and a fearful fiery hell for "unbelievers".²⁵⁰ These themes recur again and again also in Bible studies and prayers.²⁵¹

Biblical creation narratives, teachings on the divine-given goal of humans on earth and their ultimate end, sermons on the love of God, heaven, hell, resurrection, and eternal life, all these give us some hints of what parts of the Bible were encountered first. Initially, as I have argued earlier, the Bible was not encountered as one book, but rather as books. Before the translation of the whole Bible was complete, certain portions of the Bible were translated first, and circulated according to the evangelistic or mission needs of the time. Krapf translated the book of Genesis first; it is likely that he wanted his audience to know first and foremost that the God he had come to preach about is the one, the great one, who created all human beings and the universe. Krapf later used creation narratives, and God's providence, to teach the indigenous about God's love. In Zanzibar, Steere first translated the book of Jonah; presumably, he wanted to stress the mercy of God for the repentant.

In those early days of Tanzanian reading of the Bible, it was not easy to obtain a copy of the Bible; and this suggests that the Bible was consciously encountered, in most part,

²⁴⁹ J.C. Price, 1881, as quoted by Iliffe, J., *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, p.227.

²⁵⁰ "Unbelievers" here does not mean un-religious; the word implies those who do not believe in Christ, that is peoples of other faiths, cf. Robinson, M., *The Faith of the Unbeliever*, London, Monarch Publications, 1994, pp.178-98.

²⁵¹ Cf. Monica Wilson, *Communal Rituals of the Nyakyusa*, London, 1959, as quoted by Iliffe, J., *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, p.227.

through Sunday worship, sermons, songs, catechetical teachings and Sunday schooling. This conscious engagement with the Bible was preceded by partial engagement with the Bible in the earliest missionary presence. In the first place, the presence of the Bible was that of an object of strange power. It was a symbol of superior, foreign western power and religion. This power was desired by native kings and their subjects. This power, for natives, was contained in the magic Book, the Bible. As people continued to engage with the Bible, the Bible was opened to them. It became a text. It became not only an object of strange magic power, but also the Book of knowledge and understanding. Anyone who was able to open the Bible, opened up a new world of knowledge and faith; and in most cases, those who "read" became Christians. To some extent one had to "read" to be a Christian. Hence *soma*, reading, Christianity emerged. *Soma* Christianity was one of the significant characteristics of Christianity in Tanzania, and particularly among the Gogo Christians. *Soma* Christianity suggests a particular view of the Bible and its interpretative method of the Gogo's encounter with the Bible. In the next chapter, I will endeavour to chart the historical processes of the interface between the Bible and the Gogo people.

CHAPTER 5

5.0 CHARTING HISTORICAL PROCESSES OF THE ENGAGEMENT

5.1 EARLY CMS MISSIONS AND THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN THE BIBLE AND THE GOGO: 1876-1907

The processes of the encounter between the Bible and the Gogo began with the arrival of the first missionaries in Mpwapwa, on 24 August 1876. These missionaries were George J Clark, William Robertson and Thomas O'Neill. O'Neill together with George Smith, Charles Wilson and others, proceeded on to Lake Victoria, leaving Clark and Robertson at Mpwapwa.²⁵² Clark and Robertson stayed at Mpwapwa only for a few months, but they succeeded at least in establishing contacts with the local people, especially their chief, named Lukoli.²⁵³ At Mpwapwa, Clark bought a piece of land from the chief, and he began to build a mission house with stones and clay.²⁵⁴ Apart from the purchase of the site, I do not have details of other transactions which took place between Clark and Robertson, on one side, and chief Lukoli and his people, on the other side. But other items such as beads, mirrors and clothes were probably traded, as part of the barter system, with millet, corns, chicken, eggs and art works. In these transactions, the Bible was also present together with the other strange objects of the missionary.²⁵⁵

After their missionary stint at Mpwapwa, Clark and Robertson left for England at the end of 1876 because of ill-health. Other missionaries continued to use Mpwapwa as their stopping station on their way to Lake Victoria, and to Uganda. In 1878, Edward J Baxter and Joseph T Last arrived at Mpwapwa and started a permanent establishment of the mission work. Baxter and Last were joined by John C Price and Henry Cole in 1879.²⁵⁶ Briggs and Westgate came later as more mission bases were being opened. In 1880, Last

²⁵² Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, pp.6ff, 20ff.

²⁵³ Lukoli was later known as Chipanjilo.

²⁵⁴ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.7.

²⁵⁵ Cf. the encounter between the missionaries, Krapf and Rebmann with the Chagga chiefs, and how gifts and exchange of items had a significant place (in Chapter 4 of this thesis).

²⁵⁶ 'Eastern Equatorial Africa Mission: Usagara and Ugogo Mission [1881]', p.36.

was sent from Mpwapwa to open a station at Mamboya. Cole was sent to Kisokwe, now Chamuhawi, in 1881. Briggs went to Mvumi mission in 1900. Rees went to Kongwa in 1904, and Doulton occupied Buigiri in 1908. Although I have mentioned all these dates, places and missionaries, I do not intend to provide a detailed analysis of early mission enterprises, but rather to trace the encounter between the Bible and the Gogo in these early mission days. This approach, as is clear from my previous arguments in preceding chapters, treats the Bible as a separate entity with its own efficacious power and impact on people's lives within the church and without. This is not a common approach but it is a reasonable one, as my analysis of Wimbush, West, and other scholars has palpably indicated in chapters one and two. So, it is appropriate that these scholars suggest this move: 'the separation of the reception of the Bible from the reception of Christianity'.²⁵⁷ This approach, in my analysis of the Gogo's encounter with the Bible, will help to show how ordinary Gogo "readers" began to make sense of the Bible, and how new reading practices of the Bible were emerging. As we look at missionary visits and the activities of Baxter, Price, Westgate and others, I will attempt to focus on the interface between the Gogo people and the Bible.

I begin with Baxter, who, as I have pointed out earlier, started the permanent establishment of Mpwapwa as a mission base. Baxter was a medical doctor, a teacher of the Word, a farmer, a meteorologist and a builder.²⁵⁸ Apart from his medical and other skills, Baxter brought with him among the Gogo various items and objects which were utterly strange in the eyes of the natives. Baxter's personal objects included knives, mirrors, a telescope, a barometer, mosquito nets, axes, a revolver and a gun. Thus, the missionary's presence represented a whole new and fascinating world amongst the Gogo. In its broad spectrum, the encounter was not just between the natives and the Bible, it was also between an oral, unwritten tradition and written tradition. In other words, it was an engagement between orature and literature, an indigenous religion and a religion of a Book, Gogo medicines and European ones.

²⁵⁷ West, G.O., 'Early Encounters with the Bible among the BaTlhaping', p.5.

²⁵⁸ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, pp.251-52.

Chief Lukoli, who was a diviner, a medicine man and rainmaker, had much interest in the “white man”.²⁵⁹ Lukoli started teaching Baxter, together with Last, Cigogo and Gogo traditions, customs and beliefs.²⁶⁰ Often Baxter paid visits to the Chief’s court and they had long discussions. I have no details of their protracted conversations, but one visit sheds some light on how one party struggled to understand, or even interpret another’s world. In this visit, as we will see, Baxter refers to ‘God’s Word’ as his source of authority. The story is that one day when Baxter visited the Chief’s court, he found a woman who had been accused of having caused the death of a person through witchcraft. There were many people assembled before the court, awaiting the boiling water test to be applied to the accused. In this case, a pot of boiling water, with two stones in it, was put before the chief and the accused would put their hands in to withdraw stones from the pot. As was the custom elsewhere in Gogo areas, the water in the pot would be treated with herbal medicine, normally twigs. If the accused put in their hands and they were scalded, they were witches; and if they were unhurt, the accuser had to pay compensation.

Chief Lukoli welcomed Baxter at the court, and explained to him the impending trial procedure. Baxter could not make sense of the procedure and he replied to the Chief that ‘such a mode of trial was wrong as it displeased God, who is kind to all. Europeans had rejected all forms of trial by ordeal when they saw that they were contrary to God’s Word’.²⁶¹ He also insisted that trial by ordeal was a bad medicine. Lukoli did not accept Baxter’s views and insistently he explained how good his herbal medicine was in detecting witches. Baxter’s presence delayed the trial; but when he left the trial procedure continued. What happened is that the accused was not harmed by hot water,

²⁵⁹ The quotation marks implies that for the native Gogo, the word “white man” has a different connotation from the one we have in common English usage. The Cigogo word for a “white man” is *muhnu/vanhu-vadunghu*, meaning ‘red man/men’. Nola Fungo, giving a testimony about Loyi Mbogo, the wife of Danyeli Mbogo, one of the earliest teacher-evangelist at Kongwa, said, ‘*Mgolece wa Mbogo yali mzelu swee!*’ meaning ‘the wife of Mbogo was very white!’ Nola does not mean she was a European; but she was “white” in the Gogo sense (Nola Fungo, interview conducted by the author on 26 December 2003 at Kongwa, Dodoma, Tanzania).

²⁶⁰ ‘Eastern Equatorial Africa Mission: Usagara and Ugogo Mission, [1881], p.36, cf. Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.37.

²⁶¹ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.37.

and she received a compensation of three cows.²⁶² This incident, which was in the initial phase of the Gogo's encounter with the Word and/or the missionary, proved that the indigenous medicine was 'good' as the Chief had claimed. Conversely, the missionary's bold challenge to the Chief's medicine would have inculcated some thoughts among the people that the white man had different medicines and methods of detecting witches. They might have thought that if he did not believe in Gogo's *muti*, herbal medicines, then he had other *muti*.²⁶³

Through his medical treatments for the people, Baxter won the confidence of many Gogo. Baxter treated patients and also he read Bible verses for them. Through this practice, one can assume, the people were likely to associate the Bible with the power of the medicine that made them well. People began to make sense of the Bible; they also started to define the missionary himself. They called him *mganga*, a title they would use for their native healers, or medicine people.²⁶⁴ Also, the Gogo named Baxter *mzengekaya*, 'the builder of the house', because he built a rectangular house, which was different from the native houses. So whatever the missionary did or possessed caught the attention of the natives, and it acquired its interpretation.²⁶⁵ The Bible was part of the missionary possessions, the package, which the natives were trying to appropriate into their own cultural and religious matrix.

The Bible was the main occupation of Baxter, and so it would have had the particular attention of the Gogo. Baxter's preaching of the Bible began to attract the Gogo, as we can see in his mission visit in the neighbourhoods of Mpwapwa. Having visited different places around Mpwapwa, Baxter stopped at Tubungwe on Saturday March 23, 1880. He

²⁶² Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.38.

²⁶³ Oral history has it that when they first saw pills, they called them 'lizard eggs'. At first many did not accept the 'lizard eggs', but later, fascinated by their power and that of other medicines, they began using them as a last resort – when all herbs had failed (White, P., *Doctor of Tanganyika: Jungle Doctor Series*, London, Paternoster, rev.edn 1952, p.86ff, [1st edn 1943]).

²⁶⁴ *Mganga* means a healer, a traditional healer. Today, the title applies to medical doctors as well. So *mganga*, in modern Swahili and Cigogo, means both a traditional healer and a modern doctor.

²⁶⁵ Later at Kongwa Thomas B R Westgate was named by the Gogo *Mhembano*, 'the strong one' because he erected a double-storey building in their village; his wife was called *Lyanzengwa*, 'the one who builds the interior of the house', because of how she decorated the lounge and the kitchen (Azaria Mapogo, interview conducted by the author on 26 December 2003 at Kongwa, Dodoma, Tanzania. Cf. Westgate, W., *T.B.R. Westgate*, Massachusetts, Education & Research Group, 1987, pp57, 67).

met the village headman and they had conversations. It seems the headman was interested in the 'words' of Baxter, and as token of friendship, he gave him a goat.²⁶⁶ On the next day, Sunday March 24, in the evening, the headman called about twelve people to come and listen to the 'words' of the visitor. Baxter reported that he managed to tell them 'the glad tidings'. Baxter explains in brief how and what 'glad tidings' he presented to the natives at Tubugwe:

After some persuasion they came and sat under a tree in front of my tent-door. I then spoke to them, through my interpreter Ali, of creation, the distinction between a man and a beast, the fall, the remedy in Christ; His life, death and resurrection; the home in glory, the judgement; and then of God's preserving care over His people, as illustrated by Daniel, &c., &c. They listened very attentively for about two hours or more, and I then suggested that they had heard enough for tonight. They said it would do, if I told them more next time I came, to which I agreed.²⁶⁷

The story continues that after the session, all left except two people who insisted that they really liked the words of the Book and that they needed Baxter to remain in the village and teach them more. Baxter told them that he could not remain at Tubungwe, as he had to be available in other places as well; he promised to visit them occasionally and tell more about the Book. This story indicates how the message of the Bible, its stories and narratives, had begun to attract some of the Gogo people. Presumably, they started to relate the Bible narratives to their own Gogo traditional stories of creation, sin, redeeming figure and God's care.²⁶⁸

Was the Bible the only thing that attracted and fascinated the Gogo? Of course, it was not the only item in the hands of their guest. Other objects that the missionary had in his tent also captured the attention of the Gogo: pen, shoes, watch, gun, clothing, etc. Baxter reported that on the next day, Monday March 25, 1880, the headman of the village stated

²⁶⁶ 'Eastern Equatorial Africa Mission: Annual Report, Eightieth Year [1880]', p.40.

²⁶⁷ 'Eastern Equatorial Africa Mission: Annual Report', p.40.

²⁶⁸ See *Simo ne Mbazi ze Wasetu* ('Narratives and Proverbs of our Forefathers/mothers') in the Appendices.

that all his people wanted cloth, and that unless Baxter gave each a piece of cloth, they would fight him. He asked the headman why they wanted to fight when he, the headman, said he wanted friendship with a white man and had offered a goat as a token of their friendship. The headman explained to Baxter that he did not want to fight, but another headman from a neighbouring village would fight, unless clothes were distributed to their people. Baxter writes,

I took my guns and revolver and showed them to him, and then again told him I wanted to be friends...²⁶⁹

Realising that the guns were more powerful than their native weapons, the headmen and their people allowed Baxter and his porters to proceed with their journeys. On the next Sunday, Baxter returned to Tubugwe, and again he had a warm welcome from the headman. Baxter stated that he wanted to tell him and his people more about 'the truths' told to them on 'the previous Sunday'.²⁷⁰ This Sunday, he had more listeners than in the previous one. One can assume that some of those who attended the last session would have told the other villagers about the words of the Book they heard from the missionary, but also about the "white man's" guns and revolver. So, it could be possible that many other natives came to Baxter to listen to the stories of the Book, that echo their traditional folklore, and to behold the strange and powerful objects, which the white man had brought. The story continues that many gathered under the tree near Baxter's tent, and he began preaching. In the end he told them that even this time he was not going to give them any cloth; if they wanted to fight this time he would not fight back. If God allowed them to take his cloth, or kill him he was content; for he trusted only in God, and that he could preserve him and his servants, as it is written in the Bible.²⁷¹

After Baxter's warlike display on the previous Sunday, under the same tree, would the natives believe that he only trusted in God and his Word, the Bible? It was possible for the natives to associate God's power and his Word with the power of guns, as the

²⁶⁹ 'Eastern Equatorial Africa Mission: Annual Report', p.40.

²⁷⁰ 'Eastern Equatorial Africa Mission: Annual Report', p.40.

²⁷¹ 'Eastern Equatorial Africa Mission: Annual Report', p.40.

missionary demonstrated it. So, in this initial encounter, the Bible could be deemed as another missionary object charged with strange power, and so worth obtaining. This strange power could be associated with both the Bible as an object and its "spoken words". Among the Gogo, some spoken words, especially those about the creator, *Mulungu*, have supernatural power. Also, spoken words from religious people, the diviners, rainmakers, healers, prophets have some mystical, at times magic, power to make things happen or not to happen. They are, in a sense, sacred words, "unwritten sacred texts". The missionary's "words" came in as a strange "version" of sacred words. And so, the association of this strange "version" with the gun and other powerful objects evoked an even greater desire for the "words" of the missionary. It seems the missionary played a role similar to that of the indigenous ritual leaders, but in a strange and different way. We now turn to other missionaries and see how the Gogo continued to encounter the Bible, and how they tried to engage with it and its words.

In April 1888, Price set out from Mpwapwa for other Gogo areas of Kikombo, Msamalo, Handali, Mvumi, Chilonwa and Mulamba. In these initial missionary visits, Price did not intend to make converts but only to explore the Gogo region and make some contacts with chiefs, headmen and their people. Eight porters accompanied him; and he took with him tobacco, beads, cloth and other items for exchange with eggs, chicken, millet, maize and other things that could be obtained from the natives.²⁷² When he reached Kikombo, Price found that the people were very interested in the Bible. After some exchanges of goods between Price and the natives, there were discussions about what the Book says about sin, Christ and salvation. Price began to teach 'with an aid sewn from an old tricolour in which the colours had been re-arranged'.²⁷³ He taught that blue, according to the Book, represented a sinful heart, or simply sin, red the blood of Christ and white a heart cleansed from sin. The people agreed on the symbol of blood, but they interpreted the other symbols differently; they told Price that blue symbolised sadness and sorrow, while white represented joy and happiness.²⁷⁴ Although they accepted the symbol of the blood of Christ, the Gogo would have been amazed to hear that *munhu*, a human being,

²⁷² Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.93.

²⁷³ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.93.

²⁷⁴ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.93.

died to pour out his blood for saving all *wanhu*, people. The Gogo sacrificed animals, not human beings, in their prayers for rains, protection, blessing, healing from epidemics, etc. The natives struggled to engage with the message of the Bible, but at the same time they were fascinated by it. After the incident at Kikombo, Price wrote that

One has to try and show them that sin is the real cause of sorrow, and holiness the ground of joy. Some of them seem to grasp the idea that we can never make our own hearts any better, because we are born with bad hearts, and only God can give us new ones, which is really like being born a second time.²⁷⁵

Price's message was about reconciliation with both God and other people around the vicinities of his audience. By reconciliation with other people, Price implied disarmament; for on another occasion he told the Gogo that by and by they would be 'making' their 'broad and glittering spears into hoes'.²⁷⁶ Possibly, noting that his message would be questioned because he himself was well armed with guns and revolvers, Price told the people that he did not expect them to lay down their spears and shields immediately but 'when war is "dead"...'.²⁷⁷ However, Price insisted that 'God had made his Son the great Chief of all the World, and he wants all men [sic] to obey him now'.²⁷⁸ When Price finished preaching, the headman of Kikombo called his advisers to discuss the message; and they agreed that 'the words were good'.²⁷⁹

The next day, the headman and the elders called Price and asked what he thought they should do immediately. Price told them that they were to pray in the name of Christ, and he offered them the Lord's Prayer, possibly in Cigogo, and other model prayers. Hence the Kikombo people, partially or even unknowingly, encountered the Bible through the Lord's Prayer and the other prayers. Yet, the people would later come to realise that the

²⁷⁵ *The Church Missionary Intelligencer*, November 1888, p.707 as quoted by Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.93.

²⁷⁶ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.94.

²⁷⁷ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.94.

²⁷⁸ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.94.

²⁷⁹ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.94.

“good words” in the prayers derived from the Bible. After giving the prayers, Price stayed for two more days. People gathered round his tent and he taught them the Word; they asked him various questions regarding what they had heard.²⁸⁰ I have not been able to find details of the conversations, but one interesting thing is that the people inquired from Price the reason for lack of rain and what would be the solution to it. This is the kind of question that the natives would normally ask their rainmakers and diviners. So the role of Price was being interpreted through their indigenous knowledge of what is expected of a religious leader. Price did not offer reasons for the lack of rain, but he at least asked the people to pray with him for rain, which they did. After some days, God ‘granted two storms’.²⁸¹ This would have induced a belief among the people that the new religion, and its Book, was another powerful religious dimension; for in the turbulent state of the last decades of the nineteenth century, the Gogo people were struggling to search for new meanings and significance in their religious, social and even political affairs. In this initial phase of the engagement, the Gogo had begun to see the message of the Bible as a possible new discovery in their search for meaning, purpose and significance in life.

So, the Gogo’s interest in the Bible cannot just be explained in materialistic and instrumental terms as individuals sought to gain political allies, new medicine, education and jobs through CMS missions. Such an approach would neglect the manifold ways in which the Gogo were anxiously trying to interpret and appropriate the Bible as well as the practices of the missionaries, for their own purpose within their own cultural matrix. Faced with natural disasters, new diseases as well as political interference through colonial invasions, the Gogo began, just as other Tanzanians, to seek out new religious inspiration and ideas for their own social values and needs so that they could regain moral control over their lives. We can say, however, that what the natives heard from the Bible was not necessarily what the missionary read or preached. When Price preached at Ibwijili, ten years after Baxter’s visit to the same village, the people said ‘your words are good and we believe them. What are we to do? Some of the young men of the place

²⁸⁰ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.94.

²⁸¹ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.94.

took up Price's message and explained it to the older people'.²⁸² The people believed because they found new religious meanings in the words of the Bible, which might not be what the missionary anticipated. As the same story continues, when Price asked the same people at Ibwijili to abandon their practice of witch trials, the people told him that he should buy the accused, the witches, if he wanted to stop the trials. Price reported later to the CMS headquarters, in London, that the people did not understand his message.²⁸³ One can argue that it is not that the people did not understand the message, but that they interpreted and understood it from their indigenous context.

At Msamalo, another centre, chief Mpera and the elders would not allow Price to teach the Bible to the people before they as leaders had heard it. This suggests, at least among these leaders, that if this Book of the new religion contained any powerful, or superior, knowledge, then they as leaders of the people had to obtain it first. So, the chief summoned a representative assembly of about thirty elders to meet Price soon after sunrise. Price reported,

They listened very attentively while I told the story of God's love to sinners. Then the chief recapitulated what I had said, to let me see that they have heard it properly. When I asked then what they intended to do now they had heard the news, two or three wanted a little further explanation on certain points, and when they appeared satisfied with my replies, the whole party almost enthusiastically professed their readiness to accept Christ as their Saviour and Chief; the one word "mutemi" meaning Lord, King, Master, sir and chief. I never saw amongst Wagogo, or amongst the black people at all, anything so nearly approaching enthusiasm, and thanked God for it.²⁸⁴

After this event, the chief and his elders allowed Price to hold a prayer session, presumably for rain, and permitted him to stay for another week. The people's acceptance of Christ as Chief could suggest their waning confidence in their native

²⁸² Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.94.

²⁸³ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.94.

²⁸⁴ *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, November 1888, p.708.

chieftain, which was being threatened by German colonial intervention. Also, in this initial encounter with the Bible, the superior power of the missionary could symbolise the power of Christ, their new Chief. The natives' 'enthusiasm' could mean more than, or something different from, what Price reported; for we only hear the natives through the ears of their visitor, the missionary. At times, we may not catch exactly what the natives say, but as we "read between the lines" we can realise that the natives were actually making their own interpretations and appropriations of the Bible, or at least the words of the Bible, according to their own context of social values and needs.

At Handali, a neighbourhood of Msomalo, people asked Price, just after his Bible teachings: 'What have we done to offend God, that he has given us so little rain this year? Will there be rain next year or it is gone away altogether?'²⁸⁵ One may wonder why they directed the question to the missionary. The question derived from their religious perspective in which calamities, disasters, ill are attributed to some human offence against God, *Mulungu*, and *milungu*, divinities and spirits. During disasters the people consulted ritual leaders, rainmakers, diviners, and chiefs. For the Gogo, religious leaders are also diviners, and when calamities befall, they were the ones to turn to for advice. From 1884 to 1898, there had been a succession of dry years in the Gogo region;²⁸⁶ the diviners and rainmakers predictions and promises were not coming to fruition. The people's hope was diminishing. In this case, the missionary, as a new "ritual leader", seemed to provide hope from the Bible. He had to tell the people what they had done to offend *Mulungu* and the *milungu*. Price gathered his porters and other Gogo people around the campfire; and he preached that Satan was the source of all evils and ills and that only Jesus could save them from all calamities. People sang and danced around the campfire and went to their different homes, shouting the name of Jesus who would save them from Satan.²⁸⁷ Was only shouting Jesus' name adequate for the Gogo, as a saving and protection agent? No, it was not adequate; for some months later Price wrote that the people 'did not seem to be much in earnest' and he prayed for 'the power of the Holy

²⁸⁵ *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, November 1888, p.706f cf. Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.95.

²⁸⁶ Maddox, G.H., 'The Church & Cigogo: Father Stephen Mlundi & Christianity in Central Tanzania', in Thomas Spear & Isaria N Kimambo, eds, *East African Expressions of Christianity, East African Studies Series*, Dar es Salaam, Mkuki na Nyota, 1999, pp.154-55; Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.95.

²⁸⁷ *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, Nov. 1888, p.706ff; Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.95.

Spirit among these Wagogo'.²⁸⁸ The Gogo, it seems, needed a symbol of Jesus' presence, the Bible. This assumption is proven by later Gogo practice of keeping the Bible in their houses. Later Gogo Christians, both literate and illiterate, would keep Bibles, the written Word, in their houses as a visible and tangible symbol of the presence of Christ, the living Word.

Let us continue with the story of Price's mission activity among the Gogo. Because of the prolonged dry years, Price continued to preach about the saving power of Jesus over the evils and ills of Satan in Mvumi, Chilonwa and Mulamba. At Chilonwa, some natives challenged Price's message. One man said:

Let God raise up our friends who have died and let us all live together down here. I suppose it is you who have been to Msamalo and told the people there about this Gospel, and they profess to believe it, but what are [sic] they the better for it? They have hunger and get sick and die just like anybody else.²⁸⁹

This quote shows how the natives had begun to wrestle with the Bible's teachings about God's love. They struggled to reconcile God's love with their problems of suffering from famine, diseases, starvation, and drought. The natives expected the message of the Bible to answer both their spiritual and physical needs. Sometimes after Price had tried to talk to the natives seriously about eternal realities, and had asked them if they understood him, they replied, 'yes, Bwana [master/sir], give me some cloth and food'. So, in these first encounters with the Bible, some natives felt that the message it contained was absurd, and as Price wrote, 'the people [did not want] to take in any ideas whatever above those of their daily life and wants'.²⁹⁰

One can also argue that in this initial encounter, the natives were hesitant to take in new ideas and beliefs not because they were preoccupied with 'their daily life and wants' as Price suggested, but rather because the new religion, Christianity, represented a strange

²⁸⁸ *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, Nov. 1888, pp.710f; Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, 97.

²⁸⁹ *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, Nov. 1888, pp.710f; Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.97

²⁹⁰ 'East Africa Mission: Usagara and Ugogo [1888]', p.37.

tradition, which was, in some areas, quite different from the indigenous oral tradition. That is 'cultures steeped in oral traditions generally find the concept of religion and religious power circumscribed by a book at first frightful and absurd'.²⁹¹ Others were being attracted by the message of the Book, finding it awesome and enthralling, hoping that their expectations and needs would later be fulfilled. They welcomed missionaries in their homes, trying to make sense of the content of the Bible. This positive attitude gave the missionaries a glimmer of hope for the acceptance of the Bible message among the Gogo. As Price said, 'my happiest hours are those spend at the tembes (compounds, or homesteads) of the [Gogo] people, trying to deliver scraps of the Master's message'.²⁹² Price was beginning to win the confidence and affections of the Gogo, both young and old.²⁹³ The natives were beginning to engage with the 'scraps' of the Bible message that Price and other missionaries were trying to present. Some of the natives' embrace of the Bible words and their trust in God turned out to be stronger even in times of crises. During Abushiri's revolt,²⁹⁴ Price wanted to leave the Gogo; but one native, having heard of Price's dilemma, went to him and asked: 'why are you running away? If God wants to take you let him come and find you here'.²⁹⁵ Price decided to stay with the Gogo with perfect peace of mind. The natives had started, albeit partially, to "read" in a way that could sometimes startle the missionary. One missionary wrote,

I cannot express the admiration I have for this man [a native teacher-evangelist]; his very manner and bearing draws you to him and I felt as though I could sit at his feet and be taught.²⁹⁶

This suggests that a particular "reading" and understanding of the Bible, different from the missionary's, was slowly emerging among the indigenous. The Bible was beginning

²⁹¹ Gill, Sam D., 'Non-literate Traditions and Holy Books: Toward a New Model' in Frederick M Denny & Rodney L Taylor, eds, *Holy Books in Comparative Perspective*, University of South Carolina Press, 1985, p.226f, as quoted by Wimbush 'Reading Texts Through Worlds, Worlds Through Texts', in *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.131.

²⁹² 'East Africa Mission: Usagara and Ugogo Mission [1881]', p.37.

²⁹³ 'East Africa Mission: Usagara and Ugogo Mission [1881]', p.37.

