

**BIBLE TRANSLATION IN CHRISTIAN MISSION:
A CASE STUDY OF THE SPIRITUAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL
IMPACT OF THE BIBLE TRANSLATION STRATEGY OF
THE GHANA INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS, LITERACY
AND BIBLE TRANSLATION ON THE DEGA PEOPLE OF GHANA**

By

THOMAS ATTA-AKOSAH
Bachelor of Arts (Theology)

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Dedicated to

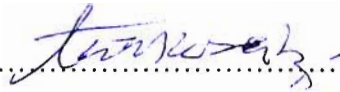
My senior brother,
Justin Kwadwo Anhwere Frempong
for your fatherly love and concern
since the death of our father 36 years ago.
Esie ne kagya nni aseda!

and the

USA Division of the Wycliffe Bible Translators International
for sponsoring my theological education at the
Diploma, Bachelor and Masters levels.
You have been like a tree through whom the creeping
plant has known heights.

DECLARATION

I declare that
apart from the sources specifically acknowledged in the text,
this work constitutes the results of my research in the subject
and it has not been submitted either in part or whole
to any other University.



Thomas Atta-Akosah

(Student)



Dr. Allison Mary Howell

(First Supervisor)



Prof. Gillian Mary Bediako

(Second Supervisor)

October 2004

ABSTRACT

After participants had been told of the processes of Bible translation during a prayer partners meeting of Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT), one of them asked, “After the people have been given the Scriptures, what happens?” This study has been an attempt to supply answers to such questions. It attempts to ascertain the impact that the Bible translation strategy (BTS) of GILLBT has had on the Dega people of Ghana, especially their socio-cultural and spiritual lives. The study uses Darrell Whiteman’s conceptual framework of Integral Human Development¹ to analyse how the Bible translation strategy has contributed to their human development. The BTS comprises linguistic and anthropological research, Bible translation, literacy and development and Scripture-In-Use.

The dissertation traces the historical origins and the rich but distinctive cultural beliefs and practices of the Dega. The results have shown that *Tete wɔ bi ka, tete wɔ bi kyere*, “the past has a lot to say and teach us”. The emergence of the Church and the BTS in the Dega Hare (Degaland) has also been outlined. One fact that runs through all the stories is the conspicuous role that the laity played in bringing the Church to Dega Hare. The Church came as early as in the 1930s, mostly from the south of the country. However, the situation is changing and from the 1990s Dega initiated churches are emerging.

The BTS has been in Dega Hare since 1981 and some of the fruits have been the Deg New Testament, an ongoing Old Testament translation, a literacy program that has made over three thousand Dega literate in Deg, a Scripture use promotion program called Scripture-In-Use and an indigenous organisation, Deg Language Project.

The dissertation analyses the socio-cultural and spiritual impact that the BTS has had on Dega in chapters four and five. It uses human interest stories and testimonies to depict the impact on the lives of individuals and communities. The dissertation ends with a summary of the findings and some recommendations for the future.

¹ Whiteman, Darrell, ‘Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development’, in Philip C. Stine (Ed.), *Bible Translation and The Spread of the Church: The Last 200 Years*, Brill, Leiden, 1990, pp.120-141.

NEA W'AYI AFIRI MU ABƆ NO PƆ

Kristofoɔ kuo bi wɔ Ghana a wɔfrɛ no, Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT). Wɔn dwumadie titire baako ne sɛ wɔtwɛrɛ Twɛrɛ Kronkron no akɔ kasa hodoɔ a ɛwɔ Ghana mu. Ɛberɛ bi, nnipa bi hyiaɛ sɛ wɔrɛbɔ mpacɛ ama saa dwumadie yi no, wɔn mu baako bisaa sɛ, “Na sɛ mo wie Twɛrɛ Kronkron no twɛrɛ a, ɛdɛn bio na ɛsie?” Adesua yi botae ne sɛ ɛbɛ pɛ muayɛ pa ayi nsem sɛɛ ano. Ɛhwɛhwɛ ahunu sɛ, ɛfiri sɛ Twɛrɛ Kronkron twɛrɛ dwumadie yi kɔ Degaman mu yi, sɛn na asi aboa wɔ wɔn daa daa asetena ne honhom fa mu? Nhwɛhwɛmu yi gyina adesua bi a Derrell Whiteman ayɛ de pɛ ahunu sɛ, so Twɛrɛ Kronkron twɛrɛ dwumadie yi boa amanfoɔ mpuntuo anaa? Dwumadie a GILLBT edi no Degaman mu no wɔ nkurabata nnan: kasa ne amammɛrɛ nhwɛhwɛmu, Twɛrɛ Kronkron twɛrɛ ankasa, akenkan ne atwɛrɛ kyɛrɛ, ɛna kwan a wɔfa so de Twɛrɛ Kronkron no di dwuma.

Adesua yi dii kan hwɛhwɛ Degafɔɔ abakɔsɛm ne wɔn Nananom gyɛdie mu. Dɛɛ afiri mu aba no kyɛrɛ pɛfɛɛ sɛ, tɛtɛ wɔ bi ka, ɛna tɛtɛ wɔ bi nso kyɛrɛ. Adesua yi nso ahwɛhwɛ kwan a asɔrɛ no ne Twɛrɛ Kronkron dwumadie no faa so baa Degaman mu. Adɛɛ baako a ada adi ne ɛfa a nnipa a wɔnyɛ asɔfoɔ faa so boa maa Kristosom ne asɔrɛ baa Degaman mu. Asɔrɛ firi asɛɛ baa ho bɛyɛ 1930 mu, na emu dodoɔ no firi Ghana anaafɔɔ na ɛbaacɛ. Nanso, ɛbɛyɛ mfie du ni dɛɛ, nsɔrɛ pii aba Degaman mu a, Degafɔɔ no ara na wɔdɛda ano.

Ɛbɛyɛ mfie aduonu-mmiensa ni a Twɛrɛ Kronkron dwumadie yi baa Degaman mu no, aso aba hodoɔ pii: w'awie Dɛg Apam Foforo no, Apam dada no nso wɔguso retwɛrɛ, Dɛg akenkan ne twɛrɛ a ama Degafɔɔ bɛyɛ mpɛnsa asua akenkan ne atwɛrɛ, ɛnɛ kwan a wɔfa so de Dɛg Twɛrɛ Kronkron no di dwuma. Ne korakora no, dwumadie no nso akɔdi Degafɔɔ ankasa nsa mu.

Adesua yi ti a ɛtɔsɔɔ ɛnan ne enum no kyɛrɛ nɛa esi wɔ abɛrɛ a w'awie Twɛrɛ Kronkron no twɛrɛ. Mayɛ mpɛnsɛmpɛnsɛm mu a ɛkyɛrɛ sɛnɛa Twɛrɛ Kronkron dwumadie yi aboa Degafɔɔ wɔ wɔn daadaa asetena ne honhom fa mu. Adansɛdie a nnipa pii adi afa boa a dwumadie yi aboa wɔn nso wɔ adesua yi mu bi. Awieɛ no, adesua yi twɛrɛfoɔ abɔ nsem yi nyinaa pɔ de nsusuie ahodoɔ pii ato dwa.

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A tortoise made its home under a large rock for a long time. One day it decided to climb the rock. After many attempts and struggles, the tortoise finally found itself at the top of the rock. It looked down and wondered, “How did I ever get here?” As I look back to the beginning of this study program in February 2002, I also ask myself, “How did I ever get here?”. “... yet not I but the grace of God that was with me.” (1 Cor. 15:10b). This study has reached this far because of the help of God through many individuals, institutions and organisations.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Acronyms

Meaning

AGM	Annual General Meeting
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BBF	Believers Bible Fellowship
BSCE	Basic School Certificate Examination
BTS	Bible Translation Strategy
CAC	Christ Apostolic Church
DELACO	Deg Language Advisory Committee
DLP	Deg Language Project
ECAC	Evangelical Christ Apostolic Church
FCBH	Faith Comes By Hearing
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GILLBT	Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation
GPP	Gender Promotion Program
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Country
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IHD	Integral Human Development
JSS	Junior Secondary School
LFL	Literacy for Life
MOSU	Mo Students Union
MTT	Mother Tongue Translator
NAMOSA	National Mo Students Association
NEA	Northern Empowerment Association
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PRAAD	Public Records Archives and Administration Department
SDA	Seventh Day Adventist
SIL	Summer Institute of Linguistics
SIU	Scripture-In-Use
SSS	Senior Secondary School
UNO	United Nations Organization
USA	United States of America
WBTI	Wycliffe Bible Translators International

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	ii
Dedication	iii
Declaration	iv
Abstract	v
Abstract in Mother Tongue (<i>Asante-Twi</i>)	vi
Acknowledgement	vii
List of Abbreviations	
 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	 1
1.1 Background to and Motivation for the Research	2
1.2 Literature Study and the Location of the Research within the Existing Literature	4
1.3 Research Problem	7
1.4 Intellectual Framework	8
1.5 Research Design and Methodology	9
1.6 Limitations	10
1.7 Research Ethics	10
 CHAPTER TWO: ETHNOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND OF THE DEGA PEOPLE OF GHANA	 12
2.1 A Brief Profile of Ghana	12
2.2 Origin and History of Dega	14
2.2.1 Location and Name	14
2.2.2 The Origin of Dega	16
2.2.3 Political and Social Structure	20
2.3 Occupation	26
2.4 Demography and Migration	27
2.5 Education and Literacy	27
2.6 Genetic Language Relationships and Language Use	30
2.7 Some Dega Cultural Practices and Beliefs	31
2.7.1 <i>Pea Dii</i> (Yam Festival)	31
2.7.2 Dega Marriage	33
2.7.3 <i>Mooga</i> (First Pregnancy) Ritual	34
2.7.4 Welcoming of Babies	35
2.7.5 <i>Lwejena</i> (Big Funerals)	35
2.7.6 Widowhood Rites	37
2.7.7 <i>Hare Kwaara</i> (Ritual to redeem the land)	38
2.7.8 <i>Som Too</i> (Sheanut Collection) Ritual	38
2.8 Dega Cosmology and Worldview	38
2.9 H.W. Turner's Six-Feature Analysis of Primal Worldview	41
2.9.1 Kinship with Nature	41

2.9.2	Human Weakness	41
2.9.3	“Man” Is Not Alone	42
2.9.4	Relations with Transcendent Powers	42
2.9.5	“Man’s” Afterlife	43
2.9.6	The Physical as Sacramental of the Spiritual	43
2.10	Conclusion	43

CHAPTER THREE: THE EMERGENCE OF THE DEGA CHURCH AND THE BIBLE TRANSLATION STRATEGY OF THE GHANA INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS, LITERACY AND BIBLE TRANSLATION (GILLBT)

3.1	The Language Factor in Christian Mission	45
3.2	The History of the Dega Church and Use of Mother Tongue	53
3.2.1	The Methodist Church	53
3.2.2	Roman Catholic Church	56
3.2.3	Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA)	57
3.2.4	Presbyterian Church of Ghana	59
3.2.5	The Church of Pentecost	59
3.2.6	The Christ Apostolic Church (CAC)	60
3.2.7	The Evangelical Christ Apostolic Church (ECAC) ...	61
3.2.8	Bible Believers Fellowship (BBF)	62
3.2.9	<i>Duu Korowii</i> Evangelical Church	62
3.3	A Brief Profile of the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation	63
3.3.1	The Bible Translation Strategy of GILLBT	66
3.3.2	Linguistics & Anthropology	67
3.3.3	Translation	69
3.3.4	Literacy and Development	72
3.3.5	Scripture-In-Use (SIU) Program	75
3.4.	The Bible Translation Strategy in Dega Hare	76
3.4.1	Literacy and Development	78
3.4.2	Scripture-In-Use Program	81
3.5.	Conclusion	82

CHAPTER FOUR: AN ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACT OF THE GILLBT BIBLE TRANSLATION STRATEGY ON THE DEGA

4.1	Integral Human Development (IHD)	83
4.2	Self-Respect and Dignity through Language Use	88
4.3	Dega Literature Development	91
4.4	Mother Tongue Literacy and Education	92
4.5	Occupation and Economy	95
4.6	Dega Indigenous Leadership	96
4.7	Dega Women’s Empowerment	98

4.8	The Scripture as a Unifying Factor	100
4.9	Conclusion	102
 CHAPTER FIVE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE SPIRITUAL IMPACT OF THE GILLBT BIBLE TRANSLATION STRATEGY ON THE DEGA		
		103
5.1	The Use of the Deg New Testament	104
5.2	Evangelism and Church Growth in Dega Hare	109
5.3	The Development of Indigenous Theologies	111
5.4	Development of Indigenous Deg Songs for Christian Worship	115
5.5	Primal Religious Beliefs and Practices	116
5.6	Ecclesiastical Hegemony	119
5.7	Conclusion	119
 CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION		
		121
6.1	Summary of Findings	121
6.1.1	Spiritual Impact	122
6.1.2	Socio-Cultural Impact	125
6.2	Recommendations	126
6.2.1	Christian Engagement with Spiritual and Social Felt Needs	126
6.2.2	Networking and Collaboration with other Organizations	127
6.2.3	Maala School	127
6.2.4	Deg Newspaper or Newsletter	128
6.2.5	Scripture Distribution, Sale and Statistics	129
6.2.6	Mother Tongue Scripture Program for Children	130
6.2.7	DLP and the 5-Phase Model	130
6.2.8	Towards Financial Sustainability of DLP	131
6.2.9	Integral Human Development as Model for Assessing BTS Impact	131
6.3	Conclusion	131
 BIBLIOGRAPHY		
		133
 FIGURES:		
	1979 Deg Linguistic Survey Table	69
	Translation Diagram	70
	Deg Literacy Data	79
	Wheel of Integrated Human Development	86
 APPENDICES:		
APPENDIX 1	Questionnaire	141
APPENDIX 2	Copy of Assessment Invitation Letter	145

APPENDIX 3	Scripture Impact Assessment Seminar Questions	146
APPENDIX 4	Impact Assessment Seminar Pictures	147
APPENDIX 5	Map of West Africa	148
APPENDIX 6	Map of Ghana Showing Volta River	149
APPENDIX 7	Administrative Regions of Ghana	150
APPENDIX 8	Ethnic Map of Ghana	151
APPENDIX 9	Language Map of Ghana	152
APPENDIX 10	Map of MoDega Traditional Area	153
APPENDIX 11	List of Deg Literacy Books	154
APPENDIX 12	GILLBT Literacy Program 5-Phase Model	156
APPENDIX 13	List of Paramount Chiefs (1)	159
APPENDIX 14	List of Paramount Chiefs (2)	160
APPENDIX 15	Faith Comes By Hearing Pictures	161
APPENDIX 16	Pictures of Various Architectural Styles in Dega Hare	162
APPENDIX 17	Literacy Activities of DLP & Other Pictures	164

INTRODUCTION

Bible translation primarily involves the rendition of the biblical text from the original language into a receptor language. However, this is just the beginning of a long process that encompasses the total life of a people, including their cultural, social and spiritual lives. In this process, translation cannot be neutral because it impacts both the process and the receptor context. Lamin Sanneh sees two ways that mission can proceed: “mission by diffusion” and “mission by translation”.¹ The former makes the missionary culture part of the message while the latter accepts the receptor culture. The paradigm of the translatability of the Christian mission is the incarnation of Jesus Christ. For when “God in Christ became man, Divinity was translated into humanity, as though humanity were a receptor language”.² Christ did not come with a “heavenly” language but spoke Aramaic, his mother tongue, and took on the Galilean culture. According to Andrew Walls, “the first divine act of translation into humanity thus gives rise to a constant succession of new translations”.³

Bible translation is an approach to missionary work in which the major missionary activity is translating the Bible (or parts of it) into the mother tongue of those being evangelized to enable them read it with understanding. It emphasizes the vital (though not necessarily exclusive) place of the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit in making and nurturing believers. It is based on the belief that “The Spirit of God takes the Word of God and makes a child of God”.⁴ Consequently, the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT), has been involved in the Bible translation strategy in the *Dega Hare* (Dega land) since 1981.

From the context of historical Christian mission however, Bible translation has been a novelty. For as Bediako has noted in the epilogue to Schaaf’s book,

¹ Sanneh, Lamin, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1989, p29.

² Walls, Andrew F., *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1996, p27.

³ Walls, Andrew F., *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, p29.

⁴ Dye, Wayne T., *Bible Translation Strategy: An Analysis of its Spiritual Impact*, Wycliffe Bible Translators, Dallas, Texas, 1980, p19.

Africa in modern times was experiencing the reception of the word of God in ways and at levels which the crucial formative generations of Christians of northern and western Europe, who received Christianity through the medium of a special ecclesiastical language, Latin, may never have known.⁵

The focus in this study will be on the Bible translation strategy of GILLBT among the Dega people of Ghana, who also had an ecclesiastical language, Asante-Twi, before the translation of the New Testament into their mother tongue. The strategy has a four faceted approach: linguistics, translation, literacy and community development and Scripture use promotion.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO AND MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH:

As a result of national geographical demarcation, the Dega people are located within Brong Ahafo and the Northern Regions of Ghana. The Black Volta River runs between two major Dega towns, Bamboi in the Northern Region and New Longoro in the Brong Ahafo Region. In Ghana, Dega people are popularly known as *Moforo*⁶ but they call themselves *Dega*, speak *Deg* and call their land *Dega Hare*. The Deg New Testament was published in 1991 and the Old Testament is currently being translated.

As a Scripture-In-Use Consultant of GILLBT, my concern is to understand the impact of the Bible translation strategy on those who are receiving the Scriptures. My choice of Dega for this study was informed by a number of reasons. Dega people have been regarded by many outsiders as part of Asante and/or Boron and therefore little has been written about them. Researching about the people of Gold Coast, now Ghana, Rattray made a brief reference to the Dega (Mo) as follows, “There are also some other tribes which are not dealt with in these volumes, e.g. [sic] the Mo and Pantera which also inhabit this area”.⁷ I have been motivated to research and write about them in order to glean from the untapped knowledge and experiences that abound in Dega Hare and contribute to Christian mission. I am eager to find out how they are now using the

⁵ Schaaf, Ype, *On Their Way Rejoicing: The History and Role of the Bible in Africa*, (Revised Edition), Regnum Africa, Akropong, 2002, p247.

⁶ Asante-Twi word which literally means, “The people who did well”. The history behind the name has been explained in Chapter two of this dissertation.

⁷ Rattray, R.S., *Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, Vol. II, at the Clarendon, Oxford Press, UK, 1932, pp516-517.

Scriptures in their own mother tongue, having used the Asante-Twi Scriptures for many years. What factors are promoting the use of Deg Scripture and what factors are militating against its use? How has the Bible translation strategy of GILLBT impacted especially, their socio-cultural and spiritual lives?

GILLBT's translation strategy has introduced a number of programs like the Faith Comes By Hearing (audio Scripture), Scripture songs in Deg, Gospel and Culture workshops and Bible correspondence courses that are aimed at promoting the use of the Deg Scripture. GILLBT is undertaking similar programs in other language groups in Ghana but little research has been undertaken to evaluate the impact of these programs on people and their communities. This is very characteristic of Christian organisations like GILLBT who scarcely evaluate their work. The cause of the lack of self-evaluation may stem from a reaction to the criticisms of cultural anthropologists and social scientists who have accused Christian organisations of interfering and changing indigenous societies.

Sjaak Van Der Geest who worked in Ghana as a missionary before studying anthropology has noted that "In the training of anthropologists, the image of the missionary is presented and 'cherished' as a deterrent, as an example of what anthropologists should not be".⁸ He adds that missionaries are seen as

talkers (preachers) and people who bring about change (converters), whereas anthropologists like to see themselves as listeners and custodians of culture. Missionaries destroy culture. They make traditional knowledge, values and practices, and ('pagan') rituals and objects of art, disappear. Anthropologists, by contrast, preserve and record them.⁹

However, there is no such thing as a static society because all cultures are dynamic. This study will help, indirectly, to respond to the above criticisms. The analysis of the impact of the Bible translation strategy on the socio-cultural life of Dega is particularly significant in view of the shift in the centre of gravity of Christianity to Africa. Andrew Walls has noted that

... within the last century there has been a massive southward shift of the centre of gravity of the Christian world, so that the representative Christian lands now appear to be in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa,

⁸ Geest, Sjaak Van Der, 'Anthropologists and Missionaries: Brothers Under the Skin', *Man*, 25, 1990, p588.

⁹ Geest, Sjaak Van Der, 'Anthropologists and Missionaries: Brothers Under the Skin', p588-589.

and other parts of the Southern continents. This means that Third World theology is now likely to be the representative Christian theology.¹⁰

The Dega story has the potential to make helpful contributions to Christian theology, and mission history in particular. I am, therefore, motivated to conduct this study in order to examine the impact of the Bible translation program on Dega Hare.

The results of this research will enhance my work among the Dega and more than thirty other language groups in Ghana. The outcome will also assist me and others in planning and implementing more effective translation strategy. Furthermore it is hoped that this research will provide a framework to stimulate further research in Dega and similar research into other languages in Ghana and in other contexts outside Ghana. The objective of this dissertation therefore, is to assess the impact of the Bible translation strategy of GILLBT among the Dega people. It will focus on especially the socio-cultural framework of Dega, including their religious beliefs and practices.

Academically, the writings of scholars like Darrell L. Whiteman, Lamin Sanneh, Andrew Walls, Kwame Bediako, Allison Howell and Gerald West on the mother tongue Scripture in particular and its relationship to development, socio-cultural issues and Church growth, have motivated me into this research. Therefore, this dissertation aims to contribute to further ascertaining the role of the Bible in African Christianity as well as giving further insight into Christian mission history generally.

1.2 LITERATURE STUDY AND THE LOCATION OF THE RESEARCH WITHIN THE EXISTING LITERATURE:

Lamin Sanneh and others have already given thought to the role of Bible translation in African Christian mission. Writing on the topic, “Gospel and Culture: Ramifying Effects of Scripture Translation”, Sanneh noted that vernacular translations of the Bible begin with the adoption of indigenous terms, concepts, customs and idioms for the central categories of Christianity. He concluded that “It is impossible to over-estimate the revolutionary impact of Christian translation on hitherto illiterate societies and their

¹⁰ Walls, Andrew F., *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, pp9-10.

now new encounter with the West.”¹¹ Even though Bible translation in itself does not necessarily lead to a literate society, in the case of Deg, the Bible translation strategy of GILLBT initiated the first attempt to write down the language which gave birth to a vigorous literacy program. Scripture translation seems to have had some ramifying effects on the spiritual and socio-cultural lives in Dega Hare. Sanneh’s observations and conclusions will be applied to this study in examining the impact that GILLBT’s Bible translation strategy has had on the Dega.

Commenting on vernacular Scripture, Kwame Bediako has aptly expressed that, “The ability to hear in one’s own language and to express in one’s own language one’s response to the message which one receives, must lie at the heart of all authentic religious encounters with the divine realm”.¹² This is usually the case because “God speaks into the African context in African idiom, and that it is through hearing in African mother-tongues ‘the great things that God has done’ (Acts 2:11), that African theology emerges to edify not only the African Church but the Church world-wide.”¹³

For many years the Dega people heard God’s Word not in their own language but in Asante-Twi, which had become the ‘Latin’ of the Church for them. Through the Bible translation strategy of GILLBT, they are now hearing and responding to God’s Word in their own mother tongue. This dissertation aims to test the comments that Bediako has made about the religious impact of mother tongue Scripture and ascertain how far the Bible translation strategy has helped the Dega to experience such authentic religious encounter.

Writing on the topic, “The Translation Principle in Christian History”, Andrew Walls locates the theological significance of Bible translation in the incarnation of Jesus. He says “Incarnation is translation. When God in Christ became man, Divinity was translated into humanity, as though humanity were a receptor language.”¹⁴ He explains further that

¹¹ Sanneh, Lamin, ‘Gospel and Culture: Ramifying Effects of Scripture Translation’, in Philip C. Stine (ed.), *Bible Translation and the Spread of the Church: the Last 200 Years*, Brill, Leiden, 1990, pp16-17.

¹² Bediako, Kwame, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1995, p60.

¹³ Bediako, Kwame, *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience*, Editions Clé and Regnum Africa, Akropong, 2000, pvii.

¹⁴ Walls, Andrew F., *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, p27.

As the incarnation took place in the terms of a specific context, so translation uses the terms and relationships of a specific context. Bible translation aims at releasing the word about Christ so that it can reach all aspects of a specific linguistic and cultural context, in the persons of his followers as thoroughly at home as he once did in the culture of first century Jewish Palestine.¹⁵

For over a decade now, the New Testament has been translated into Deg and more than three thousand Dega have become literate in Deg. Programs in print and non-print media are going on to encourage the use of Deg Scripture. How have all these developments impacted the socio-cultural and spiritual lives of the Dega? Has the presence of Christ been felt in Dega Hare? This research seeks to find answers to these and other questions.

Darrell Whiteman has researched and published on the relationship between Bible translation and socio-cultural development in the Solomon Islands, Australia and Papua New Guinea. He became intrigued and fascinated – not by what was already known, but “by the paucity of empirical studies that in fact demonstrate a positive correlation between Bible translation and development”.¹⁶ He consequently constructed a conceptual framework for pursuing this topic in the hope that it would stimulate research, and uncover the evidence that Bible translation has contributed to human development.¹⁷

His framework underscores the fact that meaningful human development must be balanced and should reflect growth in four areas: personal, material, social and spiritual. He listed the areas that should see a positive correlation between vernacular Scripture and development as: self-respect and dignity, expansion of a people’s world, literacy and a new sense of identity. His conceptual framework of Integrated Human Development will be examined to assess whether it provides a useful basis for assessing how the Bible translation strategy has impacted the socio-cultural and spiritual lives of the Dega.

The religious lives of Africans especially, have been described using terms such as ‘heathenism’, ‘paganism’, and ‘fetishism’. Harold Turner asserts that the first principle in religious studies is that the term used should, if at all possible, be acceptable to the

¹⁵ Walls, Andrew F., ‘The Translation Principle in Christian History’ in Philip C. Stine (Ed.), *Bible Translation and The Spread of the Church*, p26.

¹⁶ Whiteman, Darrell L. ‘Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development’ in Philip C. Stine (Ed.), *Bible Translation and The Spread of the Church*, p120.

¹⁷ Whiteman, Darrell L. ‘Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development’, in Stine, Philip C. (ed.), p120.

people described by it.¹⁸ He therefore takes a cue from words like ‘primordial’, ‘primeval’ and ‘primary’ and suggests that the term ‘primal’ can be an acceptable description of pre-Christian religious traditions of people. According to him, the word ‘primal’ suggests two ideas. Firstly, these religious systems are in fact the most basic or fundamental religious forms in the overall religious history of humanity. Secondly, they have preceded and contributed to the other great religious systems. They are both primary and prior and represent a common religious heritage of humanity. Turner has drawn attention to the religions of the so-called “primitive” societies that were hitherto forgotten and has noted that paradoxically, the adherents of these religions have rather “made the greatest response to Christianity ...”¹⁹ He therefore proposed a six-feature framework as a guide to the phenomenology of the primal religions of the world and this will be cited as a way of elucidating Dega cosmology.²⁰

Gillian Bediako also uses ‘primal’ as a positive term that denotes anteriority.

Primal religions are prior to all other religious traditions and underlie them. Primal also means basal or elemental, the fundamental substratum to all subsequent religious experience, continuing to varying degrees in all later religious traditions. Primal means, therefore, universal, basic elements of human understanding of the Transcendent and the world, essential and valid religious insights that may be built upon or suppressed, but not superseded.²¹

The term, ‘primal’ has therefore been used in this study to describe the pre-Christian religious beliefs and practices of Dega.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM:

The Dega people of Ghana have had a long alliance with Asante and Boron, two Akan groups in Ghana that speak Asante-Twi and Boron respectively. The Dega have therefore been greatly influenced by Akan culture and before their language was written, Asante-Twi was used in Churches and at any important mass gathering. A number of

¹⁸ Turner, Harold, ‘The Primal Religions of the World and their Study’, in Victor C. Hayes (Ed.), *Australian Essays in World Religions*, The Australian Association for the Study of Religions, Bedford Park, 1977, p27.

¹⁹ Turner, Harold, ‘The Primal Religions of the World and their Study’, p27-37.

²⁰ Turner, Harold, ‘The Primal Religions of the World and their Study’, p27-37.

²¹ Bediako, Gillian, M., ‘Primal religion and Christian faith: Antagonists or soul-mates?’, *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol.3, No.1, June 2000, p12

questions come to mind as one begins to assess the impact of the Bible translation strategy among them. How has the strategy influenced the use of Deg within and without the *Dega Hare* (Dega land) after such a long usage of Twi? What are the factors for usage and the factors for non-usage of the Deg New Testament? How has the strategy impacted their spiritual and socio-cultural lives? This dissertation asks the question: Is there any evidence that when a people have the Scriptures translated into their mother tongue it impacts their spiritual and socio-cultural lives and consequently leads them to Integral Human Development?

The Bible translation strategy of GILLBT seeks to give the Scriptures in the mother tongue to a people group, equip them to read or listen and to apply them. If the Scripture has been translated using culturally appropriate categories, it should become a tool that impacts every facet of their lives. The hypothesis that this dissertation seeks to investigate therefore is that, the Bible translation strategy of GILLBT among the Dega people of Ghana has impacted positively their socio-cultural and spiritual lives and has therefore enhanced their Integral Human Development (IHD).

1.4 INTELLECTUAL FRAMEWORK:

The approaches of Sanneh, Bediako and Walls to translation and the intrinsic translatability of Christian faith into all cultures, provide the interpretative key or overall intellectual framework of this dissertation. There will be a combination of approaches to be used within this framework: historical, phenomenological and analytical. To ascertain the impact that the Bible translation strategy has had on the Dega people, it is imperative to learn about their historical context. This includes the origin of the Dega and their pre-Christian religious and socio-cultural lives. Reference has been made to the writings of scholars like Gillian Mary Bediako, H.W. Turner, Andrew F. Walls and Kwame Bediako who have considered the phenomenological affinity between primal religion and the Christian faith. The six-feature framework for understanding primal religions as proposed by Turner has also been applied to the Dega pre-Christian religious beliefs and practices.²²

²² Turner, Harold W., 'The Primal Religions of the World and their Study', p27-37.

With regard to analysis of the GILLBT Bible translation strategy, the spiritual and the socio-cultural impact that GILLBT's Bible translation strategy has made on the Dega Hare will be assessed using Whiteman's conceptual framework of Integral Human Development (IHD). This aspect of the research relied heavily on the writer's observations, interviews conducted and archival records. I have made references to some human interest stories that demonstrate how the Bible translation strategy of GILLBT has impacted churches, communities and individual lives.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY:

The focus of this dissertation has been mainly historical. Documentary resources from three archival centres in Ghana were consulted. The centres were Kumasi in the Asante Region, Tamale in the Northern Region and Sunyani in the Brong Ahafo Region. Oral historical and situational data were collected through personal interviews. Mother tongue speakers were recruited to assist in the interviews. I made personal trips to most of the major towns in Dega Hare including Jama, Carpenter, Jogboi, Chebrenyoo, and Bamboi in North Mo. South Mo towns visited included Kintampo, New Longoro, Mansie, Weila, Santekwaa, Longoro, Manchala, Kandige, Bosuama and Yaara.

A total period of eight weeks was spent within Dega Hare during this research. The first six weeks were used to acquire some working knowledge of Deg and also to gather data. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and participation in Church services and Scripture-In-Use activities like *Faith Comes By Hearing*, an audio Scripture program and a Gospel and Culture workshop on the Yam Festival. I organized a focus group seminar on the topic, "*Ten Years of Mother Tongue Scripture: Assessing the Impact of the Deg Scripture on the Dega Community*" (see appendices 2-4). Seventy participants comprising Pastors, Church leaders and leaders of women's groups were present. After a general discussion, participants went into smaller groups and discussed various topics. They all gathered again and shared what they discussed in their various groups.

I attempted to collect written materials on Dega from the community and the Institute of Adult Education library at the University of Ghana, Legon. Materials from the Dega Language Project office and some Dega, like Rt Rev Doni-Kwame, were

particularly helpful. In all, thirty-six individuals were interviewed, including seven chiefs. I also met with eight focus groups comprising 126 people. Although I developed a questionnaire (see appendix 1) I did not use it much because there was a very poor response to the first set of questionnaires that were sent out. I found out that people who gave excuses that they did not have the time to fill out the questionnaire were willing to sit for hours to talk with me. The last two weeks of January 2004 were spent in Dega Hare to cross check and review some of the findings of this dissertation.

The dissertation contains six chapters. The first chapter contains the introduction, the background, the problem and the theoretical framework. Chapter two gives the ethnographical background of the Dega people of Ghana. It has been necessary to give a detailed background in order to portray the distinctiveness of the Dega. The emergence of the Church and the Bible translation strategy in Dega Hare has been examined in the third chapter. The fourth and fifth chapters contain the socio-cultural and the spiritual analysis of the impact that the Bible translation strategy has made on Dega. The dissertation ends with a summary of findings, recommendations and conclusion in chapter six.

1.6 LIMITATIONS:

As mentioned earlier, little has been written about Dega and I have therefore depended mostly on oral traditions and archival records as far as their historical origins were concerned. I am not a native speaker of Deg and so I used Asante-Twi in my personal interviews and interactions. Even though a good number of the Dega speak Twi, there may be some insights that Deg speakers will grasp that may have eluded me. I however used a number of Deg speakers as my research assistants and I always travelled with some of them. Another limitation was that due to the nature of this research I was only able to spend a limited period of eight weeks within Dega Hare. Therefore, much information still remains to be collected. I trust that this study will stimulate Dega scholars to research further into these and other areas.

1.7 RESEARCH ETHICS:

On occasion, traditional historical data may have the potential to instigate chieftaincy litigation. I have therefore kept sources of information as anonymous as

possible. Names have only been mentioned where the data is already in the public domain. The names of respondents have been cited in the socio-cultural and religious stories only where I have secured their consent. Otherwise the testimonies are presented anonymously. Because of the historical nature of the study and the potential tension it could cause in the Dega community, I spent another two weeks after I had written the findings, checking facts and figures with respondents. As it is said in Akan, *Nyansa nni baakofoɔ tirim* (“Wisdom is not in one person’s head”), I have therefore, consciously sought to cite sources of data and acknowledge all who have made contributions to this dissertation.

The next chapter introduces us to the Dega people of Ghana by taking us through their ethnographical background.

ETHNOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND OF THE DEGA PEOPLE OF GHANA

This study seeks to ascertain the spiritual and socio-cultural impact of the Bible translation strategy of the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT) on the Dega people of Ghana. To this end, it is important to ascertain the ethnographical background information about them, particularly as few written records about the Dega people of Ghana are available. Due to their long association with Asante and Boron, both large and well known ethnic groups in Ghana, some writers usually see the Dega as part of them. It is for this reason that this chapter has been devoted to a study of the Dega. In order to place the Dega in the Ghanaian context, the chapter begins with a brief profile of Ghana. The Dega social and political structures, linguistic structures, their occupation and economy, their cultural beliefs and practices, cosmology and worldview are also examined.

2.1 A BRIEF PROFILE OF GHANA:

Ghana is located in West Africa and has a total area of 238,539 sq km¹ and a population of 18,912,079.² It is bordered by Côte d'Ivoire to the West, Togo to the east, Burkina Faso to the north and the Gulf of Guinea of the Atlantic Ocean to the south. (See appendix 5). The Portuguese were among the first Europeans to come to the Ghanaian coast around the second half of the 15th century. They found an abundance of gold and therefore named the land, Gold Coast. Gold and later the slave trade attracted other Europeans to the Gold Coast, including the Danish, French, Dutch and the English. Albert van Dantzig says that "Within three centuries more than sixty castles, forts and lodges were built along a stretch of coast less than 300 miles (500 km) long."³

Ghana gained independence in 1957 and became a Republic in 1960. The first civilian government led by Kwame Nkrumah was overthrown through a coup d'état in

¹ Dickson, Kwamina B, and Benneh, George, *A New Geography of Ghana* (Revised Edition), England, Longman Group Ltd., Burnt Mill, Harlow, Essex, 1988, p1.

² *2000 Population and Housing Census: Summary Report of Final Results*, Accra, Ghana Statistical Services, 2002, p1.

³ Dantzig, Albert van, *Forts and Castles of Ghana*, Sedco Publishing Limited, Accra, 1980, pp.vii-xiii.

1966 and Ghana experienced other coups d'état in 1972, 1979 and 1981 respectively. Ghana returned to constitutional rule in 1992 and is currently governed by the National Patriotic Party under the leadership of President John Agyekum Kuffour. There are ten administrative regions in Ghana; namely, Ashanti, Greater Accra, Eastern, Brong-Ahafo, Volta, Central, Western, Northern, Upper East and Upper West (see Appendix 7). The administrative regions are divided into 129 districts administered by the District Assembly.

Ghana was a relatively rich country at the time of independence and its per capita income was higher than that of South Korea and Singapore. The country is currently part of the Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative and is enjoying debt relief from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.⁴ Cocoa continues to be the country's major cash crop and about 52 percent of the economically active population is employed in the agricultural sector. However, most of them are small scale farmers who produce enough to feed the immediate family with a little extra for other needs.

The 2000 Census results show that 53.3% of the population who are 15 years and older are literate in either English or a known Ghanaian language and 32.2% are literate in both. The literacy level is 46.9% and about 45.9% of the adult population is not literate. The regional illiteracy rates are as follows: Greater Accra (20.6%), Eastern (40.8%), Ashanti (40.4%), Brong Ahafo (53.5%), Northern (78.7%), Upper East (78.1%) and Upper West (75.5%).⁵ The level of illiteracy is higher for females than it is for males in all regions. Part of Dega Hare falls within the Northern Region that has the highest illiteracy rate in Ghana.

Ghanaians are generally described as very religious and believe in the Supreme God who has indigenous names in all the ethnic groups. John S. Pobee, a Ghanaian theologian, has described the Ghanaian as a "*homo religiosus* because he has a religious ontology and epistemology".⁶ There are three main religious persuasions, of which, according to the 2000 Population and Housing Census, Christianity is 68.8%, Islam is 15.9%, traditional or primal religion is 8.5% and little over six per cent claim that they

⁴ Supporting Economic Jubilee Campaign Worldwide, 'What is the HIPC Initiative?', March 2002, <www.jubileeplus.org/what_is_hipc.htm>

⁵ 2000 Population and Housing Census, p7.

⁶ Pobee, John S. 'Religion and Politics in Ghana: 1972-1978: Some case studies from the rule of General I.K. Acheampong', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol.27, February 1987, p44.

have no religious affiliation. Islam is the dominant religion in the Northern Region (56.1%) and this figure represents 34.1% of the national total percentage of Muslims. The Upper East and the Volta Regions have 46.4% and 22.2% of adherents to traditional religion respectively. Apart from the Northern and Upper East Regions, Christianity is the dominant religion in all other eight regions.⁷ Part of the Dega traditional area is located in the Northern Region which is dominated by Islam and the other part in Brong Ahafo Region which is dominated by Christianity.

2.2 ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF DEGA:

2.2.1 Location and Name:

The Dega people live within both the Brong Ahafo and Northern Regions of Ghana. The two regions are divided by the Black Volta River which also separates the two major towns that have paramount chiefs, New Longoro (*Maantukwa*) and Bamboi (*Gbanboi*). The entire Dega area used to be within the Ashanti Territory until the British colonial government created the Northern Territory in 1908⁸ and used the Black Volta River as a boundary without due cognizance of the fact that one ethnic group had been divided over two territories. This demarcation resulted in protracted local political tension, especially between Bamboi and New Longoro.

Nevertheless, the same demarcation was used when after independence the Brong Ahafo Region was created. Dega Hare (Dega land) is therefore split between the Bole district in the Northern Region and the Wenchi and Kintampo districts in the Brong Ahafo Region. On the map of Ghana, (see appendices 6-9) the Dega are surrounded by Nafaana people on the West, Bono in the South and Gonja to the north. The entire area is estimated to be 1,700 sq km with about 46 (see appendix 10) villages comprising mainly mud and thatched houses.⁹ (See appendix 16/17). Some Dega migrated to the Jaman district and are in villages like Bonakire, Adadiem and Dokachina. Another group moved to settle in Côte d'Ivoire and live in villages like Dwoboi, Wireke and Zagala and the

⁷ 2000 Population and Housing Census: Summary Report of Final Results, Ghana Statistics Service, March 2002, p7.

⁸ Public Records Archives and Administration Department (PRAAD), Sunyani, ADM/BRG.1/2/5/33, Letter from the Gonja District Commissioner (DC) to the Chief Commissioner, Northern Territory (CCNT), Tamale dated 25th November, 1944, p1.

⁹ Barker, Peter, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana – a preliminary report*, Asempa Publishers, Accra, 1986, p211.

Dega in Ghana call them *Lamoolatina* (the people beyond the river). Those in Ghana too have various indigenous names.

The people call themselves *Dega*, meaning ‘multiplying’, ‘spreading quickly’ or ‘fertility’.¹⁰ One person is called a *Deg*, the language is also known as *Deg* and they call their land *Dega Hare*. Other ethnic groups in Ghana know them as *Mo* and there are three theories behind the name *Mo*.

In 1893 the people of Nkoransa and Abease, now in the Brong Ahafo Region but then in the Ashanti Territory, were attacked by Asante when the Nkoransa Chief Nana Kofi Fa refused to pay tribute to the Asantehene, Agyeman Prempe I¹¹. The Dega were well known for their exploits in war and Nkoransa asked them for help. According to H.J. Hobbs, the Acting Provincial Commissioner of the British colonial government, “In this war, the Mos and Abeases fought for Nkronza and Banda for Asanti. The Nkronza and their allies were defeated at Sabule a Mo village”.¹² This war was also confirmed by a report that Perregant, a Basel missionary gave in 1894. When he reached Nkoransa he “found the whole of Nkoranza district in ruins, the majority of the Old population remaining in deep need, sore without even cloth for clothes”. According to him, “the account of the issue leading to war is that the Nkoranzas refused the yearly tribute of 30 girls and young men”.¹³ Even though Nkoransa and her allies were defeated, they sent a congratulatory message to Dega due to the gallant role they played in this battle, saying “*Mo, Mo, Mo!*”, meaning thank you. This won them the name, *Mofoɔ*, an Akan word literally meaning, “The people who did well”.¹⁴

Doni-Kwame alludes to the fact that the name ‘Mo’ might have come from a Pantera prefix *mõ*¹⁵. The Pantera people who call themselves Nafaana are a neighbouring group in the Brong Ahafo Region. Dega was famous for the production of large pots

¹⁰ Jabuni, Peter, Jama, June 21, 2003.

¹¹ Wilks, Ivor, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century – The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1975, p299.

¹² PRAAD, Kumasi, ADM/ARG.1/2/21/1, *Notes on History of Mo*, H.J. Hobbs, Acting Provisional Commissioner, (ND) p1.

¹³ Jenkins, Paul, *Abstracts of Basel Mission Gold Coast Correspondence*, Ghana Microfilm extracts taken from Series D-1 in the Basel Mission Archives, Legon, Accra, 1970, p320.

¹⁴ Interview with Opanin Kofi Prince, the junior brother of the late Paramount Chief, Nnaa Kwaku Dimpor II, in his house at New Longoro on April 6, 2003.

¹⁵ Doni-Kwame, Felix, ‘Ethnographic Sketch of the Dega of Ghana (2)’, Unpublished, Compiled in 2000, p8.

which were sold in the southern markets by the Pantera women. The Pantera women used to respond to greetings with words like “*Mpange, Mõ Maa*”, meaning, “You are welcome. Thank you, Madam”. “*Mpange, Mõ no*”. “Welcome. Thank you father”. Due to the frequent use of the word “*mõ*”, the Akans referred to their products as “*Mo Kukuo*”, meaning *mo* pots. Later when it became known that the Dega people were the producers of the pots, the name was then used to describe them, hence the name, *Mofoɔ*.

The third theory is that the name came from the Dega word for the Black Volta River, *Moh*.¹⁶ One of the major occupations of the Dega villages along the Black Volta is fishing. The Dega women would carry the fish to markets in Kintampo, Techiman and Wenchi and when asked where they got the fish from, their response was “*Yede firi Moh*” meaning we brought them from *Moh*. They used the Deg word for Black Volta because they did not know the Asante-Twi word. So anytime the Akan women saw the Dega women bringing fish to the market, they would point to them saying, “*Mofoɔ no de adwene reba*”, meaning the *Moh* people are bringing fish.