²⁹⁴ See Chapter 3.

²⁹⁵ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.102.

²⁹⁶ 'East Africa Mission: Usagara and Ugogo Mission [1881]', p.36.

to have an impact on the lives and thoughts of the Gogo. However, only a small number of the Gogo had been fully involved in the “reading” of the Bible by 1881; for the natives had not yet had access to the Scriptures in their own vernacular. Thus, in these initial missionary endeavours, there was only an implicit role of the Bible as a text. In these early years, the Gogo could not fully engage with the Bible as a text because it was often encountered indirectly, through catechetical materials, doctrinal statements, preaching styles, sermons, prayers, and generally through dynamic interactions and protracted conversations between potential converts and missionaries, with their conflicting beliefs and religious practices.

Right from their earliest missions in Mpwapwa, Kisokwe and Kongwa and other first stations, Baxter, Price, Cole, Westgate had some “followers” with them. Most of them were porters and freed slaves, with whom they travelled from the Coast. These people worked as missionary servants, and some of them as interpreters for the missionaries. They facilitated the contact and interaction between the Gogo, on one side, and the missionaries and the Bible, on the other. In the mission stations, they had Swahili books and portions of the Bible. At Mpwapwa, the first few Gogo people who were attracted by the message visited the mission station and learned to read, so that one day they would be able to read for themselves the Swahili Bible portions and other books.²⁹⁷ Most of these first Gogo readers, men and women, became the first native teacher-evangelists among the Gogo.

Although the Bible as a text had not yet had direct impact on the whole lives of the Gogo, something of a text was already being appropriated by the Gogo in mission stations, and in the various places that the missionaries tried to establish contacts with the people. Our next section, which particularly charts the historical processes of the Gogo’s engagement with the Bible as a text, begins with earliest *wasomi*, ordinary readers of the Bible, and how their reading practice led to *kusoma*, reading, Christians.

²⁹⁷ ‘East Africa Mission: Usagara and Ugogo Mission [1881]’, p.36.

5.2 THE BIBLE AS A TEXT: *KUSOMA* CHRISTIANS

Gogo's conscious encounter with the Bible as a text began with translation of the Cigogo New Testament in 1899. This vernacular translation launched a new phase in the processes of engagement with the Bible among the Gogo. The Cigogo New Testament led to the growth of literacy in Gogo region, which in turn resulted in the emergence of *wasomi*, readers. In the Gogo region, Christians, and catechumens, were the only ones who could read; for reading the Bible was becoming a prerequisite for baptism.²⁹⁸ Christians became readers and the only readers were Christians; hence, *kusoma* Christians. Even those who could not master the art of reading could at least be enabled to memorise, and remember, some portions of the Bible, hymns and worship responses. As one missionary wrote,

I started the year...with teaching them some Psalms, and I thought it would be nice for them to have portions of the Precious word stored where none could take it from them; and we have learned the 1st, 23rd, 27th and three others. Besides the Venite, Magnificate, responses for church, hymns, &c.; so that now they attend the Sunday morning service well.²⁹⁹

Those who could practically read and those who could remember words of the Bible, all came to be known as *wasomi*, "readers", of the Book. But all this hunger for reading was precipitated by vernacular translation.

Last, assisted by Chief Chipanjilo, laid the foundation for vernacular translation by preparing the groundwork of a grammar and vocabulary of Cigogo language. He also printed the Lord's Prayer, which was used on Christmas day in 1878.³⁰⁰ But Cole and Price are the ones who pioneered Cigogo translation of the Bible, assisted by their earliest Bible teachers at Mpwapwa and Kisokwe, namely Madari, Mbogo, Mwaka and

²⁹⁸ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.178.

²⁹⁹ 'East Africa Mission: Usagara and Ugogo Mission [1881]', p.32.

³⁰⁰ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, pp.37,129.

Timoteo.³⁰¹ Henry translated the Gospel of Matthew and printed it at the UMCA mission press in Zanzibar in 1886.³⁰² Price translated the Gospel of Luke and it was published by the British & Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), London, in 1887. In 1889, Cole and Price together translated the Gospel of John, and the CMS press, at Freretown, Kenya, printed it. John Edward Beverly translated Ruth and Jonah in 1893. In 1897, the Gospels and Acts were published in one volume by the BFBS. Two years later, Cole, Price and Beverly made possible the publication of the entire Cigogo New Testament, by the BFBS.

Cole started translating the Old Testament but he could not complete it. Briggs, Doulton and Westgate continued Cole's translation work. Genesis was published in 1905, Exodus and Numbers in 1910, and a revised Cigogo New Testament was published in 1911. The First World War disrupted the Cigogo translation of the Old Testament.³⁰³ However, by 1910, the Gogo had access to the whole of the New Testament and some portions of the Old Testament in their own mother tongue. Before the Cigogo Scriptural translation appeared, the Gogo reader of the Swahili Bible had to grapple with how to express Biblical ideas, concepts, metaphors, beliefs, practices, rituals, and spiritual beings in their vernacular. Translation made the Book open to them.³⁰⁴ In the first place, the Book was closed because it was not in a language they fully understood. The Cigogo Bible enabled the natives to explore their new religious dimension, and the implications of the texts in their own lives. The Gogo began to interpret the text in their own cultural and historical contexts, and appropriate it as their own, forging in the process reading practices which were distinctive from the European reading modes of the missionaries.

These early Cigogo translations for the first time reduced the Gogo language to writing, and thus developed an orthography for the language. Also, the translation work resulted

³⁰¹ Madari and Mbogo would have been among the first teachers trained by Price, See Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, pp.117-18,123,130.

³⁰² This, and the following detail on Cigogo translation of the Bible, is based on Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, pp.79-81.

³⁰³ Some draft manuscripts were destroyed as the German soldiers looted and burned Buigiri CMS mission station (Westgate, W., *T.B.R Westgate*, pp. 101-102). Translation work of the Cigogo Bible was never resumed until 1940s (see Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, pp.79-80).

³⁰⁴ Cf. Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, p.111.

in literacy programmes; the Gogo people began to be taught how to read so that they could read the Bible. As Mojola puts it,

Obviously the Bible in the target language would only be useful if the target audience could read and make use of it. It was not an accident that the first Christians were called readers, i.e. *asomi*, *basomi*, *wasomi*, etc. Christianity became in real sense the religion of the Book, and of readers... And the missionary was a pioneer of education in East Africa. This cannot be denied.³⁰⁵

Missionaries in the Gogo region, as elsewhere in East Africa, took seriously the literacy classes so that the Cigogo Bible would be useful. In these classes, apart from the Lord's Prayer, prayer book and hymnbook, the Bible was the main textbook. In some mission stations, in these early days, it was the only book, and therefore the only textbook. From 1882, at Kisokwe, Mrs Cole used a cloth printed with letters and syllables as an aid in the reading classes. This teaching aid became popular and it was used by all native teachers to drill the 'cloth class', i.e., beginners' class.³⁰⁶ Wherever the classes gathered, the cloth could be hung on a wall or from a branch of a tree.³⁰⁷ After learning the syllables, the people were then taught to read short sentences in Cigogo. These sentences were either extracted from the Bible or composed for immediate use.³⁰⁸ In most cases, the Bible was the only text for reading practice. So reading the Bible was inextricably correlated with literacy and education. In fact, the ability to read the Bible was education, and all 'other forms of education', as Mojola writes, 'were natural outgrowth of this basic one of reading the Book'.³⁰⁹ The Bible was considered not only the Word of God, but also the source of many skills and knowledge.

³⁰⁵ Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, p.xiii.

³⁰⁶ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.58.

³⁰⁷ See 'A Teaching Cloth' at the appendices.

³⁰⁸ For example, *Baba kabita kumgunda*, Father has gone to the farm; and *Yaya kabita bawa mboga*, Mother has gone to pick vegetables. Also, *Mlece kutunhunika mhumbula zenyu, mumwihuwile Mulungu, munyihuwile na nene* (Yohana 14:1, 1st edition of Cigogo Bible), 'Do not let your hearts be troubled, trust in God; trust also in me' (John 14:1, NIV).

³⁰⁹ Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, p.xiii.

At Mpwapwa, Baxter and Last instructed people in the mission using the Bible. They taught them to read and write, but also other essential skills for their lives. Women were also part of these classes. It is recorded that at Mpwapwa, there were some six Gogo women who were very eager to read the Bible. They did not live in the mission, but they came from a village next to Mpwapwa. Baxter instructed them in the Book, and he taught them hymns, every morning at sunrise and again in the middle of the day.³¹⁰ After their morning lessons, these Gogo women went back to their different homes to continue with domestic activities, or they went straight to their farms. Although their names are not mentioned in available documents, the six Mpwapwa women were the first Gogo Bible women who inspired other Gogo women, such as Secelela Nhonya, Debora Mwaka, Damary Vigoa, Mariamu Malanda, Persisi Stamilei, Kwejema Rebeka Balisidya and 'Maryamu of Mpwapwa', whose names are recorded in CMS archival sources and some few books.³¹¹

Until the turn of the nineteenth century, apart from the mission work-people, missionaries 'taught more women and girls than men and boys'.³¹² It is reasonable to argue that women were the first "readers" of the Bible in Gogoland, and that their readings are appropriately significant for our analysis of the early engagement with the Bible among the Gogo. Some of these early Bible women provide us with interesting glimpses of their engagement with the Word of God. Secelela was the first Bible woman, apart from the six women who read with Baxter.³¹³ When most of the aforementioned women and girls were beginning to "read" and embrace the Bible, a young Gogo woman, Secelela, was starting her ministry as Bible teacher with CMS mission in the Gogo region in 1890s.³¹⁴ Secelela taught other women in Mamboya, Mpwapwa and Kisokwe. In 1898, when Baxter opened a boarding school at Kisokwe, she was chosen to be 'prefect in charge of

³¹⁰ 'East Africa Mission: Usagara and Ugogo Mission [1882]', p.39.

³¹¹ CMS archives (Birmingham University); CMS archival material, particularly by T B R Westgate, held at St. Philip's Theological College, Kongwa, Dodoma Tanzania; also see Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, pp.179-89.

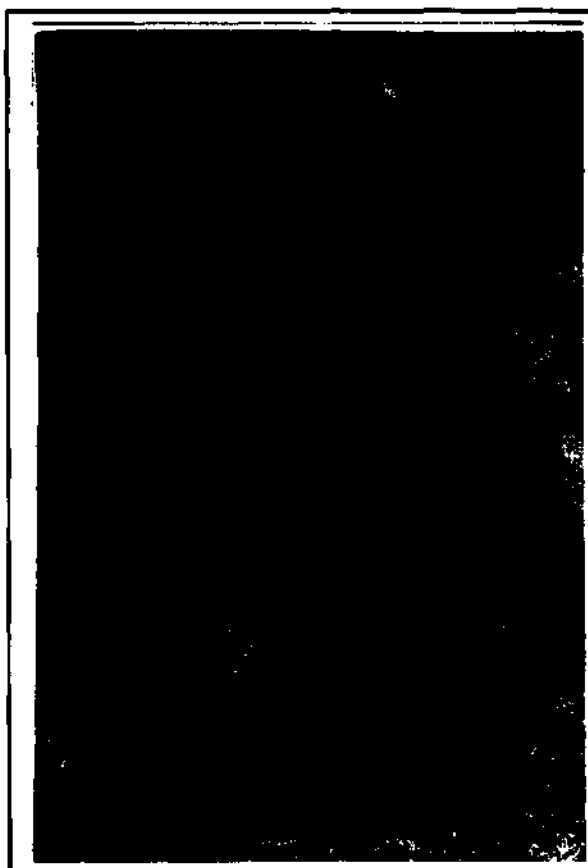
³¹² Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.179.

³¹³ Henceforth women early ordinary "readers" are mentioned in the text of the thesis by their first names, because, firstly, their second names are male names and they obscure the presence and role of women as readers of the Bible. Secondly, women readers are commonly mentioned by their first names in the author's archival sources.

³¹⁴ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.179.

the senior girls' dormitory (i.e. loft).³¹⁵ She cared for the girls and guided their behaviour in accordance with the Word of God. I do not have details as to what Secelela taught and preached to women and girls; but one thing, which would have been most characteristic of her, just like other Bible women, is that she always walked with her Bible.³¹⁶ Another thing would be her fervent trust in *Nghani yo Mulungu*, (the) Word of God. Thus she was known as a Bible woman.

PICTURE 1: Secelela Nhonya (c. 1906) had a wonderful influence among the Gogo, through her teachings of the Word of God. (Source: St. Philip's Theological College Library, Kongwa, Tanzania. All other photos also come from the same source).



As a missionary testimony of her life records: 'SECELELA – a Bible woman. She exercised a wonderful influence among the women – about 1906'.³¹⁷ The Bible gave Secelela, and other women, power to witness as well as status in their male-dominated society. Those who received baptism against their parents' wish were disowned, and so found refuge in mission stations. Most of these women became teachers of the Word and

³¹⁵ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.179.

³¹⁶ Cf. Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.257.

³¹⁷ Thomas B R. Westgate, photos and annotations, St. Philip's Theological College Library, Kongwa, Tanzania.

were also sent out to instruct others. The Bible became a means of women's emancipation from male chauvinism and cultural oppression.

The liberating role of the Bible for early Gogo women readers can well be illustrated by a story of a Gogo girl named Aksa Simule. In Gogo areas, there was a custom, after going through clitoridectomy, of incarcerating teenage girls in their homes for a period of one month to three months, only allowed out of doors after dark. Aksa was shut into a dark room for four weeks. Before this girls' teenage rite of passage, Aksa had learned to read the Bible at Mvumi mission, and she already possessed a Cigogo New Testament. This portion of the Bible provided her with a wonderful escape from loneliness in her dark room. She used a chink of light through the roof space as her candle. She read the whole Book from Matthew to Revelation, following Jesus and his friends, men and women, in Galilee, 'hearing the apostles explain the Christian life, and angels sing God's praise before the book closed'.³¹⁸ The reading of the Bible opened for her a new world of knowledge and deeper spiritual understanding. Even before Aksa completed her teenage rite, the Bible had given her mental, moral and spiritual emancipation. And when she completed the rite and continued with reading classes, she 'found a freedom undreamed of in Gogoland till then [1900s]. She became a strong Christian, as did her sister Judith. In old age she did much to revive Gogo music in the churches'.³¹⁹

Another Bible woman is 'Maryamu of Mpwapwa'. She is only mentioned by her first name and her home area, in various sources.³²⁰ Maryamu became the mother of Ema Malogo, who was a cook for the students' dining room at St. Philip's Theological College, Kongwa, Tanzania. The husband of Ema was Zakariya Malogo of Mlanga village in Kongwa. According to archival sources, Maryamu was one of the first Bible women in the region.³²¹ She taught the Bible in mission schools and she helped in medical work, both at Mpwapwa and Kongwa. She visited women in villages and held Bible studies and prayers with them. Another remarkable thing about Maryamu, which

³¹⁸ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.180.

³¹⁹ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.180.

³²⁰ Thomas B R Westgate, photos and annotations, St. Philip's Theological College Library.

³²¹ Thomas B R Westgate, photos and annotations, St. Philip's Theological College Library.

some elders still testify to, is that always 'she prayed that God would make holes in the hearts of the [Gogo] people in which the seeds of the Word of God could be dropped'.³²² Maryamu's prayer alluded to the native way of planting corn. Her prayer implies that God does not only make 'things grow', but he also prepares 'the field' for 'the planting of the seeds of the Word of God'. Maryamu's call for prayers for the reception of the Word of God was vitally significant in these early mission days in the Gogo region, for not many Gogo people had accepted the preaching of the Word. Some, for example Chief Magunga of Buigiri, withstood the teachings of the Word, though they had begun to accept missionary medicines and to read the Book.

PICTURE 2: Maryamu (Mary) of Mpwapwa. She holds the New Testament in her own language in her hand. Source: St. Philip's Theological College archives, Kongwa, Dodoma, Tanzania.



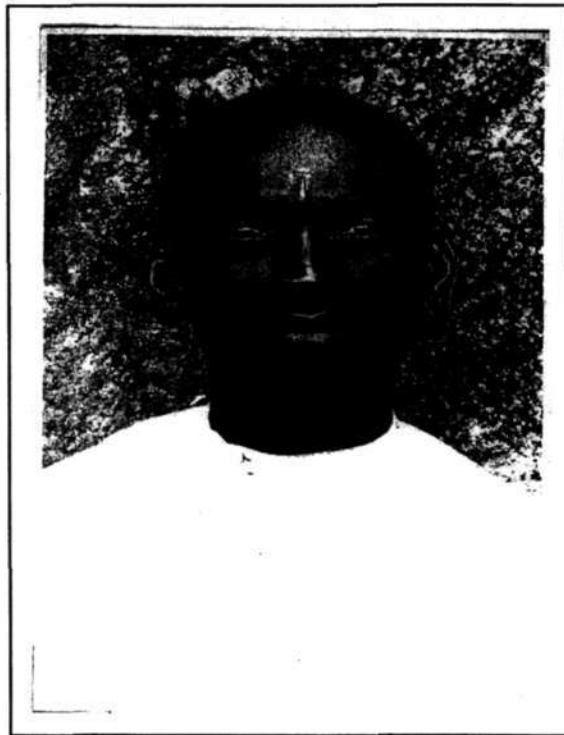
Also, in the 1890s, there was a smallpox epidemic in the region. At Mpwapwa, where most of the Bible women lived, missionaries vaccinated many people but they did not gain any sympathetic hearing of the Gospel. Some natives told Price, 'your vaccine is

³²² Thomas B R Westgate, photos and annotations, St. Philip's Theological College Library. This fact was also attested by Azaria Mapogo (Azaria Mapogo, same interview).

good, but the Gospel is a fable'.³²³ Such responses to the preaching of the Word prompted Bible women, like Maryamu, to pray that God would open the hearts of the Gogo for the reception of the Word of God.

Beside Gogo Bible women, there were also some Bible men, like Andrea Mwaka, Daniel Mbogo, Elieza Balisidya, Yohana Malecela, Madari, Yodayo, who had accepted the Gospel and offered themselves to teach it to other people. Also, these earliest readers of the Bible were instructed and then sent out to teach the Word and open new mission stations. These new stations were under the supervision of old ones. Buigiri is one of the stations which was opened by a native teacher, a Bible man, Yohana Malecela, son of Maula.³²⁴

PICTURE: 3: Yohana Malecela
a Bible teacher at Buigiri (baptised
at Easter 1898).



Before becoming a reader, Yohana was a rainmaker, who immigrated to Mvumi from Uzigua. In Mvumi he came into the service of *Mtemi* Masenha, chief Mazengo's predecessor. In the 1890s, Yohana moved to Mpwapwa, where he was affiliated with the

³²³ Original source not indicated, as quoted by Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.115.

³²⁴ Maddox, G.H., 'The Church & Cigogo', in Thomas Spear & Isaria N Kimambo, eds, *East African Expressions of Christianity*, p.158.

CMS mission under Doulton.³²⁵ For the first time, Yohana encountered the Bible at Mpwapwa mission. The Book attracted him; he learned it and he quickly became one of the first native senior teachers among the Gogo.³²⁶ By 1902, he was stationed at Buigiri, where the Anglican Bishop of East Africa, Peel, met him and later wrote of him: 'Yohana, the senior teacher employed by Mr Doulton, is an uncommonly useful and whole-hearted Christian, pure in life, and earnest in keeping his household in the fear and love of God'.³²⁷ During his ministry at Buigiri, Yohana gave part of his own salary back to the mission to help support two other teachers at the station. It was perhaps a sign of his devotion as well as a way of building a patronage network. By 1906, Yohana was considered for ordination; but because of the native teacher-evangelists' strike, the Maji Maji fight, the First World War and its aftermath, Yohana was not ordained until 1924, in the first group of African Anglican clergy from the Gogo. After his ordination Yohana took up pastoral duties at the mission at Mvumi.

Through the teaching of the Bible, medicine people, like Yohana Malecela, and diviners realised that the Bible had great knowledge, and power which was far more powerful than their native skills of divination. As chief Lenjima of Buigiri, where Yohana worked, once said, 'the things concerning God, as we read from the Book, are very great. I am thankful to you missionaries because you have brought them to us'.³²⁸ They now needed these great things, which were hidden in the Book; so they learned it diligently and taught their children and grandchildren who later assumed important ecclesiastical and political positions. Yohana Malecela's grandchildren became prominent leaders in the church and politics of the Gogo region and Tanzania. Naftali Lusinde became a clergyman; and Job Lusinde was actively involved in politics before and after Tanzania independence. John Yohana Malecela became prime minister of Tanzania. As we will see later in this thesis,

³²⁵ Maddox, G.H., 'The Church & Cigogo', in Thomas Spear & Isaria N Kimambo, eds, *East African Expressions of Christianity*, p.158.

³²⁶ Maddox, G.H., 'The Church & Cigogo', in Thomas Spear & Isaria N Kimambo, eds, *East African Expressions of Christianity*, p.159.

³²⁷ CMS archives, G3 A8/01 1903, Bishop Peel, 'Notes on a Visit to Usagara and Ugogo'. 6 October 1903, as quoted by Maddox, G.H., 'The Church and Cigogo', in Thomas Spear & Isaria N Kimambo, eds, *East African Expressions of Christianity*, p.158.

³²⁸ Thomas B R Westgate, photos and annotations, St. Philip's Theological College Library.

the Bible, and its teachings in general, has played a great role, directly or indirectly, in the making of Tanzania as a society and free nation.

'Madari of Mpwapwa' was another early reader and teacher of the Bible.³²⁹ He was a translator of the Scriptures, and he taught many Gogo, in Mpwapwa, Kiboriani and Kongwa. Westgate considered Madari as one of his 'jewels' in terms of Bible translation. It seems Madari held his Bible in high esteem, as in all available photos he appears holding his Bible in his hands.

PICTURE 4: Madari (Mulutu)
a Bible translator and teacher at
Mpwapwa and Kongwa.



During the First World War, Madari saved Bibles and other documents from confiscation and destruction by German colonial soldiers. Madari hid Bibles, manuscripts, diaries of Westgate and other books deep in the earth under the fireplace in his hut and kept them

³²⁹ He is mentioned only by his first name and where he came from, in various documents (Thomas B R Westgate, photos and annotations, St. Philip's Theological College Library; Westgate, W., *T.B.R Westgate*, pp.98, 101,102; and Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, pp.123, 165-6).

safe.³³⁰ This demonstrates how much Madari, and other native teachers, Bible people, valued the Bible, the text.

Danyeli Mbogo is another Bible reader and teacher. Mbogo began to read the Bible in 1890s under Price and Cole at Kisokwe.³³¹ Later he moved to Kongwa and married Loyi. Through his work of preaching and teaching the Bible, one can begin to see an emerging ordinary readers' interpretative practice of the Bible.

PICTURE 5: Danyeli (Daniel) Mbogo (1885 -1961). One of the first Bible Teachers of Kongwa and Mpwapwa.



Mbogo was a tireless reader and teacher of the Bible; and according to Azaria Mapogo of Mlanga, Kongwa, Mbogo preferred the parables and miracles of Jesus in his Bible lessons; but he also used some indigenous hymns, Gogo *mbazi*, proverbs, *vihwanicizi*, symbols/metaphors and *simo*, Gogo narratives, to teach various truths of the Bible.³³² Let us look at one of the Gogo *simo* as would have been used by Mbogo, and probably other teachers as well:

³³⁰ Thomas B R Westgate, photos and annotations, St. Philip's Theological College Library.

³³¹ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.92.

³³² Azaria Mapogo, same interview.

One day there were two people travelling from one village to another. One was a lame and the other was blind. In the middle of their journey they reached a big forest with thick bushes and long grasses. While walking through the forest they suddenly came across a huge fire; the fire was about to encircle them. They started crying and praying to *Mulungu*. As they continued to pray, all of a sudden, the lame was healed and he began to run away from the fire. The blind person continued to cry and pray desperately; and suddenly his sight was restored, he could now see the fire and everything around him! He did not delay; he hastened to run too. Both the lame and the blind escaped the fire and reached the village safely, unharmed.

After the story followed a question:

Nhunizyo yakwe cici nghani ayi? Nhunizyo yakwe ayi:

(What does the story mean?) (This is the meaning:)

Mulungu yo mutazi wa wose, ulombe du kokuhulika.

(God is (the) helper of all (people), just pray and he/she will hear you).³³³

The *nhunizyo*, the meaning of narrative, was followed by the reading of biblical texts, which were related to the story. In the case of the aforesaid *simo*, Psalm 23:1ff or Jeremiah 23:23 would probably be read. One theme, like this one of prayers and dependence on God, could have two or more *simos*, with intervals of songs and praises. This kind of preaching is a typical example of how the Gogo had begun to interpret the Bible according to their own cultural context and worldview. Different biblical concepts acquired new meaning, as they heard words read and preached from the Cigogo Bible. New questions also emerged; after a sermon on after-life, at Msalala village, a Gogo

³³³ All translations mine; for the original version of the *simo*, and other *simos* with their translations, see my collection of *Simo ne Mbazi ze Wasetu* in the Appendices.

stood up and asked 'are there cattle in heaven?'³³⁴ Through the preaching and teaching of teachers, like Mbogo, Madari, Malecela, Secelela, Maryamu and others, the Bible began to attract many Gogo people. And as many natives, men and women, gained increasing access to the Cigogo Bible and could make their own independent interpretations, missionaries could no longer dictate the conditions of the process of the Gogo's engagement with the Bible.³³⁵ Similarly, access to the Cigogo Bible increased hunger for reading; and so the CMS mission was prompted to establish more formal mission schools, most of which were taught by native teachers. In the new schools, the Bible continued to occupy a significant place and role.

5.3 THE BIBLE AND MISSION SCHOOLS

Elementary schools that emerged mostly after World War I were part, but also a continuation, of *kusoma*, reading Christianity, in which the Bible as a text was essentially important. Before more formal elementary schools appeared, missionaries had begun some system of schools, which was mostly seasonal. At Mpwapwa, Last and Baxter started a small school with about ten pupils. These first pupils were freed slaves, porters and immigrants.³³⁶ They were housed in the mission station, fed and taught. By March 1879, a few local youths joined in, but because they were herdsman, they did not stay in the station.³³⁷ In October 1879, when Price and Cole arrived, Mpwapwa mission school had begun to gain momentum. Price taught reading, and Cole grew European vegetables at the school. Pupils read but also worked in the school garden as part of their lessons.³³⁸ In this early school, as I have indicated earlier, the Swahili Bible seemed to be the obvious and logical textbook. School attendances for the Gogo youths was very poor.

³³⁴ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.62.

³³⁵ Cf. Spear, T., 'Toward a History of African Christianity', in Thomas Spear & Isaria N Kimambo, eds, *East African Expressions of Christianity*, p.6. Also, Bediako argues that 'whenever missionaries or a missionary society made the Scriptures available to an African people in that people's own language, they weakened any Western bias in their presentation of the Gospel' (Bediako, K., *Jesus in Africa: the Christian Gospel in African History and Experience*, Akropong-Akuapem, Regnum Africa, 2000, pp.57-58.)

³³⁶ Freed slaves at Mpwapwa were adults and children that missionaries had either rescued from slave caravans or bought their freedom from slavers ('East Africa Mission: Usagara and Ugogo [1882]', p.39).

³³⁷ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.44.

³³⁸ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.44.

This could be attributed to the lack of a text in their own Cigogo language. There was a language barrier; for in the nineteenth century, Swahili was still mainly the coastal language, and therefore it was a foreign language for the interior.³³⁹ Even in the 1880s, when Mrs Henrietta Cole started a school at Kisokwe, native attendances were still poor. Initially they had to offer gifts to encourage attendance.³⁴⁰ This scenario could be attributed to the lack of printed material in their own language. As early as 1882, Price had learned Cigogo and tried to analyse the language; he also managed to print the Lord's Prayer in Cigogo.³⁴¹ The Bible, at least the whole New Testament, was not available in Cigogo until the close of the nineteenth century, about 1899. So before the translation of the New Testament, there was very little yet printed in Cigogo for the natives.

Mission schools among the Gogo started in 1878, but until the early 1890s, the pupils were mostly slaves and immigrants, with very few Gogo. The use of Swahili as a medium of instruction was another reason. The available reading material was only in Swahili. Even when the Lord's Prayer was printed, it seemed to be inadequate to attract the Gogo to join the schools. But above all, unavailability of the Bible in their vernacular could have been the main reason for the flagging school attendance. The Gogo had known the Book, even before it was translated; they desired it, and some took the trouble to learn it in those early days. But because the Book was still closed to them they could not gain access to its contents.

Poor attendance in the schools could also be attributed to issues of time. School, western time, did not comply with Gogo time, as most of them were herdsman and farmers and the youths had a great deal to do to keep the Gogo life going. Also, many elders and parents did not yet have enough confidence in the schooling system such that they would release their children. Yes, some Gogo had started to see something of a strange power in the new religion and its Book; but they still had great confidence in their own religious power and beliefs. At Kisokwe, adults watching a school lesson which was going on

³³⁹ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.49.

³⁴⁰ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.46.

³⁴¹ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.51.

remarked: 'such matters do not relate to us. They are only for you whites'.³⁴² So, these early schools attracted very few Gogo children and adults. Attendance only increased after a sequence of tragedies that started with the outbreak of rinderpest in 1892 and which was followed by a smallpox epidemic; then in 1895, came a famine, still remembered by the Gogo elders as *magubike*;³⁴³ also Bushiri's revolt that struck the region; and finally the natives' Maji Maji war and its miserable failure.³⁴⁴ These events led to phenomenological and psychological changes which resulted in what one can call a huge turning to the reading of the Book in mission schools.

The disasters, and particularly the Maji Maji, created a sense of dissatisfaction among the Gogo. The native confidence in their indigenous religious power and belief was now dwindling. A new belief came about that they needed some more, or new power, to meet their new challenges. After the Maji Maji, the indigenous people, as Anderson writes, 'realised that the old beliefs were insufficient to meet the challenge of the new world. They now had to make a choice between Christianity or [sic] Islam'.³⁴⁵ In other words, the people had to make a choice between the Bible and the Quran. At that time, in the Gogo region, they preferred the Bible to the Quran; for they had long identified the Bible with the liberating power of the whites as they rescued slaves from Arab caravans. The natives had also seen "the people of the Christian Book" defeating Arabs and other Muslims during Bushiri's revolt of 1888. During the revolt, chief Chipanjilo of Mpwapwa was given a gun by a missionary, and he fought against Bushiri's soldiers.³⁴⁶ It is a fact that even during the Maji Maji war, Christianity, and particularly the Bible, also represented the conquering power of the white. For example, in 1914, a German official, named Herr Sperling, told the Gogo, in a speech at Dodoma, that 'it was useless

³⁴² Cole's letter to Lang 17/1/1883, as quoted by Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.50.

³⁴³ *Magubike* derives from the root word *gubika*, meaning 'cover'. *Magubike*, in its famine context, implies 'the covering of the grinding stone'. *Magubike* famine was so severe that women covered the grinding stones because there was nothing to grind in the region.

³⁴⁴ After these events, converts increased as well (see Maddox, G.H., 'The Church & Cigogo', in Thomas Spear & Isaria N Kimambo, Eds, *East African Expressions of Christianity*, p.154.)

³⁴⁵ Anderson, W.B., *the History of the Church in East Africa*, p.60.

³⁴⁶ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.101.

to fight against the Germans, for they had God with them'.³⁴⁷ So the Gogo people could not but choose the Bible.

Because of the huge turn to reading the Book, attendance in mission schools rose from 97, in 1899, to 2,310, in 1907, for the whole of the Gogo region. By 1907, Kongwa had 1215 'scholars', Kiboriani 413, Buigiri 169 and Mvumi 513.³⁴⁸ Schools had to be added as well, to meet the new challenge of readers. The numbers of mission schools were increased from 6, in 1899, to 53, in 1907.³⁴⁹ Some of these schools had houses in which readers would gather, other schools were under trees, and still others would just be outside a teacher's, or a reader's *tembe*, Gogo house.³⁵⁰

Initially, schools were basically reading classes, with a few additional things. They were literacy programmes, mainly during dry season, as the people would go back to their farm work during the rain season. Some classes were conducted in the morning, others in the afternoon, so that herdsmen and farmers could choose the time that suited them. When a missionary or a native teacher travelled, their classes were sometimes closed, only to be resumed on the teacher's return.³⁵¹ The lessons were taught in Cigogo and the vernacular Bible occupied a vitally significant place in the learning process. After they had learned the letters, and done some practices on short sentences, the rest of the reading drill was done on the Bible.³⁵² The Bible had great impact on the lives of the people. As they engaged with the text in their readings, many saw Christ there and accepted him as their Saviour. But as many schools placed an emphasis on gathering youths, for example at Mpwapwa and Kisokwe, the elders felt that they were being left out.³⁵³ For the elders, learning to read was not just to acquire the skill of reading; it meant to obtain a powerful skill and knowledge far greater than what they had known before. When they said that

³⁴⁷ White P., *Doctor of Tanganyika*, p.60.

³⁴⁸ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, pp.225,233.

³⁴⁹ By 1907, Kongwa had 34 Schools, Kiboriani 7, Mvumi 8 and Buigiri 4 (see Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, pp.225,233. For more statistics of the mission schools in the Gogo region see Mission Schools' Statistics' in the Appendices.

³⁵⁰ See 'the cloth class' in the Appendices.

³⁵¹ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.49.

³⁵² Azaria Mapogo, same interview.

³⁵³ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, pp.44,49.

they wanted to be taught 'like the white man', or 'in the manner of the white man', they meant more than the acquisition of literacy. Thus chief Lukoli, who had allowed the missionaries to start a school in his country, 'seemed disappointed that the lessons would be confined to young people'.³⁵⁴ At Kisokwe, elders complained that the missionaries taught children rather than adults. This implied that only children could learn the skills and the knowledge of the Book. If only the children were taught in the manner of the white man, the old people would be useless and with less power. Some elders at Mpwapwa, as Knox writes, 'became suspicious of the school there and decided it was some kind of witchcraft which would bring death or calamity' on their Gogo society.³⁵⁵ When Bishop Parker visited the CMS mission work in the Gogo area, he advised the missionaries to review their school curriculum, and from then they started enrolling adults as well. Cole, who was based at Kisokwe School, wrote later admitting that their schools had been confined too much to the children and youths.³⁵⁶

It is not that the mission work altogether neglected adults and old people. The mission, with respect to the preaching of the Gospel covered all ages; but when it came to schooling much emphasis was put on children and youths. After Parker's episcopal visit, many adults and old people joined the schools, though they had separate classes from the children's. Now, through the reading classes, more adults too began to gain direct access to the Book, the Bible, as a text. Adults' and children's classes continued in the whole of the Gogo mission, at Mpwapwa, Kisokwe, Kongwa, Mvumi, Buigiri, and the Bible continued to be the only textbook. Even when more formal elementary schools, distinctive from early schools, began with some extra printed Cigogo material, the Bible continued to be the main textbook.³⁵⁷

The people would use the Bible not only in school lessons, but also in their homes. In fact, the Bible occupied a vital place in the Gogo lives, as they tried to witness to other Gogo people, or discussed some biblical concepts or ideas which had arisen in their

³⁵⁴ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.44.

³⁵⁵ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.51.

³⁵⁶ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.51.

³⁵⁷ For CMS elementary schools' report, see Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.240.

classes. Readers would sit around outdoor fireplaces, listening to Bible stories from a native teacher. Teacher Andrea Mwaka held Bible studies, prayer meetings and singing sessions at a fireplace just outside his hut. After the sessions, people would go to their homes singing for joy, while lions were roaring in the forest around their village.³⁵⁸ The missionaries did not run all the schools by themselves, they had trained, very early in their mission enterprise, some native teachers, like Andrea Mwaka, Secelela Nhonya, Daniel Mbogo, Aksa Simule, Elieza Balisidya, Madari, Timoteo, Matayo, and some others. As we can see from the preceding list, native teachers were both men and women.³⁵⁹ Native women teachers do not appear in most secondary documents, with the exception of Knox and probably a few other writers; but women teacher-evangelists were there serving in the mission. As Knox writes,

A number of Christian women served as preachers, teachers and evangelists in villages, schools and in the hospital [at Mpwapwa]. As the men teachers moved to outer villages, the women took over at the central schools.³⁶⁰

As the number of schools kept growing, with morning, afternoon and evening classes, ordinary Christians in the Gogo region, as elsewhere in Tanzania, were increasingly becoming the real readers of the Bible.

In the early decades, after the translations of the New Testament and some few Old Testament portions, people possessed small booklets for the Gospels, and pamphlets for the prophets and epistles. Later they had a whole, strong binding for the Cigogo New Testament and Prayer Book, with small booklets for Old Testament portions that had so far been translated. In their houses, the Gogo "readers" placed their books in a wooden box nailed high on the wall. They carried their books to school daily, but also to church on Sundays for worship, and on Friday for Christians' class. In fact, they used their books daily, and they were marked by this custom of using and caring for books. Their

³⁵⁸ Azaria Mapogo, same interview; also see Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.123.

³⁵⁹ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.123.

³⁶⁰ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.123.

admirers named them *wasomi*, “readers” as equivalent to Christians.³⁶¹ This name *wasomi* still persists in the Gogo region, especially among the old generation. During my field research, an old lady, named Muhanga Barabara, very often used the word *wasomi* for Christians. She also pointed out that many years before *Uhuru*, freedom, she used to be *msomi*, a reader. Muhanga had never been to missionary schools; she only attended Christians’ classes on Fridays. She can hardly read but remembers her Bible contents very well, and she proudly declares that she was, and is, *msomi*. Muhanga tells some stories of her remembered Bible better and more clearly than some of those who can practically decode the text of the Bible! So the idea of *wasomi* later combined all Christians, whether literate or illiterate.

We are still charting the historical processes of the encounter between the Bible and the Gogo, and how this engagement continued even in early and later mission schools in the region. By 1910, while he was at Buigiri, Westgate, who had briefly worked at Mpwapwa and Kiboriani, reported that

It was not uncommon for a missionary, awakened early in the morning by voices outside on the verandah, to find a party of Africans from some distant place, perhaps fifty miles or even a hundred miles away, who had come to beg for a teacher to go back with them, live in their country and teach them ‘the words’.³⁶²

Further impetus to learn the words came from the German colonial government, which insisted that all chiefs and their heirs should learn at least to read and write. The Germans had begun some few schools, but the Bible had no place. Most of the Gogo preferred mission schools because, one can assume, they not only learned to read and write but they also learned the Book. They wanted to be taught ‘the words’. Large numbers of the Gogo were requesting instruction(s) from the missionaries and native

³⁶¹ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.257.

³⁶² Westgate, W., *T.B.R. Westgate*, p.86.

teachers. Already there were over one hundred schools in the region.³⁶³ Chiefs and their heirs attended mission schools, and as a result, Christian chiefs who were readers were replacing the old ones. Chief Masenha with his heir began to attend school at Mvumi.³⁶⁴ The Bible was one of the main textbooks and it was taught alongside other subjects. With the flourishing of mission schools, there came the dire need for a larger staff of both missionary and native teachers. To meet this need, Huron Training College, now St. Philip's Theological College, was set up at Kongwa, Dodoma, in central Tanzania, and Westgate became the first principal. Teachers were trained at Kongwa and sent out to teach in mission schools. These teachers were also evangelists. They preached in villages, at wells, where women and some men fetched water, and in other gathering spots. Many Gogo embraced the words of the Bible, so much so that when the First World War came to the region, they stood firm even when the Germans flogged and incarcerated them as allies of the British and the missionaries.³⁶⁵

The total havoc of World War I, and the *Mtunya* famine that followed caused much disruption in the local social order. New "readers" joined the mission schools, from the entire Gogo region and from all levels of the older social order.³⁶⁶ This move was different from the situation prior to the Maji Maji and World War I, when most "readers" were either freed slaves or of immigrant origins. Chiefs, headsmen and village elders joined schools to learn to read the Book; they also sent their children and youths to mission schools to read the Book. There was a great demand for teachers and schools; and there arose many self-initiated teacher-evangelists who, also, taught both literacy and the Bible, but in their own ways as they had not been sent out by the missionaries.³⁶⁷ This indigenous self-initiative indicated that the Gogo "readers" of the Bible were gradually getting beyond the missionary interpretations to interpretations developed within their particular Gogo contexts. That means the people's engagement with the meaning of the Bible had not stopped with the phenomenon of *wasomi* with their *kusoma*

³⁶³ Westgate, W., *T.B.R. Westgate*, p.70.

³⁶⁴ Westgate, W., *T.B.R. Westgate*, p.68.

³⁶⁵ During World War I, some Gogo "readers" faced terrible suffering from Germans; see 'Gogo Christians Who Suffered During World War I' in the Appendices.

³⁶⁶ Maddox, G.H., 'The Church & Cigogo', in Thomas Spear & Isaria N Kimambo, eds, *Ease African Expressions of Christianity*, p.155.

³⁶⁷ Westgate, W., *T.B.R. Westgate*, p.70.

Christianity. There was still an enormous desire to move forward and further beyond the missionary mode of reading the Bible. The mission school, the missionary *kusoma* classes could not answer most of the native questions. Gogo Christians still had unanswered questions about witchcraft, the Holy Spirit, leadership, the nature of the Church, their traditions, music and dance.

For most missionaries in the region, indigenous traditions and culture were anti-Christian. With very few exceptions Gogo music, instruments and dances were not acceptable. At Kisokwe, missionaries taught European hymns and played the piano. The natives, in their own time and space, chanted and sung songs and some hymns in their own indigenous tunes; they used their drums, fiddle, and marimba. Bible men and women, like Aksa Simule, did much to revive Gogo music and dance in the churches.³⁶⁸

The reality of witchcraft was denied. There were some missionaries, for example Price, who would point out that though "they" were not sure of the reality of witches, Jesus is stronger and his Book has power over witches.³⁶⁹ This assurance could at least reduce people's fear of witchcraft. However, not much was done to address the question of witchcraft; for example, in the whole of the Swahili Hymnbook, *Nyimbo Standard*, the Cigogo *Nyimbo zo Kumwimbila Mulungu*, there is not even a single hymn about witchcraft and how the power of Jesus conquers it. Implicitly, the readers were left to struggle with the question, and with great amazement they found mentions of witchcraft, magic and sorceries in the Bible. They had to struggle to read the Bible in their own context, which was full of fear of witchcraft. In Nghambako, and other parts of the Gogo region, lions were overrunning the country in the 1930s. People believed that the lions were not purely physical creatures, but they were Ng'omvya witches who went out to destroy their enemies. The Ng'omvya clan of the Gogo were then believed to possess some magic, which one could use to change themselves into lions, hyenas or whatever, whenever they wanted to. A similar belief was held among Lutheran Christians, and

³⁶⁸ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, pp.52,180.

³⁶⁹ cf. Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.180

other natives, at Ilembula village in Iringa region.³⁷⁰ So, the question of witchcraft did not have an adequate answer in missionary-led *kusoma* Christianity.

Self-initiated teaching of the Bible was an attempt at a new reading of the Bible, independent of the missionary. Others went further and started new churches. A Gogo reader, named Simeoni from Mvumi area, went to Unyankwila, in Western Gogo, to trade. The people of Unyankwila had had Bible lessons two decades before, and they showed great interest in having someone to teach them. Simeoni gave up trading and he settled down among them as their teacher-evangelist. Simeoni seized the opportunity to impart to others his knowledge of the Book, and also to teach them his new faith. 'Besides teaching all day, he sometimes, continued to late at night by the light of a lantern. All this was without remuneration of any kind'.³⁷¹ When Briggs visited Unyankwila, he found six flourishing schools, in a place that he and Price had failed to organise any group.³⁷² When the people saw Briggs, they asked him: 'If your message is as important as you said it was, why did you leave us so long'.³⁷³ In 1954, that is fifty years later, this part of Western Gogo became a birthplace of the Tanganyika Africa Church (TAC).³⁷⁴ According to David Barrett, TAC began in 1956 with 3,000 Gogo members.³⁷⁵ Nevertheless, in Gogoland, and Tanzania generally, independent movements were not as prominent as they were in Kenya and other parts of East Africa.³⁷⁶ In Gogo region, most movements, like the Balokole, the saved ones, or *Roho*, 'Spirit' Christians, remained inside the missionary church, trying to transform it from within. *Roho* Christians among the Gogo represented a new mode of engagement with the Bible, as we will see in our next section.

³⁷⁰ Anderson, W.B., *The History of the Church in East Africa*, p.127. The belief still persists, and many people, especially in rural areas, believe that the lions which overrun the southern parts of Tanzania are not purely physical lions, but witches or they are lions sent out by witches to destroy their enemies.

³⁷¹ Briggs, Annual Report 1913, as quoted by Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.154.

³⁷² Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.154.

³⁷³ Briggs, Annual Report 1913, as quoted by Knox p.154.

³⁷⁴ TAC is an African Gogo independent church, which needs further research (Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.154). Maddox, G.H., has a different date for the beginning of TAC, which is 1958 ('The Church & Cigogo', in Thomas Spear & Isaria N Kimambo, eds, *East African Expressions of Christianity*, pp.163,166).

³⁷⁵ Barrett, D.B., *Schism and Renewal in Africa*, Oxford, OUP, 1968, pp.114,17. Like Knox and Maddox, Barrett too does not provide further details.

³⁷⁶ Cf. Barrett, D.B., *Schism and Renewal*, p.30.

5.4 THE BIBLE BEFORE AND AFTER TANZANIAN INDEPENDENCE (1961)

5.4.1 Biblical Readings of *Roho* among the Gogo

Several decades before independence, ordinary “readers” in Tanzania, particularly in the Gogo region, had begun to develop their own understanding of the Bible which had more emphasis on *Roho*, the Spirit, spiritual experiences, visions, dreams and public confessions.³⁷⁷ At Kisokwe and Mpwapwa, this new emphasis on spiritual expression began even earlier. Gogo “readers” began to insist that sin is the real cause of tragedies and sorrow whereas holiness is the source of joy and peace; and that new birth, spiritual change was vitally essential. At times, in churches and classes, “readers” stood up and made public confessions of hating, fighting, killings, witchcraft, etc. As Knox writes,

The Christians at Mpwapwa moved deeper into their religious life with revival. At church and in class, Christians rose spontaneously to confess their sins to the congregation.³⁷⁸

This practice was patterned on the Gogo’s practice of public confessions. As tragedies, shortage of rains, famines and epidemic diseases were believed to be punishments from *Mulungu* and/or *milungu*, divinities/spirits, open public confessions and other rituals were needed to restore the life of the community. Gogo Christians interpreted confession in their Cigogo Bible through their own cultural worldview, and they applied it accordingly. Some missionaries, for instance Price, did not forbid open public confessions; they just observed wondering what would happen next.³⁷⁹ Others were against the practice, and they did what they could to discourage it. In Gogo churches, open public confessions, and other related practices, did not continue until later years when the embargo on the possibility of indigenous modes of readings and spiritual expressions was lifted. *Roho* readings of the Bible and its spiritual expressions were both a revival of the indigenous

³⁷⁷ Cf. Anderson, W.B., *The History of the Church in East Africa*, p.118ff.

³⁷⁸ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.119.

³⁷⁹ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.119.

readings and a further movement in the Gogo's engagement with the Christian scriptures. It was another attempt to meet questions and needs that the Gogo felt.

Roho Christianity, with its fresh reading of the Bible, had begun among the Gogo long before the Great East Africa Revival (GEAR) came about to rekindle it. The GEAR rekindled *Roho* Christianity which had been suppressed by missionary Western hegemony. Gogo Christians, ordinary readers of the Bible, were yearning for something deeper. *Roho* Christianity and readings of the Bible should not be considered as just something that came in from Uganda through western Tanzania to revive the slumbering Gogo churches. *Roho* reading of the Bible was an outgrowth of *Soma* reading; it was a need that grew from within the *kusoma*, reading, of the text. In *Kusoma*, mission schools provided literacy and knowledge of the outside world; they taught a new faith and ways of worship but they did not engage realistically with African Gogo religious expressions. Hymnodies and prayer books were verbatim translations of European hymns. They had, and still have, no references to ancestors or other Gogo spiritual realities. It was the discovery of the *Roho* in the midst of their reading that opened up doors of ministries and fresh interpretations which were once closed due to the limitations of the missionary mode of teaching the Bible in *kusoma* Christianity.³⁸⁰ *Roho* readings of the Bible began after the Second World War, and gained much momentum in the 1950s, with such names as Yohana Majani Omari, Erisafati Matovu and Festo Kivengere.³⁸¹ These people got into their new *Roho* experiences as ordinary readers of the Bible.³⁸² Most *Roho* readings in Gogo churches were based on the New Testament, for example the first epistle of John chapter 1 verses 5 to 9 and Romans chapter 10 verse 9, with emphasis on 'openness of life, walking in the light, fellowship with each other, the cleansing of the blood of Christ as the antidote to sin, also open confessions of sin in public with forgiveness, restitution and blessing'.³⁸³ In this *Roho* experience, the Bible was essentially vital, as the Book with fascinating power of God, which draws people to Christ. Many accepted Christ through their private reading of the Book and later or the next day, they went to confess

³⁸⁰ Anderson, W.B., *The History of the Church in East Africa*, p.118.

³⁸¹ Stanway, M., *Alfred Stanway: the Collections of a 'little m'*, Canberra, Acorn Press, 1991, p.81.

³⁸² They were not Gogo by origin but they had become part of the ordinary "readers" of the Bible in the Gogo region.

³⁸³ Stanway, M., *Alfred Stanway*, p.81.

their sins openly in public meetings or in church. The Bible, through readings of *Roho* people, had enormous influence upon the life of the church in the Gogo region and the whole of central Tanzania. We now revisit the experiences of the *Roho* people, which I have just mentioned above, so as to illustrate what *Roho* Christianity and its readings of the Bible meant.

Majani Omari was born in a Muslim family at Songe, beyond Berega mission, in Unguu area. As a boy, Majani attended *madrasat*, a Quranic School, but he did not have much interest in it. He might have seen Christian “readers” and had heard about their Book. He wanted to go to a mission school; but his father, as a fervent Muslim, could not allow young Majani to join the “readers”. Majani’s hunger for reading persisted; and eventually, his father allowed him to join Berega boarding school, on condition that he would not read the Bible, especially the New Testament, or listen to any Bible lessons. ‘If he disobeyed he would be disowned’.³⁸⁴ Majani progressed well in his education, but being told not to read the Bible made him even more curious about the forbidden knowledge.³⁸⁵ Thus, ‘he secretly stole a New Testament and took it away to read it by stages. He...managed to read all through’.³⁸⁶ In his reading Majani was touched by the message of the Book, particularly John 14:6: ‘I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me’. By this text Majani Omari decided to become a Christian saved by Jesus Christ. He attended baptism class and was aptly baptised Yohana, that is John, after the Gospel that changed his life.³⁸⁷ For many years he testified that ‘that text, that very text, pushed me out of Islam into the light of Christ’.³⁸⁸ Because of his conversion Yohana Omari was disowned by his father; but he continued to feel that he had obtained something essential, that is the Word of life, the Bible. In later life, he reconciled with his father and family, but they remained Muslims and he continued in his faith in Christ.

³⁸⁴ Stanway, M., *Alfred Stanway*, p.82.

³⁸⁵ Anderson, W.B., *The History of the Church in East Africa*, p.114.

³⁸⁶ Stanway, M., *Alfred Stanway*, p.82

³⁸⁷ Stanway, M., *Alfred Stanway*, p.82

³⁸⁸ Stanway, M., *Alfred Stanway*, p.82

Yohana progressed in his education. Later, he worked at Berega Hospital; but also he taught literacy classes for adults, as well as baptismal and confirmation classes. George Alexander Chambers, the first bishop of Central Tanganyika Diocese, asked Yohana to go and preach to the Waha people in western Tanzania. Yohana refused the request, as he and Ana, his wife, were expecting their first born. But a few days later after the conversation with the bishop, Yohana had a dream in which he saw someone standing near him, and he asked him to read Ezekiel chapter 2 verses 7 and 8. When he woke up he remembered the dream, but, feeling that it had to do with preaching to the Waha, he ignored it and he never told his wife.³⁸⁹ After two weeks, he had the same dream; and this time he decided to tell his wife. She suggested they open the Bible and read it. Then they read these words, in Swahili:

Nawe utawambia maneno yangu, kwamba watasikia, au kwamba hawataki kusikia; maana hao wanaasi sana. Bali wewe, mwanadamu, sikia neno hili ninalokuambia; usiwe wewe mwenye kuasi kama nyumba ile yenye kuasi; funua kinywa chako, ule nikupacho.

(You shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear; for they are a rebellious house. But you, son of man, hear what I say to you; be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you).

Yohana interpreted the words as his call to preach the Word to Waha. He took a few possessions and a bicycle and went to western Tanzania. He learned the local language of the Waha, he organised groups, which met under trees and he taught them the Bible, and there were many changed lives. He lit a fire of *Roho* in western parts of Tanzania, which has never died down to this day. From Kasulu he went to St. Philip's Theological College, Kongwa, to train for the ministry and he was ordained a priest in 1939. Training did not alter his mode of reading and preaching the Bible, but it enhanced it. Yohana carried the fervour of *Roho* Christianity and reading of the Bible to various parts of

³⁸⁹ Stanway, M., *Alfred Stanway*, p.82

Tanzania. In 1947, he moved to Mpwapwa and had exceptional success in preaching and teaching the Bible. After a year overseas, Yohana was consecrated assistant bishop of Central Tanganyika Diocese in 1955. His new responsibility did not restrict him; he continued to hold revival conventions. Omari was not a biblical scholar; but he was a great Bible man, preacher and man of God.³⁹⁰ In his ministry, the Bible was essentially significant. He insisted, in his preaching and teachings, that each and every Christian must have a Bible, because to possess a Bible is a sign of love for God.³⁹¹ Christians, both literate and illiterate, bought Bibles, kept them in safe places in their homes, took their Bibles with them for various Christian occasions, or for house-to-house evangelism.³⁹² A Bible reader, Simon Mhaci, who began reading during Yohana's *Roho* revival conventions, testified that the Bible was, and still is, far more than a mere book; it is 'the Book of Life'. One could just wrap it up in a cloth and put it under their pillows, as a protection against bad dreams or nightmares, during the night.³⁹³ *Roho* readings of the Bible brought a new form of Christian expression whose power and authority did not come primarily from missionaries or westernised bishops and clergy.³⁹⁴

Another figure who played a significant role in the revival in Central Tanzania among the Gogo was Erisafati Matovu. He and his wife Editha lived at Kasulu, in eastern Tanzania. Originally they came from Uganda where they owned a small shop, in which they sold essential items, such as salt, sugar, maize meal, beans, matches, paraffin, etc. Matovu defrauded people in his shop. Through the Great East African Revival conventions, he and his wife were touched by the Bible message. They accepted Christ and made restitutions where they could and set out to teach the message in western Tanzania. In 1937, Matovu, with Simeoni Nsibambi, Blasio Kigozi and others, preached at Katoke School, near Bukoba. Staff and students confessed their sins and put things right. They spoke in tongues, trembled, and there was great excitement. They began long fellowship meetings at night, after school hours. Matovu and his colleagues proceeded to other parts

³⁹⁰ Anderson, W.B., *The History of the Church in East Africa*, p.144.

³⁹¹ Simon Mhaci, interview conducted by the author on 24 November 2003 at Kongwa in Dodoma, Tanzania.

³⁹² Simon Mhaci, same interview.

³⁹³ Simon Mhaci, same interview.

³⁹⁴ Anderson, W.B., *The History of the Church in East Africa*, p.125

of western Tanzania, holding revival conventions. After these preaching visits, Matovu returned to Uganda; they sold their shop and went to settle at Kasulu, as teacher-evangelists in 1940. Matovu preached the Word of God, started small schools to educate the Waha; and later in his life he encouraged the planting of coffee and other development activities in the area.³⁹⁵ He taught the Bible and literacy as well. He also had healing ministries. When Matovu came to Kongwa for ordination training, he did not stop his preaching ministry. He and Yohana went to various places of the Gogo to hold revival conventions. Matovu is still remembered by the Gogo elders, particularly in Kongwa and Mpwapwa areas, as a Bible man whose love for the Word and his unbounded enthusiasm to expound it had an incredible impact upon the lives of many Bible men and women among the Gogo.³⁹⁶

Festo Kivengere, another Bible man, had much influence upon Gogo Christians in Dodoma and its vicinities. Kivengere came from Uganda, and he began working as a teacher at Alliance Secondary School in Dodoma, central Tanzania.³⁹⁷ He strengthened the *Roho* revival in Dodoma, as he was a gifted interpreter of the Bible.³⁹⁸ Kivengere and Omari became close friends and companions of the Gospel, teaching and preaching in the Gogo region. According to Alfred Stanway, Kivengere loved the Word and his 'preaching was scriptural and anyone listening to him was able to recognise that he was a careful student of the Word'.³⁹⁹ This was characteristic of many *Roho* Christians. Kivengere had not obtained any theological training when he began preaching and teaching the Bible among the Gogo; but Stanway, who was then bishop of Central Tanganyika Diocese, spoke of him as 'a careful student of the Bible'. Ana Sigonza, who converted during revival conventions of Dodoma in 1950s, testified that

We *Roho* Christians, together with our teachers, did not have any formal training as witnesses, preachers or readers of the Bible, but *Roho* taught and guided us to read it rightly according to God's will. Some of us had never

³⁹⁵ Anderson, W.B. *The History of the Church in East Africa*, p.127.