From the research survey conducted, the most popular theory was the first. The majority of respondents said that their ancestors got the name from the help they gave to Nkoransa during their battle with Asante. In some writings, the two names are put together as MoDega to describe the people and MoDeg, the language.

2.2.2 The Origin of Dega:

Dega, as they are known today, migrated to their present area from different places under different leaders at different periods. Each group has their own story of origin and migration. From interviews conducted, some migrated from the Sisaala land in the north-western part of Ghana, when a fight arose over a dog’s head which had been sacrificed to their earth deity, *Teo*. The ancestors of Dega had an annual rite during which dogs were sacrificed to their earth deity. The legs and head were left on the shrine and it was believed that whoever ate them would attain power from the deity. The legs and head were, therefore, usually shared among all the elders.

On this particular occasion, some Sisaala people ate them without sharing. According to David Mensah who is a Deg, the Sisaala shared the meat but there was a

¹⁶ Doni-Kwame, Felix, ‘Ethnographic Sketch of the Dega of Ghana (2)’, p8.

complaint that the elder who divided the meat had cheated the rest.¹⁷ A demand arose that the meat should be shared again but the accused elder objected to it and ate his part. Those who felt cheated started beating the elder and inter-ethnic war erupted. The above story is confirmed by two other sources. In 1926, (Sgd.) R. Brace-Hall who was the District Commissioner of Western Gonja wrote the following in relation to the origin of Mo:

The Mo [sic] originate from Issala and moved, how long ago does not seem to be known, South until they reached the Volta where they settled, as the result of a dispute over the proprietorship of a dog's head.¹⁸

Second, the head of the Nandoma clan, Namoa Kwaku Kyina, of Longoro (one of the oldest towns in Dega Hare) indicated that one group migrated from a village known as Tiwii in Sisaala under the leadership of Maala and Paago. He then related the following concerning the origin of Dega:

Our ancestors lived among the *Grusi*¹⁹ in a town called Longoro. They were not Grusi but lived among them and spoke their own language, Deg. From here we went to settle among the Sisaala. Our ancestors left the *Grushies* because they demanded so much from them. When they moved among the Sisaala, they came with their earth deity, *Teo*, and they used to sacrifice dogs to it and shared the meat with the Sisaala. During one of such sacrifices, our ancestors left the head and legs on the *vog* and the Sisaala took the meat without permission. This brought serious conflict and our ancestors decided to migrate.²⁰

Maala was not a Deg but was our ancestors' landlord when they were living in the Sisaalaland. He offered to mediate but when our ancestors insisted on leaving, Maala decided to move with them. The *Nandoma* (meaning, I have seen my enemies) clan owns *Teo* and so performs all the rituals. Some of our ancestors who migrated were: Kombo, Nandoma, Paago, and Kwanben Pete. It was after we settled on Degaland that Paago was made a chief.

¹⁷ Mensah, David, *Kwabena: An African Boy's Journey of Faith*, Essence Publishing, Canada, 1998, p14.

¹⁸ PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG.1/2/21/2, *Mo Tribe – Buie Division – Movements into Ashanti to Evade Communal Obligations*, dated 29th March, 1926, p1.

¹⁹ In his book, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, p219., Peter Barker says that “Kasena people are often known as *Grunshies*, from the word *grunshi* or *grunga* meaning slave in some northern languages including *Hanga*. The term *Grunshi* may have been widely used by *Mamprusi* and *Dagomba* slave raiders to describe tribes in the area at present forming the Upper East and especially Upper West regions where they made repeated raids... None of these people would have described themselves as *Grunshi*, but for convenience they came to adopt the name used by their neighbors to the east and south.”

²⁰ Elders of Longoro, including Namoa Kwaku Kyina, interview conducted by Thomas Atta-Akosah (writer) on April 1, 2003.

Because of what Maala did, even Paago always took off his sandals before greeting him, as a sign of respect and appreciation. For proximity purposes, the British colonial officer asked the *Mohene* (the Chief of Mo) to move to the new site, New Longoro (*Maantukwa*) since Longoro was away from the main road. Koro Kwaku Damkwa was the first *Mohene* to settle in New Longoro.

Another group came under the leadership of Joge and Gbage from Jefisi also in Sisaala and settled in Jogeboi and Gbanboi (Bamboi) respectively. A third group, led by Kpaah Djan, also migrated from Jefisi and settled in Jan and later moved to their present place, Jama.²¹

Another version of this story says that Paago was the son of Maala and he became a chief through conquest and intermarriage. However, Nnaa Kwame Adjei, the Hareti of Longoro explained that Paago died as a clan head and the first Longorokoro was Dimpo I.²² It is also believed that Maala did not die but disappeared into a hole in Manchala. A room with a flat roof has been built over the hole and any new Paramount chief enters the room bare-footed to show himself to Maala. (See appendix 16).

According to oral history, the groups that migrated from Sisaala met the people of Kandige and Chebrenyoya who had already settled on the land. The people of Kandige say that their ancestor and founder, Weripi, came over the Black Volta in an iron boat.²³ Those in Chebrenyoya believe that their ancestors emerged from a hole at Karampodera but moved to the present site due to lack of water.²⁴ Other groups from the Tekyi and Damkwa clans also joined the Dega later. Those from the Takyi line are Gonja who became part of the Longoro paramountcy when they joined Dega. Tekyi and his sister Wurikye came from Kosogwo in the Gonjaland to Bewela and then continued to Longoro. They were first received by the *Brafokoro* (the Chief Executioner). During their stay, the Asantehene had sent to collect gold dust and slaves from Dega and they had none to give. Wurikye gave some gold dust and a slave to be paid as tribute to Asantehene. As this gesture continued from time to time, Tekyi and Wurikye asked what

²¹ Interview with Noah Ampem, Carpenter, April 4, 2003.

²² Nnaa Kwame Adjei and Elders, interview conducted by Thomas Atta-Akosah on January 30, 2004 in New Longoro.

²³ Chief and elders of Kandige, interview conducted by writer on June 30, 2003 in Kandige.

²⁴ Chebrenua Chief and elders, interview conducted by writer on July 1, 2003 in Chebrenua.

they would receive in turn and they were offered the chance to be part of the Longoro dynasty. They are the Leera clan of Dega.²⁵

The Damkwa line came with their ancestor, Golo-Maala, from Felenyola in the Sisaala land and they were offered a place to live. They proved to be good and helpful friends and offered special assistance to the Paago dynasty. In appreciation, they were offered a share in the paramountcy and were told that if questioned, they should explain that “A friend offered it to us”, hence the name “*damkwa*”, meaning “things for my friend”.²⁶ Nnaa Adjei explained that Dega were not many and were therefore open to embrace strangers. Whenever strangers proved good, they were accepted to be part of them.

Dega people are not able to give the date of their migration since they came in various groups at different times. However, the Vagla who moved first from Sisaala after the dog’s head saga, date their migration around 1600 AD.²⁷ The Acting Provincial Commissioner of the British colonial government, H.J. Hobbs, wrote,

The Mos are Grunshi stock and migrated from Twei, Grunshi to Northern Asanti, at the time Osai Bonsu was Asantihene. The reason of their migration was a quarrel between Mala and Dakora which developed into a fight between them and their respective supporters.²⁸

The Asantehene, Nana Osei Bonsu, reigned from 1800 to 1823 and according to Hobbs, the ancestors of Dega might have migrated to their present location within this period. Reconciliation of the two dates means that there was a span of about 200 years between the migration of Vagla and Mo. However, indications from oral history do suggest a shorter span of time between their migrations. Meanwhile, the political and social structures of Dega Hare began to undergo some changes as they interacted with neighbouring ethnic groups.

²⁵ Longoro Hareti, Nnaa Kwame Adjei and his elders, interview conducted by writer on January 30, 2004 in Longoro.

²⁶ Longoro Hareti, Nnaa Kwame Adjei and his elders, interview conducted by writer on, January 30, 2004 in Longoro.

²⁷ Doni-Kwame, ‘The Ethnographical Sketch of the Dega of Ghana’, Unpublished, p1.

²⁸ PRAAD, Kumasi, ADM/ARG.1/2/21/1, *Notes on History of Mo*, Hobbs, Acting Provincial Commissioner.

2.2.3 Political and Social Structure:

Dega migrated with their distinctive political and social structures which have evolved over the years. The Akan type of chieftaincy that is seen among the Dega was adopted through their association with Asante and Boron. Dega migrated with *Dia Nomoa* (clan heads) and *Vogti* (spiritual leaders) as their community leaders.²⁹ To a large extent, each clan head was independent. Jamakoro explained that

Teo [the earth deity] is a symbol of authority over a piece of land where it is erected. Any chief of Mo who has *Teo* has absolute power over his land. He does not serve any other chief in Mo.³⁰

However, the situation changed when the Dega became the vassal of Asante after they were defeated in war. According to Nnaa Kwame Adjei and his elders, Dega did not go under the Asantehene because they were defeated but they were asked to be part of Asante. Asante found them to be brave fighters and Dega helped Asante during their war with Denkyira.³¹ The *Longorokoro*, (Longoro chief), who was sometimes referred to as *Boikoro* or *Batakarihene*³², was recognized as the paramount chief and the Akan chieftaincy system was adopted. Other clan heads were appointed as divisional chiefs and Queens were also appointed. According to Doni-Kwame, "This Chieftaincy arrangement was copied from the Ashanti system by Nnaa Kwasi Addae".³³ Apart from the Bamboikoro who sometimes exhibited a reluctance to serve the Asantehene under the leadership of the Longorokoro, all the other chiefs served under the Longorokoro without any notable complaints.

Matters changed further when in 1908 the British colonial government used the Black Volta River that runs between Bamboi and New Longoro (Maantukwa) as a demarcation between the Ashanti and the Northern Territories.³⁴ Major towns like Bamboi, Jogboi, Nepui, Tasalima, Chebrenuyoa and Jama became part of the Northern Territory and therefore served under a new District Commissioner and House of Chiefs. The Bamboikoro in particular questioned why he should continue to serve under the

²⁹ Emmanuel Ataakorekpa, interview conducted by writer on May 31, 2003 in Bamboi.

³⁰ 'Opinion of Nana Kojo Pambo' – Chief of Jama, MoDega region of Ghana, 2001, Unpublished pamphlet.

³¹ Longoro Hareti, Nnaa Kwame Adjei and Elders, interview conducted by writer on January 30, 2004 in Longoro.

³² The Longoro chief was known as *Batakarihene* in the Asantehene's palace.

³³ Doni-Kwame, Felix, 'Ethnographic Sketch of the Dega of Ghana (2)', Unpublished.

³⁴ PRAAD, Sunyani, BRG.1/2/5/33, Letter on Mo from the Gonja DC to CCNT, 25th November, 1944, p1.

Mohene who was in a different territory. This resulted in a long dispute and in 1912 the *Mohene* petitioned the then Governor, J.J. Thorburn asking that “the Mos North of the river be placed under the District Commissioner of Kintampo again and his [the *Mohene*’s] paramountcy over them be restored”.³⁵

The Governor refused and gave what amounted to virtual independence to the towns in the Northern part of Mo and ordered that they should appoint a head chief to represent them. Accordingly, in 1913 the chief of Bamboi was appointed to represent the villages on the north side of the river.³⁶ During an inquiry held at Kintampo on 5th January 1933, before Major J.S.R. Robertson, District Commissioner of Wenchi and Mr. Guthrie Hall, District Commissioner of Gonja, to investigate the claim of the Omanhene of Longoro to paramountcy over the Koro of Bamboi, Nana Yaw Dodi (Dagwi) through Kwasi Agina, Benkumhene complained,

Since the Whiteman came we have been divided. Before, if the people of Bamboi got anything they gave half to me. Now these people have even closed the road to my people and it makes me very sad.³⁷

It appears that the *Longorokoro* suffered the consequences of the divide and rule policy of the colonial government because Asante had been declared a British Crown Colony in 1902 and the Northern Territories, a British Protectorate. Since the *Longorokoro* was still loyal to Asante, it was not in the interest of the colonial government for the towns in North Mo to be under him. The *Longorokoro* therefore became the victim of the prevailing political situation. The same demarcation was sustained when the Brong Ahafo Region was created in 1959. As a result, the Dega people have been divided between the Brong Ahafo and the Northern Regions of Ghana.

The Dega in the Brong Ahafo Region are referred to as South Mo and those in the Northern Region as North Mo. The South Mo continued with the Akan political system with the *Longorokoro*, Nnaa Kwaku Dimpo II, as the paramount chief. However, the

³⁵ PRAAD, Sunyani, ADM/BRG.1/2/5/33, Letter on Mo from the Gonja DC to CCNT, 25th November, 1944, p1.

³⁶ PRAAD, Sunyani, ADM/BRG.1/2/5/33, Letter on Mo from the Gonja DC to CCNT, 25th November, 1944, p1.

³⁷ PRAAD, Sunyani, ADM/BRG.1/2/5/33, Inquiry held at Kintampo on the 5th day of January, 1933, before Major J.S.R. Robertson, D.C. of Wenchi and Mr. Guthrie Hall, D.C. Gonja to investigate the claim of the Omanhene of Longoro to paramountcy over the Koro of Bamboi and the Mo people living on the North of the River Volta, p3.

chiefs in North Mo did not have any centralized authority. In 1991 the Provisional National Defense Council government gazetted the Bamboikoro, Nana Kwaku Dapaa II, as the paramount chief of North Mo. The *Koros* of the three main towns namely, Jogboi, Chebrenuyoa and Jama, were not happy because they claimed that this was done without their approval. This action brought with it attendant problems and Doni-Kwame has made the following observation:

There is no cohesion in the North Mo administrative structure. There is no unity and Nana Kwaku Dapaa II, Bamboikoro, is hardly recognized by the other chiefs as their central figure. His long absence from home in America makes his impact very minimal.³⁸

The chief of Jama which is one of the important towns in North Mo has also remarked that

Nana Kwaku Dapaah II's claim as paramount chief of North Mo Traditional area is an artificial one fabricated through manipulation... His over-ambition to remain as a permanent paramount chief is creating a lot of problems for Nana Dapaah himself in particular and Mo in general. This is because Nana Dapaah is now a mere figurehead...³⁹

Govina writes that "the Bamboikoro humbly apologized to the other chiefs for having done wrong against them. This took place in Jugboi, where sacrifices were made to pacify the gods." And he adds, "There are many issues surrounding this misunderstanding."⁴⁰

Through this research, the writer has observed that Dega chieftdom has been characterized by litigation. For example, Longorokoro Nnaa Kwaku Damkwa was destooled in April 1948 and replaced by Nnaa Kwasi Amanin-Ampong (Banempo). He was also destooled in December 1949 and Nnaa Kwaku Dimpo II was enstooled on January 2, 1950. Nnaa Dimpo II spent most of his almost fifty year reign attending to court disputes. Several attempts were made to destool him until his death in 1999.⁴¹ (See appendix 13/14). He has not been replaced because of internal disputes in the Leera

³⁸ Doni-Kwame, Felix, 'Ethnographic Sketch of the Dega of Ghana (2)'.

³⁹ *Opinion of Nana Kojo Pambo, Chief of Jama, 2001*, Unpublished, p5-6.

⁴⁰ Govina Nudjor, Francis, *The Notion of Chieftaincy and a Contribution of the Formation of Paramountcy among the Northern Degha (Mo)*, Unpublished Memoir submitted in partial fulfilment for a Certificate in Philosophy, St. Victor's Major Seminary, Tamale, Ghana, 2000, p22

⁴¹ PRAAD, Kumasi, ADM/ARG.1/2/21/1, *Notes on History of Mo*, Hobbs, Acting Provincial Commissioner (ND).

(Takyi) clan which is the next line of succession. The protracted chieftaincy disputes in the Dega Hare (Dega land) are certainly impacting negatively on the socio-economic development of the area. Whenever litigation is at its peak, citizens of North and South Mo cannot socialize during activities such as funerals and festivals. It is not uncommon to see people from Bamboi beaten up in New Longoro and vice versa. Some of the causes of litigation in Dega Hare are the conflict over the ownership of the Black Volta River⁴² and the integration of the Akan chieftaincy systems.

The Queenship system, *Haan-koro*, was not part of the Dega indigenous traditional leadership structure at all. This was confirmed during an interview with the Hareti of Longoro, Nnaa Kwame Adjei and his elders.⁴³ In the Akan system, the queen mother is very powerful and nominates a candidate for new chiefs for approval by the kingmakers. In the Mo system, “The Queen mothers have no customary recognition and therefore have no hand in either enstoolment or destoolment”.⁴⁴ They rather work as women leaders and mobilize women for community activities during festivals and other occasions. They also accompany the Chiefs during official durbars.

Because of the long alliance with Asante and Boron, Dega Hare has been influenced by a number of Akan customs. Among them are the chieftaincy system, the *gbonjen* (*fontomfrom*, a huge sounding drum),⁴⁵ wearing of cloth and golden ornaments, carrying of chiefs in the palanquin and adoption of Twi names. However, some Dega claim that the *gbonjen* was indigenous to Dega Hare.⁴⁶ Deg names like *Damkwa* have been changed to *Danquah* and *Chewa* to *Kyei*. Traditionally, Dega chiefs used to wear large smocks and rode horses which explain why, in the Asantehene’s palace, the Mohene was also called *Batakarihene* (the chief of smock).⁴⁷ The way chiefs wore their hats signified their status in the society.

⁴² PRAAD, Sunyani, BRG.1/2/5/33/114, Letter from Nana Kwasi Akai, Omanhene of North Mo to Omanhene of South Mo about the ownership of the Black Volta River, May 20, 1961.

⁴³ Hareti of Longoro, Nnaa Kwame Adjei and Elders, interview conducted by writer on January 30, 2004 in Longoro.

⁴⁴ PRAAD, Sunyani, ADM/BRG.1/2/5/9, *Customary Laws for the Brong Ahafo Region*, p7.

⁴⁵ Interview conducted by Peter Jebuni at Jama, June 26, 2003.

⁴⁶ Review meeting with Mr. Daniel Nsia at New Longoro, January 03, 2004.

⁴⁷ Gabriel Chiu, interview conducted by writer on April 9, 2003 in New Longoro.

To a large extent, the social life of the Dega is guided according to the dictates of the earth deity, Teo. In *Notes on History of Mo*, the Acting Provincial Commissioner of the British colonial government, H.J. Hobbs commented,

A remarkable incident of this battle was that the Mos captured a lot of Banda gold ornaments, which they handed over to the Nkoranzas, for they did not desire gold. In support of this there are no gold stool ornaments and it is stated the [sic] no Mo man is allowed to possess gold.⁴⁸

It was not because the Dega did not desire gold, but because of religious fidelity. The main deity of Dega Hare, *Teo*, tabooed war booty and gold in particular, so chiefs were not permitted to wear any gold ornaments. The Longoro Hareti, Nnaa Kwame Adjei added that Teo tabooed gold because it is a golden deity and saw the introduction of any golden item as rivalry.⁴⁹

However, during an inquiry to investigate Longorokoro's claim of paramountcy over Bamboi,⁵⁰ the following cross-examination took place in relation to gold in Dega Hare. The court asked Bamboikoro, "Who is forbidden to have gold?" And he answered, "The Bamboikoro is forbidden but not Jugboikoro, so he looked after the gold mining". Again he was asked, "What happened to the gold after the Banda war?" To this he answered, "The former chief changed it all for cowries with the Ashanti in Kumasi". The proceedings indicate that there was gold mining in some parts of Dega Hare and not all the chiefs were forbidden to handle gold.

During an interview with the Jogboikoro and Nomoa Kwasi Briama, they confirmed that their ancestors kept the said gold and there was a gold mine at Kwi, land which has now been claimed by Gonja.⁵¹ Opanin Kwaku Seidu of New Longoro also confirmed it and mentioned that it was in a place called Kwi.⁵² Commenting on the same issue, Hareti Kwame Adjei added that after the alliance with Asante, Koro Yaw Dagwi went to Kumasi and saw how beautifully Asante chiefs had been adorned with golden ornaments. When he returned, he went through the necessary traditional sacrifices and pleaded with *Teo* to allow them to use gold and the gold taboo was consequently

⁴⁸ PRAAD, Kumasi, ADM/ARG.1/2/21/1, Notes on History of Mo, Hobbs, H.J., p2.

⁴⁹ Longoro Hareti and elders, interview conducted by writer on January 30, 2004 in Longoro.

⁵⁰ PRAAD, Sunyani, BRG.1/2/5/33, *Enquiry at Kintampo on 5th Day of January 1933*, p.8.

⁵¹ Jogboikoro and Nomoa Kwasi Briama, interview conducted by writer on January 28, 2004 in Jogboi.

⁵² Opanin Kwaku Seidu, interview conducted by writer on January 26, 2004 in New Longoro.

abolished.⁵³ This is indicative of the fact that even though the Akan say *Amanmere yento ntwene* (traditional custom should not be thrown away), *yetumi sesa no* (it can be changed).

Although Dega were great fighters and were victorious in many wars, the booty of gold they obtained was given away. This probably explains why, though great warrior communities such as Asante became rich through war booty, Dega Hare did not.

Most of the 46 communities of Dega live in villages made up of earth houses with grass roofs. Their ancestors used to build houses with flat roofs but these have changed over the years. There were only two buildings with flat roofs in Longoro and Manchala (Mansra). The one at Longoro belonged to the head of *Nandoma* clan who is in charge of the main earth deity. He explained that it depicted the architectural style of their ancestors and as the spiritual head of Longoro, he was required to maintain it. The one at Manchala was built over the place that Maala was believed to have sunk into the ground. The flat roof type of house structure is common among the Kasena, Bulsa and Grunne (described as Grushi) from whom their ancestors migrated. The architectural styles in Dega Hare are of different varieties: flat mud roofs, round and rectangular thatch roofs, as well as modern rectangular houses with corrugated aluminum roofs (see appendix 16/17).

Dega families are made up of children from the father. Women marry outside the clan but are expected to return to their father's home after the death of their husbands. However, the children remain in their father's home. A great number of people from other ethnic groups in Ghana, especially the Dagati people from the Upper West Region, settle and farm in Dega Hare. Describing his own people, David Mensah has written

They love festivals, intense idol worship, witchcraft and tribal dancing. It is a very happy tribe, although idol worship has ruined many homes due to the excessive sacrifices that have decimated the already limited supply of cattle, goats, sheep, dogs and fowls.⁵⁴

Dega are among the few ethnic groups in Africa that practice both patrilineal and matrilineal systems of inheritance. Royal succession is patrilineal and the chief is succeeded by the father's family. However, property succession is matrilineal. According

⁵³ Longoro Hareti, Kwame Adjei and his Elders, interview conducted by writer on January 30, 2004 in Longoro.