³⁹⁶ Azaria Mapogo, same interview.

³⁹⁷ After Independence, Alliance Secondary School became Mazengo Secondary School, Dodoma.

³⁹⁸ Stanway, M., *Alfred Stanway*, p.84.

³⁹⁹ As quoted by Stanway, M., *Alfred Stanway*, p.84.

been to school; but in our reading of the Word, by the enablement of the Spirit, God granted us wonderful knowledge and understanding. We witnessed, preached and taught the Bible, and many people turned to Christ. *Roho* is the great teacher.⁴⁰⁰

In their open meetings, *Roho* preachers followed a chosen theme. 'Jesus Satisfies' was a popular theme. The chorus *Utukufu Halehuya*, 'Glory Alleluia', was sung during the meetings. Other hymns and choruses related to the preached texts were sung too as part of the preaching, the sermon. This is a way of interpreting the texts which, according to Dube, is also common among independent churches in Botswana. It is *Semoya*, Spirit interpretation, particularly among Botswana women's ministers. It is participatory interpretation of the Bible through songs, which springs from indigenous oral tradition of story-telling and songs. This aspect of oral tradition plays an essential role in interpreting the message; for a story well told and sung is a story well understood.⁴⁰¹ Among the Gogo, Songs were, and still are, not mere sermon decorations, but they emphasised and enforced the message. This pattern might have sprung from the Gogo's story-telling tradition, in which short songs are part of the *simo*, the story.⁴⁰² *Roho* meetings had long addresses, endless repetitions, with continuous singing here and there. At the end many accepted the Word, and there was much joy and cheerfulness. Marjory Stanway writes, 'the whole pattern of the singing, enthusiasm and feeling of brotherhood was typically African'.⁴⁰³ The pattern of preaching too was characteristically African.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰⁰ (My translation from the Hehe language) Ana Sigonza, interview conducted by the author on 10 January 2004 at Migoli, Iringa, Tanzania.

⁴⁰¹ Dube, M.W., 'Readings of *Semoya*: Botswana Women's Interpretation of Matt 15:21-28', in *Semeia* 72 (1996), p.120.

⁴⁰² In Gogo *simo* tradition, the past and the future are often recreated through songs and dances. In most rituals, whether celebrating rain, birth, circumcision, marriage or funeral, songs and dance are a central part of the ceremonies. Similar tradition can be identified in other peoples of Tanzania and Kenya. In *I Will Marry When I Want* (originally from Kikuyu language *Ngaahika Ndenda*) Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ngugi wa Mirii use a great number of short songs as part of their novel (Ngugi & Ngugi, *I Will Marry When I Want*, Nairobi/London, OUP, 1982, pp.21-9,39). In his recent book, *Decolonising the Mind*, he points out that his approach of fiction-writing employs some indigenous, traditional techniques of story-telling, which includes songs, dance and mime (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature*, Nairobi, East African Educational Publishers, pp.45,53).

⁴⁰³ Stanway, M., *Alfred Stanway*, p.85.

⁴⁰⁴ This argument related to the issue of interpretative practices, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six of this thesis.

Readings of *Roho* took the Words of the Bible seriously. Each reader had specific text or texts, which first touched their heart and influenced their life. They were not just “favourite texts”, but significant texts in one’s life. Yohana Omari had John chapter 14 verse 6, as a text that significantly changed his life, and Ezekiel chapter 2 verses 7 and 8, as a text that led to his call to preach, teach and evangelise. Different ordinary “readers” had different biblical texts that had meant so much in their lives, and they applied them to their daily Christian living.

An elderly Gogo widow, living on the outskirts of Dodoma, was much influenced by the story of Cornelius in Acts 10. She lived alone in a small hut but she had a few goats and hens. Whenever she sold a goat or a chicken she put aside a portion for God. When she saw that the sum was large enough for her, she walked several miles to the Diocesan office in Dodoma, and she would give her offering particularly for pioneer evangelism. She would then get a Diocesan headed receipt and return home. When she died her sons found a bunch of headed receipts, which totalled TSh. 4,000/-.⁴⁰⁵ Because they did not know what the receipts meant, the sons took them to the Diocesan office; and the bishop explained to them that their mother gave to God for pioneer evangelism. In those days, according to Marjory Stanway, Tsh. 4,000/- ‘would have supported an evangelist for several years. This was devoted and consistent giving out of love for her Lord’.⁴⁰⁶

The elderly widow of Dodoma, and other *Roho* Christians, lived out the message of the Bible; and at times, their oral and practical, living interpretations of the Bible fascinated the missionaries and other African church leaders. One ordinary Gogo held out the open palm of his right hand to bishop Stanway, and he said, ‘You must put all you have on the open palm of your hand, so that if God wants it He won’t hurt you, but if you grasp things to yourself He may have to hurt you’.⁴⁰⁷ Commenting on this ordinary reader’s illustration, Marjory Stanway points out that the Gogo are very perceptive of the Gospel and that from them they ‘learned much of humility, devotion and enduring services’.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁵ TSh. stands for Tanzanian Shilling.

⁴⁰⁶ Stanway, M., *Alfred Stanway*, p.106.

⁴⁰⁷ Stanway, M., *Alfred Stanway*, p.107.

⁴⁰⁸ Stanway, M., *Alfred Stanway*, p.107.

Also, they might surely have learned new ways of engaging with and understanding the Bible.

In this new phase of engagement with the Bible, as envisaged in readings of *Roho*, the Bible is seen as the living Book with great personal authority for the believer; the Spirit, *Roho*, is the great teacher of the Word of God; and “readers” love each other in the Spirit and they long to share their faith and knowledge of the Word with others. Readings of *Roho* was a significant alternative in the processes of the encounter with the Bible. Still, it did not answer all questions and needs that the Gogo and other Tanzanians felt. Issues of politics, native leadership, poverty, diseases and education for all had to be attended to. Because of all these unanswered questions, some readers of the Bible were engaging with it from a socio-economic-political perspective. They needed to see more than what readings of *Roho* disclosed; they were reading the Bible in mission schools and churches to meet their spiritual needs and also to regain their freedom and dignity. Their Christian faith and reading of the Bible became a path for social and political mobility as well as an encounter with the West. The Bible became part of the means for political engagement with colonial rule. Whether implicitly or explicitly, the Bible had an impact on politics, particularly among the Gogo, and other Tanzanians, as we will see in the next section.

5.4.2 The Bible and Politics

After the Germans had militarily conquered the Gogo, and other peoples of Tanzania, the chiefs who survived had to place themselves under the colonial rule or abdicate.⁴⁰⁹ Chief Magunga of Buigiri, and some others chose to abdicate.⁴¹⁰ This was not the end of purely native leadership; elders, diviners, rainmakers and medicine men and women continued to exercise their power and influence in their communities. The Maji Maji War, which began in Ngarambe village in 1905 and reached Gogo areas in its early days, was organised by a medicine man, *mganga*, and supported by native chiefs. After the War, from 1907, chiefs and other indigenous leaders began to seek new visions to sustain their

⁴⁰⁹ CDA, *Dodoma*, p.15ff.

⁴¹⁰ Westgate, W., *T.B.R. Westgate*, p.56.

political power and influence among their societies. They joined mission schools to learn to read and write; and there they encountered the Bible as it was the only textbook. In the midst of reading the Book, some converted and became Christian “readers”. Other chiefs and local leaders, for example Magunga of Buigiri and Mbogono of Handali, though they read, did not convert; but they rendered every possible assistance to the mission schools, the teachers and “readers”. Later the Germans began to favour chiefs who had attended schools; and they also encouraged chiefs and their heirs to learn at least to read and write, indicating that those who remained illiterate might lose their positions.⁴¹¹ More chiefs and their people joined mission schools, others employed native teachers in their villages.⁴¹² In this process of struggle for social and political mobility, the Bible was encountered; chiefs, headmen and other people found in the Bible some political inspiration and guidance for their struggle.

Chief Bilinje, who was based in a village near present Dodoma municipality, was anxious to have himself and his people taught by CMS teachers. He paid the teacher from Buigiri, Yohana Malecela, to come and teach in his chieftain.⁴¹³ Chief Madinda of Chilungula, and chief Mbogono of Handali invited teachers to instruct them in the Book.⁴¹⁴ Chief Mazengo of Mvumi had become a reader of the Bible and he wanted all his people to be taught. There was unprecedented desire for reading among local political leaders and their subjects. They were eager to be supplied with Christian teachers of the Bible.⁴¹⁵ There were some few schools started by the German colonial government, but chiefs in the Gogo region preferred the mission schools, in which, one can argue, they could not just learn to read and write, but read the Bible and unlock its secrets and knowledge. The hunger for reading the Bible was, in a sense, a new strategy to regain in space and time their self-esteem as native leaders, but also as a people generally. Reading the Book might have been seen, though partially, as the road to political victory and freedom. This indigenous spirit of struggle had been seen by the German colonial rule itself; as we can see in history, the Germans were very suspicious

⁴¹¹ Cf. Westgate, W., *T.B.R. Westgate*, p.87.

⁴¹² Westgate, W., *T.B.R. Westgate*, p.99.

⁴¹³ Westgate, W., *T.B.R. Westgate*, p.82.

⁴¹⁴ Westgate, W., *T.B.R. Westgate*, pp.80-81.

⁴¹⁵ Westgate, W., *T.B.R. Westgate*, p.86.

of the “readers”, the teachers and their CMS missionaries in Gogo region. They ‘thought that because the converts had learned to read they would also have learned to send messages by heliograph with mirrors’.⁴¹⁶ In this, the Germans were not mistaken. Since the early days of the German conquest of the Gogo-land, CMS missionaries stood with the natives, and began to teach the Book to them. The Gogo “readers” caught the vision that they would one day use the knowledge of the Book to seize back their ingenious resourcefulness in history through real control of all their means of communal self-definition. When an appropriate time came, the “readers” rose up with their new knowledge and skills.

In the First World War, when the “readers” supported the British armies to overthrow the German colonial rule in Tanzania, they used whatever knowledge they had acquired to support the new colonial power; and some could signal a coded military message from a mountain.⁴¹⁷ During the War, some “readers”, such as Danyeli Mbogo, were accused by Germans of ‘signalling’.⁴¹⁸ Knox argues that the native Christians could not signal, for the knowledge and ability which is required ‘for signalling does not fit the picture of agricultural people newly emerging as illiterate’.⁴¹⁹ That is, the natives could only signal for the message of the Gospel, and not for war in support of the British. It might be true that the Germans falsely accused many “readers” of supporting the British militarily; but still Knox’s points undermine the ability and capacity of the Gogo, and it is contrary to the evidences we find in early historical and mission sources that the Gogo are intelligent people, simple but quick to learn.⁴²⁰ When Henry M. Stanley passed through the Gogo region in 1870, in search of David Livingstone, he wrote of the Gogo people as ‘a powerful race, physically and intellectually the best of the races between Unyamwezi and the Sea [the Indian Ocean]... their faces are broad and intelligent’.⁴²¹ There is no evidence to deny that some Gogo readers could have the ability and skill to *signal on a mountain* for the British soldiers.

⁴¹⁶ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.206.

⁴¹⁷ *Contra* Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, pp.206-207.

⁴¹⁸ Westgate, W., *T.B.R. Westgate*, p.104.

⁴¹⁹ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.206.

⁴²⁰ Westgate, W., *T.B.R. Westgate*, p.37.

⁴²¹ As quoted by Westgate, W., *T.B.R. Westgate*, p.37.

Some native chiefs, for example Mazengo who was a reader, provided local soldiers who aided the Allied Forces in the First World War.⁴²² During the War, Mazengo escaped arrest by hiding in a bush while his elders explained to the Germans officials that a lion had killed him.⁴²³ By 1924, the British colonial administration in Dodoma region regarded Mazengo as 'the most effective political leader in the region' and 'a staunch patron of the CMS'.⁴²⁴ There were Christian readers, and other readers of the Bible, who were also political leaders, like Mazengo. These ordinary readers made use of the Bible in their political leadership and activism. There was a chief who explained to Paul White, a CMS missionary, how the Bible helped him to lead his people. According to White, the chief insisted that 'I use it regularly'.⁴²⁵ The impact of the Bible on local politics in the Gogo region became even greater when the British colonial government introduced Indirect Rule in 1925. In this rule, the colonial government gave local leaders some autonomy, and also attempted to replace non-local and uneducated leaders with locally educated people. The majority of these locally educated people were readers of the Bible. This pattern of local political leaders, chiefs and village leaders, who were also Christian readers, continued in many parts of the region even after independence.

Leaders of the *ujamaa* villages were Christian readers of the Bible, and they employed some biblical principles in their political leadership.⁴²⁶ From the 1960s to 70s, Mlowa-Barabarani *ujamaa* village was led, for more than a decade, by Matayo Muyombo who

⁴²² Maddox, G.H., 'The Church & Cigogo', in Thomas Spear & Isaria N Kimambo, Eds, *East African Expressions of Christianity*, p.158; Westgate, W., *T.B.R. Westgate*, p.81.

⁴²³ White, P., *The Doctor of Tanganyika*, p.60. (1st Edn 1943).

⁴²⁴ Maddox, G.H., 'The Church & Cigogo', in Thomas Spear & Isaria N Kimambo, Eds, *East African Expressions of Christianity*, p.158.

⁴²⁵ White, P., *The Doctor of Tanganyika*, p.186.

⁴²⁶ *Ujamaa* villages were part of the implementation of *ujamaa* political policy of Tanzania, which was officially launched in 1967, through the Arusha Declaration. People were persuaded to form villages so that they could cooperate in their development. The word *ujamaa* derives from a Swahili word *jamaa*, meaning 'family'. Thus, *u-jamaa* means 'familyhood' (Mwoleka, C., 'Trinity and Community', in Aylward Shorter, ed., *African Christian Spirituality*, London, Cassell, 1978, p.122). *Jamaa* consists of parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, cousins, servants, etc. In its broader sense, *jamaa* means community, which is based on social cooperation and responsibility. In *jamaa* every member, a widow, a widower, an orphan, an aged person, or a disabled, is cared for; and a fair distribution of what is produced is ensured. Nobody can starve from lack of food, or lose dignity, while others have plenty. Anybody who lacks personal wealth can depend on the wealth possessed by the community, *jamaa*, of which he or she is a member. This is *ujamaa* (Nyerere, J.K., *Ujamaa -Essays on Socialism*, OUP, pp.3,4.).

was also a teacher-evangelist of an Anglican congregation in the village. Muyombo preached and taught the Bible in church and on various Christian occasions; but he also held political public meetings for all villagers. In his public addresses, as a political leader, he could very often use biblical images, stories and examples. Because most of the people were familiar with biblical images and stories, this approach facilitated communication and helped to pass on political messages of *ujamaa* to the people.⁴²⁷ As evidence shows, in the process of engagement with the Bible among the Gogo, the Bible played a role in politics. Thus, the Bible had a place in the struggle for independence.

The role of the Bible in the struggle for Tanzania's independence can be traced back to the training of the people who came to be actively involved in the freedom struggle. From the arrival of the missionaries to the dawn of independence, and for a few years thereafter, schools were run by Christian missions and churches. In fact, as I have indicated earlier in this thesis, the missionaries were the pioneers of education in Tanzania. Even most of the schools which were later added by German and British colonial governments, came to be affiliated with Christian mission schools. In the case of the Gogo region, most of the colonial government schools were affiliated with CMS mission schools. Primary schools and secondary ones such as Alliance Secondary School, Msalato Girls, Mkwawa High School, Tosamaganga, Tabora Boys, all these were under Christian missions. These schools had Bible lessons, chapels and other things that could lead to a Christian, biblical, impact on one's life. Teachers too were Christians, most of them just ordinary Bible readers, missionaries and native teachers. I have mentioned Festo Kivengere who was a teacher at Alliance School, and also one of the revivalist readers of the Bible.

The impact and role of the Bible, directly or indirectly, took place in the mission schools and colleges through which most of the Gogo, and Tanzanians in general, passed, prior to independence. From mission schools emerged Christian ordinary readers, and other readers of the Bible, who became leaders in political parties, from a village level up to the

⁴²⁷ Matayo Muyombo, interview conducted by Paulo Magomba in December 2003 at Mlowa-Barabarani, Dodoma, Tanzania.

national level. In the Gogo region, most people who became political leaders had attended Anglican CMS schools. In the 1950s, some of the grandsons of Yohana Malecela, CMS teacher-evangelist at Buigiri, assumed the leadership in the region, and after independence they held responsible positions in the United Republic of Tanzania.⁴²⁸ Nationwide mission schools produced a generation of political leaders whose attitude to the Bible was positive, and most of them, like Julius K Nyerere, were also devout Christians. These readers of the Bible were anti-colonialists; they were also against “colonial missionaries”;⁴²⁹ but they did not discard the Bible. During the freedom struggle, the Bible, explicitly and implicitly, became a frame of reference in speeches, manifestos, and in political mobility.⁴³⁰ One can call this approach a political reading of the Bible. It resulted in readings which theoretically and practically broke away from conventional readings of the Bible in missionary churches and schools. Political readings came as a challenge to the church’s neglect of some socio-political issues, such as abject poverty among its members.⁴³¹ It was a new way of interpreting biblical principles, from ordinary readers. These ordinary readers took history seriously, with its vicissitudes of slavery, colonialism and exploitation. Then they sought to discover and construct viable structures of livelihood, employing biblical principles. To illustrate this point, we now turn to *ujamaa* policy to see how the Bible was employed as a frame of reference.

⁴²⁸ In particular, John Yohana Malecela later became Prime Minister of Tanzania, and his brother Job Lusinde worked as ambassador in the UK for many years.

⁴²⁹ By “colonial missionaries”, I mean those missionaries who encouraged, sometimes using the Bible, obedience to the colonial system. For example, Rev. A. Northwood preached a sermon, at Mvumi in the Gogo region, to a conference of African teacher-evangelists, where he emphasised ‘the relationship of the believer to Jesus, the Master, as overseer, as teacher, as leader, as despot and owner’ (CMS archives, ‘Native Teachers’ Conference’ *Usagara and Ugogo Notes* April 1904 as quoted by Maddox, G.H., ‘The Church & Cigogo’, in Thomas Spear & Isaria N Kimambo, Eds, *East African Expressions of Christianity*, p.153.)

⁴³⁰ The Bible in Tanzania is not only read by Christians, but also Muslims and people of other faiths. Apart from Christians, Muslims have become ardent readers of the Bible. In a five-page document, typed in Swahili, *Sisi ni Wasomaji wa Kudumu*, ‘We are Constant Readers’, anonymous Muslim authors use 250 Bible references to answer various questions about Islam, and in response to some articles written by Christians. John Chesworth argues that the article might have been inspired by Muslim biblical teachings of Muhammad Ali Kawemba and Musa Fundi Ngariba (Chesworth, J., ‘Muslim Affirmation through Refutation: A Tanzanian Example’, unpublished MA dissertation, Birmingham University, 1999, pp.33-34, 36-46; also see Chesworth, J., ‘Fundamentalism and Outreach Strategies in East Africa: Christian Evangelism and Muslim *Da’wa*’, a paper presented at ISITA Colloquium May 2003.). In 1987, I had the opportunity of attending some of Kawemba and Ngariba’s biblical teachings in Uhuru Street, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Further research on ordinary Muslim readers of the Bible, in Tanzania, needs to be done. Also, as the Quran has remained the dominant text among Muslims, its impact in Tanzanian politics would also require further research.

⁴³¹ Cf. *Ujamaa* policies, after independence, aimed to fight against poverty, ignorance and diseases.

It needs to be stated, in the first place, that there are many issues and questions regarding *ujamaa* as a political ideology and a theological context which cannot be adequately dealt with in this thesis due to its scope and limited space. I will only produce a succinct analysis of *ujamaa* and how the Bible might have influenced its formation.⁴³² *Ujamaa* was begun by Julius Nyerere, the first President of Tanzania. Its most significant aspiration is the dignity of the human person and the society they constitute. The overall purpose of *ujamaa* was to empower people in their struggle against poverty, ignorance and diseases. All implementation of *ujamaa* was to be centred on people. As the Arusha Declaration (1967) stated,

The purpose of all social, economic and political activity must be man –the citizens, and all the citizens of this country. The creation of wealth is a good thing and something which we shall have to increase. But it will cease to be good the moment wealth ceases to serve man and begins to be served by man.⁴³³

This human-centred, anthropocentric, purpose was closely linked to the first aspiration of dignity for every human person. Other aspirations were social equality, freedom for all, as well as ultimate development of people. *Ujamaa* aimed to create a society without classes; unity and sharing of resources were of paramount significance.⁴³⁴ Every citizen was encouraged to play his or her role in the political mobility of the nation. This was a right of everyone.⁴³⁵ In order to reach the aforesaid aspirations and aims, *ujamaa* stressed hard work and self-sacrifice for every citizen. As Nyerere writes,

⁴³² For a detailed theological analysis of *ujamaa*, see Magesa, L., 'Toward a Theology of Liberation for Tanzania', in Edward Fashole-Luke, *et al*, *Christianity in Independent Africa*, London, Rex Collings, 1978, pp.501ff; Frostin, P., *Liberation Theology in Tanzania and South Africa: A First World Interpretation*, Lund, Lund University Press, 1988, pp.1-81; Lyimo, C., 'An *Ujamaa* Theology', in Aylward Shorter, ed., *African Christian Spirituality*, 1978; and also Mwoleka, C., 'Trinity and Community', in Aylward Shorter, ed., *African Christian Spirituality*, 1978.

⁴³³ Nyerere, J.K., *Freedom and Socialism*, OUP, 1968, p.316.

⁴³⁴ Nyerere, J.K., *Freedom and Socialism*, OUP, 1968, p.316.

⁴³⁵ Cf. Magesa, L., 'Towards a Theology of Liberation for Tanzania', in Edward Fashole-Luke, *et al*, eds, *Christianity in Independent Africa*, London, Rex Collings, 1978, p.509.

In a real socialist country no person exploits another; everyone who is able to work does so; every worker obtains a just return for the labour he [or she] performs; and the incomes derived from different types of work are not grossly divergent.⁴³⁶

From the above statement, *ujamaa* looked similar to other world socialist concepts and ideas. However, *ujamaa* had its peculiarity as an African political ideology. For in *ujamaa*, people are not just the means of economic development, they are the sole purpose of it. People are not coerced, but encouraged to work together. In its implementation, people were persuaded to live together in *ujamaa* villages, cooperate and share their responsibility in socio-economic and political progress. On one hand, the concept of *ujamaa* derived from a traditional African community ethic of familyhood, togetherness, and that sense of 'We are, therefore I am'.⁴³⁷ On the other side, the praxis of *ujamaa* had intrinsic liberating values, which implicitly were drawn from biblical principles. The *Ujamaa* message is of brotherhood, equality, freedom, development, economic justice and 'the continual betterment of the human person... all these are empirical dimensions of salvation' in accordance with the Bible.⁴³⁸ *Ujamaa* is not an abstract concept. It is, according to Magesa, 'essential and personal. It stresses participation in reality. It is a child of a culture which prefers the symbol to the abstraction. It underlines the necessity for its success of that attitude of mind to treat all fellow human beings as kinsmen'.⁴³⁹ Practice was a priority.

Ujamaa was not against the Bible; and though one would not expect the Arusha Declaration or other declarations to have explicit references to the Bible, one could find in *ujamaa* biblical implications. Nyerere might have been inspired by his encounter with the Bible. Nyerere, the pioneer of *ujamaa*, was a Christian, and a reader of the Bible right from his early schools and then at St. Mary's School. He continued to be an ardent

⁴³⁶ Nyerere, J.K., *Freedom and Socialism*, OUP, 1968, p.233.

⁴³⁷ Mbiti, J.S., *African Religion and Philosophy*, London/Nairobi, Heinemann, 1969, p.127.

⁴³⁸ Magesa, L., 'Towards a Theology of Liberation for Tanzania', in Edward Fashole-Luke, *et al*, eds, *Christianity in Independent Africa*, p.509.

⁴³⁹ Magesa, L., 'Towards a Theology of Liberation for Tanzania', in Edward Fashole-Luke, *et al*, eds, *Christianity in Independent Africa*, 509.

reader of the Bible even after retirement. This fact is proven by his translation of the Gospels and Acts, which was published by Benedictine Publishing, Tanzania, in 1996, under the *na ichapwe, nihil obstat*, of Polycarp Pengo, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dar es Salaam. Nyerere's translation confirms how he liked the Bible. There is no doubt that the Bible had its influence when he formulated the concept of *ujamaa*. Nyerere's use of biblical images, sayings and words seems to further support this fact. On 29 February 1968, just a year after the launch of *ujamaa* policy, when he spoke to the students and lecturers at the University of Liberia about how much contribution African governments expect from intellectuals, Nyerere said,

You know better than I do that two thousand years ago, Jesus said: 'For unto whoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they shall ask the more'. What is it, then, that we require of those in our societies who have education? We require service to the community – and service in geometric progression according to the amount they have received.⁴⁴⁰

Here, as in many other biblical references in his speeches, Nyerere does not indicate where the text comes from. Normally, he would read, or remember a biblical text and directly apply it according to his context and that of his audience. In his reading of the Bible, he saw the free market as a fulfilment of what Jesus said: 'For he that hath, to him shall be given; and he that hath not, that also which he hath shall be taken away from him'.⁴⁴¹ Before I read Nyerere's article, I never thought that the above text could be read in the context of the present system of free-market globalisation. Nyerere was a real ordinary reader of the Bible, reading it from his own Tanzanian context and beyond. On 16 October 1970, when addressing Maryknoll Sisters' conference, New York, Nyerere touched on most of *ujamaa* aspirations, aims and means, but with explicit biblical quotes from and allusions to the Bible.⁴⁴² He saw the struggle against poverty, ignorance and

⁴⁴⁰ Nyerere, J.K., *Man and Development*, OUP, 1974, p.5.

⁴⁴¹ Nyerere, J.K., *Man and Development*, OUP, 1974, p.84.

⁴⁴² Nyerere, J.K., *Man and Development*, OUP, 1974, pp.84ff.

diseases as a struggle for 'abundant life', and that the church cannot withdraw from it.⁴⁴³ It must cooperate with all those who are involved in the struggle, whether they are Christian or not. Those who represent 'Mammon' must not be supported. According to Nyerere, Christians must seek new ways of applying their biblical truths, but also to recognise new truths 'when they are pointed out by others'.⁴⁴⁴ Then before he quoted a biblical text, which comes from John chapter 10 verse 10, he emphasises these words as well:

Fear of the future, and of the need of the future, is no part of Christianity. Ours is a living faith, if you like, a revolutionary faith, for faith without action is sterile, and action without faith is meaningless.⁴⁴⁵

Even the above quote alludes to the text in James about faith.⁴⁴⁶ Issues of poverty, equality, dignity, freedom and shared responsibility in the struggle for better life, which Nyerere substantiated by biblical quotes and allusions, are the same issues which form part of *ujamaa* policy. As *ujamaa* was meant for all citizens, regardless of their faith or religious affiliations, clear biblical references would not have been expected. But as one reads *ujamaa* aspirations and aims, from a critical Christian perspective, one finds biblical influence in it.⁴⁴⁷ The spirit of *ujamaa*, and its praxis, is not contrary to the overall message of the Bible. As Magesa writes,

The basic aspirations and aims of *ujamaa* puts us into a position to affirm... that at the very least the spirit of the Tidings of the Gospel and that pursued by *ujamaa* are not antithetical but identical. There is therefore no reason for the Christian not to accept the vision of *ujamaa*.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴³ Nyerere, J.K., *Man and Development*, OUP, 1974, p.98.

⁴⁴⁴ Nyerere, J.K., *Man and Development*, OUP, 1974, p.98.

⁴⁴⁵ Nyerere, J.K., *Man and Development*, OUP, 1974, p.98.

⁴⁴⁶ James 2:14, 21, 26.

⁴⁴⁷ According to Isichei *ujamaa* was 'rooted in Christianity' and in 'communal sharing', which is 'characteristic of African societies' (Isichei, E., *A History of Christianity in Africa*, p.340; also see Isichei's comment on Nyerere's address to Maryknoll sisters, p.326).

⁴⁴⁸ Magesa, L., 'Towards a Theology of Liberation for Tanzania', in Edward Fashole-Luke, *et al*, eds, *Christianity in Independent Africa*, 510.

According to Laurent Magesa, a Tanzania theologian, *ujamaa* initiated, among Christians, a new attitude towards socio-politico-economical issues.⁴⁴⁹ Before the launching of *ujamaa*, there was a tendency of 'withdrawal' from the world.⁴⁵⁰ Christians read their Bible as if it had nothing to do with poverty, diseases and politics. The spirit of *ujamaa* had begun long before independence; but after its launch, through the Arusha Declaration, Christians began to actively involve themselves in economic and political issues of the country. Christian leaders began to encourage Christian political involvement.⁴⁵¹ In 1972, Roman Catholic bishops published their pastoral letter, in which they stated,

Politics is a pathway of Christian commitment because we discover daily that change in the quality of our life is influenced by political action... Let us not as Christians be content to be bystanders... All who have the ability must use their gifts in the service of others.⁴⁵²

Christians stopped being 'bystanders'; Christian involvement in politics, and the entire struggle against poverty, ignorance, diseases and other problems, began to be seen as part of the call of the Gospel. All this, one can argue, began with ordinary readers of the Bible, Nyerere and others whose names are not known, who tried to find implications of the Bible in their own historical situation. As they engaged with the Bible, they found in it, as Muslim readers would find in the Quran, the intellectual strategy to combat colonialism, regain their control, and generate viable means of social, economic and political mobility. So the Bible had a significant role and impact in the politics in the Gogo region in particular, and Tanzania at large.

I have discussed at length, in this chapter, the processes of engagement with the Bible among the Gogo. I have shown how ordinary readers began to engage with the Bible

⁴⁴⁹ Magesa, L., 'Towards a Theology of Liberation for Tanzania', p.501.

⁴⁵⁰ Magesa, L., 'Towards a Theology of Liberation for Tanzania', p.501.

⁴⁵¹ Magesa, L., 'Towards a Theology of Liberation for Tanzania', p.511.

⁴⁵² TEC, *Peace and Mutual Understanding*, 1972 as quoted by Magesa, L., 'Towards a Theology of Liberation for Tanzania', p.511.

from the earliest days of mission enterprises in the region, especially at Mpwapwa, Kisokwe, Kiboriani, Kongwa, Buigiri and Mvumi. We have seen how the missionaries selectively transmitted the message, and how the natives began to make sense of it. Through translation of the New Testament, and some other portions of the Old Testament, the natives gained more access to the Bible, and so began to develop their own modes of readings. The reading of the Book did not only fill Gogo's spiritual vacuum after the Maji Maji, and other tragedies, but it was also an acquisition of the art of writing and new knowledge. Hence *wasomi*, readers, emerged and there was a development of *kusoma* Christianity. Another move was biblical readings of *Roho*, the Spirit, which brought about new spiritual vitality. Still, readings of *Roho* left some "readers" with questions such as poverty, colonial oppression, and struggle for independence, unanswered. Political or liberation reading of the Bible, with its *ujamaa* spirit, provided a significant alternative for the issues and questions that had previously not been attended to, or inadequately touched. After charting all the processes of engagement, and how readers were transacting with the Book, we need to ask, what resources were there with which ordinary readers transacted with the Bible? Are there any emerging interpretative practices that can be depicted within the historical processes of engagement, from the earliest days of the Bible to the political readings? These questions are the focus of the next chapter, to which we now turn.

CHAPTER 6

6.0 ORDINARY “READERS” AND EMERGING INTERPRETATIVE PRACTICES

6.1 ORDINARY “READERS” INTERPRETATIVE RESOURCES

Ordinary “readers” do not transact with the Bible ‘empty handed’.⁴⁵³ From the historical analysis of early engagements with the Bible in Tanzania, particularly among the Gogo, one can identify several interpretative resources with which ordinary readers come to the Bible. Vernacular language, indigenous religion, community values, oral narratives, songs, wise sayings, symbols, rituals, drama, dance and general life experiences are significant interpretative resources for the engagement with the Bible among Tanzanians. These are part of the socio-cultural context of the ordinary “readers” that facilitate their reading of the Bible.

In any context, language is vitally significant; for it is a means of communication as well as a carrier of culture and history. Language, communication and culture are intertwined in indigenous African Tanzanian societies. Communication creates culture and language carries it forward. Through life experience and orature, culture carries the entire community values by which the indigenous people perceive themselves and their place in the universe. Thus, language is more than a means of communication and a carrier of people’s culture and history; it is a means of cultural self-definition in relation to others and the world at large. Vernacular language is a significant resource for people’s understanding of themselves *visa-à-vis* the rest of the creation. Similarly, vernacular language is a key interpretative resource with which people come to the Bible, or any text. Vernacular language has been a vital interpretative resource since the early encounters with the Bible among the Gogo and other Tanzanians.

⁴⁵³ West, G.O., ‘Mapping African Biblical Interpretation’, in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, Eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.37.

As we have seen in our historical analysis, the initial engagements with the Bible were oral and partial. In the initial encounter, vernacular Bible translations were not yet available. Missionaries spoke in foreign languages and some indigenous interpreted the message. Biblical truths, concepts, ideas, rituals, symbols were orally translated into, and even filtered through, a people's vernacular language. 'God' became *Mulungu*, 'our Lord Jesus' *Mtemi wetu Yesu*, 'the Holy Spirit' *Muhe mono Yelile*, and the 'Word of God' was translated as *Nghani yo Mulungu*, or *Luganuzi Luswanu*, meaning 'Good preaching/discourse'. *Mulungu* (God), *nghani* (word/s), *mtemi* (chief), *muhe* (breath/spirit), *yelile* (clean/holy), *luganuzi* (preaching/speaking out) were not new words in Cigogo vocabulary. They were old words that acquired new meaning based on the original Gogo concept. *Mtemi*, for example, derives from a Cigogo word *tema* 'rule', and *kutema* 'to rule'; hence *mtemi* 'one who rules', 'a ruler'. *Mtemi* was a Gogo indigenous chief. When they encountered the Bible, the Gogo interpreted the Lordship of Jesus through their indigenous understanding of *mtemi*. So the Cigogo language became a resource and a tool by which the Gogo interpreted the person of Jesus and other teachings of the Bible. Language as a key tool opened up whole new vistas for other interpretative resources which in turn facilitated further engagements with the Bible.

Indigenous religion is another significant resource for interpreting the Bible. Indigenous Gogo beliefs in God, spiritual powers, good spirits and bad spirits, as we have seen in Chapter Three, were part of the tools with which the Gogo began to interpret the Bible message, stories, religious figures and events. When the missionaries came with the Bible, they did not bring God to the Gogo; God, and all his power, was there already, and the people's religious experience as well as their understanding of God helped them to comprehend the new religious message, the Bible. The indigenous unwritten religious message found fulfilment in the written message. The indigenous people see their stories in the narratives of the Bible. The following story can help to illustrate the aforesaid argument about the indigenous religious narratives as a resource for reading the Bible. The Gogo have a story about the young man 'Mundagwa and the Ogre Igongolo'. The

story is part of the indigenous religious narratives, and there are various versions of it.⁴⁵⁴

One version from Kongwa, as I discovered from my informants, is told like this:

Once upon a time life on the earth had no end. Then, *ilimu*, the ogre or monster, named Igongolo appeared. The monster began to swallow animals and people. After some years, all human beings were swallowed except one young woman and some few animals and insects. The woman was pregnant and, before the last group was taken away, she hid herself in a cave which was surrounded by thicket and tall grasses. After all this the monster Igongolo went into a forest. The woman gave birth to a baby boy and named him Mundagwa. When Mundagwa grew up he asked, 'Mother, are there other people in this land?' She replied, 'My dear one, the monster Igongolo took everyone else into the forest and swallowed them. You and I are the only ones left'. Mundagwa said to his mother, 'I will look for the monster Igongolo and kill him, lest he takes and swallows us too'.

One day Mundagwa killed a bird and arrived home singing 'Mother, Mother, I have killed the monster Igongolo up in the hills. Let's rejoice and sing for joy'. His mother answered, 'My dear one, this is only a bird, let's roast it and eat'.

Another day, as Mundagwa continued to grow, he killed an antelope and arrived home singing, 'Mother, Mother, I have killed the monster Igongolo up in the hills. Let's rejoice and sing for joy'. His mother answered, 'My dear one, this is only an antelope, let's roast and eat it'.

Another day Mundagwa went further in the forest to look for the monster Igongolo. Mundagwa shouted in the forest, 'Hey Igongolo, come out, I want to see you'. 'Yes it's me; I'm coming to swallow you too'. The monster

⁴⁵⁴ Another version of the story from the Sukuma people is narrated in Healey, J., & Sybertz, D., *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, Nairobi, Paulines Publications Africa, 1996, pp.64-65.

shouted so loudly that the earth trembled. But, Mundagwa took courage. Igongolo showed himself; Mundagwa overcame him, killed him and cut open his belly. Out came all the other people, including his father and relatives. Mundagwa became the victor over the Ogre Igongolo. Mundagwa became the Chief of the whole world, and his mother *Nyina Mtemi*, the Queen Mother.⁴⁵⁵

In the Gogo's tradition and culture, Mundagwa who later becomes *Mtemi* is a symbol of victory, while Igongolo is a symbol of death; and sometimes Igongolo implies death itself. For example, when one passes away in a Gogo family, children would later ask, *Nhendu yalihal?* 'Where is he/she?' Parents would answer, *Yasolwa Neligongolo*, 'the Igongolo took him/her away'. According to the Gogo religious interpretation of the story of the Mundagwa and the ogre Igongolo, we are living in the world in which God's original plan has been thwarted by the Ogre Igongolo; but, in the end, divine victory will come about through a child born of a young woman. Life is a struggle against *ilimu* which is always against life; and the birth of a child brings hope for the final defeat of the Ogre Igongolo.

In the initial encounters, when the missionary brought the message of the Bible about the goodness of creation, about Satan and how sin and death entered human life, as well as about Christ's victory over sin and death, and the consummation of the rule of God, the Gogo already had their indigenous religious "text" which helped them to engage with the biblical text. Wittingly or unwittingly, the Gogo found connections and points of contact between their religious experiences and/or stories and the stories of the Bible. Their indigenous stories functioned as interpretative resources; teacher-evangelist, catechists and ordinary "readers" of the Bible saw the connections in their reading and utilised them, together with other native stories and narratives, in their testimonies and homilies. One catechist preached in an Easter homily in Kongwa that the son, the only son, is born and he has won us victory over Igongolo and its fear; the victory is soon to be consummated. The catechist emphasised that we are in a new dispensation, preparing

⁴⁵⁵ The story is my own English translation of the Cigogo story of *Mundagwa ne Ligongolo*.

ourselves for life eternal. When our victory is consummated our loved ones and all people will come back to life eternal.

Apart from specific religious narratives, other oral narratives are also rich interpretative tools. In Chapter 5 we saw how Danyeli Mbogo, and some other teachers, use oral narratives to interpret and teach the Bible. Oral narrative was one of the interpretative resources that were prevalent in the early engagements with the Bible and it still persists to this day among the Gogo. To build on this point, let us turn to an alternative way of how oral narratives have been used to interpret the Bible. The story comes from Paul White who was a missionary at Mvumi mission station, in Dodoma region. At Mvumi mission, as in other mission stations, there were prayers every morning. According to White, almost everyone would turn up for prayers. First, a hymn is sung. People sing heartily and harmoniously. Then comes the reading of the Bible; normally some verses are read either from the Old Testament or the New Testament, and briefly explained by the Gogo Christians themselves. White comments that they are masters of stories to illustrate their biblical points.⁴⁵⁶ White writes that 'this particular morning one of the junior dressers [of the mission hospital] read slowly and carefully from his Testament' this verse: 'Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved'. Then the reader 'carefully put the Book down, paused a moment', then he began to interpret the verse in these words:

I want you to understand that there is no other road to life but Jesus. Listen to my tale: Two monkeys were playing down by the swamp. One grasped a nut belonging to his fellow and threw it yards out into the soft mud. The other monkey bounded after it, and, landing in the middle of the quagmire, he began to sink. His struggles were futile. He kept on sinking, and when he was up the middle, he called out to his friend: 'Help me, help me!' But the answer came back: 'Will I not get stuck, too? Pull yourself out?' The monkey that was stuck had a lovely pair of long whiskers. His companion said: 'Save yourself, monkey; pull yourself out by your whiskers. Heave,

⁴⁵⁶ White, P. *The Doctor of Tanganyika*, p.66.

monkey, heave!' The monkey grabbed his whiskers, and pulled with all his might, but every moment he sank deeper. He was up to his neck, and he gave one tremendous, final heave to pull himself out of the mud that was engulfing him, but it was useless. A few minutes later a few bubbles, oozing slowly through the bog, was all that remained of the monkey, who thought he could save himself by his own efforts.⁴⁵⁷

According to White, when the dresser finished the story he just said:

And the name of that bog was SIN. Remember, the only way out is by asking Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to save you from sin, and its consequences.

After the preaching, prayers follow, related to the preaching, and other prayers concerning daily Christian living. Despite certain attempts from some church leaders to try and ban the use of what they call 'hare and monkey stories' in homilies and speeches, the use of oral narratives, oral narratives, fables, riddles and stories, has been common in the Gogo region and still persists among ordinary "readers", teachers and evangelists. The story of Ndudula is another striking oral narrative interpretative resource for understanding Jesus' redeeming work. This story is also available in other parts of Tanzania in various versions with different names.⁴⁵⁸ The Gogo story of Ndudula is told in the following way (again, I gathered this material from local informants):

Once upon a time, there was a mother named Ndewo, who had a baby girl called Ndudula.⁴⁵⁹ One day Ndudula fell sick, and her mother went to her neighbour to ask for medicine. Ndudula was fast asleep in her mother's house. While still at her neighbour's house, Ndewo suddenly saw flames coming from her own house. Ndewo ran as fast as she could to get Ndudula out of the house before the fire reached her. Just before she entered the house that was now in flames, she saw a man coming out of the burning house badly

⁴⁵⁷ White, P. *The Doctor of Tanganyika*, p.66- 67.

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. Healey J., & Sybertz, D., *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, Nairobi, Paulines, 1996, p.70.

⁴⁵⁹ In Gogogo Ndudula means 'harvest', or 'one who was born during harvest time'.

burned, but with Ndudula in his coat. Ndudula was completely unharmed. Just after he had given Ndudula to his mother, the man collapsed. He was taken to the *waganga*, traditional healers, and later he recovered. This man was not a resident of the village of Ndewo and her daughter Ndudula; so after his treatment he went back to his home village.

When Ndudula grew up, her mother told her the story of the big fire which destroyed their old house and that she was sleeping in the house. Ndewo told Ndudula about the man who came to rescue her just before the fire reached her, and that the man came out of the fire seriously burned. Ndudula asked: 'Mother, where is this good man?' She answered: 'My dear child, it is very far from our village'. Ndudula insisted that she wanted to know where he was. The mother told her where the man lived.

One day Ndudula decided to go and look for the man. She found him, thanked him and returned to her village. Later Ndudula went to the man and invited him to come and stay with her in her mother's house. The man answered, 'Look my face is disfigured and many people make fun of me, because I have scars all over my body. How can I stay in your mother's house? Ndudula answered: 'You are the most handsome person I have ever seen. Please come and stay with us'. The man agreed.

In 1994, an evangelist from Dodoma, named Isaiah Ngobito, used this story to interpret Isaiah chapter 53 verses 1 to 5, when he preached in Kongwa. Ngobito insisted on the cost of salvation; that our salvation cost Jesus' life. He was disfigured in order to save us. Ngobito's approach was that he first spoke on various salvific passages, and then he narrated the oral story of Ndudula and how she was rescued. After the story of Ndudula, Isaiah chapter 53 verses 1 to 5 was read with further interpretations based on the story of the burning house and the biblical text itself. When using oral narratives, as interpretative tools, ordinary "readers" and preachers do not limit themselves to the stories, they also apply proverbs and wise sayings.

Proverbs and sayings are another important interpretative resource in ordinary readings of the Bible. Carolyn Parker defines a proverb as 'a message coded by tradition and transmitted in order to evaluate and/or affect human behaviour'.⁴⁶⁰ A research group working on proverbs in Shinyanga, Tanzania, describes an African proverb as 'a short, pithy saying that encodes the philosophical outlook, religious concepts and worldview of African society in a digestible form'.⁴⁶¹ Proverbs and saying are like windows into the African worldview; for they describe community values, aspirations, religious beliefs and experiences. Proverbs and sayings are like a commentary on African Gogo traditional life and experience, and as such they are resources by which ordinary Gogo readers engage with the biblical texts. In Gogo society, the role of proverbs and sayings, not just for engaging with the Bible, but in life in general, cannot be understated.

Among the Gogo people, proverbs and wise sayings have played an important role in traditional education, and especially during rites of passage. During circumcision rites, Gogo youths are taught proverbs and sayings to prepare them for adulthood. Through proverbs and sayings 'the young are initiated to life or enculturated, that is to say, educated to a cultural tradition. They teach young people to observe and to compare. They reflect the participatory character of experience, encouraging the young to explore a given experience in the light of another related experience'.⁴⁶² Proverbs are not only for the youth, they are also for the whole community, for advice, warning, religious directives, knowledge and understanding. As Healey and Sybertz argue, 'there is religious faith in many African proverbs'. Their illusiveness gives them a mysterious character. Some are 'cynical, fatalistic, negative, pessimistic', but others are 'positive, uplifting and inspiring'.⁴⁶³ Even those which seem to be negative have some positive moral teaching.

⁴⁶⁰ Parker, C.A., *Aspects of a Theory of Proverbs: Contexts and Messages of Proverbs in Swahili*, Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Washington 1974, p.79 as quoted by Healey J., & Sybertz, D., *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, p.34.

⁴⁶¹ Sukuma Research Committee as quoted by Healey J., & Sybertz, D., *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, p.34.

⁴⁶² Shorter, A., *Songs and Symbols of Initiation*, Nairobi, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Monograph One, 1987, p.50; cf. Healey J., & Sybertz, D., *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, p.40.

⁴⁶³ Healey J., & Sybertz, D., *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, p.40.

The Gogo say *Cidole cimonga siciwulagaga mhani*, that is 'one finger cannot kill a louse'. This proverb stresses the value of community, unity and cooperation.⁴⁶⁴ On this proverb Mbiti comments:

On the surface this is a simple statement coming out of living experience in which people kill bodily lice [or fleas] by using fingers or finger nails to squeeze them (until they burst). However, this proverb is used to refer to more serious matters of working together, joining hands so as to accomplish tasks or objectives which cannot be done by one person. It points to mutuality and helpfulness. Trivial terms are used here symbolically to handle deeper issues of people's character and working relationships.⁴⁶⁵

Also the Hehe have this proverb, 'one hand does not cultivate a field'. Ordinary "readers" have creatively utilized many proverbs in their reading and interpretation of the Bible. Proverbs that teach about the value of unity and community have been employed as tools in interpreting biblical texts regarding Christian unity, *undugu*, 'brotherhood/sisterhood' and love.⁴⁶⁶ Proverbs and sayings occupy a significant place in preaching and teaching the Bible among the Gogo in central Tanzania. Sometimes in the middle of a sermon or Bible lesson a preacher gives the first half of a proverb or saying, and the people respond with the second half: 'One hand... does not cultivate a field'. 'If you murder in a jungle... the sky will record the incident'. 'The second half', according to Healey and Sybertz, 'is the advice that the speaker wants the audience to accept, so he or she "manoeuvres" the listeners so that the words come from their own lips'.⁴⁶⁷ This participatory aspect of the use of proverbs and sayings in interpreting the Bible fits in well with the community values of the Gogo, and other Tanzanians. People are normally comfortable in participating in the interpretative process of the sermon, preaching session or Bible lessons.

⁴⁶⁴ This proverb is also common among other ethnic groups in Tanzania, e.g., the Maasai; it is also found in Swahili.

⁴⁶⁵ Mbiti, J.S., *Introduction to African Traditional Religion*, Nairobi, E.A.E.P., 1992, p.1.

⁴⁶⁶ E.g., John 17: 11, 20, 21f; Romans 13:1ff

⁴⁶⁷ Healey J., & Sybertz, D., *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, p.42.

Songs, dance and drama are another resource which since the early encounters with the Bible among the Gogo has facilitated the interpretation of the Bible among ordinary "readers". The Gogo, like other people of Tanzania, are a musical people. Traditionally they compose and sing their songs on various occasions. Almost all social occasions are marked with singing and dance. Songs are based on various experiences of life: ploughing, harvesting, hunting, birth, circumcision, marriage, burial, rain prayers, etc. Gogo songs do not have many stanzas; they are short and allusive – they do not have a straightforward meaning. One has to find the meaning behind the singing and so one line or verse is sung many times to allow creative thinking or contemplation.

The Gogo use the fiddle, the *ilimba*, 'Gogo marimba' and the drum, but normally the song itself is an accompaniment to the dance; people sing while they dance. The rhythm of the dance becomes the rhythm of the song.⁴⁶⁸ The singing pattern is that the leader or half of the singers start the first line or lines, and after a few lines the rest of the singers join in, then the whole song is sung in round fashion. This is common in a night vigil dance called *msunyunho*, when no musical instrument is used. Until the 1980s, *msunyunho* was very common in the dry season, and it filled the nights. As the song proceeds, the leader can add interjections and extra lines, to try and give some interpretations of the on-going song. The song can be short but it is interpreted as it is repeatedly sung or chanted. In initiation camps, Gogo singing and dance are the main aid for teaching girls and boys. They, in their respective camps, repeatedly sing and their leaders add extra lines and interjections as the songs proceed and as such some of the hidden messages of the songs are interpreted as the people sing.

When the Gogo people encountered the Bible, they also used their singing and dance tradition to interpret and/or preach the message of the Bible. Texts or specific themes were taken from the Bible to be sung and dramatized. Marjory Stanway tells a story of Gogo readers who carried the Gospel to another neighbouring village where as yet there were no Christians. The group of the readers asked the nearby village if they would

⁴⁶⁸ Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.53.

receive them for a few days to sing with them. The group was warmly welcomed. When they reached the village, just after sunset their hosts built a large campfire in the open and started singing and dancing traditional songs to entertain their visitors. The Christian group responded by 'singing and dramatizing the Gospel such as "God loves us and he sent His son Jesus to teach us". The hosts were encouraged to join the chorus after each sentence'.⁴⁶⁹ Normally, this joint singing, according to Marjory Stanway, goes on for hours, and each piece of biblical teaching, or texts is sung again and again, with interjections and extra lines added by the song leader. This has been a common practice of presenting the message in various parts of Dodoma; and after each singing session, in those villages where as yet there is no biblical teaching, 'teachers would then be invited to teach about Yesu Kristo (Jesus Christ)'.⁴⁷⁰

The Gogo singing and dance tradition has been a useful interpretative resource among ordinary readers of the Bible. Songs have continued to be a powerful interpretative tool for the Bible, particularly among the youths and women's groups in Kongwa, Mpwapwa, Mvumi, Mlowa, Buigiri, and in Dodoma urban churches. This point is further developed in Chapter 7, on 'Neo-Indigenous and Academic Readings of the Bible'. In this Chapter the focus is on ordinary readers' interpretative resources. That is, we are building a case as to what the resources are with which ordinary readers come to the Bible. Basing our discussion on the previous chapters, we have identified five interpretative tools: vernacular language, indigenous religion, proverbs and wise sayings, as well as indigenous song and dance tradition. These interpretative tools can appropriately be called cultural interpretative resources or contextual hermeneutic resources, because they are rooted in the ordinary readers' culture and context.⁴⁷¹ These resources are the results of cultural and contextual factors.⁴⁷²

Out of cultural interpretative resources one sees emerging interpretative practices such as translation, oral narrative and participatory interpretative practices. It may sound unusual

⁴⁶⁹ Stanway, M., *Alfred Stanway*, p.105.

⁴⁷⁰ Stanway, M., *Alfred Stanway*, p.105.

⁴⁷¹ Adamo, D.T., 'The Use of Psalms in African Indigenous Churches in Nigeria', in Gerald O West & Musa W Dube, eds, *The Bible in Africa*, pp.336-37.

⁴⁷² Holter, K., *Yahweh in Africa*, p.53.

to think of translation as interpretation; but it is a fact that any work of translation involves interpretation, as such translation itself into an African language, such as Cigogo, Kihehe, Cikaguru, becomes 'an interpretative act'.⁴⁷³ When the Bible was first translated into Cigogo, and other Tanzania languages, it was translated orally. The missionaries spoke and the natives "translated" for the audience, as we have seen in the account of the mission enterprise in Mpwapwa, Kongwa, and other areas, in Chapter 5. These oral translations were in fact interpretative practices; for they involved the expression of meaning of words and concepts of the source language into the words and thought form of that people's vernacular language.

Through the means of translation something new is brought into the receptor language, but at the same time some elements and concepts of the source language are expanded and re-defined in the receptor's language. As Andrew Walls writes, 'the receptor language has a dynamic of its own and takes the new material to realms it never touched in the source language'.⁴⁷⁴ Hence, it is reasonable to argue that any translation of the biblical text in an African language, whether oral or written, is a form of interpretation of the Bible. Even those early Cigogo translations which are word-for-word, 'presupposing a theory of formal-correspondence translation', are to some degree forms of interpretations of the Bible. They take the translated Word into realms it never touched before, and give it a new weight. Although one can consider Cigogo translation, which culminated in a complete Bible in 1962, as a form of interpretation, the Gogo themselves feel that the old translation is not clear and meaningful and that it lacks the naturalness of the Cigogo language.⁴⁷⁵ This does not rule out the fact that even those old translation involved interpretation.

Languages are not static, but dynamic and over the years Cigogo has developed and changed and this fact calls for new translation, which is in a way further interpretation of the Word. Thus the Diocese of Central Tanganyika, together with the Bible Society of

⁴⁷³ West, G.O., 'African Biblical Hermeneutics and its Relevance for Bible Translation in Africa', p.3.

⁴⁷⁴ Walls, A.F., 'The Translation Principle in Christian History', in Philip C. Stine, ed., *Bible Translation and the Spread of the Church: the Last 200 Years*, Leiden, E.J., Brill, 2nd impression 1992, p.25.

⁴⁷⁵ Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*, p.80.

Tanzania, initiated a new Cigogo Bible translation which was completed in 1997 and published in 2002. The new translation is a meaning-based, dynamic equivalence, translation of the Bible.⁴⁷⁶ It uses every-day-language; it is indeed a further interpretation of the Word of God into Cigogo. It is used by some Gogo people as *mafafamuzi ya mistari*, 'textual exposition'. These people would usually read their Swahili Bible, but when they do not clearly understand the meaning of a text, they would turn to their Cigogo Bible for clarity and more meaningful reading.⁴⁷⁷ Translation of the Cigogo Bible, which included experts and ordinary readers of the Bible, has been successful in completing 'the hermeneutic circle' by moving from what the text might have meant to what the text might mean among the Gogo.⁴⁷⁸ So, use of the Cigogo Bible is itself an interpretative practice.

Interpretation of the Bible that incorporates indigenous oral narratives is another interpretative practice. Oral narratives, as shown in the discussion on interpretative resources, have not just been illustrations or decorations for sermons, they are part and parcel of the message. The biblical text and the oral narrative are so merged, or blended, that they, together, are transformed into one salvific message.⁴⁷⁹ In oral narrative interpretative practice, the preacher starts with (1) a word of prayer, (2) reading of a biblical text, with some introductory words to it, (3) a narrative is told, (4) meaning of the narrative in relation to the biblical text, and then (5) some application, with additional biblical readings. In the additional texts, the preacher mentions a text and somebody else from the congregation reads it. This interpretation pattern is not a strict one; different preachers, among ordinary readers, may follow different patterns but with almost the same elements.

Another interpretative practice is participatory interpretation. This implies that the congregation is involved in the interpretation process of the text. Here an important element, which is either added by the preacher or initiated by a volunteer in the

⁴⁷⁶ Mojola, A.O., *God Speaks in Our Own Language*, p.173.

⁴⁷⁷ This point came up in some interviews in Kongwa and Mlowa about the New Cigogo translation.

⁴⁷⁸ West, G.O., 'African Biblical Hermeneutics and its Relevance for Bible Translation in Africa', p.10.