⁵⁴ Mensah, David, *Kwabena: An African Boy's Journey of Faith*, p15

to Opanin Kwaku Seidu, the Amponsa stool is inherited matrilineally because at a time that sons were expected to fight and defend the stool, they ran away and it was the nephews rather, who fought.⁵⁵ The clan head, therefore vowed that those who had risked their lives should be the rightful successors.

2.3 OCCUPATION:

The Dega are located in the area of Ghana where there is a transition from forest to savannah. The people are mostly subsistence farmers, growing yams, cassava, maize, melon (*akatoa*) and groundnuts. There is also river fishing, animal husbandry and a few traditional crafts such as pottery and weaving. Women collect uncultivated shea nuts annually and make shea-butter. Plantations of cashew and teak trees have been introduced recently and a number of Dega have started cultivating them. Production of charcoal from felled trees has lately become one of the main occupations, to the detriment of the environment. The African Development Bank is sponsoring an irrigation project at New Longoro and it was scheduled to be completed by November 2004. It has been planned to irrigate 535 acres of land and provide fish ponds for fish farming.⁵⁶ Cooperative groups have been formed and the members are hopeful that commercial farming will be boosted when completed.

Fishing is no longer as lucrative as it used to be in the Dega Hare as a result of detrimental practices such as poisoning the fish in the rivers with DDT. This constitutes a deviation from the indigenous way of fishing, in which people used the juice from the *bel* plant that was inter-cropped with cassava. The leaves were beaten and dumped into the rivers. This intoxicated the fish and made them float temporarily so that the people could collect them. The potency lasted for about an hour and so the people had to hurry to collect as much as they could.⁵⁷

The writer observed that few people were involved in animal husbandry on a commercial basis. Animals were left to roam about and the mortality rate was always very high during outbreaks of diseases. They were rarely eaten but served as a financial

⁵⁵ Opanin Kwame Seidu, interview conducted by writer on July 2, 2003 in New Longoro.

⁵⁶ Mr. J.C. Nandoma, the Chairman of the Cooperative Group gave the writer this information during a trip to the irrigation site on February 4, 2004.

⁵⁷ Mensah, David, *Kwabena: An African Boy's Journey of Faith*, p29.

security in times of emergency or were reserved for sacrifices to Voga (earth deities). David Mensah has again observed that

The idols demanded most of the goats and sheep. Our idols had an unsatiable [sic] appetite for blood. They required sacrifices from everyone – even the very poor and sick. They protected us, but at a very high cost.⁵⁸

Salaried workers comprised mainly teachers and agriculture extension officers. The lack of employment in Dega Hare has impacted the demography and the rate of migration.

2.4 DEMOGRAPHY AND MIGRATION:

According to the summary report of the 2000 Population and Housing Census,⁵⁹ the total population of Dega people in Ghana is 55,174, representing 0.3% of the national population which is 18,912,079. Out of this number, 21,016 live in the Brong Ahafo region while 5,178 live in the Northern Region. About 28,980 live in the other eight regions with 8,514 living in Greater Accra Region alone. An estimated 1,100 Dega people have moved and settled in Côte d'Ivoire. The statistics show that there are more Dega living outside the Dega Hare and there is a high degree of migration. A number of factors account for this and in 1986 Peter Barker observed that

Dega people migrate in search of work and education, or to escape witchcraft. They go to such places as Techiman, Tamale, Kumasi, Accra and Abidjan. Some migrate annually and return to work on their own farms when the rains begin.⁶⁰

Even though the first formal school was established in Dega Hare as early as 1944, there is only one Senior Secondary School in the entire Mo land.⁶¹ The majority of Dega therefore migrate to other parts of the country for education.

2.5 EDUCATION AND LITERACY:

Formal education started in Dega Hare when the first primary school was opened at Longoro in 1944.⁶² The school came as a result of a request that Koro Yaw Dagwi and

⁵⁸ Mensah, David, *Kwabena: An African Boy's Journey of Faith*, p31.

⁵⁹ 2000 Population and Housing Census: Summary Report of Final Results, Ghana Statistical Services, 2002.

⁶⁰ Barker, Peter, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana* 1986, p214.

⁶¹ Kintampo Senior Secondary School.

his Methodist missionary friend, Samuel Kwaw Akesson, made in 1942.⁶³ The first head teacher was Mr. Kwabi, a Methodist teacher-catechist from Agona Nsabaa in the Central Region of Ghana. He had to go round to plead with parents to send their children to school. Among the few children who pioneered the school were S.K. Pambo who is now the chief of Jama, John Manu, Peter Kojo and James Kagbaah. Recounting his experience, Nnaa Pambo II had this to say

I started my primary school education in 1944 when I was about 8 years at Old Longoro. It was by sheer luck for me to get this rare opportunity to enter into classroom among the first few children in the whole Mo to study. One teacher Kwabi had to solicit me seriously from my father. Things were not easy for my father to look after me in school, but I managed to complete my middle school education in 1952 at Wenchi Methodist School.⁶⁴

According to archival records, in the 1938/39 Annual Education Report on Wenchi the ordained European Methodist Superintendent Minister in Wenchi reported that “During the year under review the Mission had four Teacher-Catechists at Wenchi, Kintampo, Longoro and Techiman ...”⁶⁵ It is likely that the teacher-catechist referred to was S.K. Akesson for he was at Longoro around 1937 but the school was opened in 1944.

The Longoro School was later relocated to another village, Ayorya, for a number of reasons. The area suffered from an acute water shortage in the dry season. It took great efforts to fetch water and a swarm of bees competed for the little that was available. According to Doni-Kwame,

The Longoro School did not live to see the light of day because of poverty, depravity and remoteness of the place. The school children had to walk three miles twice a day to fetch water from the Black Volta for domestic use. Hunger and disease was the lot of both teachers and pupils. There was no food and there was no market from where they could buy anything. The nearest town Kintampo, was 18 miles to be walked on foot.⁶⁶

⁶² Opinion of Nana Kojo Pambo – Chief of Jama, MoDega Region of Ghana, 2001.

⁶³ Doni-Kwame, Felix, *Ethnographic Sketch of the Dega of Ghana* (2), 2000, p5.

⁶⁴ Opinion of Nana Kojo Pambo – Chief of Jama, MoDega Region of Ghana, 2001.

⁶⁵ PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG.1/20/2/11, 1938/39 Report on Education, (ND), p8.

⁶⁶ Doni-Kwame, Felix, ‘*Ethnographic Sketch of the Dega of Ghana* (2)’, p5.

Parents gave little support to the school because education was seen as allegiance to Christianity. Some parents perceived it as a means of taking away their children from allegiance to the local deity.

Namoa Kwasi Briama of Carpenter was one of the pioneers of the Longoro School. During an interview with him and the Jogboikoro, he testified that he left the school after primary two because of hunger and other hardships.⁶⁷ However, Hareti Kwame Adjei of Longoro and his elders gave a different reason why the school was moved to Ayorya. According to them, the colonial District Commissioner asked that the school be moved to Ayorya which was more accessible. Koro Yaw Dagwi refused but after his death, Koro Kwasi Addae acceded to the demand of the district administration.⁶⁸

Additional schools were established later in other parts of Dega Hare. The first primary school in North Mo was opened at Bamboi in 1948 and Jama had one in 1956. Currently, Dega people are making good efforts to encourage education and literacy among themselves.

The Mo Students Union (MOSU) was initiated by the Mo students at the University of Cape Coast in 1998.⁶⁹ They have as their motto: "*Ir nyu ne to a pera bigro*", meaning "Wake up from your sleep for the day is far spent". This has grown to embrace Mo students in other tertiary institutions in Ghana and there is now the National Mo Students Association (NAMOSA). The aims and objectives of NAMOSA include promotion of peace, education and the general development of Mo traditional area. Another means to help develop education in Dega Hare is the Jama Koro Foundation for Deg Child Education which was founded in August 2002 by Dega like Nana Kojo Pambo II and Rt Rev Felix Doni-Kwame.⁷⁰ The vision of the foundation is to produce educated youth who can read and write, and to develop the requisite skills for socio-economic development of the area.

⁶⁷ Jogboikoro and Nomoa Kwasi Briama, interview conducted by writer on January 28, 2004 in Jogboi. He recalled that his teacher was called Mr. Kwabi.

⁶⁸ Longoro Hareti and his Elders, interview conducted by writer on January 30, 2004 in Longoro.

⁶⁹ Doni-Kwame, Felix, 'Ethnographic Sketch of the Dega of Ghana', p7.

⁷⁰ Jama Koro Foundation for Deg Child Education, June 1, 2003.

2.6 GENETIC LANGUAGE RELATIONSHIPS AND LANGUAGE USE:

The languages of Africa are grouped into four families namely, Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan, Khoisan, and Niger-Congo.⁷¹ The Niger-Congo linguistic area comprises most of the African continent south of the Sahara. The Kwa languages are found in a strip along the west coast of Africa from south-eastern Nigeria to Liberia. North of the Kwa language region, extending from western Nigeria into much of Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso, are the languages of the Gur branch including Mossi, Bariba, and Gurma. The name "Gur" was first used in 1889 as this syllable occurs in a number of linguistic and ethnic names from the area such as Gurma, Gurenne and Gurunsi.⁷²

Deg belongs to the Gur language family and is a member of the Grushi subgroup. Together with Vagla, it forms a separate branch of south-western Grushi cluster which includes Tampulma, Chakali and Sisaala, all in Ghana. According to M.E. Kropp Dakubu, "Vagla (abbreviation VG) is reasonably similar to Chakali, Deg, Tampulma and the southeastern and northwestern Sisaala languages; Sisaala of Tumu is not too different, but Kasem (KS) and the southeastern Grusi languages Chala and Delo are rather less similar."⁷³

There are two mutually intelligible dialects in Deg, namely Longoro and Mangom. The former is the main dialect spoken in most communities south of the Black Volta River, with the exception of villages like Nyambwe, Sabule and Chaara where Mangom is spoken. The latter is spoken in the north except Chebrenuyoa and Nipui (Carpenter) that also speak Longoro. There are three Dega villages in the Côte d'Ivoire and another three in the Jaman district in Brong Ahafo that speak a variation of Mangom.⁷⁴ The majority of Dega speak the Longoro Deg and the Bible has been translated into that dialect.⁷⁵ Primers for adult literacy programs are published both in Longoro and Mangom Deg. However, as far as language use is concerned, it is not only Deg that is used in Dega Hare.

⁷¹ 2001 *Encarta*, Microsoft Corporation.

⁷² Hall, Edward, *Ghanaian Languages*, Asempa Publishers, Accra, 1983, p18.

⁷³ Kropp Dakubu, M.E. (ed.), *The Languages of Ghana*, Kegan Paul International for the International African Institute, London, 1988, p21.

⁷⁴ Crouch, Marjorie and Herbert, Patricia, *The Phonology of Deg*, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, 2003, p1.

⁷⁵ The only Mangom community that asked for a separate translation was the Mansiekoro and his elders. Interview conducted by writer on June 2, 2003 in Mansie.

Asante-Twi is the trade or commercial language in the area and it was mostly used in churches before the linguistic development of Deg. Marjorie Crouch, one of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) translators seconded to the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT), recalled that

In contrast to Vagla, where we worked earlier, there were a number of Churches in the Mo area already but they were using Asante-Twi which was the language of the Church. The language that was used during any important gathering was Asante-Twi.⁷⁶

Twi is taught in the schools in South Mo but not in schools in North Mo, since they are under a different region that operates a different policy. During an impact assessment seminar organized in the course of this research,⁷⁷ it came to light that even though many more churches in the Dega area are using Deg, esteem for the language, especially outside Dega Hare is still low. Deg is now used extensively within the Dega area but it is not uncommon to see some Dega families that live in Akan areas speaking Asante-Twi to their children. Since language is the main carrier of culture, this attitude is gradually influencing Dega cultural beliefs and practices.

2.7 SOME DEGA CULTURAL PRACTICES AND BELIEFS:

Dega have cultural practices that indicate their distinctiveness and also demonstrate their cultural beliefs.

2.7.1 *Pea Dii* (Yam Festival):⁷⁸

The most important festival that is celebrated by all Dega communities is the *Pea Dii* (literally, eating of yams), the Yam Festival. It is celebrated at different periods by each community and the festive activities start from the middle of July and run to the end of September. Traditional festivals in Africa differ according to the ecology and the social structure of the ethnic groups. The Dega people are mostly farmers, hunters and fishermen and they therefore depend on nature for their livelihood. Their cosmological ideas are therefore linked to their occupational habits and depict dependence on nature.

⁷⁶ Marjorie Crouch, interview conducted by writer on June 17, 2003 in Tamale.

⁷⁷ Impact Assessment Seminar held on May 30, 2003, New Longoro.

⁷⁸ Narrated by Daniel Nsia, New Longoro, July 2, 2000.

The Dega *Pedia* is a harvest festival.⁷⁹ The main earth deity, *Teo*, and other deities are given the honour of being the first to eat of the new yams and appreciation is expressed to *Korowii* (God) and the *Voga* (earth deities) in Dega Hare.⁸⁰

There are two main rituals to the festival and the first part is called *Gbandawu*. Items like ashes of burnt tree roots and some spices are mixed with yam and meat and boiled into porridge form. Some is offered to *Afafu*, an earth deity and the rest is eaten by those who are believed to be spiritually powerful. The food is eaten while still boiling on fire and people eat it to demonstrate the potency of their spiritual powers.

The second ritual is the *Saga*, (hanging of yams). Traditionally, Dega people can only eat the new yams after these rites have been performed. Those who break this rule are banned from coming to the premises of the deities until this rite is performed. In Dega Hare, Longoro *Teo* is the highest deity under *Korowii*. The *Vogti* (traditional priest) of *Longoro Teo* follows the Deg calendar strictly and on one *Longo Yawa* (a day in Deg) in the month of July he will go to his farm and dig a tuber of yam. The *Vogti* in Longoro usually performs this rite on behalf of Dega before they formerly now eat the new yams.

The *Vogti* seeks permission from *Teo* by sacrificing a chicken to assess whether the communities can go ahead and celebrate *Pedia*. *Teo* is said to have given approval if the chicken lies on its back with the chest facing the sky. Individual communities can now fix dates for their celebrations. Farmers are given permission to harvest new yams from their farms after the hanging ritual. Usually, children will follow those bringing new yams home shouting, *Tuuru! Tuuru! Tuuru!* It is believed that as children shout and give appellations to the new yams, there will be better yield.

Members of the community ensure that they have harvested enough yams. At dawn the chief's drummer will beat the talking drums to invoke the spirits of the ancestors to join in the celebration. The drum also wakes up the women as early as 5:30 in the morning to prepare mashed yam. While the chiefs pour libation and sprinkle

⁷⁹ Bame, Kwabena N., *Profiles in African Traditional Popular Culture consensus and Conflict: Dance, Drama, Festival and Funerals*, Clear Type Press Inc., New York, 1991, p72. Bame has come up with three closely related categories that are sometimes hardly distinguishable, namely harvest festivals, commemorative festivals, and deity festivals. He adds that they are interrelated and interlocked, so much so that very often the dividing line between one type and another becomes very thin indeed. In fact, most traditional festivals share elements common to all three types.

⁸⁰ Narrated by Daniel Nsia, New Longoro, July 2, 2000.

mashed yam on the community deities, individual clan heads do the same to family deities. Chickens, goats or sheep are sacrificed to the deities.

Gifts of yams and pieces of meat are sent to friends, the needy and strangers in the community. The chief in each community will sit in state to receive homage and gifts from his subjects in the midst of drumming and dancing. The festival continues into the night with dancing and sharing of food. The youth go round doing what is known as *kabidage* (tasting). They help households to pound their *fufu* (yam) and they will be given some to eat. An added element to the festival is that communities now use it as an opportunity to discuss development programs, settle cases and contract marriages.

2.7.2 Dega Marriage:⁸¹

Culture is said to be dynamic rather than static and this is true of the Dega marital procedure which has changed over the years. Traditionally, the Dega process for contracting marriage involved the parents looking for wives for their sons. Sometimes this can begin when the prospective couple are even babies. When parents see a beautiful baby girl from a “good” home, they will express interest in her becoming the future wife of their son. A good home from the Dega perspective is a family free from such stigmas as communicable diseases, murder, theft, laziness and barrenness. If the girl’s parents agree, she will be betrothed. Occasionally, the boy’s family would give a stipulated amount of money and about 50 tubers of yams, corn and some fish to the girl’s family.

When the prospective couple is old enough to stay together as husband and wife, the boy’s parents will send the stipulated amount to announce their intention to formally ask for the hand of their daughter. At this point, the girl’s parents will seek her consent before collecting the money. The actual customary marriage rites are performed and according to the tradition, the girl becomes the son’s wife. The girl does not go to the husband’s home right after the customary rites but waits for a period of time during which the boy’s family perform the *Lamanda*.⁸²

On a determined day, the girl and her friends will go to the husband’s farm to collect yams and the husband will usually add some meat. This is known as *Kwaa Kpoe*,

⁸¹ Narrated by Opanin Kwame Seidu and Daniel Nsiah, New Longoro, July 2, 2003.

⁸² The boy’s parents send items like maize, yams and meat to the girl and in the process spy on her to see if she is faithful to their son.

meaning taking of food. Then the girl is taken to the new husband's home by elopement to begin a three week period of *hamfalidia*, confinement. During this period, she is taught how to spin silk-cotton and she makes a traditional cloth called *deg yal* (Deg cloth) for her husband. If she is found to be a virgin, the husband announces her virginity to his family and the bride will be dressed in white and smeared with white clay. She and her family are hailed and honoured with gun shots.⁸³ She is given pieces of cloth and some beads for staying a virgin. The *hamfali* tradition encouraged a young woman to remain a virgin, therefore, preventing teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.⁸⁴

The bride returns to her parents' house after a period and the husband sends her money *non chona* (help) to buy the items that she will need for her marital home. The bride finally prepares for *dia kora*, which is where she now goes to start a home with the new husband. She goes to her marital home with friends and relatives who will help her to cook food and distribute them to the new community. This is to announce her presence and the acceptance of the food signifies the community's recognition of the marriage. People will usually return the bowls with some gift to the bride. The extensive marriage procedure of gifts made divorce very difficult and rare in Dega Hare.

2.7.3 Mooga (First Pregnancy) Ritual:⁸⁵

Mooga is done mainly to protect the first pregnancy of a woman. *Mooga* is a traditional means to make the newly pregnant wife aware of her new state and to offer her ante-natal and post-natal education. It is worth noting that the Kasena from whom Dega migrated to Sisaala, also have a similar ritual for first pregnancy.⁸⁶ The husband will go and divine to find out the food that the baby in the womb likes best. Then it will be given to the pregnant woman's best friend to prepare for her. After she has taken the first two bites, the friend knocks her hand away during the third attempt to eat and announces to her, "You are pregnant". Usually the newly pregnant wife would stop eating and start weeping.

⁸³ It is worth noting that traditionally, the fidelity of the man before marriage is not of much concern.

⁸⁴ This customary rite can be an effective means of curbing the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

⁸⁵ Narrated by Mr. Daniel Nsia, New Longoro, July 2, 2003.

⁸⁶ Howell, Allison, *The Religious Itinerary of a Ghanaian People*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 1997, p88.

2.7.4 Welcoming of Babies:

There is a belief in Dega Hare that a baby takes the character of the first woman who receives it during childbirth. Careful choice is therefore made as to the woman who performs this important duty. The newly born is first bathed and water is thrown on the grass roof three times if the baby is a boy, and four times if it is a girl. Some of the water is collected as it is dropping from the roof and given to the baby to drink. A drop is put on the tongue of the baby and it is welcomed into the family. Opanin Kwaku Seidu⁸⁷ explained that this is not a naming ceremony but it is a means of welcoming the child and wishing it long life. It is also believed that once this is done, the child will always want to return home no matter where he or she goes as an adult.

The Dega only perform naming ceremonies when a baby cries abnormally. The parents will divine to find out the cause of the crying. Often it means that an ancestor has reincarnated and wants the child to be named after him or her. Under normal circumstances, parents will name the child without any ceremony. The *Leera* clan that migrated from among the Gonja shaves off the first hair on the head of the newly born baby.⁸⁸

2.7.5 *Lwejena* (Big Funerals):⁸⁹

Lwejena is a Dega joint or mass funeral that is celebrated for a number of people who might have died within a year. Any person who died within the year is buried shortly after death and the actual funeral is celebrated after the major harvesting season which falls between September and November. It is preceded with adequate preparation and hunters are mobilized to go and find game for the funeral. The night that the hunters return, *kpaana*, a type of drumming and dancing is performed. Each hunter dances to display the game that he has brought home. When the one with the biggest game rises up to dance, all the others sit down and watch.

On a Thursday all the bereaved relatives gather at the chief's palace, including the warriors and old women. The chief opens the ceremonies with a solemn speech as a

⁸⁷ Opanin Kwaku Seidu and Messrs Daniel Nsia and J.C. Nandoma, separate interviews conducted by writer on January 26, 2004 in New Longoro.

⁸⁸ Narrated by Mr. Daniel Nsia, New Longoro, July 2, 2003.

⁸⁹ Narrated by Yaw Jimkel and recorded by Felix Doni-Kwame, 2000. This reflects the Mangom *Lwejena*.

tribute to the dead. A sheep is slaughtered for the dead who were advanced in age and a goat or chicken for the young who died. The chief leads the crowd to the houses of all the bereaved and animals are slaughtered again in each house. Meanwhile traditional musical instruments like *gbonjen* and *tinpane* are beaten and people will either be dancing or wailing. The dancing and wailing go on the whole day and the people reassemble in the palace on the Friday morning.

The *Hareti* (the land owner) performs a ritual called *chee* to bring all the spirits of those who died to the place where *Lwejena* is being performed. The *chee* comprise soil from the grave of the dead, feet of chicken sacrificed and old pieces of cloth that belonged to the dead persons. The *Hareti* ties them together and a young girl carries it to the village where the *Lwejena* is to be performed. A messenger is sent ahead to inform the village of their arrival when they get to the outskirts. The entire village meets the *chee* to hail the spirits of the dead and the girl walks briskly into the houses of the successors to all the dead. At some point the *chee* is forcefully taken from her head and placed on the ground.