⁴⁷⁹ See the examples of Danyeli Mbogo's sermon in Chapter 5, and the dresser's sermon at Mvumi in this Chapter.

congregation, is singing. Songs and choruses would normally be related to the message. In October 2003, at Kongwa-Maji church, Kongwa district, Dodoma, while Catechist Gilbert Muhuga was preaching on the second book of Kings chapter 5 verses 1 to 15 about the cleansing of Naaman, *Kwaya ya Wadala*, the 'Women's Choir', started singing, in Swahili:

<p>Solo: <i>Naamani alikuwa mgonjwa kwa siku nyingi alitafuta dawa kwa waganga, Nabii akamwambia uende ukaoge mara saba katika mto Yordani. Naamani alipooga alipona ugonjwa wake wa siku nyingi. (Repeated twice)</i></p>	<p>Naaman was ill for many days and he looked for cure from healers. A prophet told him to go and wash himself seven times in the Jordan river. When Naaman washed himself he was cured of his illness.</p>
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<p>Chorus: <i>Welile Yesu, Welile! Welile Yesu, Welile, Unghweme! Welile Unghweme, Welile! Welile Mwikolongo, Welile! Unghweme! (Repeated several times)</i></p>	<p>Holy Jesus, Holy! Holy Jesus, Holy! Cleanse me! Holy cleanse me, Holy! Holy in (the) river, Holy! Cleanse me!</p>
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The whole congregation joined in the song, particularly the chorus, and after some minutes the preaching continued. The practice of including songs and choruses in the middle of a sermon was, and is, still popular among *kiroho*, spiritual churches.⁴⁸⁰ This practice, with its interpretative pattern is still common in rural areas where the Christian majority live. On other preaching occasions, this participatory practice would involve questions and answers, that is, the preacher asks some questions, as the preaching proceeds, and some answers would randomly be given from the audience or congregation. Also proverbs and sayings, as I have indicated earlier, would be use to

⁴⁸⁰ See Chapter 5 of this thesis.

involve the congregation in the interpretation of a text. The preacher would say the first half of the proverb and the congregation responds with the second half.

Songs, choruses, proverbs, sayings, questions, answers and even dancing in the middle of the sermon are not mere decorations; they are resources as well as essential elements of the interpretative act. These practices arise out of the African Gogo indigenous cultural world in which interpretations of religious knowledge is not cultivated by an individual alone. Indigenous "unwritten religious texts" are culturally determined and delimited by the community. This corporate and cooperative "reading" and interpretation also determines the meaning of "the text" for the people in their own context.⁴⁸¹ Similarly, their religious knowledge, their religious oral "text", does not belong to an individual alone, but to the community. This cultural religious background influences the way people, the Gogo in particular, engage with the Bible. Hence, the Bible is perceived to belong to the community, and as such each has the liberty to participate in its interpretation, as we have seen. Participatory interpretative practice is not static; it is cooperative, appealing and dynamic, as it is inclusive of every "reader" in the community. Until now, we have looked at interpretative acts, and how the Bible is cooperatively interpreted as it is considered a community religious resource. But what was and is the Bible among ordinary "readers"? To this question we now turn.

6.2 ORDINARY READERS' PERCEPTION OF THE BIBLE

The historical analysis of the early encounters between the Bible and the Tanzanians in general and the Gogo in particular has attempted to indicate what the Bible might have meant among those ordinary "readers". We have seen, in those early engagements, the perception of the Bible as an object charged with superior *power*. This attitude was more explicit in the encounters between the missionaries Krapf and Rebmann with the Bible, on one side, and the respective chiefs of the Chagga and the Shambara, on the other side. The chiefs, especially Mandara, struggled to obtain the Book and there were even some

⁴⁸¹ Cf. Wimbush, V.L., 'Reading Texts through Worlds, Worlds through Texts', in *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.129.

attempts to stop the spread of the knowledge of the Book to other tribes. The Bible as an object of strange superior power was associated with guns, mirrors, telescopes, watches, revolvers, bullets, etc. There was a desire to obtain the Bible together with other strange objects, especially the gun.

The perception of the Book among freed slaves on the coastal region, and in some centres along the slave caravan routes, for example in Mpwapwa, was more as an object of liberation. That is, the power of the Bible was revealed in the way freed slaves were liberated from slave masters, Arabs and Africans. In the encounters, the missionaries both bought freedom for slaves or attacked slave caravans, and set the slaves free. After gaining their freedom, slaves were put into Christian villages and taught the Bible and other useful skills. For freed slaves the Bible became the symbol of liberation from slavery.

When the Bible became a text among the Gogo, through the means of translation, new perceptions of the Bible emerged. This perception was that of the Bible as a source of superior knowledge and skills. The perception was inculcated by the political and social disruption of the German colonial takeover and exploitation. The new attitude to the Bible was also precipitated by the failure of the Maji Maji war, which was an indigenous attempt to regain their political and social control as well as their self-definition. The Maji Maji caused political instability and religious dissatisfaction that in turn resulted in a mass turn to the Bible as another source of knowledge and religious experience. In the historical process, the perception of the Bible as a source of superior *knowledge* was not a break away from the earliest perceptions. It was a new development, based on previous perceptions of the Bible, which emerged as an outcome of socio-political paradigm shift from native socio-political organisations to colonial domination.

The Bible as a source of superior power, knowledge and skills seemed to provide at least some clues to the people's immediate questions and problems. Many read the Bible, and there came a generation of *wasomi*, "readers" of whom some became important ecclesiastical and political leaders. The reading of the Bible as a source of superior

knowledge was not just materialistic; it was equally a spiritual, religious pursuit. As we saw in some testimonies in Chapter 4, in the reading of the text many encountered the Word of God, and they were saved by Jesus Christ. The Word of God, until now, has become the dominant perception of the Bible. Among ordinary “readers” in central Tanzania, and other parts of Tanzania, the Bible is commonly referred to as ‘the Word of God’. One has to pause, and ask, ‘what do they/we mean by the Word of God?’

First, *Nghani yo Mulungu*, ‘the Word of God’, according to some of my informants, is what is contained in the Book, the Bible. Others pointed out that it is *ugubule wo Mulungu kuli wanhu wose*, ‘God’s revelations to all people’. Still others added that through *Nghani Yakwe*, ‘His Word’, God has explicitly shown us the way of salvation and how we can reach him. Quoting from a Cigogo book, *Nhumbula yo Munhu*, ‘the Human Heart’, Eunice Nhonya says that the Word of God, the Bible, is *cilole ce mikalile ye cimuhe*, ‘the mirror of spiritual living’.⁴⁸² There are other perceptions of the Bible such as *Nghani zo Mulungu* ‘(the) Words of God’; also, the power of God and the symbol of the presence of God. People’s reference to the Bible as a symbol of divine presence and the power of God suggests an understanding of the Bible as an object with efficacious power; its presence as a text is not just that of a mere book. It is a presence of the power of the divine Word of God; indeed, it is the presence of God through his *Roho*, Spirit. Some more discussion about the Bible as an object of efficacious power will be picked up later in the next section of ‘Early Ordinary Readers and Contemporary Readers: continuity and discontinuity [of perceptions and readings]’. Let us here further develop the meaning of the Word of God among ordinary “readers” of the Bible in Tanzania, specifically among the Gogo “readers”.

The phrases *Nghani yo Mulungu*, ‘the Word of God’, and *Nghani zo Mulungu*, ‘the Words of God’, are commonly used interchangeably to mean the Bible. However, there are times when the phrase ‘the Words of God’ is used to imply not just the Bible as a text, but also all *Nghani*, ‘words’, ‘talks’, sermons, oral preaching, singing, etc., about

⁴⁸² Eunice Nhonya, a conversation with author on 8 February 2001 at Mlowa, Dodoma, Tanzania. Cf. *Nhumbula yo Munhu*, Pretoria, All Nations Gospel Publishers, n.d., p.1.

Mulungu, 'God'. This wider perception of the Word of God, which goes beyond the covers of the Bible as a Book, might have partly been influenced by the words that appear on the black cover of the Cigogo Bible: *Biblia, Luganuzi Luswanu Kuli Wanhu Wose Mu Nongo [sic] ye Cigogo*, meaning '(the) Bible, Good preaching to all people in the Cigogo language'. According to the words on the cover of the Cigogo translation, the Bible is not only good news, it is good preaching in the vernacular language of the Gogo. It is like God himself speaking 'good words', uttering divine oracles in their own mother tongue. So when some Gogo "readers" speak and sing from the Word of God, their preaching becomes part of God's 'Good Preaching' to all people in the Cigogo language.

Sometimes an academic theological meaning of 'the Word of God' may not necessarily agree with what ordinary "readers" actually mean when they talk about 'the Word of God'. For ordinary users of the Bible, the Bible might be what they have read, heard and perceived to be the Word of God, through socialisation in church life as Bible men and women in worship, singing, fellowships, Bible studies, prayers, etc.⁴⁸³ Despite this view of the Word of God, the Bible as a text does continue to have a place as well. What Ndung'u notes in his Kikuyu context is also true of the Gogo and Tanzania context, that 'even the illiterate members take pains to master some verses which they readily quote when they give their testimonies'.⁴⁸⁴ So beside the Bible as a text, there is also the conceptualisation of what is God's Word that goes beyond the limits of the covers of the "black Book". Unwittingly, ordinary "readers'" interpretations become part of the Word of God.

As the preceding argument points out, the Word of God, at least among ordinary readers, implies the textual Bible and also the oral knowledge of the Bible which may not directly come from the text. This, it seems to me, is not an impoverishment of what the Word of

⁴⁸³ West, G.O, 'Mapping African Biblical Interpretation', in Gerald O West & Musa W Dube, eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.44. Cf. Mosala 'Race, Class and Gender as Hermeneutical Factors in the African Independent Churches' Appropriation of the Bible', in *Semeia* 73 (1996), pp.43-57; Drapper, J.A., 'Confessional Western Text-centred Biblical Interpretation and an Oral or Residual Oral Context', in *Semeia* 73 (1996), pp.59-77; and Oduyoya, M.A., *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1995, p.190f.

⁴⁸⁴ Ndung'u, N., 'The Bible in an African Independent Church', in Hannah W. Kinoti & John M. Waliggo, eds, *The Bible in African Christianity: Essays in Biblical Theology*, Nairobi, Acton 1997, p.62.

God is, but instead it is an enrichment of the Word. This understanding of the Word of God is not just a new and deliberate innovation of what ordinary “readers” consider to be God’s Word, it is an appropriation of the Bible that is in continuity with the earlier engagements with the Bible among the Gogo and Tanzanians in general. The next section attempts to elaborate on the issue of continuity and discontinuity of ways of engagements with the Bible between early ordinary “readers” and present ones.

6.3 EARLY ORDINARY “READERS” AND CONTEMPORARY “READERS”: CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY

6.3.1 The Bible: An Object and a Book with Power and Knowledge

Present perceptions of the Bible as well as the interpretative strategies of ordinary “readers” of the Bible reflect to some extent the early encounters and engagements with the Bible as an object with power and a text with superior knowledge. The perception of the Bible as an object with power is reflected in the ways ordinary “readers” treat their Bibles in their daily living and struggle for life. A first year diploma student at St Philip’s Theological College, Kongwa, testified that before coming to the College he used to put his Bible under his pillow as a protection from bad dreams and nightmares at night.⁴⁸⁵ Before putting the Bible under the pillow, a word of prayer would be said, asking for the presence of God’s spirit in the room.⁴⁸⁶ In some healing prayer groups, it is not uncommon to see either a member of the group holding their Bibles as they cast out demons or the Bible may be placed on the sick person to hasten healing. Beside prayers, the presence of the Bible and/or its physical contact with the sick is believed to bring about divine power of healing. These present appropriations of the Bible have connections with earlier engagements with the Bible. Maluleke is right in his observation that,

⁴⁸⁵ The interviewee did not want his name to be disclosed (an interview conducted by the author on 5 November 2003 at Kongwa, Dodoma, Tanzania).

⁴⁸⁶ Atukelye Magomba, a conversation with the author on 5 November 2003 at Kongwa, Dodoma, Tanzania.

In some parts of Africa, the dead are buried with the Bible on their chests, and the Bible is buried into the concrete foundations on which new houses are to be built. In many African independent churches it is the physical contact between the sick and the Bible that is believed to hasten healing.⁴⁸⁷

In the Christian context of Tanzania, these ordinary moves of appropriation of the Bible, as indicated by Maluleke, are found not only in Independent and Pentecostal churches, they are also in the Mainline churches particularly in *vikundi vya maombi na uamsho*, 'prayer and revival groups', which, since the Great East African Revival, have remained within the churches. Although most of the groups many not be officially recognised by the ecclesiastical structure of the Anglican Church, in Dodoma and the rest of Tanzania, they have a significant impact on the way the Bible is read and interpreted among ordinary Christians in prayers, Bible studies, fellowships, singing sessions and *mikesha* (night vigils).

Some academic readers through their interpretations of the Bible with ordinary "readers" have unwittingly been influenced by ordinary appropriations of the Bible. One Sunday, in 1999, Philip Kuta, who was a lecturer at St. Philip's Theological College, Kongwa, preached in the College chapel about God's love, emphasising that the Word of God reveals to us what love means and that through the Bible we are able to follow in divine tracks of love. The congregation, lecturers and students, were arrested when in the middle of his sermon he raised his voice and said, 'I would love to be buried with my Bible and vestments when I die'. Kuta's desire to be buried with the Bible was debated for sometime within the College campus. If ordinary readers and users of the Bible were involved in the debate, one can assume they might have enriched the discussion. Kuta's attitude to the Bible might have been influenced by ordinary readers of the Bible. Thus one can argue that ordinary "readers" "school of interpretation" is also impacting on the way some academic theologians read the Bible. Also, trained readers' trust and

⁴⁸⁷ Maluleke, T.S., 'the Bible among African Christians: a Missiological Perspective', in Teresa Okure, ed., *To Cast Fire Upon the Earth: Bible and Mission Collaborating in today's Multicultural Global Context*, Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 2000, p.91-92.

confidence in the Bible might be another influence from ordinary “readers” interpretation of trust.

6.3.2 A Hermeneutic of Trust

The Bible continues to be a text to be read and interpreted and also an object whose presence and power can bring about divine presence, healing and protection. This whole attitude towards the Bible, which has continued from early engagements with the Bible, has resulted in a hermeneutic of trust, especially among ordinary “readers” of the Bible. A hermeneutic of trust is part of a hermeneutic approach in which the predominant attitude towards the Bible is one of trust. In this approach trust in the Word of God is a hermeneutical starting point. The hermeneutical of trust is predominant in the inculturation hermeneutical approach of East Africa, in which the disposition is one of trust towards the Bible.⁴⁸⁸ Trust in the authoritative power of the Word is a starting point in many interpretations of trust in Tanzania. These phrases, ‘the Word says’, ‘the Bible says’, ‘the Holy Book says’, ‘Jesus says’, are common in testimonies, evangelism, sermons, prayers, common conversations and even in political speeches. As we have seen, in Tanzania the Bible is used in the political realm, and even here it is used within the framework of a hermeneutic of trust. In this hermeneutic approach, quoted words are frequently left without exact Bible references. In Chapter 5, we saw how Nyerere quoted the Bible in some of his speeches; the Gospel seemed to be his favourite part of the Bible, and often he would start a quote with ‘Jesus said’.⁴⁸⁹ This is a common pattern in most of Nyerere’s impromptu speeches that employ Bible texts. In some cases, ordinary readers of the Bible provide clear references to their Bible quotations and allusions.⁴⁹⁰

There is a strong trust among ordinary readers in the words of the Bible to effect change in people’s lives. As a result, Bible quotations are used in the speeches for campaigns

⁴⁸⁸ Cf. West, G.O., ‘Mapping African Biblical Interpretation: A Tentative Sketch’, in Gerald O West & Musa W Dube, Eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.35.

⁴⁸⁹ See, for example, Nyerere, J.K., *Man and Development*, Dar es Salaam, OUP, 1974, p.5.

⁴⁹⁰ A case in point here is Benjamin Mkapa’s use of the Bible at the Anglican Clergy Conference at Morogogo on July 12, 2001, by *Mpigachapa wa Serikali*, Dar es Salaam, 2001; Also Benjamin Mkapa, Speech at Council of Churches of Tanzania annual meeting in Dodoma on June 21, by *Mpigachapa wa Serikali*, Dar es Salaam, 2001.

against the spread of HIV/AIDS. The Bible is used to encourage a good moral life which will reduce corruption and other evils in Tanzanian society.⁴⁹¹ The Bible is read and applied by ordinary readers, and many academic theologians, not with suspicion, but with trust and confidence. In Dodoma, Dar es Salaam and elsewhere in Tanzania, one cannot drive in the city without seeing biblical verses painted on sides of buses and *daladala*, small public transport vehicles, and most Tanzanians would know what it means to be called a Pharaoh, or a Moses!⁴⁹² After Tanzania's independence, people in the streets of Dodoma, and Dar es Salaam as well, nicknamed the first President, Julius Nyerere, *Musa*, 'Moses', and Tanzania itself was nicknamed *Nchi ya Musa*, '(the) Country of Moses'.

However, this reality of interpretation does not deny the Bible's ambiguous presence, which prevailed particularly in Tanzania's post-colonial decade. During this time there was a belief that missionaries were forerunners of and collaborators with colonisers. Because of this belief, according to I.K. Katoke of Tanzania, there emerged a saying that

One missionary told his converts to shut their eyes (in prayer), while they were praying he turned to his fellow white, who was in search of land, and told him to take as much land as he wanted. After satisfying himself with the loot, the missionary said the Amen and told the "faithful" to open their eyes, to discover their land had been taken over by the newcomers. They (Africans) were advised not to resist the new authority or reclaim their land for this new power was God-sent and also the Bible says that our treasures and home are in heaven.⁴⁹³

⁴⁹¹ For example, Proverbs 5:15 is a common reference (cf. Benjamin Mkapa, A Speech at Tanzania Council of Churches in Dodoma on June 21, by *Mpigachapa wa Serikali*, Dar es Salaam, 2001; also see, Devota Kabuta, 'Why Lt. Makamba Applied the Holy Scriptures to Define Corruption' in <ippmedia.com>; Makamba, Y., 'How the Holy Bible and the Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Prophet (SAW) Interpret Corruption', as referred to in <ippmedia.com>

⁴⁹² Cf. Nthamburi, Z., & Waruta, D., 'Biblical Hermeneutics in African Instituted Churches' in Hannah W. Kinoti & John M. Waliggo, Eds, *The Bible in African Christianity*, p.49.

⁴⁹³ Katoke, I.K., 'The Coming of the Gospel and the African Reaction', in Cuthbert K. Omari, ed., *Essays on Church and Society in Tanzania*, Arusha, E.L.C.T., 1976, p.108. Cf. Related story from South Africa by Mofokeng, T., 'Black Christians, the Bible and Liberation' in *Journal of Black Theology* 2 (1988), p.34.

In his comments, Katoke seems to separate the Bible from the missionary as he argues that the saying 'means that missionaries were agents of colonial exploitation'.⁴⁹⁴ The Bible is not seen as inherently destructive; it is the missionary who misused it, and so the Bible itself is innocent; that is, some missionaries, as they were among those who had power, manipulated the use of the Bible for their own interest.⁴⁹⁵

The present Tanzanian biblical hermeneutic of trust might be based on this assumption that the Bible was "innocent" in the process of colonial propaganda. Hence, "the ambiguous presence of the Bible" in Tanzania, or specifically among the Gogo, is for most readers "the ambiguous presence of the missionary".⁴⁹⁶ That is, the missionary who was the bringer of the good news brought the Word of life, the Bible, but at the same time he was the friend of the coloniser, the one who brought out the bad news of exploitation and misery. The legacy of the missionary partnership with colonialism is what lives on to this day.⁴⁹⁷ This separation of the Bible from the missionary-coloniser partnership might be one of the reasons as to why there is a hermeneutic of trust among readers and users of the Bible in the context of Tanzania, and particularly in central region.

The present hermeneutic of trust might also imply that, since the early encounters, the appropriation of the Bible, especially among ordinary readers, has continued to develop, moving from an interpretation of the Bible as an ambiguous source to an interpretation of trust as we see today. Whether the Bible was received as a colonial tool, or an object of strange power that could be potentially useful for the natives if they controlled it, ordinary African reading of the Bible has not been static, it has been dynamic. Ordinary readers have always wrestled with the Bible so that it can be relevant to their life struggles. Through their conceptualisation of the Word of God, they have shaped the

⁴⁹⁴ Katoke, I.K., 'The Coming of the Gospel and the African Reaction', in Cuthbert K. Omari, ed., *Essays on Church and Society in Tanzania*, p.108.

⁴⁹⁵ Cf. West's discussion on Mofokeng, Mosala, et al, in *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible*, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1999, p.87ff.

⁴⁹⁶ Cf. West, G.O., 'African Biblical Hermeneutics and its Relevance for Biblical Translation in Africa', p.2.

⁴⁹⁷ Missionaries have contributed a great deal to the spread of the Word in central Tanzania, and elsewhere. Most of them were committed teachers of the Bible.

Bible, relativised and modified it 'with uncanny creativity' so that it cannot frustrate them but build them up in their spiritual pursuit.⁴⁹⁸

Since the early encounters, the ways of engaging with the Bible among ordinary readers in Gogo region, and Tanzania at large, have dynamically been developing to the present readings, some of which are so creative that they need careful scholarly attention, if academic readers in Tanzania are to be relevant in their context. Such creative readings are, for example, *nyimbo za wamama*, 'women's songs', and *nyimbo za vijana*, 'youths' songs'.⁴⁹⁹ *Nyimbo za vijana* and other current readings of the Bible, which are the focus of the next chapter, can appropriately be called neo-ordinary readings of the Bible.

⁴⁹⁸ Maluleke, T.S., 'The Bible Among African Christians', in Teresa Okure, ed., *To Cast Fire Upon the Earth*, p.8.

⁴⁹⁹ King, F., '*Nyimbo za Vijana: Biblical Interpretation in Contemporary Hymns from Tanzania*', in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, Eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.360ff.

CHAPTER 7

7.0 NEO-INDIGENOUS AND ACADEMIC READINGS OF THE BIBLE

7.1 NEO-INDIGENOUS READINGS

Down through the decades, since the early encounters with the Bible, ordinary readers have learned and appropriated some of the missionary interpretative resources and practices. As a result, neo-indigenous interpretation of the Word of God seems to have emerged among ordinary readers of the Bible. Neo-indigenous interpretation is an integration of indigenous and missionary-learned interpretative resources as used by ordinary “readers”. These readings have been suggested by some scholars as ‘emerging neo-indigenous hermeneutic strategies’.⁵⁰⁰ These hermeneutic strategies, at least in the Tanzanian context of the Gogo people, can well be elaborated by what King calls *nyimbo za vijana*, ‘youths’ hymns’.⁵⁰¹ There are also, as mentioned in the previous chapter, *nyimbo za wamama*, ‘mothers’ (women’s) hymns/songs’, which are commonly sung in churches in central Tanzania, and in the whole of the Anglican Church of Tanzania.⁵⁰²

Apart from the interpretative resources that we have discussed in the previous chapter, *Nyimbo zo Kumulumbila Mulungu*, the Cigogo hymnbook, *Nyimbo Standard*, an Anglican Swahili hymnbook, and the textual Bible itself are also resources that influence interpretations. In the first place, it implies that traditional missionary hymns and hymnbooks have influenced ordinary Gogo hymn writers. As these hymnbooks are mostly translations of Western hymns, which do not touch on the daily lives of the Gogo people, Gogo hymn writers developed new Christian hymns that were, and are, indigenous, contextual and relevant. They are hymns that touch issues of witchcraft, HIV/AIDS, rape, corruption, which are hardly mentioned in the “official” hymnbooks. The attempts of some youths’ choirs to put their hymns and songs in writing can be

⁵⁰⁰ West, G.O., ‘Biblical Hermeneutics and its Relevance for Biblical translation in Africa’, p.3.

⁵⁰¹ King, F., ‘*Nyimbo za Vijana: Biblical Interpretation in Contemporary Hymns from Tanzania*’, in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, Eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.360.

⁵⁰² My analysis of youths and women’s hymns follows King’s approach to *Nyimbo za Vijana* (King, F., ‘*Nyimbo za Vijana*’, in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, Eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.360ff.).

considered as a creative move to construct their own hymnbooks like the ones which were received from the missionaries. Thus, hymnbooks become one of the factors for ordinary readers' interpretative acts through neo-indigenous hymns and songs.

The Bible, both oral and textual, is another factor from which hymn writers and listeners begin their "song theology". It is the Word of God through which God speaks and preaches to the present Christian generation. The Bible is held in high esteem among ordinary people for it does not belong to the past but to the present. It does not belong to the museum but to the public realm. This is why its verses are painted on the sides of public transport vehicles. In some hotels and restaurants, the Bible is placed in the guest rooms. The Bible is widely available in both urban and rural areas; it is widely read; and it has been the most influential book in youths' and women's songs and other types of appropriating the Bible.⁵⁰³ The Bible is 'God's gift to God's people' and it 'has an exalted place in many people's thinking', and as such it is 'a source material from which theological reflection begins' amid men, women, old people and youths, in their daily lives as they walk, work, pray and sing.⁵⁰⁴

Youths' songs are sung in youth choirs, which normally consist of men and women between the age of 16 and 40. Women's choirs comprise married and single women up to 55 in age, and even beyond. Youths and women's songs are a lively part of the Anglican Church in cities, towns and villages. They are composed by leaders and ordinary members of the choirs, and sung in regular worship, outreach evangelism and on special occasions such as *matanga*, wedding ceremonies, baptism and burial.⁵⁰⁵ As official preaching and interpretation of the Word of God in the Anglican Church is deemed to be the preserve of the priest, the trained reader, or the catechist, these ordinary "readers'" songs provide 'a voice for youths [and women] who are often marginalised by

⁵⁰³ Cf. Mugambi, J.N.K., *From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian Theology after the Cold War*, Nairobi, EAEP, 1995, p.142.

⁵⁰⁴ King, F., 'Nyimbo za Vijana', in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, Eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.367.

⁵⁰⁵ *Matanga* is a Swahili word for an official ending of a mourning period, marked by a special festival. *Matanga*, in Cigogo, is *kumalacililo*.

traditions which discriminate against them'.⁵⁰⁶ Youths' and women's songs are interpretations of the Bible in the context of ordinary Christian living and experiences in Dodoma region. Some of the songs are in Swahili and others in Cigogo. Often, they are first orally composed, and then some of choir members handwrite the lyrics in exercise books.

In composition, the words are either taken directly from Bible texts or based on biblical themes. In the latter, passages might be drawn from various books of the Bible to build on the theme and bring out its present implication. A theme can also be taken from one passage. In the former, particular words are directly taken from the Bible, incorporated in the songs, interpreted and applied according to the socio-political and cultural context. So, we have "thematic" and "textual" strategies of ordinary readers' interpretation of the Bible through songs. Choices of which songs should be sung depend on contexts and circumstances. There are a variety of aims in hymn writing and singing. King notes, in his interview with Motti Mbogo, a Gogo youth choir director, 'three aims in hymn writing: to praise God, to inform, and to encourage'.⁵⁰⁷ Another youth hymn writer, Jangisi Masagasi, from Kongwa, includes 'to teach and to remind people of the Word of God' as the aims of hymn writing and singing in churches and other occasions. This may also be what Mbogo means by 'to inform'. Masagasi stresses "reminding" as the main aim in his hymn writing and singing. King raises four significant questions which are vital in analysing youths' and women's hymns and songs: 'Which biblical texts are used? How are these texts incorporated into the hymns? Which methods of interpretation are used? Do particular circumstances shape the interpretation?'⁵⁰⁸

With respect to the biblical texts used, as argued before, the composition is done orally. A passage would be remembered and then incorporated in a song. In other cases, once a certain biblical text is remembered and thought to be appropriate in the immediate context, it would be checked in the Bible. Then the biblical words would be incorporated

⁵⁰⁶ King, F., 'Nyimbo za Vijana', in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, Eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.360ff. Also see Mtingele 1995, pp.5-6.

⁵⁰⁷ King, F., 'Nyimbo za Vijana', in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, Eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.363.

⁵⁰⁸ King, F., 'Nyimbo za Vijana', in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, Eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.362.

in a particular song. Even those who are illiterate, or technically illiterate, would look for someone who can practically read to check the “remembered text” in the Bible. ‘In this process either the circumstance of the writer, or a particular text, gives the initial impetus for composition’.⁵⁰⁹ My study of songs of different choirs in Kongwa and Dodoma shows that source passages come from the whole of the Bible, from the book of Genesis to Revelation.⁵¹⁰ More focused analysis of which texts are mostly preferred and used is yet to be done. King’s analysis of Mbogo’s lyrics also identifies that a ‘whole range of literary genres are drawn upon: legal, wisdom, prophetic, historical, gospel, letters, and apocalyptic forms of literature are all represented’.⁵¹¹ This is a common aspect in youths’ and women’s songs; that source texts come from the whole Bible.