The *Hareti* mixes corn or guinea-corn flour with water and pours it on the *chee*, thus offering water to the spirits and welcoming them to their ancestral home. He sacrifices another chicken to open the way for the dead to join the old ancestors. After this ritual all the men in the community move to the chief's palace with their guns. The *Obrafo* (Chief executioner) leads them to the outskirts of the village where they open fire. While they are firing, the women will be shouting 'כשכש, כשכש', to boost the shooters' moral. The gunmen are instructed by the *Obrafo* to go round the village to hunt for death.⁹⁰ Meanwhile, the chief and his elders will be waiting in the palace anxiously for the outcome of their search.

On their return, the chief sends someone to meet them with *pito*, a local fermented guinea corn drink, and they will narrate their achievement by telling the chief that, "we found that wicked death and fought a fierce battle and killed him". On hearing this good news, the women will shout, 'כשכש, כשכש'. Local drums like *gbonjen*, *kpaana* and *jingo* are beaten and people dance to celebrate the victory over death. This victory dance brings the *Lwejena* to the end.

⁹⁰ The hunting for death seems to be peculiar to the Mongom in North Mo.

2.7.6 Widowhood Rites:⁹¹

The widowhood rites for widowers are different from those for widows. As long as the wife is not buried, the man is not allowed to come to the house where the corpse is laid. After burial the man is shaved, sits on a funeral mat and then a day is set for the final funeral rites. All the things belonging to the dead wife ought to be taken to her father's home and later given to the sister who succeeds her. She can decide to share the items with the children of the deceased. She has the responsibility to bring up the young daughters of the deceased sister. The man has the liberty to remarry after about a one year period. Usually, the man is encouraged to remarry early in order to prevent the spirit of the deceased wife from tormenting him.

The rites that a widow goes through are more rigorous. She sits by the corpse and places her right hand on it while wailing. This is to demonstrate her love for the deceased husband. She is not expected to accompany the corpse during burial. After burial, some elderly women in the community bath her and she is sent back into a room. Her hair is shaved and white cloth is tied round the head. She is expected to sit in the room until after the final funeral rites and this could be as long as a month or more. If she has to go out, she is accompanied by some women who usually sit by her, one in front, and another behind. She is not supposed to look back when walking about. She walks about with a small piece of cloth around her waist, her left arm on the right shoulder and the right arm on her stomach. She is expected to wear this small cloth irrespective of the weather. According to the *Hareti* of Longoro, all these rituals are done to protect her from being hunted by the spirit of the deceased husband.⁹² In time past, funerals of chiefs could be postponed for about seven years and for all those years, the wives were not expected to work.

Within one year after the final funeral rites, the widow is returned to her father's home on a Friday with only her own property.⁹³ There is the traditional fear that if she continues to stay in her marital home or inherit any property of the deceased husband, she will die. The property of the deceased husband usually goes to his family. The children

⁹¹ Narrated by Opanin Kwame Seidu, New Longoro, July 2, 2003.

⁹² Interview with Longoro Hareti and Elders at Longoro, January 30, 2004.

⁹³ Friday is considered sacred and Dega are not expected to go to farm.

remain in the marital home and will inherit the father's property if they are old enough. If they are still young, then the deceased's brother from the maternal family inherits from him and he is expected to take care of the children but this rarely happens.

2.7.7 *Hare Kwaara* (Ritual to redeem the land):⁹⁴

Annually, a cow is sacrificed by the *Hareti* (the land owner) to *Teo* for a bumper harvest. This is done around April before the main farming activities of the year are started. The land has to be redeemed from any curses and blessings asked from *Korowii* and the Dega deities. The community normally contributes money to purchase a cow, sheep or goat.

2.7.8 *Som Too* (Sheanut Collection) Ritual:⁹⁵

Another communal ritual that is done annually is the *som too*, the sheanut collection ritual. Before women go to collect sheanuts at the beginning of the season, the *Hareti* and the *Han-koro* (the Head woman) are required to make a sacrifice to the *Hare* (the land) and seek protection particularly from snake bites, for the women who will go to the bush to collect the nuts. The *Hareti* and the *Hankoro* pay for the pledges made the previous year and then make new pledges.

If the chicken sacrificed falls flat on its back with its chest facing the sky, then the sacrifices have been accepted and this is a sign that there will be no trouble. If it falls on its chest with its back facing the sky, then a *vogre* (diviner) will have to be consulted for divine interpretation. The *vogre* will then determine what steps to be taken next. The above rites and rituals give insight into the Dega cosmology and worldview.

2.8 DEGA COSMOLOGY AND WORLDVIEW:

As I moved through Dega Hare during the research, I observed that the Dega people are very religious. Their ancestors migrated with the earth deity, *Teo* and they added other deities to it as they encountered them. *Teo* and *Afafu* are located in (Old) Longoro, *Kosorowei* at Bewele and *Jabuni* who is a deity of war, is found in many Dega

⁹⁴ Narrated by Gabriel Chiu, New Longoro, June 28, 2003.

⁹⁵ Narrated by Gabriel Chiu, New Longoro, June 28, 2003.

villages. Apart from these, there are many other clan deities that families keep. Dega seek permission often from these deities before undertaking farming activities. They believe that failure to do this will result in drought, poor yield, pest infestations or even outbreak of sickness. These deities provide babies to women who ask and so children are named after them. There are Dega with names like Kwaku Teo, Yaw Ampara, Kwabene Firi, Yaw Bwe and Kofi Jabuni.⁹⁶

Even before Christianity or Islam came to Dega Hare, they acknowledged the existence of God, the supernatural being, who is called *Nnaa Korowii Jen*, the Great Ancestor who is the chief of all spirits. God's name in Deg also depicts the fact that he is greater than their great ancestors and is considered to be the King of all the supernatural beings and spirits. It is worth noting that in Dega cosmology, God is seen as Spirit. However, *Korowii* as the chief of all spirits is too far away from humankind and can only be reached through ancestors, deities and other spirits. *Voga*, the local deities, are seen as representatives of God.⁹⁷

Traditionally, Dega believe that humankind come from *Korowii* and return to 'Lalabwee', the home of the dead.⁹⁸ The dead still live among the living and want to be fed, so sacrifices are made for them or food is kept for them on special occasions. The dead reincarnate into the world. Such babies are named after the dead who are believed to have reincarnated. They acknowledge that power is vested in their ancestors and the dead and so pray to God through them. Therefore any venture or journey they make in life is usually preceded by divination. The dead are in a spiritual world and interact with the living. When a person dies, he or she joins the ancestors and so the dead are buried with items that they will use in the next world.

The living give items like *deg yal* and a mat to the newly dead to send to a father who has died long ago. Because of the belief that the dead go into a spiritual world, traditional leaders like chiefs are buried with other people like wives and servants so that they can continue life as chiefs in the next world. David Mensah writes,

The number of heads brought in by my great grandfather to bury a chief depended on the chief's age. If the chief was young, perhaps in his fifties,

⁹⁶ Interview conducted by Peter Jebuni at Jama, June 21, 2003.

⁹⁷ Interview conducted by Peter Jebuni at Jama, June 21, 2003.

⁹⁸ Interview conducted by Peter Jebuni at Jama, June 21, 2003.

he would need only a few companions since he was still strong. But should the chief be in his eighties then, he must have several people to accompany him on his celestial journey. He would need some young men to carry him in case he became tired of walking. His wives usually were the first to be beheaded. I am told that the senior wife usually considered it a privilege to go with her husband.⁹⁹

The Dega Paramount Chief, who was a Roman Catholic, died in 1999 and people I interviewed could not tell whether or not he was buried with other human heads. This is usually done in secrecy but others said they saw old human skulls displayed. Dega maintain interaction with their ancestors as depicted in their primal religious prayers.

A piece of cola nut is put into a calabash full of water and a prayer like the following may be said: "My ancestor (name), this is your cola and water. Come for water and let my problem be as cool as this water". Then a chicken is slaughtered and when it lies flat on its back with its chest facing the sky, then it is believed that the ancestors have accepted the plea. On the other hand, if the chicken lies on its stomach with its back facing the sky, then the plea has not been accepted.¹⁰⁰ An elderly Deg man explained how traditional prayers were made.

Our ancestors made local drink from *nora* (millet) and used it to pour libation. The drink was used to pray to *Korowii*. The one pouring the libation will either be in white cloth or his body would be smeared with white clay. He will then pray a prayer like this: '*Nnaa Korowii Jen*, this is your drink. You created heaven and earth and you are the King of all. You gave birth to the *Voga* (local deities). We are going to give water or drink to our *Vog*. Please help us to succeed'. The prayer is first directed to *Nnaa Korowii Jen* and whatever is to be offered is first given to him. So, worshippers of *Vog* know that they are essentially worshipping *Nnaa Korowii Jen* through the *Vog*. Our ancestors believed that *Korowii* gave *Vog* to man to serve as his messenger and representative. *Vog* does things in place of *Korowii*.¹⁰¹

The drink is first given to *Nnaa Korowii*, then to *Hare* (the land) and then to the *vogti* (local deities). This attests to the fact that the Dega acknowledged God in their pre-Christian beliefs and practices and saw him as superior to their local deities. Therefore,

⁹⁹ Mensah, David, *Kwabena: An African Boy's Journey of Faith*, p16.

¹⁰⁰ Narrated by John Chewa, Carpenter, April 6, 2003.

¹⁰¹ Opanin Kwaku Seidu, interview conducted by writer on July 2, 2003 in New Longoro.

local deities like *Teo* and *Afafu* are not seen as ends in themselves but as messengers of *Korowii*.¹⁰²

2.9 H.W. TURNER'S SIX-FEATURE ANALYSIS OF PRIMAL WORLDVIEW:

Harold Turner's six-feature analysis of the primal worldview¹⁰³ provides a useful framework for understanding the Dega worldview.

2.9.1 Kinship With Nature:

Turner looks at the ecological aspect of primal religions and touches on the profound sense in many primal societies that humankind is akin to nature. Human beings are children of Mother Earth and brother or sister to plants and animals which have their own spiritual existence and place in the universe. This is usually seen in the way the environment is used and at the same time revered. Plants and animals are in totemic spiritual relationship with people and some become tutelary and guardian spirits. In a technologically oriented society, nature is exploited for human ends while in most primal oriented societies, people live in a relationship of mutual obligation with nature. Kwesi Dickson describes this as "the fellow-feeling that the African has with nature, which has led sometimes to the description of African religion as 'nature religion'".¹⁰⁴ Western society may label and distinguish the animate from the inanimate, the physical from the metaphysical, the sacred from the secular, and the natural from the supernatural. However, to the Deg such distinctions are not meaningful as far as his or her cultural worldview is concerned. For example, even though the Black Volta River is exploited for economic gains, it is also served as a deity.

2.9.2 Human Weakness:

There is the deep sense that human beings are finite, weak and impure or sinful and stand in need of a power not his or her own. Turner observes that this is not a sense

¹⁰² It is significant to note that a drink made from local grains was used to pour libation instead of imported gin as done today.

¹⁰³ Turner, Harold W., 'The Primal Religious of the World and their Study' p27-37.

¹⁰⁴ Dickson, Kwesi, *Theology in Africa*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1984, p 48.

that is found only among people of developing countries who live in abject poverty but an authentic religious sensibility coupled with a realistic assessment of the human condition. This sensibility and assessment have always been hidden from people from industrialised countries but it is present with them. Turner underscores the universal needs of human beings for reliance on a more powerful spiritual being. However, this is more pronounced in a primal society like Dega Hare where the local deity, *Teo*, is readily available to be consulted. Aware of his or her weakness, the Deg depends on the ancestors and deities through constant divination. Every year, the *Hareti* and the *Haankoro* make sacrifices to ask for protection for women that will go through the bush looking for sheanuts.

2.9.3 “Man” Is Not Alone:

Turner sees the third feature as complementary to the second, which is the conviction that humans are not alone in the universe for there is a spiritual world of powers or beings more powerful and ultimate than him. The primal world is therefore a personalised one and has a sense of causation. There should be a reason behind every event and the question to ask is, who caused it rather than what caused it. Kwesi Dickson has also observed that “The African predominantly interprets his world theologically, rather than in scientific terms, in terms of final rather than material causes”.¹⁰⁵ This does not mean that Africans do not believe in and appropriate scientific methods. Dega will divine to determine why a child is crying unusually and will also perform *Lalalee*¹⁰⁶ to ascertain the cause of death of a deceased person.

2.9.4 Relations with Transcendent Powers:

There is the belief that humans can enter into a relationship with the benevolent spirit world and so share in its powers and blessings and receive protection from evil forces by these more-than-human helpers. Turner adds that anything less than a transcendent helper would be inadequate, so that the last thing the primal peoples want is a merely “man-made” religion with gods of a human dimension. In the primal world,

¹⁰⁵ Dickson, Kwesi, *Theology in Africa*, 1984, p50.

¹⁰⁶ Some cloths of the dead are tied to sticks with two people carrying them and led by a *bogbie* in order to find out who might have killed the dead.

“there seems to be a longing for the true life of man that is not yet achieved and that can come only from the gods”.¹⁰⁷ This longing is evident in Dega Hare. Communities have representative shrines from the main *Teo*. It is no offence to have as many deities as one can afford. So apart from *Teo*, there are *Afafu*, *Sonya Kipo*, *Abrewa*, *Kosorobwe*, *Bofo* and other clan deities. No important venture is taken without first consulting the deities and ancestors.

2.9.5 “Man’s” Afterlife:

Turner sees the fifth feature as the extension of the fourth which relates to the pervasive sense that life is shared with the powers also after death. This sense is very prevalent in the Dega cosmological thought. Members of the royal clans are buried in common graves in specific rooms and locations so that they can join their ancestors.¹⁰⁸ The Deg stands by the dead body and gives messages for ancestors who have died long ago.

2.9.6 The Physical as Sacramental of the Spiritual:

The sixth feature is “the conviction that the ‘physical’ acts as the vehicle for ‘spiritual’ power. In order words, men live in a sacramental universe where there is no sharp dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual”.¹⁰⁹ This belief underpins the significance of the rituals such as *Hare Kwaara* (ritual to redeem the land) and harvest festivals in Dega Hare.

2.10 CONCLUSION:

We have seen in this chapter that the Dega are people who migrated from various areas in the northern section of Ghana. There were those who migrated from the “Grushie” and Sisaala lands and those who claim to be the original settlers on the land. It is also clear that Asante and Bono have had great influence on the Dega culture, including language use. However the linguistic structure and the indigenous cultural beliefs and practices are sufficiently intact to identify the Dega as a distinct people.

¹⁰⁷ Turner, Harold, ‘The Primal Religions of the World and their Study’, p31

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Opanin Kwame Seidu, Jaasehene of Branam, at New Longoro, July 2, 2003.

¹⁰⁹ Turner, Harold, ‘The Primal Religions of the World and their Study’, p32.

The physical and the spiritual environment of Dega Hare have also been described. The geographical demarcations that were made in 1906 and 1959 respectively separated them into two territories and later regions. This brought some contention between, especially, New Longoro and Bamboi, particularly over the ownership of the Black Volta River.¹¹⁰ The Dega migrated with their earth deity, *Teo*, but acquired other deities as they encountered equally powerful ones. They do not take any important venture in life without consulting their deities and ancestors through the *vogre* (diviner). Reference has been made to Harold Turner's six-feature analysis of primal religions as an appropriate framework for understanding Dega cosmology and worldview. The next chapter will look at the emergence and operation of the Church and the Bible translation strategy in Dega Hare.

¹¹⁰ PRAAD, Tamale, NRG.8/2/4/114, Letter from Nana Kwasi Akai, Omanhene of North Mo to Omanhene of South Mo about the ownership of the Black Volta River.

Chapter Three

THE EMERGENCE OF THE DEGA CHURCH AND THE BIBLE TRANSLATION STRATEGY OF THE GHANA INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS, LITERACY AND BIBLE TRANSLATION

The Church and the Bible translation ministry came to Dega Hare at different times in the Dega history. This chapter seeks to discuss the significance of the language factor and translation in Christian mission and the emergence of the Dega Church. Finally, the chapter outlines the Bible translation strategy of the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT) and its outworking in Dega Hare.

3.1 THE LANGUAGE FACTOR IN CHRISTIAN MISSION:

Christian mission is understood as God's mission. Indeed, the Christian God is perceived as a missionary God.¹ Mission is *missio Dei* (God's mission) and according to Bosch, "mission is not primarily an activity of the Church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God".² Under the 'Great Commission',³ Jesus has given the Church a significant role to play in God's mission. Right from creation, God has sought to reach out to humankind and this is depicted in the first book of the Bible, Genesis, where God went into the Garden of Eden looking for Adam and Eve.⁴ The story of Babel in Genesis⁵ indicates a world that was mono-lingual until God scattered humankind through multi-lingualism. However, God continued to interact with human beings through the languages that they understood. The stories of the patriarchs mark the beginning of a religious history of a people out of whom emerged the books of the Hebrew Old Testament. By the time Jesus started his ministry, the Jews who were described as

¹ Sanneh, Lamin, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1989, pp9-15.

² Bosch, David J., *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1991, p390.

³ Matthew 28:18-20.

⁴ Genesis 3:8-10.

⁵ Genesis 11:1-9.

“people of the Book”⁶ had been dispersed through the Roman Empire. There was one dominant language - Greek, a common writing system, and the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint. Jesus’ words spoken in Aramaic were later translated into the common (*Koine*) Greek. The New Testament Gospels are therefore a translated version of the message of Jesus. By virtue of its particular history reaching into Old Testament times, Christianity can be said to be a translated religion without a revealed language.⁷

Language can be said to be the principal means used by which human beings communicate with one another. Language is primarily spoken although it can be transferred through other media such as writing.⁸ According to Lamin Sanneh, however, language goes beyond the spoken or written media. “Language was not merely a tool fashioned to achieve limited and temporary goals. It was also a dynamic cultural resource, reflecting the spirit of the people and illuminating their sense of values.”⁹ Clement Akrofi, a Ghanaian linguist and translator also saw language as “an indispensable factor of national life; it provides the most adequate means of expressing what a people feels, thinks, and wills.”¹⁰

The decisive event of Pentecost provides a new perspective on the language factor in Christian mission. In the account given in Acts 2, worshippers from the Gentile world, including Africans, heard God’s Words in their own languages and in amazement and perplexity they exclaimed, “What does this mean?”¹¹ Thus, Pentecost demonstrates that God has no favourites as far as language use is concerned and as Sanneh has put it with reference to African languages, “God is not disdainful of Africans as to be incommunicable in their language”.¹² At the heart of the Christian message is the fact that God respects, speaks every language and wants to communicate to each person in his or her heart language. Usually, persons who do not have the Bible translated into their

⁶ Watkins, Morris, *Literacy, Bible Reading, and Church Growth through the Ages*, William Carey Library, Pasadena, California, 1978, p12

⁷ Sanneh, Lamin, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK, 2003, p97.

⁸ Comrie, Bernard, *Language*, Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2002.

⁹ Sanneh, Lamin, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1989, p165.

¹⁰ Akrofi, C.A., *Twi Kasa Mmara*, Scottish Mission Book Depot, Accra, Gold Coast, 1937, pvii.

¹¹ Acts 2:12.

¹² Sanneh, Lamin, The Horizontal and the Vertical in Mission: An African Perspective, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 7. No. 4 (October 1983): 165-71 (166).

languages tend to think that God does not understand their languages. As a new convert to Christianity prayed in Akan, the widely spoken language in Ghana but not his mother tongue:

God in heaven, we thank you for all the things you have made. But you know that I do not speak Akan well and I know that you don't speak my language. So I am finished. Amen.¹³

Since he did not have the Bible translated in his mother tongue, he may have assumed that God did not speak his language. Bediako has observed that

The significance of Pentecost, therefore, has to do with more than answering to the chaos of Babel and restoring harmony between God and humanity, and between human beings. Its deeper significance is that God speaks to men and women – always in the vernacular. Divine communication is never in a sacred, esoteric, hermetic language, rather it is such that 'all of us hear ... in our languages ... the wonders of God'.¹⁴

These sentiments underscore the crucial role of language in Christian mission. That the language factor in Christian mission is logically and practically connected to translation, is indicated by the fact that people acknowledge the fact that God speaks their languages when the Bible is translated into their mother tongue.

Andrew Walls perceives politics as "the art of the possible and translation as the art of the impossible".¹⁵ But he further states:

In the light of the frustrations inherent in the translation process, it is the more astonishing that God chose translation as his mode of action for the salvation of humanity. Christian faith rests on a divine act of translation: 'the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us' (John 1:14). Any confidence we have in the translatability of the Bible rests on that prior act of translation. There is a history of translation of the Bible because there was a translation of the Word into the flesh.¹⁶

Unlike some other religions, Christianity has no *lingua franca* or sacred language but translates itself into every language and culture wherever it goes. Through translation it becomes part of the new culture and so the receptor group no longer sees it as foreign but

¹³ Quaye, Paa Ekow, *The Story of the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation*, Accra, 1991, p19.

¹⁴ Bediako, Kwame, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*, Orbis Books, Edinburgh University Press, 1995, p60.

¹⁵ Walls, Andrew F., *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1996, p26.

¹⁶ Walls, Andrew F. *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, p26.

as their own. Sanneh has pointed out that “Like Judaism and Islam, Christianity was committed to monotheism but unlike both of them, it found translation to be the method suited to spreading the gospel.”¹⁷ Bible translation has played a cardinal role in Christian mission, especially in Africa.

Translation of the Scriptures started in Africa in the ancient city of Alexandria in Egypt around 260 BC.¹⁸ Schaaf gives the traditional background to this translation:

Ptolemy II, who ruled Egypt from 285 to 247 BC, and his counsellor Demetrius, had a scholarly interest in the law of the God worshipped by the Jews in Jerusalem. So they established relations with the high priest in Jerusalem. In response, the high priest sent 6 x 12 translators with scrolls to Ptolemy’s court, where they were well received. But the Egyptian ruler could not understand the Jews’ sacred books in Hebrew. A detailed and interesting discussion took place, and the scholars translated the books of the Old Testament into Greek in 6 x 12 days.¹⁹

The Hebrew Old Testament in Greek is popularly called the Septuagint or LXX (Seventy) and it became a missionary Scripture of the day that contributed to the conversion of some Greek philosophers such as Justin Martyr.²⁰ Mbiti says that the Septuagint was “the definitive Bible of the early Church and it played a tremendous role in the life of the Church, so that nearly all the Scripture quotations we find in the New Testament come directly out of the Septuagint”.²¹

There is a direct correlation between translation of the Bible and successful expansion of the Church in some areas in Africa. Writing on the history and role of the Bible in Africa, Schaaf has noted, “That the Nubians held out so long against Islam is certainly due to the fact that in their spoken and written Christian witness, they used the language of the people.”²² Lamin Sanneh has also noted that “... without translation there would be no Christianity or Christians. Translation is the Church’s birthmark as well as

¹⁷ Sanneh, Lamin, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, p37.

¹⁸ Schaaf, Ype, *On Their Way Rejoicing: The History and Role of the Bible in Africa*, (Revised Edition) Regnum Africa, Akropong, 2002, p1.

¹⁹ Schaaf, Ype, *On Their Way Rejoicing: The History and Role of the Bible in Africa*, p1.

²⁰ Halsey, William D. (Ed.), *Collier's Encyclopedia*, Crowell-Collier Educational Corporation, New York, 1968, p689.

²¹ Mbiti, John S., *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*, Oxford University Press, Nairobi, 1986, p22.

²² Schaaf, Ype, *On Their Way Rejoicing: The History and Role of the Bible in Africa*, p19

its missionary benchmark: the church would be unrecognizable or unsustainable without it.”²³

It can be deduced from Augustine’s writings in the fourth century BC that even though the Punic element was strong in the North African Church, because of the language factor, “the Punic population of the time was inclined less rapidly to Christianity than the Romanized Greco-Latin incomers”.²⁴ Sanneh says that the non-translation of the Scripture into Punic made the Church foreign to the indigenous people.

The failure to produce a Punic version of the Bible was an ill omen for the Churches in North Africa, for it left the indigenous population excluded from any meaningful role in Christianity. ... Without the native Scriptures the local populations construed the church as an instrument of foreign domination and became as a result alienated from the Romanized Christians.²⁵

When Islam spread in the region in the seventh century, unlike the Nubian Church, there was no strong indigenous Punic Church to resist because, in Sanneh’s words, “it encountered only the ghost of a long-spent force”.²⁶ This scenario is not peculiar to the North African story but is also the case in certain parts of Ghana.

It is an observable trend in Christian mission that wherever Christianity operates in the *lingua franca* rather than the indigenous languages, the Christian faith does not get rooted in the indigenous cultures. In a preliminary finding of her doctoral dissertation,²⁷ Juliana Senavoe has noted that the exclusive use of Twi in the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches in Ghana in Akuapem Guan has “stifled creativity” in the Guan Churches. She has observed that, “The true incarnation of the gospel for Akuapem Guan Christians and the doing of theology in the mother tongue are yet to take place.”²⁸ Again, development of indigenous theologies and songs is virtually non-existent. Barbara F. Grimes, a translator with the Wycliffe Bible Translators, has testified that “Without

²³ Sanneh, Lamin, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?*, p97

²⁴ Latourette, Kenneth Scott, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, Vol.VII, Harpers and Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1945, p279

²⁵ Sanneh, Lamin, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, p69.

²⁶ Sanneh, Lamin, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, p69.

²⁷ Senavoe, Juliana, The Effects of Non-Translation of the Scriptures among the Guan of Southern Ghana – Some Preliminary Findings, in *Journal of Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol.5, No.1, June 2002, p58.

²⁸ Senavoe, Juliana, The Effects of Non-Translation of the Scriptures among the Guan of Southern Ghana, p57.

Scriptures in the mother tongue, Churches are not able to sustain spiritual depth into succeeding generations. They have difficulty answering false teachings.”²⁹

Sanneh quotes a story that Livingstone told in 1857:

In Madagascar a few Christians were left with nothing but the Bible in their hands; and though exposed to persecution, and even death itself, as the penalty of adherence to their profession, they increased tenfold in numbers, and are, if possible, more decided believers now than they were when, by an edict of the queen of that island, missionaries ceased their teaching.³⁰

An indigenous Church left without missionary agents but with the Scripture in their mother tongue is likely to be able to grow and persevere against persecutions. Some of the missionary societies that came to Ghana in the early nineteenth century took the language factor in Christian mission seriously. This resulted in the translation of the Bible into indigenous languages.

Johannes Gottlieb Christaller was commissioned by the Home Board of the Basel Mission to devote himself solely to the Twi language which is the most widely spoken language in Ghana. Six years after his arrival in Akropong-Akuapem, in 1859, Christaller and his local team members like David Asante and Jonathan Bekoe Palmer were able to publish the four Gospels and the Acts.³¹ Three years later he sent the manuscript of the translated Bible to Europe and saw it through the Press by 1871. He followed it with a comprehensive Grammar book in 1875 and a monumental Dictionary in 1881 which has been described as “a veritable encyclopaedia of Akan life”.³² Commenting on Christaller’s work, J.B. Danquah, a scholar and a statesman who was an Akan, has pointed out

... but for Christaller’s foresight in recording in permanent form the scattered elements of the beliefs, hopes and fears of the Akan people at this particular juncture ... the Akan people of the Gold Coast in the West would have failed to bring their indigenous contribution to the spiritual achievements of mankind.³³

²⁹ Winter, Ralph D. & Hawthorne, Stephen C. (Eds.), *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, Third Edition, Paternoster Press, Carlisle, United Kingdom, p560.

³⁰ Sanneh, Lamin, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, p109.

³¹ Smith, Noel, *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, 1835-1960: A Younger Church in a Changing Society*, Ghana, Universities Press, Accra, 1966, p55.

³² Smith, Noel, *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, 1835-1960*, p55.

³³ Danquah, J.B., *The Akan Doctrine of God*, London, 1941, p185.

Noel Smith also remarks on the impact that Christaller's work had on the Twi language. "It raised the Twi language to a literary level and provided the basis of all later work in the language. It gave the first real insight into Akan religions, social and moral ideas and it welded the expression of Akan Christian worship to the native tongue."³⁴ Zimmermann who was also with the Basel Mission worked on the Ga language with his team of mother tongue translators.

In 1886, Zimmermann and other mother tongue translators such as Jacob Nikoi, translated the Bible into Ga. He also produced a Grammar book and a Dictionary.³⁵ The emphasis on vernacular languages became and remained a marked feature of the work of the Basel Mission. Among the factors that motivated the Basel Mission to open schools was "to enable him [the Akan student] to read the Bible for himself and to ground his life in the Word of God and to train future leaders for the Church".³⁶

The Bremen Mission that worked in the Volta Region of Ghana similarly took the language factor seriously. E. Grau has observed that one factor which helped to make the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana, independent was the language work of the missionaries.³⁷ After just one year's work, the *Keys to the Ewe Language* was printed in 1854. By 1877 the New Testament had been printed and in 1913 the Bible in Ewe was published. As part of their missionary language policy, expatriate missionaries were encouraged and helped to minister through the local language and reliance on interpreters was discouraged.

Since Bible translation is done using the cultural idioms of the receptor language, it is equally impacted by the religious terms from the pre-Christian tradition. There is always a mutual impact because as the Biblical idioms impact the traditional idioms in vernacular translations, the traditional idioms also impact the vernacular Scripture. This eventually, enhances indigenous Christian theologies. In Deg primal religion, a covenantal relationship is established with a deity by "bathing its water". So in the Deg New Testament, the phrase, "to bath the water" was used in translating the word

³⁴ Smith, Noel, *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, 1835-1960*, p55.

³⁵ Smith, Noel, *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, 1835-1960*, p55.

³⁶ Smith, Noel, *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, 1835-1960*, 1966, p56.

³⁷ Grau, E, Missionary Policies as seen in the Work of Missions with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana, Baeta, C.G, (Ed.), *Christianity in Tropical Africa: Studies Presented and Discussed at the Seventh International African Seminar*, University of Ghana, April, Accra, 1965, p61.

‘baptism’. Again, in the Deg New Testament, the Holy Spirit is rendered as “sitting on” people rather than dwelling inside them because the latter will not make sense in Deg.³⁸ Emphasising the importance of reading the Word of God in one’s own language, Kwame Bediako has observed that

If Akan speakers read their Bibles only in the English versions and neglect the Word of God in their own language, it is conceivable that they would dutifully participate in every annual *Odwira* Festival without ever realising that the traditional purificatory rituals of *Odwira*, repeated year after year, have in fact been fulfilled and transcended by the one, perfect *Odwira* that Jesus Christ has performed once for all, (Hebrews 1:3 in Twi: *ode n’ankasa ne ho dwiraa yen bone no*).³⁹

The Twi rendering uses the traditional terminology, ‘*dwira*’ meaning to purify, which connects to the Akan festival *Odwira*. The English Bible renders it as “After he had provided purification for our sins, ...”⁴⁰ and Akan readers may not connect this to the traditional festival of *Odwira* when read in English rather than Twi.

This is further demonstrated, especially when it comes to the name of God in the mother tongue. Sanneh cites the example of the Zulu name for God.⁴¹ In South Africa, the Methodists were not convinced to use the Zulu term for God, *uNkulunkulu* and so used *uJehova*. An Anglican Bishop, on the other hand, modified a Latin term and came up with *uDio*. Eventually, the general consensus favoured the Zulu name for God, *uNkulunkulu* which carries the sense of the “Great-Great-One”. The word used in Deg for God is *Korowii* and this is the name Dega used for God even in their pre-Christian prayers. *Koro* means chief and *wii*, spirits.⁴² So, even though the Dega believe in the existence of both good and evil spirits, God is the chief of them all. *Korowii* is the God that Dega have known all the time because the “God who the missionary came to serve had actually preceded him or her in the field ...”⁴³

The use of indigenous languages in the Christian mission, especially in Ghana, has helped the ethnic groups to identify with the missionary agents and to accept their

³⁸ Marjorie Crouch and Patricia Herbert, Deg translators, interview conducted by writer on October 29, 2003 in Tamale.

³⁹ Bediako, Kwame, *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience*, Regnum Africa, 2002, p33.

⁴⁰ Hebrews 1:3 (NIV).

⁴¹ Sanneh, Lamin, *Translating the Message*, 1989, p171.

⁴² Kofi Prince, interview conducted by writer on April 6, 2003 in New Longoro.

⁴³ Sanneh, Lamin, *The horizontal and the vertical in mission – an African Perspective*, p166.

message. Christianity has become a 'traditional' religion in some areas in Ghana where the language factor in Christian mission was taken seriously and the Bible was translated into the indigenous languages. There appears to be a contagious element in language use. One is unconsciously drawn to the person who speaks his or her heart language. And when it comes to matters of religion, "no language speaks to the heart, mind and innermost feelings as does our mother-tongue".⁴⁴ The Scripture in the mother tongue of people, therefore, attracts people to hear God who speaks their languages.

3.2 THE HISTORY OF THE DEGA CHURCH AND USE OF MOTHER TONGUE:

The Dega Church comprises many denominations that came to the Dega Hare at different times and under different circumstances. As there is little written historical information, I had to rely mostly on interviews and other primary sources. As an Akan proverb says, *Nyansa, ye fa no obi ano*, "wisdom is taken from somebody's mouth", I gleaned oral history from Church leaders and members and sometimes from traditional leaders in the Dega community who were not members of the Church. There are about ninety churches, that is, denominational gatherings, in the forty-six communities of Dega Hare. The membership of some of them is predominantly Dega while some comprise Dega, Dagaabi and Akan. Some of the Churches were planted by lay members who became Christians when they travelled to other areas of Ghana. In recent years, some Churches that were initiated by Dega are also emerging.

3.2.1 The Methodist Church:

Missionary venture into the traditional areas of Dega Hare was made in 1934 through the Mo Mission which was to accelerate the establishment and spread of Christianity among the Mo and Gonja. The Mo Mission was part of the North Ashanti Mission which had its headquarters at Wenchi in the Brong Ahafo Region. An expatriate missionary, Rev. Leslie T. Dixon, was the coordinator but he was not resident in Dega Hare. This effort had been preceded by a Methodist congregation that was already in

⁴⁴ Bediako, Kwame, *Jesus in Africa*, 2002, p32.

existence in Kintampo by 1906.⁴⁵ It is believed that the Kintampo Methodist Church was started in 1893 through the leadership of Joshua Opoku⁴⁶ and by 1916, Mr. Arkorful from Winneba came there as a teacher-catechist to begin the Methodist School.

Samuel and Sophia Kwao Akesson were the first Ghanaian missionaries who went to the Dega Hare in 1937. They were in fact, evangelising as cross cultural missionaries because Samuel who went there as a Catechist, was an Nzema from the Western Region and Sophia was an Asante. They were stationed at Longoro and Samuel Akesson became the friend of the Chief, Koro Yaw Dagwi. They had their first child there, a daughter who was affectionately called Abena Longoro.⁴⁷

A church was planted in Longoro with eight members and another planted in Ntraban. Akesson and his family worked under very difficult conditions. The nearest market in Kintampo could be reached on foot eighteen miles away. The Black Volta River which was their main source of drinking water was three miles away. They also faced opposition, notably an encounter with a priest of a local deity called Kwaku Ntoa who had the title, *Chorchorbodor*, meaning “the greatest *vogti* or *tegate* (medicine/juju man) on earth”. Doni-Kwame recalled an interview he had with Samuel Akesson in Accra before he died.

Chorchorbodor was coming to Longoro cursing me. When I told Nana Yaw Dodi (Dagwi) about it, he was afraid and cautioned me, ‘You are called Yaw and I am Yaw. I do not want you to contest with this man. He will destroy you.’ Then I told Nana, I want to prove to this man that I was sent here by God Almighty to preach the Gospel of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ to the people of Mo and my text is Psalm 23:4 – Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for Thou art with me. With this faith I confronted *Chorchorbodor* and said to him: You worship animals but I worship the living God. I command you to sit down. From now on I have overcome you! Immediately, he sat down and from that day forward he did not stand in my way again.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Methodist Church, Ghana, Souvenir Brochure for the inauguration of the Wenchi Diocese at the Calvary Cathedral on Sunday 23rd November 2003, p15.

⁴⁶ Boahin, Isaac K.S., Methodist Church, Ghana – A Brief History of Sunyani District, 1998, Unpublished Anniversary Report, pp11-12.

⁴⁷ Abena Longoro is now Prof. Mrs. Florence Abena Dolphyne, Professor of Linguistics, at the University of Ghana, Legon.

⁴⁸ Rev Dr Akesson, interview conducted by Rt Rev Doni-Kwame on Thursday, 8th November, 2000 in Accra.

Samuel Akesson intentionally broke a number of traditional taboos to demonstrate the power of God to the local people. He would eat yam before it was offered to the main earth deity, *Teo*. He also learnt Deg and translated a number of Christian songs into the language. He did the preparatory work towards opening a school and before he left the area, he asked his friend, Koro Yaw Dagwi, to formally make a request for a school.

Because of the rather difficult social and economic situation, it took a long time to find pastors who were willing to serve in the area. Rev. Sampson Owusu was stationed at Bamboi in 1977 but was withdrawn after one year for lack of suitable accommodation. An attempt was made to resolve the absence of a resident pastor when a native of Mo, Rev Felix Doni-Kwame who later became the Bishop of the Sunyani Diocese of the Methodist Church, was posted to New Longoro in 1983. Through his efforts the MoDega Agricultural Project was established. Bungalows were built for the staff and two vehicles acquired for evangelism and a mobile clinic.

However, the Church was virtually an Akan Church exported to Dega Hare. The liturgy and the hymns were all in Fante. Aware of the significance of language in the transmission of the Christian faith, Doni-Kwame encouraged his people to use Deg instead of Twi in worship. He would tell them, *Dega Korowii waa boɲa no*. (“The God of Dega does not understand Twi”).⁴⁹ He translated the liturgy and some popular hymns into Deg and wrote a number of books in Deg to promote the adult literacy program. He was very supportive of the Deg New Testament translation team and served as a reviewer for the translators.

After serving his people for eleven years, Rev Felix Doni-Kwame was replaced by Rev E.K. Halm who served from 1991 to 1994. Rev P.Y. Acheampong followed from 1994 to 1997 and Rev S.N. Bonnah served from 1997 to 2000. The Rev George Afirifa Tenakwa was stationed in the Mo Mission in 2000 to date. He is a Safwi from the Western Region and so uses Twi to preach and teach. However, he is seriously encouraging the Dega membership to learn the liturgy that has been translated into Deg. There are eleven societies (Churches) within Dega Hare with a total membership of 243: New Longoro, Ayorya, Chingakrom, Ntraban, Tikla No.2, Jogboi, Carpenter, Banda Nkwanta, Mansie, Jema, and Bamboi. I was not able to visit all of them but when I

⁴⁹ Rt Rev Doni-Kwame, interview conducted by writer in October 2003 in Accra.

worshipped with Mansie, they used the Fante-Twi liturgy and hymn book and Bible readings and preaching were done in Asante-Twi.

3.2.2 Roman Catholic Church:

The Roman Catholic Church operated in Dega Hare under the Kumasi Diocese until the Sunyani Diocese was founded in 1975. Parish Priests used to visit Churches in Dega Hare from Wenchi, Nkoransa and Kintampo. As early as 1955, Rev Fr L. Memders was stationed in Wenchi and he baptised three people in Ayorya.⁵⁰ Baptismal records show that Rev Fr Jacobus Guillumand who was stationed in Nkoransa baptised six members from Ahenakrom and eight from Busuema in 1961.⁵¹ After the formation of the Sunyani Diocese in 1975, the Society of Divine Word (SVD) Missionaries started operating in the Wenchi parish in 1976. Rev Fr Otmar Auinger of SVD used to go to Ayorya and New Longoro to minister.

The Roman Catholic Church started in New Longoro through the late Paramount Chief of Mo, Nnaa Kwaku Dimpo II.⁵² He was known as Thomas Saahene before he became the Longorokoro and was baptised in 1944 at Kintampo by Rev Fr H.J. Naus.⁵³ Nnaa Dimpo decided to continue with the Roman Catholic fellowship when he moved to New Longoro. The initial Church membership comprised his family and his friend, Opanin Kwasi Mensah. He used to invite priests and catechists from Kintampo and Wenchi to lead worship until Catechist Peter Nobal was stationed in New Longoro.

In 1998, Rev Fr Otmar who had already served in the Akan areas of Ghana for 15 years was stationed in New Longoro and he founded the Holy Family Parish which now comprises 21 Roman Catholic Churches in Dega Hare. Personal visits I made to some of the branches revealed that the membership is mainly Dega, Akan and Dagaaba. Where the membership was mono-lingual, Deg or Dagari was used and where it was multi-lingual as in the New Longoro Parish, then Asante-Twi was used. The Roman Catholic

⁵⁰ Rev Fr Otmar Auinger, interview conducted by writer on January 26, 2004 at New Longoro.

⁵¹ Rev Fr Otmar Auinger, interview conducted by writer on January 26, 2004 at New Longoro.

⁵² Three Catechists of the St. Thomas Roman Catholic Church, interview conducted by writer on May 25, 2003 in New Longoro.

⁵³ Rev Fr Otmar showed the writer the baptismal certificate of the Late Chief, New Longoro, January 25, 2004.

Church in Dega Hare evangelises mostly through social services like provision of potable water, schools and credit unions.

Apart from Rev Fr Otmar, there were three other expatriate Priests serving in Dega Hare. There were also a total of twenty-nine catechists working on voluntary basis, with occasional incentives. Two Dega, Benjamin Buo from Busuema and Francis Govina from Jama were in seminaries training to become priests.

3.2.3 Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA):

The Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA) was first established in Dega Hare through the evangelistic activities of a lay person, Opanin Kofi Kinto. Opanin Kofi Kinto and Opanin Kwame Monyomoyo travelled to Mampong in the Ashanti Region to work.⁵⁴ Kinto went there as a mason but did not practice it at the beginning. They took along their earth deity, *Timiningo* and people used to consult them for spiritual help. While people were consulting with Monyomoyo in the house, Kinto would secretly stand behind the house and throw stones over the roof into the house as if the deity had thrown the stones. One day their tricks were found out and the consulting business collapsed so Kinto went back to his mason work.

Kinto became a Christian through the SDA Church and was later trained as a lay preacher. He returned to Dega Hare in 1949 with Pastor Dwomo to evangelise his own people. According to Evangelist Busi, the first two Churches that were established in Dega Hare were the Kintampo and the Santekwaa churches. He added that it was likely that the Kintampo Church was the first to be established.

However, to some leaders of the Santekwaa SDA, their Church was the first SDA Church to be planted in Dega Hare in 1949.⁵⁵ Dwomo and Kinto organised open air preaching and three elders of the town accepted Christ. Pastor Dwomo continued preaching for one week and a number of people, including five local leaders of Santekwaa, joined the Church. The following week, three more traditional leaders were added to the number. All those traditional leaders came with their wives and children. During one of the SDA annual camp meetings held in Chiraa, near Sunyani, three

⁵⁴ Evangelist M.K. Busi who was a pastor from 1971-83 but was retired and Elder J.C. Nandoma, Former Church Secretary, interview conducted by writer on January 29, 2004 in Bamboi.

⁵⁵ SDA Church leaders, interview conducted by writer on March, 2003 at Santekwaa.

traditional leaders, Peter Nu, Emmanuel Dankwa and Samuel Kojo were baptized. More members including traditional elders were baptized in the second year.

There were post-conversion conflicts between the Church and the traditional leaders of the town arising from a number of factors. Church members were not prepared to contribute to buy animals to sacrifice to the shrine of the earth deity, *Kwaku Firi*. The leaders of the Church were taken to Mansra (Manchala) and detained. Eventually, the *Mohene* (Mo Chief) at New Longoro ruled that the Christians should not be forced to contribute money to buy animals for their rituals. It was a taboo to go to farm on Fridays but the Christians broke that taboo. Samuel Kojo and Peter Nu were taken to Mansra and locked up. The Pastor in Techiman intervened and the case eventually was settled by the *Mohene*. He ruled that the Christians could not be bound by the traditional religious laws.

Again the chief of Santekwaa demanded that since the Christians also picked “*boto*” seeds which are used to make local soap from his land, they should also contribute to make sacrifices to the earth deity. It was resolved that Christians would not contribute money but would give two pieces of the soap they made out of the seed to the chief. After this incident, the Church had a relatively peaceful co-existence with the traditional leaders.