We now elaborate on how texts are incorporated into the lyrics of the songs. The first song is based on a “thematic” hermeneutic strategy and the second on “textual” hermeneutic strategy.

Bartimayo-Yule

Solo: *Bartimayo yule, yule wa zamani*

Alikuwa Kipofu kabisa.

Siku moja Yesu, alipita pale

Akamwita, ‘Timayo! Timayo!’ (repeated twice)

Chorus: *Nini wataka?*

Macho yaone! (repeated thrice)

Yesu asema, ‘Macho yaone!’ (repeated thrice)

Solo: *Ndugu yangu wewe, ukama Timayo*

Ukipofu katika roho yako.

Bartimaeus-That

Solo: Bartimaeus, that, that of long ago

He was totally blind.

One day, Jesus passed by and he called him, ‘Bartimaeus! Bartimaeus!’

Chorus: ‘What do you want?’

‘Eyes to see!’

Jesus says, ‘Eyes (to) see!’

Solo: My comrade, you are like Bartimaeus

You are blind in your spirit.

⁵⁰⁹ King, F., ‘*Nyimbo za Vijana*’, in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, Eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.362.

⁵¹⁰ This is based on the author’s survey on songs of Maranatha, Mponyi, Mnyakongo, St. Andrew’s, St. Michael’s, Viganga Bii, Kongwa-Maji, Dodoma Road and Chimuli choirs of Kongwa District and Dodoma municipality. This study also involved interviews with choir directors and some members.

⁵¹¹ King, F., ‘*Nyimbo za Vijana*’, in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, Eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.364.

Yesu anapita, maishani mwako
Anakwita, 'Timayo! Timayo!'
Chorus: (the same chorus sung again)

Jesus passes by in your life
And he calls you, 'Bartimaeus!
Bartimaeus!'

In this song, the encounter of Bartimaeus with Jesus, and his subsequent healing, provides a theme and its application. In the second approach, texts are either used verbatim or altered and put together for rhythmic and interpretative reasons.⁵¹² More than one source text is incorporated in one song as the second song below shows. I have put source passages in square brackets.⁵¹³

Wapendwa

Solo: *Wapendwa siku za mwisho ni za hatari*

Watu watapenda fedha kuliko Mungu
(repeated)

Wapenda anasa, wenye kiburi, wenye kujisifu, wasiosafi [2Tim.3:1-4]

Chorus: *Kwa kuwa bado kitambo kidogo sana, Yeye ajaye atakuja, hatakawia, mwenye haki wangu ataishi kwa imani yake...[Ebr 10:37-38] Atakuja Yesu kama mwivi na hukumu yake [Ufu 16:15]*
(repeated twice)

Dear all/Beloved

Solo: Dear all, the last days will be dangerous times.

People will love money rather than God.

Lovers of pleasure, proud, boastful, (and) unclean/unholy [2Tim 3:1-4].

Chorus: For in just a very little while, he who is coming will come; he will not delay. (But) my righteous one will live by his/her faith [Heb 10:37-38]. Jesus is coming like a thief! [Rev 16:15].

It seems the words of the song are derived from the Swahili Bible, *Biblia*.⁵¹⁴ Below are the original Swahili texts in which I have underlined the portions incorporated in the song.

⁵¹² King, F., 'Nyimbo za Vijana', in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, Eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.365.

⁵¹³ Song source: St. Mary's Choir, Chimuli Anglican Church, Area 'C' Dodoma, from their Album *Kitimutimu*, distributed by Wasanii Promoters Ltd, n.d.

⁵¹⁴ *Biblia, Swahili Union Version*, Bible Societies of Tanzania and Kenya, UBS, 1994.

Lakini ufahamu neno hili, ya kuwa siku za mwisho kutakuwako nyakati za hatari. Maana watu watakuwa wenye kujipenda wenyewe, wenye kupenda fedha, wenye kujisifu, wenye kiburi, wenye kutukana, wasiotii wazazi wao, wasio na shukrani, wasiosafi, wasiowapenda wa kwao, wasiotaka kufanya suluhu, wasingiziaji, wastojizuia, wakali, wasiopenda mema, wasaliti, wakaidi, wenye kujivuna, wapendao anasa kuliko kumpenda Mungu (2Tim 3:1-4). Kwa kuwa bado kitambo kidogo sana, yeve aiaye atakuja, wala hatakawia. Lakini mwenye haki wangu ataishi kwa imani. Naye akisitasita roho yangu haina furaha naye (Ebr 10:37-38). Tazama naja kama mwivi. Heri akeshaye, na kuyatunza mavazi yake, asiende uchi hata watu wakaiona aibu yake (Uf 16:15 [Rev 16:15 cf. Mt 24:42-44 and Luke 12:39-40])⁵¹⁵

The first part of the *Wapendwa* song includes only some sentences and phrases of the source text, probably to fit in with the tune and interpretation. The reference to the love to God, which appears in verse 4 of the second book of Timothy chapter 3, is put in the first line. Then some mention of ungodly behaviours, and lastly 'unclean life' is mentioned. This wording seems to insist on the love for God as first and foremost, and that all other ungodly lives are results of 'unclean/unholy' living. The second part of the song is almost a verbatim quote of Hebrews chapter 10 verses 37 to 38, excluding the last line of verse 38 which states that if the faithful shrinks back, God will not be pleased with him. Does this omission imply, according to the hymn writer and the choir members, that shrinking back has no room in faith and righteousness? It is not clear to me, but one can argue that omissions of biblical words, additions, syntactical changes in the songs presuppose a contextual interpretative act, which is part of the ordinary readers' interpretation of the Bible. As Thiselton writes, 'Every understanding ...even if it is not explicitly arrived at by a conscious process of hermeneutics, still tacitly includes interpretation'.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹⁵ *Biblia, Swahili Union Version*, Bible Societies of Tanzania and Kenya, UBS, 1994.

⁵¹⁶ Thiselton, A., *The Two Horizons*, Carlisle, Paternoster 1993, p.100, as quoted by King, F., 'Nyimbo za Vijana', in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.366.

Youths' and women's songs are a contextual interpretation of the Bible. Youths and women, in their choirs, interpret the Bible in their situations and the circumstances of their audience. Songs that are verbatim biblical quotes, as pointed out earlier, are meant to remind people of the Word of God and let the people make their own implications of the texts. All songs reflect real contexts of the choirs and their listeners. So, neo-indigenous reading of the Bible, as envisaged in songs, is a contextual interpretation of the Bible.

The Bible as a literary document, particularly its poetic genre, has also had some bearing on the composition of some songs which seem to be patterned on the biblical poetic (Psalms) style. A comparative analysis of biblical poetic techniques and the poetic styles of the *nyimbo za vijana* and *nyimbo za wamama* from central Tanzania is also an area of research which may deepen our understanding of ordinary "readers'" appropriation of the Bible through songs and hymns.

Similarly, this kind of study can even provide insight into the factors that influenced Nyerere to translate the Gospels and Acts into Swahili poetic form. Apart from the influence of the Swahili poetic tradition, was Nyerere also influenced by the biblical poetic styles? *Nyimbo za vijana*, *nyimbo za wamama*, Nyerere's translation and other poetic translations and/or interpretations of the Bible, are brave signs of creative engagements with the Bible outside the theological academy of Tanzania. In these ordinary readings of the Bible, as Kings puts it, 'we see a true Tanzanian African Christian school of [biblical] interpretation, which speaks to its people in their familiar voice'.⁵¹⁷ Does this ordinary school of biblical interpretation have a place in the academic school of theology in Tanzania? Do the academic readings of the Bible recognise the rich resources of the ordinary readers? We now turn to the academic arena to see where the trained readers of the Bible stand.

⁵¹⁷ King, F., 'Nyimbo za Vijana', in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, Eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.372.

7.2 TRAINED READERS' READING: ACADEMIC CONTEXT

Theological colleges and university departments of theology form the context of academic interpretation in Tanzania. In this academic context one finds academically trained readers of the Bible, most of whom, particularly in Anglican Church institutions, have been trained in the Western context – America, Europe and Australia. They are trained in the Euro-American context but they are to do their biblical translation and interpretation in the Tanzanian context, and at times among ordinary readers of the Bible in villages where the Tanzanian Christian majority lives. Having mastered their Western tutors' tools of interpretation, can these trained readers recognise the resourceful context of ordinary readers of the Bible?

Despite the rich and creative interpretative resources of ordinary readers, as analysed in the previous chapter, very often these academic readers do not pay attention to the concerns of ordinary users of the Bible and their situation.⁵¹⁸ Often trained readers are reluctant to socially engage with ordinary Christians' context in parishes, in cities and villages. Those with teaching positions confine themselves in their institutions, while other trained readers concentrate on administrative responsibilities in their diocesan headquarters. This is a sign of a lack of concern for the situation and context of ordinary Christians. Trained readers, though they isolate themselves from the daily endeavours of the people, tend to dictate the interpretation of the Bible in the (Anglican) Church. The ordinary readers' understanding of the Bible is hardly accepted as valid and sometimes their faith is questioned.

Simon Chiwanga tells a story that when he first went for ordination training, in a theological college, he was shocked by the words of the principal in his opening speech: *mmekuja Chuoni ili tuweze kuondoa imani yenu ili tuwape imani mpya!* 'You have come to the College so that we can take away your faith and give you a new faith!' Because of these words, some students, particularly those who had entered the academic theological

⁵¹⁸ Cf. Ukpong, J.S., 'Popular Readings of the Bible in Africa and Implications for Academic Readings', in Gerald O West & Musa W Dube, Eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.583.

“world” for the first time murmured, ‘Why should they take away our faith...?’⁵¹⁹ One student wanted to leave the college; Chiwanga encouraged him to stay and he later agreed to continue with the training. Commenting on the story, Chiwanga argues that the principal’s reference to ‘faith’ did not mean our Christian faith in Jesus; but it means our old tools for understanding the Word of God; that the unprofessional methods that facilitate our understanding of the Gospel had to be dismantled so that we could acquire new tools and strategies.⁵²⁰

One can pose the question, ‘Why do ordinary readers, seeking entry into academic theological studies, have to throw away their “tools and methods”?’ In the story, and Chiwanga’s comments, one sees that their “other tools” are not recognised as valid, and therefore they have no room in the corridors of the academic school of theology. The unheard voices of the first year theological students and the decision of one student to leave the college manifest what one may call ‘ordinary readers’ “acts of resistance” to the academic dominance.⁵²¹ Acts of resistance to trained readers do sometimes emerge in working relationships where the academic and the ordinary interpreters of the Bible work together. Their relationships at times reveal ‘a reluctance to work together’; either the ordinary is seen as unqualified or ‘not well qualified’ or the trained reader is seen ‘as a threat’.⁵²²

Struggle for dominance is not an idiosyncrasy of the Tanzanian Anglican context; it can be found in other African contexts as well. Justin Ukpong identifies this struggle as ‘the dominance model’. It is the situation whereby the ordinary and the trained readers and their readings of the Bible seek to establish power over one another.⁵²³ Each side sees the

⁵¹⁹ Translation mine.

⁵²⁰ Dr Simon Chiwanga, currently bishop of Diocese of Mpwapwa, shared this story in a lecture at St. Philip’s Theological College, Kongwa, Tanzania, in 1995.

⁵²¹ Cf. West, G.O., ‘Contextual Bible Study in South Africa’, in Gerald O West & Musa W Dube, Eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.599.

⁵²² CACS, ‘Report on a Visit to Kenya and Tanzania in July 2003 by John Corrie’. Revd Dr John Corrie is co-ordinator of Centre for Anglican Communion Studies, Weoley Park Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham, UK.

⁵²³ Ukpong, J.S., ‘Contextual Hermeneutics: Challenges and Possibilities’, in Jesse N K Mugambi & Johannes A Smit, Eds, *Text and Context in New Testament Hermeneutics*, Nairobi, Acton, 2004, p.43; cf. Holter, K., ‘Old Testament Scholarship in Sub-Saharan Africa North of the Limpopo River’, in Gerald O West & Musa W Dube, Eds, *The Bible in Africa*, pp.58-59.

other as a threat to the truth of the Word of God and 'tries to save' it by 'suppressing the other's interpretation'.⁵²⁴ Ukpong also identifies an 'exclusive model' in his analysis of the interpretation between the ordinary and the trained readers.⁵²⁵ The exclusive model is a situation whereby each side tries to exclude the readings of the other as irrelevant.⁵²⁶ In the Tanzanian context, it is normally trained readers who tend to ignore the readings of the ordinary readers.

In the central region of Tanzania, there are both dominating and exclusive tendencies in the attitude of academic readers towards the ordinary readers. More often than not, the readings of the trained readers either dominate the "official" interpretation of the Bible, or they entirely ignore the ordinary concerns and readings of the Bible in testimonies, Bible studies, songs and hymns. Another 'model', which can be recommended in a situation where trained and ordinary readers read the Bible together, is a 'complimentary model' – or one can call it a complimentary relationship in reading and interpretation. This is a situation whereby both sides 'come to acknowledge each other as equal partners in a joint enterprise and work together in reading the Bible'.⁵²⁷ It is a collaborative approach, between ordinary and trained readers, in biblical interpretation; it is an interpretative act in which 'the resources of the people's culture and historical life experience are used as complimentary to conventional critical tools of biblical exegeses'.⁵²⁸ Through this approach the tools and the experience of the trained readers can facilitate the interpretative process of the ordinary readers, and as such the gap between the ordinary and the trained can be bridged from both sides. The aim in this call

⁵²⁴ Ukpong, J.S., 'Contextual Hermeneutics', in Jesse N K Mugambi & Johannes A Smit, eds, *Text and Context in New Testament Hermeneutics*, p.43

⁵²⁵ Ukpong, J.S., 'Contextual Hermeneutics', in Jesse N K Mugambi & Johannes A Smit, eds, *Text and Context in New Testament Hermeneutics*, p.44.

⁵²⁶ Ukpong, J.S., 'Contextual Hermeneutics', in Jesse N K Mugambi & Johannes A Smit, Eds, *Text and Context in New Testament Hermeneutics*, p.44.

⁵²⁷ Ukpong J.S., 'Contextual Hermeneutics', in Jesse N K Mugambi & Johannes A Smit, Eds, *Text and Context in New Testament Hermeneutics*, pp.43-44.

⁵²⁸ Ukpong, J.S., 'Developments in Biblical Interpretation in Africa: Historical and Hermeneutical Directions', in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 108, pp.1-8, as quoted by West, G.O., 'Biblical Hermeneutics and Its Relevance for Bible Translation in Africa', p.8. According to Holter, 'complimentary model is 'a model where two contexts and their interpretations acknowledge each other as equal participants – although with different contributions to make – in joint enterprise of creating an understanding of what the Word of God means for people to day' (Holter, K., *Yahweh in Africa*, p.59. In a South African context, it is a 'collaborative Bible reading' where academic and ordinary readers come together and read and interpret the Word (West, G.O., *The Academy of the Poor*, p.16).

for collaborative reading of the Bible is to actualise the meaning of the text in today's context in order to develop integration between faith and practice that can elicit commitment to personal and larger societal transformation. To achieve this goal, complimentary model demands that ordinary interpretations be incorporated in the theological academy.

If academic theology is to be relevant to its context, as well as enriching for the life of the whole church in Tanzania, it has to apply the 'complementary model'. That is, trained readers have to accept ordinary readers as equal comrades whose readings are necessary for truly Afri-centric biblical and theological studies. Anglican provincial theological colleges in Tanzania have tried to provide a place for the interpretative concerns of the ordinary readers but with little success, as we will see in the following depiction of two Anglican colleges.

In 1994, there was a revision of the syllabus for the Anglican colleges of St Mark and St Philip, Kongwa, which at least allowed individual tutors to develop their own optional courses in biblical and theological studies. Despite this step forward, many tutors have been reluctant in implementation. This reluctance is due to the "exclusive tendency" of trained readers which is a result of their Euro-centric theological training. In recent years, some few tutors in the two Anglican colleges have been able to introduce courses which take seriously the real context of Tanzania.

In the first half of the last decade, Ainea Kusenha, at St. Philip's, contributed much in the study of African Traditional Religions, which focused on the understanding of indigenous beliefs, practices and their relationship with Christianity. In 1995, John Chesworth, at St. Philip's, developed a liturgical course which, among other things, sought to make Tanzania worship and liturgy truly African and truly Christian. From October to November 1996, Fergus King, at St. Marks, taught an optional course on 'interpreting the Bible in Tanzania', which had two aims: first, it was to help students realise 'that biblical interpretation is not the preserve of the students and teachers, but is also found in parish life'; second, the course aimed to encourage students to know that ordinary readers'

interpretations of the Bible need serious attention, and should not be marginalised 'by a theological education which remains Euro-centric'.⁵²⁹

Tanzanian Euro-centric theological education is a dire result of Western hegemony and its eventual 'colonisation of our thought and the entirety of our way of life'. This theological education has produced "colonised biblical studies" whose approach takes the traditional (European) approach to the Bible as the norm, from which all else should follow. David Tuesday Adamo lists six marks of colonial biblical interpretation that can also help to envisage the Euro-centric context of biblical and theological studies in Tanzania.

1. Inculcation, that is, 'the use of the Bible as a vehicle for inculcating European manners'.
2. Encroachment, that is, 'the introduction to the "other" of alien values, under the guise of biblicization', in order to repudiate the local culture which is considered incapable of transmitting Christian truths.
3. Displacement, that is, the displacement of local culture.
4. Analogies and implication, that is, the juxtaposition of biblical and secular history as a weapon against those who resisted colonial intervention.
5. The textualisation of the Word of God, that is, the idea that no religious teaching was of any value unless it is in written form. This is in order to discredit the oral tradition of the local people.
6. The Historicisation of faith, that is, the affirmation of biblical religion as [only] a historical faith.⁵³⁰

This Euro-American-centric approach to biblical and theological studies in Tanzania still lives on even in this new millennium. Through this approach many trained readers of the Bible are still overwhelmed by old (Western) academic questions which for the most part

⁵²⁹ King, F., 'Nyimbo za Vijana', in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, Eds, *The Bible in Africa*, p.361.

⁵³⁰ Adamo, T.D., *Decolonising African Biblical Studies*, Abraka, Delta State University, 2004, p.13 cf. Sugirtharajah, J.S., *The Bible and Third World*, Cambridge, CUP, 2001, pp.61-73; Sugirtharajah, J.S., *Vernacular Hermeneutics*, Sheffield, Sheffield Academy Press, 1999.

overlook the real lives of the ordinary people of Tanzania. If academic readings are to be relevant in the Tanzanian context, they have to consciously and fully engage with both old questions and new ones. Academic interpretation of the Bible cannot be relevant unless it pays attention to the daily walks of ordinary life. The approaches of Kusenha, Chesworth and King suggest a relevant direction as to how theological and biblical studies should proceed in the Anglican Church of Tanzania and beyond. Through his interpretative approach of *Nyimbo za Vijana*, King has explicitly demonstrated how ordinary readers creatively engage with the Bible and how much the academic readers can learn from them. It is vital for academic readers to realise that ordinary readers' interpretative resources and methods are significant for the present formation and future of African biblical and theological studies in Tanzania, and of course in the whole of Africa.

7.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF ORDINARY READERS' INTERPRETATIVE RESOURCES AND PRACTICES IN BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL STUDIES IN TANZANIA

7.3.1 Reading with Ordinary Eyes

As the evidence shows in the preceding discussions of this thesis, ordinary readers of the Bible have not been just recipients of academic interpretation; they have been creatively appropriating biblical texts and applying them to their situations and needs since the early encounters with the Bible in Tanzania. For decades now, ordinary readers have developed, through their daily lives and experiences, interpretative resources and practices that have helped them to perceive the mystery of the Word of God, which brings joy and understanding in their life situations and needs. A Tanzanian story is told: 'A village woman used to walk around always carrying her Bible. "Why always the Bible?" Her neighbours asked teasingly. "There are so many books you can read". The women knelt down, held the Bible above her head and said, "Yes, of course there are many books which I could read. But there is only one book which reads me".'⁵³¹

⁵³¹ Weber, H.R., *The Book That Reads Me*, p.ix. Cf. Holter, K., *Yahweh in Africa*, p.51.

Trained readers can study the Bible academically to identify narratives, poetry, apocalyptic and other genres; this is good and it helps to uncover the message of the Bible; but, we may miss the mystery of the Bible 'that behind and through the stories, texts and visualised messages stands someone who looks at us, speaks to us and gives us guidance... The object of our enquiry [the Bible] becomes the subject who addresses us'.⁵³² The Tanzanian village woman has seen and understood the mystery of the Bible, that it is not just the object of our study and interpretation; it is the subject who 'understands us better than we do ourselves'. It is God speaking through the written Word in the power of the Spirit. The Living God speaks to the woman all the time, even when she walks around carrying her Bible. If centres of theology are to develop and pursue real African biblical and theological scholarship in Tanzania there must be a full recognition of the real existence of ordinary readers of the Bible and their significance in biblical interpretation and theology. Academic readings must be in conscious and constant dialogue with neo-indigenous readings of the Bible.

It has been common for academic readers in Tanzania to assume that they "read the Bible for" the ordinary; they "interpret for" them because they need to be taught what the Bible means. The approach should now be to "read the Bible with" the ordinary readers, and to "interpret it with" them.⁵³³ Ordinary African Tanzanian readers are not just recipients; they are part of the on-going development of African biblical and theological scholarship. Although there is a tendency to overlook, and even exclude, ordinary readers and their context, no one interprets the Bible in a vacuum. 'There is no innocent interpretation, no innocent interpreter, [and] no innocent text'.⁵³⁴ All interpretation is contextual, and in this contextuality ordinary readers' interpretative resources and practices do play a significant role. There must be a commitment to the context, life concerns and needs of the ordinary people. When biblical and theological studies are pursued 'without the appropriate connectedness to real local communities run the danger of becoming merely academic', which are only 'strained and rigid', and irrelevant to the communities and

⁵³² Weber, H.R., *The Book That Reads Me*, p.x.

⁵³³ West, G.O., *The Academy of the Poor*, pp.5-6,16.

⁵³⁴ Tracy, D., *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope*, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1987, p.79.

their real contexts.⁵³⁵ Commitment to the people's context, rather than a mere admission of contextuality, should be a real concern in academic biblical and theological studies.

African biblical studies cannot be meaningful in the Tanzanian context without real commitment to the real situation of the people in their survival; for African biblical and theological scholarship includes all readers of the Bible, men and women, poor and rich, as well as literate and illiterate. This is the path that academic theological studies in Tanzania should tread – encompassing ordinary and trained readers. We can also add that ordinary readers, their resources and hermeneutic acts, are part of African biblical interpretation, and as such they are vitally significant in biblical interpretation in Tanzania.

West puts forward four reasons which elaborate the significance of the ordinary readers and their tools for interpreting the Bible in Africa.⁵³⁶ Firstly, African biblical scholarship focuses on the correspondence between African experience and the Bible, something which locates the scholarly task within the social, political as well as ecclesiastical context, which is filled with ordinary readers of the Bible. As West rightly comments, "Biblical scholarship belongs in the church and community, not only in the academy, and, anyway, the community intrudes into the academy, demanding a presence and access to its resources."⁵³⁷ Secondly, some modern biblical scholarship impulses, like reader-response criticism and liberation interpretations, make necessary the inclusion of the ordinary, non-academic, readers of the Bible. Thirdly, academic readers, in their scholarly reading, have found elements of ordinary reading. It is true that any academic reader was at some point an ordinary reader; so academic readers incorporate ordinary elements of reading the Bible. Fourthly, all kinds of African contextual theologians recognise the significance of the foundational resources of ordinary "readers" of the Bible

⁵³⁵ Maluleke, T.S., 'The Bible Among African Christians' in Teresa Okure, Ed., *To Cast Fire Upon the Earth*, p.92.

⁵³⁶ West, G.O., 'Mapping African Biblical Interpretation: A Tentative Sketch', in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, Eds, *The Bible in Africa*, 2000, pp.40-44.

⁵³⁷ West, G.O., 'Mapping African Biblical Interpretation: A Tentative Sketch', in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, Eds, *The Bible in Africa*, 2000, p.43.

for the doing of theology (whether feminist theology, liberation theology, or African theology).⁵³⁸

African ordinary readers can be considered to play a great role in the development of African biblical scholarship. Ordinary people's interpretations of the Bible are contextual; the Bible is interpreted according to the people's socio-cultural contexts. As we have seen, there are contextual factors that make ordinary people read the Bible the way they do. They do not come to the Bible empty-handed. They have rich African indigenous resources that facilitate their appropriation of the Scripture.⁵³⁹ This is the academy of the non-academic reader. There is a lot that the academic reader can learn from the ordinary reader.

7.3.2 Towards Integration of Readings

There has been a gap between ordinary and the academic readers that needs to be bridged.⁵⁴⁰ In this process of bridging the gap, the tools of the academic reader can facilitate the interpretations of the non-academic reader.⁵⁴¹ Academic readers need to be prepared to listen and learn, as well as to prepare an atmosphere in which there can be reciprocal help and enrichment between the two readers. Because most ordinary readers of the Bible, for example in Tanzania, reside in villages, this listening and learning implies the actual learning of the local vernaculars. One can go even further and ask, can the vernacular languages, together with ordinary readers' interpretative modes, be used in biblical scholarship? Yes, of course! Just as the Bible has been translated into vernaculars, there can also be commentaries, Bible study manuals in vernaculars. Akrofi-Christaller Memorial Centre, Ghana, has launched a project on 'Biblical Commentary

⁵³⁸ This links with Wimbush's point about ordinary readers' resources as a 'foundational hermeneutic', see Wimbush, V.L., 'Reading Texts through Worlds, Worlds through Texts', in *Semeia* 62 (1993), p.138

⁵³⁹ *Jesus of the Deep Forest* (Accra, Asempa Publishers), by Afua Kuma, is a concrete example of how the rich African cultural context can facilitate the appropriation of the Bible in Africa. *Jesus of the Deep Forest*, as 'grassroots theology' (Bediako, K., *Jesus in Africa*, Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana, Regnum Africa, 2000, p.8), or 'a theology from the pews', has made tremendous contribution to African theological biblical interpretation.

⁵⁴⁰ Cf. Jonker, L.C., 'Bridging the Gap Between Bible Readers and 'Professional' Exegetes', in *Old Testament Essays* 10 (1997), pp.69-83.

⁵⁴¹ This is well expounded by West, G.O., *The Academy of the Poor*, 1999.

Writing on Ghanaian Languages'.⁵⁴² This can serve as an indicator as well as a challenge for Tanzania and other parts of Africa that a lot remains to be achieved regarding bridging the gap, and even integrating the academic and ordinary resources into the African biblical studies context of the academy.

Doing African biblical scholarship in the language of the ordinary readers of the Bible can be part of the task of 'bridging the gap'. This can be a challenging task for African biblical scholars, which requires not only commitment, but first of all, what West calls, 'conversion from below'.⁵⁴³ It is a decisive change of perspective and expectations. Once scholars change in their perspective, they cannot continue confining themselves in lecture rooms and campuses; they will go out and establish links with the ordinary readers of the Bible, the poor and marginalised. The Institute for the Study of the Bible (ISB), in its contextual Bible study with the poor and marginalised South Africans, is a concrete example of how the academic readers can read the Bible with the ordinary readers,⁵⁴⁴ not only in South Africa but also in a context like Tanzania, in which multitudes live under the threats of poverty, HIV/AIDS and other diseases. Readings of the Bible which can sustain the lives of the poor masses of Tanzania who live under constant threats of poverty and disease need an integrated hermeneutic strategy. This "integration" of the ordinary and trained readers' resources, tools and modes of interpretation is a daunting task facing African Tanzanian biblical hermeneutics in this decade and in many years to come.

Returning to the Tanzanian village woman who walks around carrying her Bible, telling her neighbours that the Bible is not just a Book we can read, it also reads us and speaks to us: she interprets her Bible intuitively. This intuitive interpretation of Word of God by a village woman may require an explicit place in the academic arena in Tanzania. It is an ordinary mode of interpretation. Holter puts forward a big challenge to trained readers of the Bible, which is worth noting, particularly in a context like Tanzania:

⁵⁴² *Akrofi-Christaller Centre News*, No.32, January-June 2003, p.5.

⁵⁴³ West, G.O., *The Academy of the Poor*, p.37.

⁵⁴⁴ West, G.O., 'Contextual Bible Study in South Africa: A Resource for Reclaiming and Regaining Land, Dignity and Identity', in Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, Eds, *The Bible in Africa*, pp.595-610.

Our obligation as biblical scholars – I would argue – is to create a context for biblical interpretation, where her popular and our academic experiences can meet and interact in mutual respect. We have the influence that is needed to initiate the research and establish the teaching programs that will let the interpretations of the popular and academic contexts fruitfully interact.⁵⁴⁵

In fulfilling this obligation and in establishing academic centres of theology in the Anglican Church of Tanzania, ordinary readers' interpretative resources and practices will require an explicit place; for they are vitally significant.