Most of the SDA Pastors in the Dega Hare are Akan-speaking and so services are held in Asante-Twi whenever they led. The liturgy, hymns and announcements were done in Twi but during my visit⁵⁶ the hymn “How Great Thou Art” was sung in Deg and it received big applause. The enthusiasm on the faces of members and the “Amen, Amen” that came from members when the Deg language was used, illustrated clearly, the importance of ministering to people in their heart language. In matters of language, “no one points to her father’s village with her left hand”.⁵⁷

The Church has two districts within Dega Hare. The Nsuoano District has its headquarters at New Longoro and headed by Pastor Paul Amo Kyereme. The Kintampo North District which has its head in Kintampo was headed by Pastor Mensah. Both districts had a total of twenty-two congregations and seven schools. The SDA Church has

⁵⁶ I visited the New Longoro SDA on Saturday, 24th May, 2003 and there were 60 adults and 30 children present. They met again in the evening between 3.30 PM and 5.30 PM to listen to the oral Scripture, Faith Comes By Hearing (FCBH).

⁵⁷ A proverb in Akan, the writer’s mother tongue, Asante-Twi.

produced five Dega pastors: J.K. Badu, the President of the Mid-West Ghana Conference, Anane Dome, Publishing Director, J.M. Donkor at Sawaba in Kintampo, O.P. Nsia, a student at the Valley View University, Accra and I.K. Donkor at Nsawam. Coincidentally, none of them was serving in Dega Hare during the period of the research.

3.2.4 Presbyterian Church of Ghana:

There is a Presbyterian congregation at Weila, a predominantly Nafaana village. Their ancestors fled from their land due to internal conflict and settled on the Dega Hare.⁵⁸ According to the Catechist, Alex Badu, the Church was started by a catechist who was an Akuapem about fifty years ago but it became defunct later. It was reactivated in 1973 and placed under the Wenchi Presbytery. The total membership was about forty-five: ten adult males, fifteen adult females and twenty children. Asante-Twi was used in the Church and the Catechist was not aware that the audio Scripture was available in Nafaanra.

3.2.5 The Church of Pentecost:

The Church of Pentecost had three Assemblies in Kintampo, one at Tichera and another in Bamboi.⁵⁹ According to Deacon Binka, the Church at Bamboi was started by some migrant workers like Police Corporal Sampene and his wife, Elder Atta, Opanin Kwabena Asante, Yaa Badu, Vida Doni, and others. It was started in 1990 with adult membership of sixteen. The Church was under the Wenchi District and Pastor Ajiamanu was heading the district.

The current membership was sixty-five with the majority being Dega and some Ewe and Asante. The main medium of preaching and teaching was Asante-Twi since, according to Deacon Binka, all the members understood Twi. The Deg New Testament was not read in the Church at all and after some discussions about the relevance of the mother tongue Scripture, he decided to buy a copy and start reading it in addition to the Twi Bible. The Pentecost Churches in Kintampo were using Asante-Twi Bible rather than the Deg New Testament.

⁵⁸ Catechist Alex Badu, interview conducted by writer on January 2, 2004 in Weila.

⁵⁹ Deacon Augustine Kwabena Binka, interview conducted by writer on January 29, 2004 in Bamboi.

3.2.6 The Christ Apostolic Church (CAC):

The Christ Apostolic Church in Dega Hare has attracted some Dega youth and nurtured them in their Christian lives. One personality behind the formation and growth of the Church was Evangelist Daniel Kwame Kupo from Gbere.⁶⁰ He was the son of Ajwaa Dinlee and Kwabene Yabwakwaa, a priest of a war deity. Daniel Kupo was expected to succeed his father to take care of this powerful war deity. Kupo married Yaa Teohaa and they had two sons. Debt that Kupo accrued from smoking and drinking became so insurmountable that his wife left him. He moved to Carpenter where he met two men who preached to him and he gave his life to Christ.

Daniel Kupo purchased a Twi Bible and read from the Book of Acts, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”⁶¹ Kupo said that he had a dream where he was interviewed and taken on as God’s worker. After this dream, he travelled through Dega villages preaching the Gospel. Young men like David Mensah and Michael Nimoh who used to accompany him have risen to positions of leadership. Dr. David Mensah is the Director of the Northern Empowerment Association (NEA) and Apostle Michael Nimoh is the head of the Christ Apostolic Church in Ghana. Evangelist Kupo used to admonish his people to go to school and also to serve God saying, “Any land where there is no school and service of God, the people live in darkness”.⁶² The CAC uses Deg where Dega are in majority but uses Asante-Twi where the membership comprises Dega, Akan and Dagaaba. The Christ Apostolic Church has experienced some schism in the Dega Hare due to a misunderstanding over some Church policies.

One of the Churches that broke away claimed that for many years some of the Christ Apostolic Churches in Dega Hare had been worshipping in dilapidated buildings while they were obliged to send all tithes and fifty percent of offerings to the headquarters in Accra. To compel the local Pastors to ensure that members paid their tithes, they were levied according to the numerical strength of their congregations. The

⁶⁰ Peter Chiu, interview conducted by writer on April 9, 2003 in New Longoro.

⁶¹ Acts 1:8.

⁶² Mensah, Steve, *Sofo Daniel Kwame Bwara Wa*, Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation, 1986. (Written in Deg and translated into English by Stephen Mensah).

Pastors therefore adopted coercive methods in collecting tithes. Meanwhile, all appeals for help towards the construction of local church buildings yielded no results.

Some of the Church members in Nepui (Carpenter), Jama, Yaara and Tasilima decided that instead of sending all the tithe proceedings to Accra, some would be kept to rehabilitate the church buildings. The national leadership did not agree with their decision and action and this resulted in a split. The new group call their Church, Evangelical Christ Apostolic Church (ECAC).⁶³ However, a leader of CAC told me that the financial policy had been in place for many years without any problem and suspected that someone had instigated some of the Churches into breaking away.⁶⁴ I observed that a number of new Church buildings had emerged among the CAC and ECAC since the schism.

3.2.7 The Evangelical Christ Apostolic Church (ECAC):

The Evangelical Christ Apostolic Church (ECAC) started in November 1995 at Carpenter and operates only within Dega Hare. It can be described as a Dega Initiated Church (DIC). The headquarters is in Nepui (Carpenter) and ECAC has branches in about fifteen Dega communities. There were two Pastors and two more had just finished training at the Christian Service College in Kumasi.⁶⁵ ECAC had particularly attracted some of the Dega traditional leaders which included six Dega chiefs who were members of the Church.⁶⁶

A visit to some of the ECAC Churches revealed that where the membership was predominantly Dega, Deg alone was used. Where the membership was Dagaaba, Akan and Dega, then Asante-Twi was used. The Northern Empowerment Association was a development partner of the Church. ECAC is not the only Church in Dega Hare that can be described as a Dega Initiated Church (DIC) for the Bible Believers Fellowship (BBF) is equally a Dega initiated church.

⁶³ Rev Dr David Mensah, interview conducted by writer on September 15, 2003 in Tamale.

⁶⁴ Peter Chiu, interview conducted by writer on April 9, 2003 in New Longoro.

⁶⁵ Pastors John Chewa of Carpenter, Paul Kuma of Jama, Jacob Mensah of Bamboi and Ransford Busi of Yaara. Information given by Noah Ampem at Carpenter, January 25, 2004.

⁶⁶ The chiefs included: Carpenterkoro, Jugboikoro, Kintampokoro, Baniantwekoro, Tasilimakoro and Yaarakoro, April 2003.

3.2.8 Bible Believers Fellowship (BBF):

The founder of the Bible Believers Fellowship (BBF), Pastor Emmanuel Kateri started in the Methodist Church in New Longoro when he was a young man.⁶⁷ He changed over to the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) because of misunderstanding about the mode of baptism. He was a member of CAC for twenty-four years and served as a deacon for eight years. According to Pastor Kateri he left the CAC because the local leadership did not give him the freedom to evangelise in his zeal to win lost souls. In order to have the freedom to reach out to the lost, he wrote to the CAC and resigned his membership. He started meeting with his wife and children in his house in New Longoro on July 31, 1994. After two months, he went to Accra and met some friends who introduced Believers Bible Fellowship (BBF) to him.

BBF is a Branhamite⁶⁸ group of fellowships and lays great emphasis on eschatological doctrines. He decided to adopt the name because the Fellowship recognises the autonomy of individual Fellowship member groups. By the time he returned from Accra, some members from the CAC had decided to join the local Fellowship and they later managed to put up a Church building in New Longoro. Pastor Kateri disclosed that two fellowships had started in Subinso and Awisa and he was nurturing them so that they can gain their autonomy later. Even though the Pastor of BBF is a Deg, they use Asante-Twi for everything in the Church.

3.2.9 *Duu Korowii* Evangelical Church:

Duu Korowii Evangelical Church in Kintampo is a Dega Initiated Church (DIC) which was established in 1999 due to the passion and desire to use the mother tongue Scripture. *Duu Korowii* means ‘honour God’ and the Church was founded by Pastor Philip Anane.⁶⁹

According to Pastor Anane, the Church that he used to attend purchased two copies of the Deg New Testament when it was dedicated. All attempts to read them in Church failed with the explanation that every Deg speaks and understands Asante-Twi.

⁶⁷ Interview with Pastor Emmanuel Kateri, January 26, 2004 at New Longoro.

⁶⁸ The Branhamite groups of fellowship was founded by William Branham, born 1909 and died in 1965. He claimed to be the fulfilment of Malachi 4:5 and was referred to as the “Elijah” of the so-called Laodicean Age. (Ref: Larson, Bob, *Larson's New Book of Cult*, Tyndale House, Wheaton, Illinois, 1982, pp156-158).

⁶⁹ Interview with Pastor Philip Anane at Kintampo on April 1st, 2003.

However, he had discovered that whenever he read the Asante-Twi Bible and later read the same passage in the Deg New Testament, he understood the Deg one better. When he read John 5:45⁷⁰ from the Asante-Twi Bible, he did not understand it clearly until he read the same passage from the Deg New Testament. The Asante-Twi uses “*betwa*” for accuse and “*twire*” for accuser and he did not know what they meant until he read the passage from the Deg New Testament.

Despite these hermeneutical discoveries, the Church would not read the Deg Scripture in addition to the Twi Scripture, so Pastor Anane decided to form a Dega Church where they can read the Deg New Testament, sing Deg songs and use Deg. At the time of interview, there were sixteen members in the Church. The Church also had a radio ministry in Deg on ADARS FM radio in Kintampo. The Deg Scripture was read and preaching was done in Deg.

Pastor Anane’s firm conviction about the use of mother tongue is expressed in his eschatology and of the role of angels. “When Christ returns he will speak to us in our mother tongues. He will speak to Dega in Deg. Again, the angels that God has assigned to attend to us usually speak our mother tongues to us and we should be interested in our mother tongue Scripture.” This is an illustration of how the mother tongue Scripture breaks theological and ecclesiastical hegemony and unlocks the door to indigenous initiatives.

3.3 A BRIEF PROFILE OF THE GHANA INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS, LITERACY AND BIBLE TRANSLATION (GILLBT):

The Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT), is a Ghanaian organisation which is non-governmental and non-denominational. It was born out of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), which is the field entity of the Wycliffe Bible Translators International (WBTI).

“If your God is so great, why can’t he speak my language?” SIL work began as a result of this challenge that was thrown to the founder, Cameron Townsend in 1918.⁷¹

⁷⁰ “But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set.” (NIV) (Underlining my emphasis).

⁷¹ Agyekum, Grace, *Beyond Literacy: Functional Equivalence for Scripture Use in Ghana*, MA Thesis presented to Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Mission, Pasadena, California, 1989, p95.

Townsend was in Guatemala to distribute Spanish Bibles and a Guatemalan Indian asked him this question when he handed a Spanish Bible to him. Later Townsend returned to the United States of America where he and colleagues like Ken Pike started training Christians during the summer to become linguists and translators. The name, Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) emerged from this training program. The first summer course was held in 1934 in Arkansas in the USA and trained recruits initially started work in Mexico. Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT) was formed in the USA to seek recruits and funds by liaising with Christian churches that will support the field workers. It is estimated that 6,809 languages are spoken in the world and SIL is working in 3,462 in seventy countries.⁷² SIL is increasingly seeking to work in partnership with National Bible Translation Organisations (NBTOs) like GILLBT.

The SIL started work in Ghana through an appeal that John Agama, a Ghanaian Christian, made in 1960 while studying in Britain. John Agama heard that the WBTI was sending missionaries to South America to translate the Bible into indigenous languages. He therefore went to a WBTI British Council meeting and asked if they would send missionary translators to Ghana.⁷³ He was told that SIL had no plans for Africa and so could not send missionaries to Ghana.

However, in 1962, eight teams comprising administrators and translators, led by John Bendor-Samuel, came to Ghana to make the first start in Africa.⁷⁴ They served as Research Fellows under an agreement with the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, Legon. The agreement was later extended to include cooperation with the Department of Linguistics, the Language Centre and the Institute of Adult Education. The administrative leadership was transferred to Ghanaian Trustees in 1980 and the name was changed from SIL Ghana branch to the Ghana Institute of Linguistics (GIL). Later in 1982, the name was changed again to Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT) to reflect what is being done in the field.⁷⁵

⁷² SIL International General Statistics, May 2003.

⁷³ Quaye, Paa Ekow, *The Story of the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation*, 1991, p6.

⁷⁴ Mary Steele, interview conducted by writer on February 27, 2004 in Tamale. The teams were as follows: John & Pam Bendor-Samuel – Director, Jack & Linda Henderson – Associate Director, Mary Steel and Gretchen Weed – Konkomba, John & Kathleen Callow – Kasem, Bob & Shirley Beadle – Vagla, David & Nancy Sprat – Kusaal, Jack & Sally Kennedy – Dagarti, and Joy Clevenger and Mary Abbott – Baasare.

⁷⁵ GILLBT Constitution and Legislative Manual, Tamale, August 1995, p1.

GILLBT is made up of Christians from various denominations and nationalities and an annual general meeting of membership has the ultimate authority. Membership is open to people who ascribe to the basis of faith of the organisation.⁷⁶ Members are bound together by the common belief that every person ought to be given the opportunity to hear God's word in his or her mother tongue. The mission statement of the Institute states:

In obedience to the Great Commission, GILLBT exists to provide access to the Word of God in the mother tongue to language groups in Ghana and beyond, in partnership with others, through academic research, Bible translation, Scripture-In-Use, literacy, development and training.⁷⁷

The policy on the financial principles and practices of GILLBT begins, "GILLBT is a 'faith' work, dependent, under God, on the faithfulness of the Lord's people".⁷⁸ GILLBT is a non-governmental and non-denominational but international organisation. It is principally financed through the gifts of individual Christians and Christian groups within and outside Ghana. Some of the gifts come directly to specific projects in GILLBT or to stipulated members. Ten per cent of members' gifts are assessed to help finance the administrative cost of the Institute. Some projects like the Literacy and Development are financed by secular groups like Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Department for International Development (DfID) of the British government. Internally, GILLBT generates income from her Income Generating Activities of Guest House in Accra and Training Centre and Printing Press in Tamale.

The work of the Institute has been grouped into four main sections: Language Programs, Administrative Support, Income Generation and Church and Public Relations. The language programs sector, which is the focus of this study, has responsibility for anthropological and linguistic research, translation, Scripture-in-use and literacy and development.

⁷⁶ The Basis of Faith are seven statements of faith including the divine inspiration and consequent authority of the whole canonical Scriptures, the Trinity, fall of man, deity of Jesus Christ, justification of the sinner solely by faith, the indwelling of the believer by the Holy Spirit and resurrection of the body both of the just and the unjust. (GILLBT Constitution and Legislative Manual, pp 2-3.)

⁷⁷ GILLBT Constitution and Legislative Manual, p1.

⁷⁸ GILLBT Constitution and Legislative Manual, p44.

3.3.1 The Bible Translation Strategy of GILLBT:

Wayne Dye defines the Bible translation strategy of SIL in the following words:

The translation strategy is an approach to missionary work in which the only formal missionary activity is translating the Bible (or parts of it) into the mother tongue of those being evangelized and teaching them to read it with understanding. It emphasizes the vital (though not necessarily exclusive) place of the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit in making and nurturing believers. As SIL Executive Vice President Frank Robbins put it, 'The Spirit of God takes the Word of God and makes a child of God',⁷⁹

In principle, the GILLBT Bible translation strategy is similar to that of SIL but some differences have emerged in practice over the years.

Dye's definition emphasises Bible translation and literacy that enables the receptor language group to read the Scriptures with understanding. His statement however, is silent about the functions of those in various support services like administrators and computer services that are integral part of the translation strategy. The major aspect of GILLBT's translation strategy is of course Bible translation and literacy. However, community development and conscious promotion of Scripture use through both the print and non-print media are some of the integral aspects of the strategy that has emerged in Ghana. Even though SIL's translation goal was the New Testament, GILLBT's strategy emphasises the need to translate the Old Testament for the Ghanaian Church. The indigenous churches accept the responsibility to translate the Old Testament and GILLBT supports them with specialised services like consultant checking, information technology and some financial assistance.

Why is this described as a strategy? It is a strategy because it is a process aiming at laying the necessary foundation for church planting and Christian discipleship by providing the tools – the Bible, literacy and the capacity for using the Scriptures. It is assumed that the translation team will immerse themselves among the recipient group and be involved personally in witnessing, encouraging local believers and serving as living examples to the community. They are expected to provide a model of applying Biblical values to everyday life. Actual church planting is left to the local Christians as they hear or read and apply the Scriptures in their own languages. The strategy is aimed basically at

⁷⁹ Dye, Wayne T., *Bible Translation Strategy: An Analysis of its Spiritual Impact*, Wycliffe Bible Translators, Dallas, Texas, 1980, p19.

language groups that do not have vernacular Scriptures. In most cases, these are minority language groups whose languages have not been reduced to writing by the local government or mission agencies.

For example, in Ghana, about 60 languages are spoken and the Ghanaian government is currently sponsoring only eleven.⁸⁰ GILLBT's translation strategy is being pursued in thirty-three language groups located in six regions, namely Northern, Upper-East, Upper-West, Brong Ahafo, Volta and Western. The four inter-related components of the Bible translation strategy, namely, Linguistic and Anthropological research, Translation, Literacy and Development, and Scripture-In-Use, will now be discussed.

3.3.2 Linguistics & Anthropology:

The GILLBT's translation strategy usually pioneers language groups that have little or no material published in the mother tongue. A general language survey is done to ascertain the language groups that do not find existing vernacular Scriptures intelligible. Where a church already exists in the area, the church and/or community leadership usually makes a request for translation work to begin. GILLBT takes the initiative to move into areas where there is no presence of the Church or it may be a weak one, and eventually seek to share the vision with them.

A resident team of linguist-exegetes is located within the language group to work with the mother tongue speakers. The team then analyses the phonology and grammar of the language and a technical description of the language is written. This research is applied practically by proposing a standard orthography for the language. This is done in consultation with the mother tongue speakers who usually constitute the orthography committee. By virtue of the fact that GILLBT has a formal agreement with the Linguistics Department of the University of Ghana, copies of linguistic research findings are sent to the University. Primers are then prepared using the approved orthography. The translation team is also required to conduct anthropological studies of the languages. This is done with the awareness that dynamic translation cannot be done without deep knowledge of the culture of the receptor language group.

⁸⁰ Johnstone, Patrick, *Operation World: When we pray and God works*, Paternoster Publishing, USA, STL Books, 1987, p190. and Kropp Dakubu, M.E. (Ed.), *The Languages of Ghana*, KPI for International African Institute, 1988, p10 gives between 45 and 50.

In 1979 three linguist-exegetes made a week-long linguistic survey trip to Dega Hare to ascertain whether or not Dega needed their own translation or could use the Vagla New Testament or the Asante Bible with comprehension.⁸¹ The following brief report illustrates what is done during a language survey that usually precedes the work of Bible translation among a people group.

The survey team reported that Mo people were interested to see the Bible translated into their language because they had seen similar work done in Vagla and Nafaanra.⁸² There seemed to have been much evangelism and there were a substantial number of Christians in Dega Hare. Ten people were tested: five men and five women with a range of ages above fifteen. A short narrative in their own language was played to them, followed by four questions about the content of the narrative. A passage from the Twi Scripture (Mark 7:31-37) was played to them and they were asked ten questions in their own language to test comprehension. The same passage from Mark was played in Vagla, and they were asked the same questions in their language. Each of the three testers and an interpreter who understood English, Mo and the languages being tested, had a separate room. Each administered one of the three tests to all the people, who passed from one test to the next until they had finished all three tests.

Answers were marked right, wrong, or partially right. Partially right answers were given half point value in tallying and the following were the results:

⁸¹ Language Survey Report from GILLBT Linguistics Department, Tamale, 1979.

⁸² Language Survey Report from GILLBT Linguistics Department, 1979.

<i>Town</i>	<i>Mo/Deg</i>	<i>Asanti-Twi</i>	<i>Vagla</i>
Jama	87.5%	38%	67.5%
Chibirinyoa	89.9%	15.5%	59.5%
Manchala	94%	4%	44%
Longoro	90.7%	1.5%	32.5%
Average	90.5%	14.8%	50.9%

Source: GILLBT Linguistics Department, 1979

The villages that were chosen for the test were fairly isolated and did not have much contact with Twi speaking people. However, a Roman Catholic priest, Rev. Father Peter who had used both Twi and Vagla Scriptures among the Mo confirmed that even Dega from villages along the major roads also had very low comprehension of these two languages. The survey team therefore concluded, “The Mo people need and want a New Testament translation, and, with the proper encouragement and training a Mo should be able to do it for his own people.”⁸³

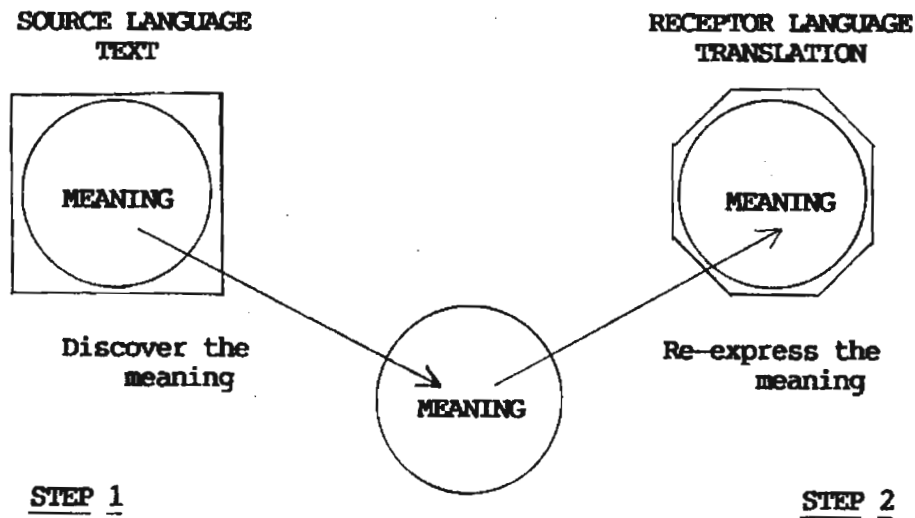
3.3.3 Translation:

Translation within the GILLBT strategy is aimed basically at translating the Gospel into indigenous languages and is defined as “Re-telling, as exactly as possible, the meaning of the original message in a way that is natural in the language into which the translation is being made”⁸⁴ The following diagram further illustrates the above definition:

⁸³ Language Survey Report from GILLBT Linguistic Department.