⁵⁴⁵ Holter, K., *Yahweh in African*, p.60; cf. Gitau, S., *et al*, 'Contextualized Old Testament Programmes?' *Newsletter on African Old Testament Scholarship* 2 (1997), pp.1-7.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to chart the contours of the engagement between the Bible and the indigenous people in Tanzania, specifically the Gogo in the central region. The processes of the engagement have explicitly envisaged how the Bible, from past to the present, has been appropriated in various ways and in different historical moments in Tanzania. In Chapters 4 and 5, which form the central part of this research, we have seen the appropriations of the Bible as an object of superior power, as a Book of knowledge and skills, as a text as well as the Bible as the Word of God. Through a historical analysis of the encounters, this research has demonstrated how the early engagement between the Bible and early “readers” was frequently different from their engagement with missionaries and/or Christianity. The indigenous desired to possess the Book, for instance Chief Mandara, even before they had thought to accept the new religion. Others read the Book, for example Chief Magunga, never accepted Christianity, though they supported the teaching of the new religion.

In African biblical and theological scholarship, the study of the Bible should not always be subsumed under Christianity and/or missionaries, if we are to clearly chart the processes of early encounters and their emerging interpretative practices. These early encounters, as we have seen throughout the thesis, have to be studied and understood because they are not a wasteland of naïve biblical readings that have nothing to do with present readings. They are bold and creative appropriations of the Bible that have been passed on to present ordinary “readers” of the Bible. In central Tanzania today, perceptions of the Bible as the Word of God and an object charged with power are as equally prevalent as they were about seventy years ago.

The analysis of neo-indigenous readings of the Bible through women’s and youths’ songs has demonstrated how the Bible is widely used and interpreted, and how it is held in high esteem as the Word of God, *Nghani yo Mulungu*. These ways of appropriating the Bible, with all the interpretative resources of the vernacular language, indigenous experience, community values, oral narratives and orature in general, are the rich heritage of past

readers, which is still stored in the hearts of many ordinary “readers” today. This heritage is disclosed by the ordinary “readers” themselves through their songs, testimonies, sermons, conversations and in their daily endeavours for survival. The Bible as the Word of God has remained to this day as one of the ordinary “readers” fountains of life, and as such a means of religious as well as socio-political mobility and mobilisation. A biblical ethos, coupled with an African community ethic, have been used implicitly and explicitly to mobilise the masses, the ordinary people, to move forward into possibilities of triumph and development, particularly in the politics of *ujamaa* in the post-colonial Tanzania. Contemporary ordinary “readers” have not abandoned their heritage of trust in the Word of God to effect changes in their lives. The texts of the Bible have been used to mobilise people to keep good morals in order to fight against HIV/AIDS, corruption, ethnic tension, women’s abuse, child abuse, rape, etc.

The use of the Word of God in the struggle against the evils that threaten human existence has creatively been continued among ordinary “readers”. This fact, and other findings as presented in this thesis, prove the guiding thought, the hypothesis, of the thesis that in all the historical and hermeneutical processes down through the years, the Bible, at least among ordinary readers, is a distinct object that contains mysterious (magic) power; also, there is a continuity of interpretative acts, from the past to the present, and this is why contemporary ordinary “readers” interpret the Bible the way they do. This study has also pointed out that academic readers of the Bible have a great deal to learn from the rich resources and interpretative strategies that “the school of the ordinary readers” have developed down through the decades. Similarly, through reading and interpreting with ordinary “readers”, trained readers will be able to share their tools and methods.

Due to the scope of this research and its limitation, what has been found out in this thesis is only a general view of the early encounters with the Bible. More focused research on the early presence and place of the Bible in Tanzania, how the natives encountered it and what impact there was, would be an appropriate step from this thesis. This second step will have to look closely at the role and impact of the Bible in mission proceedings,

education, politics and national building. Hence, more fieldwork and an in-depth study of CMS and UMCA archival material, both in Tanzania and overseas, will provide illuminating findings on how ordinary people began to engage with the Bible in the early missions. This kind of study can help to depict a clearer picture of the continuity, as well as the change, of ordinary readers from missionary times to the present.

Similarly, further research on interpretative ways of present “readers”, such as woodcarvings, songs, poems, dreams and visions would need to be probed. Songs have been discussed in this thesis, but further research might focus on collecting and comparing works of different song writers and poems from different parts of Tanzania in order to present a wider picture of women’s and youths’ biblical interpretation through songs and poems. The findings of such research will help to develop contextual syllabi in theological and Bible schools in the Anglican Church of Tanzania. Indeed, as this thesis has argued, the effectiveness of Tanzanian African biblical and theological scholarship will depend on its deep understanding of ordinary “readers” interpretative ways and the messages they convey.

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- 13) Benjamin Mkapa, A Speech at Tanzania Council of Churches in Dodoma on June 21, 2001.

A List of Interviewees:

Name	Gender	Place	Date
Ally Magomba	M	Dodoma	October 27, 2003
Anna Sigonza	F	Migoli	January 10, 2004
Atukelye Magomba	F	Kongwa	November 5, 2003
Azaria Mapogo	M	Kongwa	December 26, 2003
Beatrice Noha	F	Buigiri	October 26, 2003
Blandina Daudi	F	Mpwapwa	November 16, 2003
Chibupa Legazo	M	Dodoma	October 27, 2003
Devota Mhemi	F	Dodoma	October 27, 2003
Eliudi Chiwanga	M	Kongwa	November 6, 2003
Eunice Nhonya	F	Mlowa	February 8, 2001
George Cibago	M	Mvumi	December 4, 2003
Gilbert Muhuga	M	Kongwa	November 8, 2003
Husein Magomba	M	Makatapora	May 7, 2001
Janeth Petro	F	Mpwapwa	November 16, 2003
Jangisi Masagasi	M	Kongwa	November 6, 2003
Job Malogo	M	Kongwa	November 7, 2003
John Cilongozi	M	Mvumi	December 4, 2003

Julius Mjitii	M	Mlowa	December 3, 2003
Keneth Mjilima	M	Mpwapwa	November 15, 2003
Lutu Mbijima	F	Kongwa	November 6, 2003
Lyalizo Citewa	F	Mpwapwa	November 15, 2003
Lyanzengwa Chiponha	F	Mpwapwa	November 15, 2003
Magi Msimbi	F	Mvumi	December 4, 2003
Manzala Dani	F	Mvumi	December 4, 2003
Mariamum Mtaze	F	Mpwapwa	November 16, 2003
Martha Chilongola	F	Buigiri	October 26, 2003
Mary Mtyani	F	Kongwa	November 6, 2003
Matayo Muyombo	M	Mlowa	December 3, 2003
Matika Mzenji	F	Mvumi	December 4, 2003
Meshack Mazengo	M	Mvumi	December 5, 2003
Mhanga Barabara	F	Kongwa	November 7, 2003
Mhembano Mahanza	M	Mvumi	December 6, 2003
Mwaluko Nghanale	M	Mvumi	December 6, 2003
Mwanaidi Magomba	F	Mlowa	December 3, 2003
Mzenga Mchefu	M	Buigiri	October 26, 2003
Naftali Chikolingo	M	Kongwa	November 8, 2003
Ndudula Mtemi	F	Mpwapwa	November 16, 2003
Noeli Chilewa	M	Kongwa	November 5, 2003
Noha Chilangwa	M	Mvumi	December 5, 2003
Nola Fungo	F	Kongwa	December 26, 2003
Orpa Borna	F	Kongwa	December 26, 2003
Paulo Magomba	M	Migoli	January 10, 2004

Philemon Chiloleti	M	Kongwa	June 22, 2003
Polina Mbijima	F	Chamuhawi	November 17, 2003
Ruth Mazengo	F	Mvumi	December 6, 2003
Samson Malongo	M	Kongwa	November 2, 2003
Shida Cibwana	F	Buigiri	October 25, 2003
Simon Mhaci	M	Kongwa	November 24, 2003
Welezwe Mpolo	F	Buigiri	October 25, 2003
Yudith Mbwani	F	Dodoma	November 25, 2003

Interviews were conducted either in Cigogo or Swahili. Below is a sample of some guiding points/questions in Swahili, which were used in the research.

A Sample of Interview Questions

Utangulizi (introductory remarks) kufahamiana na mazungumzo mafupi ya kujiweka huru kwa ajili ya mahojiano.

1. *Kwa mara ya kwanza ulitona wapi Biblia?*
2. *Kabla ya hapo ulikuwa ukiifikiriaje?*
3. *Kwa mara ya kwanza umesikia lini habari za Biblia? Una weza kumkumbuka mtu aliye kusimulia?*
4. *Ni mambo gani, au neno gani katika Biblia lililo kugusa kwa mara ya kwanza uliposikia habari za Biblia?*
5. *Ulipoiona au uliposikia Biblia kwa mara ya kwanza ulipata hisia gani? Au mabadiliko gani katika maisha?*
6. *Je, Biblia ni nini, kwako binafsi na jinsi ambavyo umesikia wengine wanasema na kuisimulia?*
7. *Je, Biblia ni kitabu tu kama vitabu vingine?*
8. *Kuna umuhimu wa kuwa na Biblia nyumbani au ndani ya nyumba? Ni vema ikae sebuleni, chumbani au popote tu?*
9. *Je, Biblia ina umuhimu wowote kuwa nayo katika maisha ya mtu?*
10. *Inakusaidiaje?*
11. *Kama mtu hajui kusoma kuna haja awe na Biblia nyumbani mwake? Yanini?*

12. *Wengine wanapoombea wagonjwa wanawawekea Biblia vichwani. Kuna umuhimu wowote?*
13. *Wengine huweka Biblia chini ya kichwa au chini ya mto. Umewahi kusikia au kuona kitu hicho? Kuna umuhimu Fulani katika kufanya hivyo.*
14. *Kuna Biblia za Kiingereza, Kiswahili na Cigogo. Wewe unapendelea kusoma Biblia gani?*
15. *Hivi kuna umuhimu wa kuendelea kutengeneza Biblia katika lugha za asili. Biblia katika lugha za asili zina msaada gani?*
16. *Kwa kweli katika mambo ya kuulizia ulizia mimi nimemaliza; nilikuwa naomba unistimulie tu mambo mbalimbali kuhusu jinsi watumishi wa Mungu miaka ya nyuma walivyokuwa wanafundisha Biblia. Walikuwa wanafundishaje, mambo waliyopendelea kufundisha na jinsi watu walivyoyapokea.*
17. *Kuna hadithi zozote unazozijua ambazo zilikuwa zikitumika kuelezea Neno la Mungu.*

(Concluding remarks) Ahsante sana kwa mazungumzo, na jinsi ulivyonifundisha mengi ambayo sikuwahi kuyajua.

Note: interviews were not strictly confined within these questions. The questions functioned only as a guide though for the interviewer.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: *Simo ne Mbazi ze Wasetu*

–Narratives and Proverbs of our Forefathers/mothers

(i) *Simo* –Narratives

Linyani no Mdela – the monkey and the root

Izuva linji inyani liawwona mdela muswanu wono wendeze kulya. Likawukwega, ukalemela; likahimba no kusingisa ulawile ukafutula. Likawa kutwa, 'ulanga ulamwawa'. Vilovichifu mvula ikawatonya. Muhnembelo zakwe likawa jendela kumudela wuwulya. Lyezejela kanyhi mdela wose somho – likawatuga ndigwa.

Nhunizyo ya simo ayi yoyi: Vinhu vyose vimulombaga mulungu nayo yakavihulika du ulombe wavyo.

Cipofu ne Citewe – the blind and the lame

Izuwa limonga wanhu wejete wali wena muhizo. Mumonga Citewe na yunji cipofu. Wajenda, wajenda, wakawafika mbago mbaha, kanyhi yina mahanze matali munomuno. Mumbago yiyo mbaha, ukejela moto; moto muwaha ukawawatanga wanhu wawo wejete. Cikawa sigala cizila cidodo.

Ayu citewe yakawa tuga magulu yakawa tiza. Yakawasigala cibofu, yakugayagaya. Nayo, aah, yakawatuga meso yakawatizo moto. Nhunizyo yakwe simo ayi yohi: Mulungu you mutazi wa wose.

Sungula na Nzogolo vyali vilimbuya – the hare and the cock were good friends.

Sungura na nzogolo vyalivilimbuya. Izuva linji nzogolo yamulonjela sungula vyono mitondo yokwe kowuli mukung'ano, ninga mukung'ano wuwo vanhu vakubita mitwe du, miwili ikusigala muzikaya. Hodu nzogolo yakawa mulonjela sungula vyono cinyamihe vadumule mitwe, mitondo yibite kumukung'ano.

Chinyamihe cheze kunjila, sungula yakawa mulonjela mugolece wakwe yamudumule mutwe ubite kumukung'ano mitondo. Mucekulu yakawalema; sungula yakajendelela

mdindimiza. Micekulu wa sungula yakawa bita kwa nzogolo yakawone hono yadumuye mutwe wakwe. Yakawa kwagana nzogolo yasina mutwe (kumbe yahundice mutwe mumapawa). Yeze wuya yakwa mulonjela sungula, mulume wakwe, vyono kamwagana nzogolo yasina mutwe. Mucekulu wa sungula yakawa kutya, 'ninga vyono nghuwona yahundice mumabawa gakwe'. Sungual yakwa mutwa mugolece wakwe, 'ng'oo sahundice; muyangu yakondwa udumula mutwe wakwe ubite kumkung'ano. Ndumulaje nane'. Hodu mdala wa sungula yakawa sola nhemo yakawa mudumula mutwe, sungula mulume wakwe. Yeze mudumula du, yakawa kufya bahobaho. Usugu wa sungula ukawa duma.

Nhunizyo yakwe simo ayi: hamba uwe ulimusugu nha sungula, usugu wako uladuma du mulizuwa lyedumo.

(Note: these are just examples of Gogo narratives/stories which were used to interpret the Bible)

(ii) *Mbazi* – Proverbs

(A proverb is given in Cigogo with literal English translation or meaning)

Cidole cimonga siciwulagaga mhani – one finger does not kill a louse.

Nda ya muyago siyinji – another person's stomach (feeling) is a foreign land/country.

Manyakuwulawo kuubito kutitu – we know where we have come from, but the future is all unknown to us.

Lyambuwi matunda mwilechelo – many people pass away and at the same time many are born into this life.

Wubi walawa kwo mtwikwa – the one who was assisted to put the laggage on her head is the one who caused the trouble (or she is the one who conspired against me).

Mhinza yakwe kebatilwagwa – he who skins his own goat needs another person's help.

Mwana wa muwumba nyungu sikalekaga lizaye – A porter's daughter is a porter.

Chamundulu chimanyilu muwope –

Miluzi minji, micheza mbwa – too much whistling confuses a dog.

(Note: These are only few examples from my proverbs collection)

APPENDIX B: 'The Cloth Class' and The Teaching Cloth

Below a Bible teacher is teaching Gogo Christians to read so that they can be able to read their Bibles. Syllables are written on a cloth as a teaching aid.



APPENDIX C: Early CMS Elementary Schools in Central Tanzania (until 1911)

Station	Mamboya	Berega	Nyangala	Kongwa	Mvumi	Buigiri	TOTALS
Elementary schools	10	14	5	20	13	12	74
Teachers							
European	2	2	1	3	4	2	15
Native	8	5	1	13	15	10	52
Others	1	2	0	4	0	0	7
TOTAL	11	10	2	20	19	12	74
Male readers							
Christian	32	19	10	73	65	35	234
Other religions	172	280	163	641	598	597	2451

TOTAL	204	299	173	714	663	632	2685
Female readers							
Christian							
Non-Christian	36	20	6	109	36	30	237
TOTAL	146	251	104	496	292	414	1703
	182	271	110	605	328	444	1940
Total readers	386	570	283	1319	991	1076	4625

Note: this information is based on Knox, E., *Signal on the Mountain*, p.240 and on 'Statistics of the Eastern Equatorial Africa Mission, 1894' in *Proceedings of the Church missionary Society for Africa and the East from 1844 to 1921*, p.82.

APPENDIX D: The Gogo Christians Who Suffered During World War I (1914-1918)

Native readers, Christians and other adherents of the *Church Missionary Society's* mission in the Gogo region who endured great brutality were:

Andrea Mwka of Kisokwe – He was 'kicked and hammered' and 'herded into crowded cells'.

Andrew Kanyanka. He was a teacher of the Bible. He was 'flogged, chained and imprisoned'

Samwili (Samuel), Petero (Petro) and Daudi (David) were young Christian readers. They were 'mercilessly flogged by the Germans because they refused to say what they knew to be untrue about the missionaries'.

Natanieli Lenguja, Nehemiya Masing'oti, Zephaniya Mudaci and Hesikiya Alimosi were junior teachers of the Bible. During the First World War, 'they were arrested by the Germans, flogged, imprisoned with hard labour. They were chained together'. In 1966, Zephaniya Mudaci walked many kilometres to see the children of his friend, Thomas BR Westgate, who came to visit St. Philip's Theological College, Kongwa, Tanzania.

Danyeli Mbogo was one of senior teachers of the Bible. 'The Germans failing to capture him during the 1914 War offered 500 rupees for his head. They took his wife (Iohi?) and greatly abused her'.

Madari Muluu was a Bible translator and teacher. He also suffered during the War.

Paulo (Paul) was a teacher at Handali. 'He was taken by train to Morogoro and brought before the Governor on false charges – sentenced to Tabora Prison Camp for duration...[he] was kicked hammered and knocked down by the German guard [named] Hinckmann'.

Zakariya (Zachariah) Mazengo of Handali was 'arrested at Dodoma by May 1916...[and he was] falsely accused of writing letters to the British to come quickly and take the Colony'.

Yonatani (Jonathan) Mutandala and Musa (Moses) Kongola 'all were bound with strong cords with elbows almost meeting at the back – made to lie flat – face downwards – flogged with *kiboko* by two men, one on either side to the extent of 110 lashes each'.

Samwili (Samuel) Makanyaga was a CMS teacher at Ihumwa. Also Zebedayo, Yosiya and Yusufu and Dawudi (samwili's younger brother) [were] arrested at Buigiri and taken to Dodoma [in] April 1916'. 'Samwili Makanyaga – was (with his brother) made to lie down and be flogged. Each had 25 lashes – their necks were tied together with ropes'. 'All [were] falsely accused of heliographing from the Chahwa hills and of having been taught how to do this by E.W. Doulton and T.B.R. Westgate'. (Source: Thomas B R Westgate, 'A List of Some Wagogo who Suffered Terribly at the Hands of the Germans During the 1914 – 1918 War in German East Africa' (St Philip's Theological College Archives, Kongwa, Tanzania).

APPENDIX E: Photo Gallery of Bible People and CMS Stations

PICTURE 6:

Loyi Mbogo, wife of Danyeli Mbogo (later Canon Daniel Mbogo) of Kongwa. Loyi Mbogo as a Bible reader, suffered terribly during World War I because she did not disclose where her husband was hiding. Danyeli hid himself because he was accused by Germans of signalling the British armies during the War. (Source: St. Philip's Theological College Library, Kongwa, Tanzania. The same source for all photos in this photo gallery)



PICTURE 7:

One of the first Bible Teachers at Kongwa. From left (standing): Mbogo, Yodaya, and Mlenga. Sitting: Madari Mlutu (left) and Andrea Mwaka (right).



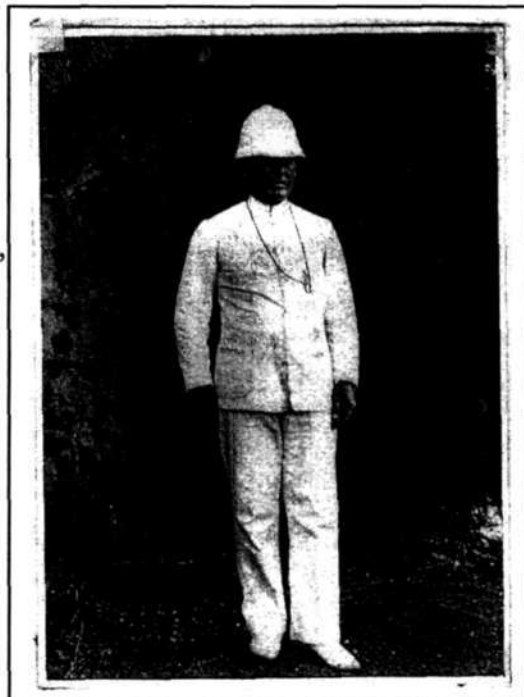
PICTURE 8:

A powerful Gogo chief, Magunga, who read the Bible with Bible teachers and missionaries, but he never became a Christian. He supported the mission work and he was respected by many



PICTURE 9: Thomas B.R.

Westgate, who was nicknamed by The Gogo *Mhembano*, 'the strong one'. He taught the Bible at Kiboriani, Mpwapwa, Kongwa and Buigiri.



PICTURE 10:

This is Maswaga, the young Chief of Buigiri who succeeded Magunga the hereditary chief. Maswaga was appointed by the Germans because he “read”. He wears the regulation cap as a symbol of his position during the German rule.

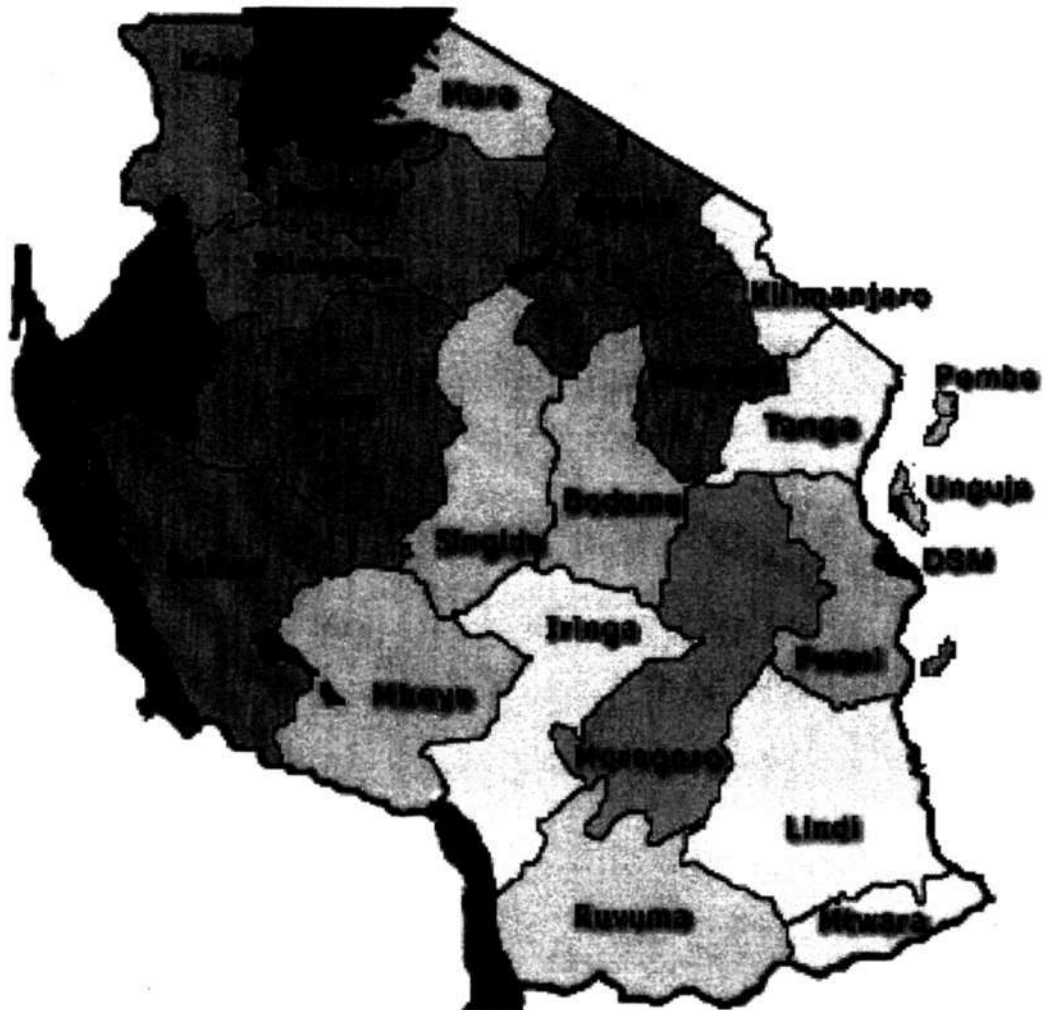


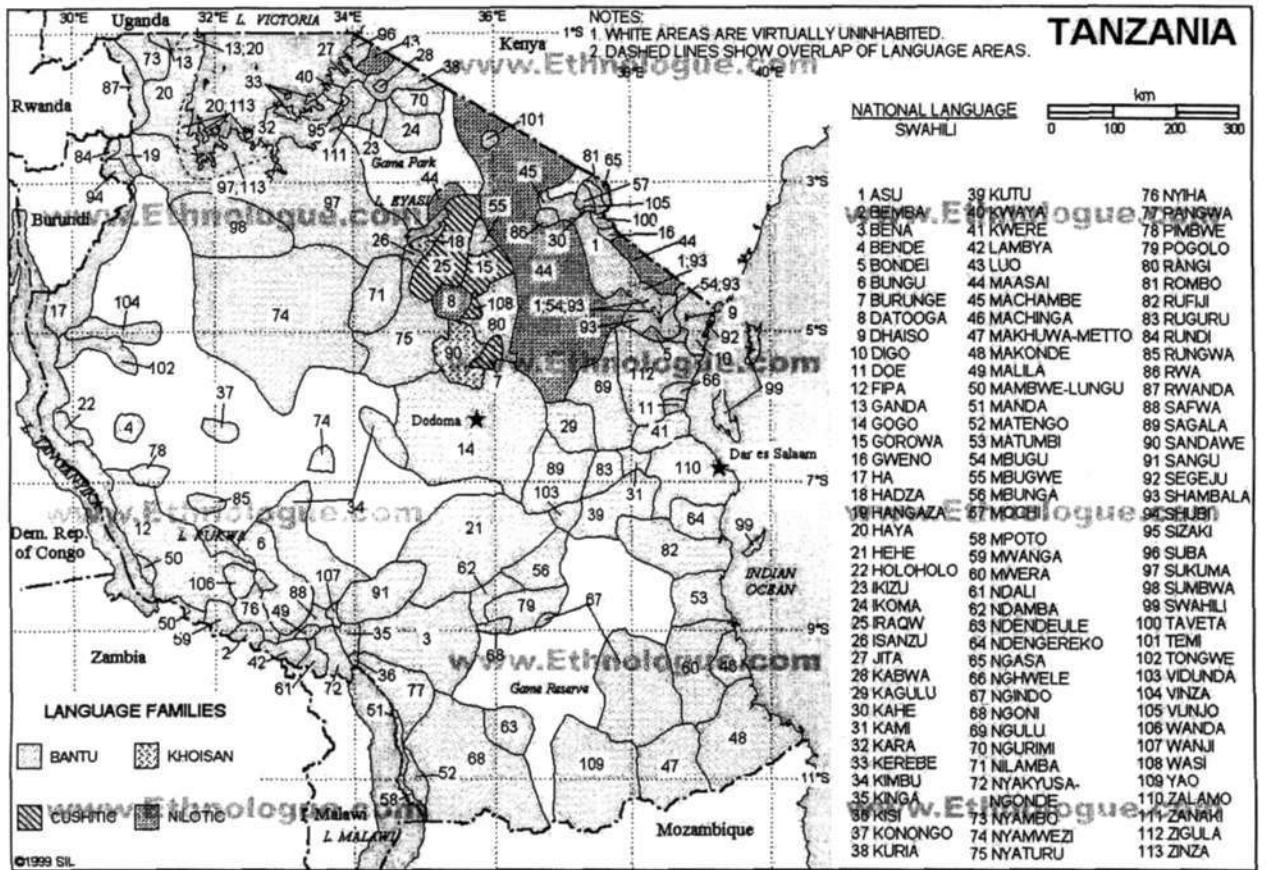
PICTURE 11:

This is Chief Lenjima of the Buigiri District during the German Period in Tanzania. Chief Lenjima became impressed with the Gospel when he was 40 years of age. He said, ‘the things concerning God are very great. I am thankful to you missionaries because you have brought them to us’. (Lenjima 1911, as quoted by Westgate, T.B.R. Source St. Philip’s archives).



APPENDIX F: MAPS
TANZANIA - REGIONS





Source: Summer Institute of Linguistics 1999.