⁸⁴ Barnwell, Katharine, *Bible Translation: An Introductory Course in Translation Principles*, SIL, Dallas, 1992, p8.

Translation Diagram



Source: Bible Translation (Katharine Barnwell), 1992.

A good translation must therefore, communicate the meaning of the original message. Since the words and expressions of each language are different, if the translator keeps too closely to the grammar or words of the original, the translation may be unnatural, confusing and even give the wrong meaning. Two types of translations, namely literal and meaning-based are recognised.⁸⁵ Literal translation is one that follows as closely as possible the form of the language which is used in the original message. On the other hand, meaning-based translation aims to express the exact meaning of the original message in a way that is natural in the new language. It is sometimes called idiomatic or dynamic equivalent translation.⁸⁶ Instead of word-for-word translation from the Hebrew and Greek, dynamic equivalent translation uses thought-for-thought for clearer meaning in the receptor language. A meaning-based translation may change the order of the words and use the order which is most clear and natural in the receptor language. The aim is to ensure that the translation is accurate, clear and natural to all segments of the target audience.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Barnwell, Katharine, Bible Translation, p13.

⁸⁶ Barnwell, Katharine, Bible Translation, p14.

⁸⁷ Barnwell, Katharine, Bible Translation, p33.

GILLBT's translation projects are using the meaning-based or dynamic type of translation with four important principles.⁸⁸

- The Bible is the Word of God, and it is inspired by the Holy Spirit. For this reason, the translator has a very serious responsibility not to change the meaning in any way. He must be careful not to add anything to the meaning, or to leave any part of the meaning untranslated.⁸⁹
- The Bible is a meaningful book with a message that is meant to be understood.
- All languages are different and each language has its own grammar, its own words and expressions. In order to express the meaning of the message to be translated, the translator often has to use grammatical forms and words that are different from those of the language he is translating from and this does not matter. The important thing is that the meaning of the message is unchanged.
- The task of a translator therefore, is to translate the meaning of the message, rather than the words.⁹⁰

In order to produce dynamic translations, GILLBT's linguist-exegetes live among the ethnic groups and learn their languages and cultures. They identify and recruit mother tongue speakers to assist them to learn the language and culture. Mother Tongue Translators (MTTs) are also identified and trained so that they can draft the translation from a source language to the receptor language. The resident linguist-exegetes assist the MTTs with the Greek or Hebrew text. GILLBT consultants run occasional workshops to introduce MTTs to biblical languages like Greek and Hebrew. After the translation has been done, a literal translation of the vernacular is done back into English so that another linguist-exegete, usually referred to as translation consultant can also check it through with them. A larger group of mother tongue speakers called reviewers meet to go through the translation. To ensure that the translation reads naturally to mother tongue speakers who are not literate, the text is checked in the community. The translation is read to mother tongue speakers who are not literate to ascertain their comprehension.

⁸⁸ Barnwell, Katharine, *Bible Translation*, p12.

⁸⁹ This may seem an impossible goal to the translator. It is however, important that the translator aims at keeping the inevitable loss or addition in significance to a minimum.

⁹⁰ Barnwell, Katharine, *Bible Translation*, p14.

Aloo Osotsi Mojola who is a Translation Consultant for the United Bible Societies, has given a dimension of the translation process that perhaps needs to be explored in greater depth in relation to GILLBT's approach. "Translation does not happen only between languages (a source and target language) but is, at the same time, always a process of negotiation and exchange between cultures and their respective power relations."⁹¹ He thinks that transposing categories, concepts, and textual practices of one language into those of another are a problem of translation. He adds that translators are constrained in many ways, by their own ideology. "In other words, no translation is a neutral, pure reflection of the original text."⁹²

In the process of producing a dynamic translation, it can be said that the translation strategy cannot succeed in any community without the active participation of the mother tongue speakers.

However, GILLBT translation programs have largely been financed from external sources. Translation projects are capital intensive and attempts are being made to encourage indigenous Churches to make some financial contributions.

3.3.4 Literacy and Development:

The other facet of the strategy is Literacy and Development which enables the indigenous people to read the translated Scripture. According to the 2000 population and housing census of Ghana, about 45.9% of the adult population are not literate.⁹³ According to the National Literacy Coordinator of GILLBT, the purpose of the Literacy and Development program is to augment the efforts of the Ghanaian government to reduce illiteracy by assisting language groups to build reading and writing capacities. It is hoped that this will empower Ghanaians academically, socially, economically, culturally and even spiritually. He outlined the main activities of the literacy and development program as:⁹⁴ to establish literacy committees and promote the value of literacy in

⁹¹ Mojola, Aloo Osotsi, 'Bible Translation' in Fabella, Virginia & Sugirtharajah, C.S. (Eds.), *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 2000, p31.

⁹² Majola, Aloo Osotsi, 'Bible Translation', p.31.

⁹³ 2000 Population and Housing Census, Summary Report of Final Results, Ghana Statistical Services, March, Accra, 2002, p7.

⁹⁴ Maalug Kombian, George, *Enhancing a Sustainable Literacy Program through Micro Enterprise Development*, dissertation prepared in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Award of MA in Rural Social Development, University of Reading, UK, August 2000, pp 13-14.

communities; identify and train voluntary teachers (facilitators) and supervisors. It aims to initiate and supervise literacy classes and hold 'literacy days' and to increase local participation, provide training in record keeping, and book keeping and transfer project management to communities. It also aims at training and enhancing the skills of project managers and regional coordinators; prepare, test and print primers and functional materials in the vernacular languages and English, hold 'Writers Workshops' for the purpose of local literature production and establish sustainable cottage industries with appropriate micro-credit facilities.

The literacy program uses the Gudschinsky approach to literacy.⁹⁵ The Gudschinsky approach holds that the adult knows his language and what he or she may be deficient in is the skill of reading and writing. According to her a literate person is:

“That person ... who, in a language that he speaks can read and understand anything he would have understood if it had been spoken to him; and who can write so that it can be read, anything that he can say.”⁹⁶

The emphasis in this definition is on the adult being able to read and write with understanding. However, a person's writing competence is always less than his or her reading competence. The GILLBT literacy program has a development component which connects reading and writing to the other needs of learners and their communities.

In the development programs, GILLBT aims to serve as catalyst to communities in their developmental needs. The purpose is to develop the human resource of some of the poorest and most excluded people in Ghana in order to empower them.⁹⁷ The program seeks to address gender inequalities by empowering women academically, socially and economically. In a participatory procedure, the women are asked to identify locally viable economic ventures and training and loans are sourced to empower them. Projects like beekeeping, animal rearing, grain storage and corn milling are undertaken in the communities.

⁹⁵ Hampton, Nana Roberta S., *A Guide to Mother Tongue Literacy*, GILLBT, Tamale, 1990, p88. Sarah Gudschinsky was a pioneer of mother tongue literacy. She developed literacy materials in more than 800 languages before her death in 1975 and put the teaching of vernacular reading skills on a new and more scientific basis. One of her emphases was that insights from other disciplines should be used to make literacy more functional in the community.

⁹⁶ Hampton, Nana Roberta S., *A Guide to Mother Tongue Literacy*, p88.

⁹⁷ Maalug Kombian, George, *Enhancing a Sustainable Literacy Program through Micro Enterprise Development*, p12.

The Literacy and Development facet has been grouped into six regions in Ghana and each has a coordinator. They liaise between the field projects and the head office in Tamale. The program is non-sectarian and embraces people of all faiths. The cardinal aim is to promote reading, writing and numeracy among all people. It is the policy of the program to move local projects through a five-phase model so that they can become self-managing, self-financing and finally reach a Non-governmental Organisation (NGO) status.

- Phase 1: Beginning Literacy status (1-2 Years)
- Phase 2: Training and Ongoing Literacy status (Approximately 2 years)
- Phase 3: Towards Self-managing status
- Phase 4: Self-Management status
- Phase 5: NGO status⁹⁸

GILLBT proposed the model in 1970 but it has gone through a number of revisions and it affects only the Literacy and Development aspects of projects.⁹⁹ It was proposed for the purpose of classification, uniformity, evaluation, sustainability and assessment.¹⁰⁰ However, a meeting with the staff of Deg Language Project (DLP) revealed that they did not understand the full implications of the model and some were even seeing copies for the first time.¹⁰¹ (See Appendix 12). The management bodies in DLP are the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and the Executive Committee but the model had not yet filtered through these bodies. From all indications, the phasing model seemed to have been handled by GILLBT in what Darrell Whiteman describes as dominant paradigm of development.¹⁰² The Tamale staff meeting, however, insisted that the model was not donor-driven but donor agencies rather accepted the idea.¹⁰³ Asked if field projects could decide not to be part of the 5-phased model, one of the literacy

⁹⁸ Collected from Literacy and Development Coordinator, Mr. Joshua Osei, Kintampo, February 1, 2004.

⁹⁹ George Maaluge Kombian, National Literacy Coordinator, interview conducted by writer on March 1, 2004 in Tamale.

¹⁰⁰ Some of the staff of the GILLBT Literacy & Development, interview conducted on February 26, 2004 in the Tamale office.

¹⁰¹ DLP Staff, interview conducted by writer on February 4, 2004 at the Community Library, New Longoro.

¹⁰² Whiteman, Darrell, Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development, pp120-122.

¹⁰³ Some staff of GILLBT Literacy and Development Department, interview conducted by writer on February 26, 2004 in Tamale office: Peter Wangara, Judith Bawah, Alex Dotse, John Kennedy Apegyah.

coordinators answered that it was possible but such projects could not access funding from the department.

GILLBT literacy program covers thirty language groups in Ghana that are spread over six regions, comprising 38,907 learners and 2,116 classes. As at the end of 2002, two projects were said to be in Phase 1, four in Phase 2, nine in Phase 3, nine in Phase 4 and two were in Phase 5.¹⁰⁴

3.3.5 Scripture-In-Use (SIU) Program:

The objective of the Scripture-In-Use (SIU) program is to ensure that every person is given the opportunity to hear or read God's Word. The SIU program seeks to promote and facilitate the use of the vernacular Scripture through both the print and the non-print media.¹⁰⁵ In this strategy, GILLBT is aware that Scripture use is the task of the Church so the purpose of the program is to pass on the vision for the importance of the mother tongue Scriptures, and the capacity for using those Scriptures, to its Christian partners. Some of the activities through the print media are awareness seminars with Church leaders to identify and discuss barriers to using the vernacular Scripture and finding solutions to them. Research is conducted into pertinent cultural issues and workshops organised to discuss and equip Church and community leaders so that they can share with the people they lead.

Workshops are held to equip Church leaders in how to use drama to teach and evangelise and how to prepare and lead Bible studies. Some Church leaders do not use some of the vernacular Scriptures or preach in the vernacular because of difficulties they encounter in using some Biblical key words. SIU seminars are designed to overcome such difficulties.

A Church-based literacy program aimed at helping Church members become literate in their mother tongues and be able to read the Bible is also part of the print activities. It is called Literacy For Life (LFL). Scripture passages and illustrations have been incorporated into the primers so that as Church members learn to read, they are also introduced to Bible reading. This was started in 2001 at the request of some Church

¹⁰⁴ GILLBT Thirty-First Annual General Meeting report, July 18-19, 2003, p10.

¹⁰⁵ Atta-Akosah, Thomas, *Tools for Effective Evangelism and Discipleship: GILLBT & Christian Partners in Ghana*, NACOE 2000, Tamale, July 2000, p1.

leaders in Northern Ghana that had acknowledged literacy as a tool for evangelism and discipleship.¹⁰⁶ Since GILLBT's general literacy program is non-sectarian, there was a need for a Church based literacy strategy to run concurrently with it.

Even though GILLBT desires that every person is given the opportunity to read Scripture in the language that he or she understands best, it is equally true that not all people can learn to read or would like to learn to read. Non-print media are therefore used to communicate the Scripture, for after all, the Scriptures were first given in oral form. Scriptures have been recorded on audio cassettes for people to listen to in a program called "Faith Comes By Hearing".¹⁰⁷ Vernacular Media specialists organise workshops to assist Churches to gain skills in composing Scripture songs using indigenous musical instruments and tunes. These songs are recorded, reproduced and sold at subsidised prices to the community. The birth, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus based on the Gospel of Luke¹⁰⁸ is filmed in the mother tongues. Indigenous speakers are intrigued to hear and see Jesus speaking their languages.

3.4 THE BIBLE TRANSLATION STRATEGY IN DEGA HARE:

The story of Bible translation in Dega Hare started around the 1970s with invitations from some Dega like Noah Ampem and Rt Rev Doni-Kwame.¹⁰⁹ Pastor Daniel Kwame Kupo of Christ Apostolic Church had also been praying for many years that God would send someone to translate the Bible into Deg. Noah Ampem was a head teacher at Jentilpe in the Vaglaland where Marjorie Crouch and Patricia Herbert were translating the New Testament into Vagla. He used to help them in the literacy project and so asked them to consider moving to Dega Hare to work on Deg when they finished work in Vagla. Noah Ampem was later transferred to the Dega Hare where he continued as a teacher.

Then in 1979, Norman Price who was the Director of GILLBT went with a survey team to ascertain the possibility of translating the Bible into Deg. Another language survey team returned to the area in 1981 to conduct further testing in the villages. The

¹⁰⁶ Patricia Herbert, Department Head of SIU, interview conducted by writer in May 2003 in Tamale.

¹⁰⁷ A quotation from Romans 10:17.

¹⁰⁸ The Jesus Film Project, P.O. Box 72007, San Clemente, CA 92674-9207, distributed by Campus Crusade for Christ.

¹⁰⁹ Mr. Noah Ampem, interview conducted by writer on April 2003 in Carpenter.

outcome. The Dega New Testament translation was dedicated on February 14, 1991. Four MTTs are translating the Old Testament with consultant help from GILLBT and have already drafted about sixty percent of it.

3.4.1 Literacy and Development:

Literacy and Development work go hand in hand in the Bible translation strategy. The literacy project in Dega Hare is popularly known as *Maala* School and it assumed the name from one of the founding ancestors of Dega whose name was used as the main character in the primers. The Deg Language Project moved to Phase IV in 1993 and Peter Chiu is coordinating the Literacy and Development aspect of the project. He is assisted by Daniel Nsiah. Peter Chiu became a volunteer teacher and later a supervisor in his village. After a series of training workshops, he is now coordinating the Literacy and Development work in Dega Hare. He had sponsorship through the Deg Language Project to pursue six months training in Community Development in Canada from June to December 2003.

Maala classes were being conducted within Dega Hare and also among the Dega who migrated to the North Jaman District of Brong Ahafo and Côte d'Ivoire. Classes were going on in Bonakri, Adadiem and Dokakyina in the Jaman District and Joobwe, Wirikye, and Zagla in Côte d'Ivoire with a total number of 120 students.¹¹⁴ Through the training of Deg writers, the students who have become literate in Deg have produced forty-seven titles in Deg (see appendix 11). According to the DLP Manager, at the beginning of the translation strategy in Dega Hare, the illiteracy rate was estimated as high as 70 percent but it has been reduced to about 40 percent.¹¹⁵ Some of the students have bridged from reading and writing Deg into reading English and some have gone further into formal schools.

There is evidence that those who bridged from the Maala School into formal schools were promoted into higher classes. For example, Gabriel Mante was sent to

¹¹⁴ The Literacy Supervisor for the Jaman area, Mr. Basofa Tawia, interview conducted by writer on February 2, 2004 at the DLP office in New Longoro.

¹¹⁵ Data produced by Mr. Stephen Mensah, the DLP Manager, October 8, 2003.

Junior Secondary School (JSS) two. According to Gabriel,¹¹⁶ he found it very difficult to cope with Mathematics since he had very weak foundation.

Although the Maala Schools had a good beginning, there is now evidence of decline. Some of the traditional leaders that I spoke to regretted that the Maala School was not as effective as was the case sometime ago. At Jama, the Koro showed me a class room that was built by the Maala School students themselves but had become a pen for goats and sheep.¹¹⁷ The Mansiekoro and his elders also expressed similar concern.¹¹⁸ In addition, *Deg Bweewaa* (Deg Newspaper) that attracted Peter Chiu to the Project is no longer in production. Asked why it had stopped, the project staff said that they were given out free of charge and when the expatriate staff left they could not sustain it.¹¹⁹ The table below illustrates the status of the Deg literacy during the past twelve years.

DLP Literacy Status: 1990 - 2003

Year	Class	Category								
		Supervisors			Teachers			Learners		
		M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
1990	49	-	-	7	46	3	49	267	143	410
1993	30	-	-	6	61	2	63	311	179	490
1994	30	-	-	6	-	-	64	311	179	490
1995	30	-	-	6	-	-	48	410	267	677
1996	25	-	-	5	-	-	27	132	96	228
1997	83	-	-	5	-	-	83	636	389	1025
1998	118	12	1	13	105	10	115	1037	704	1741
1999	136	11	1	12	112	11	123	1567	1091	2658
2000	157	13	8	21	129	14	143	1709	1517	3226
2001	217	13	7	20	187	30	217	1531	1489	3020
2002	217	12	7	19	187	30	217	1709	1517	3226
2003	233	17	4	21	180	23	203	1802	1290	3092

Source: GILLBT Annual Reports

It is not clear from the above table if the statistics for any given year include repeat performers that may have tried the program once but failed. However, it can be seen that the progress of the literacy program has stagnated since 2000. It was significant that the number of learners had more than doubled between 1998 and 2000. However,

¹¹⁶ Gabriel Mante, interview conducted by writer on April 8, 2003 in New Longoro.

¹¹⁷ Visit with Jamakoro in his palace at Jama, April 5, 2003.

¹¹⁸ Mansiekoro and elders, interview conducted by writer on June 29, 2003 in Mansie.

¹¹⁹ DLP staff, interview conducted by writer on February 2, 2004 at the Community Library, New Longoro.

while the number of male learners increased between 2002 and 2003, that of female learners decreased by 227 learners. This scenario confirms the concerns expressed by some of the Dega elders that the earlier enthusiasm in the Maala School is waning. According to the 2003 statistics from the DLP literacy office, the communities have been demarcated into thirteen zonal areas with a supervisor each and over 233 Dega have been trained as voluntary teachers for 233 classes spread over forty-six communities. The literacy office indicated that 3,092 Dega have become literate in Deg; 962 of this number have certificates in oral English and 789 are literate in both oral and written English¹²⁰. However, the available statistics from 1990 to 2002 do not indicate the actual number of learners who had completed the various stages and those who were still continuing in higher stages. Therefore, it is difficult to know the total numbers who have become literate in Deg and also in English.

The Income Generating Activities (IGA) also serves as training opportunities to the community and as a means of raising funds locally for the Deg Language Project. The income generating activities comprised beekeeping, grain storage, goat rearing and a rural press (see appendix 18). The beehives are harvested annually and the proceeds are used to support the local budget. The rural press provides services such as the printing of funeral or wedding cards, Church programs and other documents to the community at affordable charges. The press has a computer, duplicating machine, and printer. DLP had plans to expand it so that it could be one of the main sources of income. Prices of grain like corn, and groundnuts (peanuts) are comparatively lower during the harvesting season. The Project therefore, purchased and stored them for sale during the lean season.

The women who are involved in the literacy and development programs come together to pursue their common needs through the Gender Promotion Program (GPP).¹²¹ The GPP seeks to mobilise Dega women and empower them through literacy and economic activities so that they can play their respective roles in the community. They come together and form cooperative associations so that they can source loans and go into ventures like soap and pomade-making and farming. They also organise workshops to discuss Dega cultural beliefs and practices like the widowhood rites and inheritance.

¹²⁰ Literacy data from the Deg Language Project literacy office, New Longoro, April 11 2003.

¹²¹ Ms. Theresa Saahene, GPP Coordinator, interview conducted by writer on May 2003 in New Longoro.

3.4.2 Scripture-In-Use Program:

The Scripture-In-Use program is actively going on in the Dega Language Project. The two expatriate translation team members stayed on in Dega Hare two more years after the dedication of the New Testament to help promote its use.¹²² This was particularly necessary and helpful because the Dega Churches had used the Asante-Twi Bible for a long time. GILLBT is collaborating with the Hosanna Ministries and the TheoVision International,¹²³ to run an audio Bible program called 'Faith Comes By Hearing'. The entire Deg New Testament has been recorded onto audio cassettes and DLP is supervising their use in Dega Hare. Community and church groups meet to listen and discuss what they hear¹²⁴ (see appendix 15). The Scripture cassettes were played on the ADARS FM radio in Kintampo and the project was planning to revive it on the Radio BAR in Sunyani for greater coverage.

Correspondence Bible study courses in Deg to encourage people to read and memorise the Scriptures had been part of the Deg SIU program. One of the Roman Catholic Church catechists in New Longoro testified, "The Bible correspondence course motivated me to read the Bible. It helped me to memorise Bible verses that I still remember now."¹²⁵ Unfortunately this program had ceased to function during the period of the research but the Coordinator intimated that he had plans to revive it. Gospel and culture workshops are held occasionally to help the Dega Church relate their cultural beliefs and practices to Scriptures. Workshops on witchcraft and traditional festivals¹²⁶ had been held already. All these activities are aimed at giving the Dega Church the capacity to use and apply the Deg Scripture to their socio-cultural and spiritual lives.

About ninety-five percent of the financial support for DLP activities came through GILLBT. The translation budget was sponsored through the former resident

¹²² Marjorie Crouch, interview conducted by writer on June 17, 2003 at Halleluja House, Tamale.

¹²³ Hosanna Ministries are groups in the USA who specialize in producing audio Scriptures. TheoVision is their partner in Ghana. They do the field recordings and forward them to Hosanna for mass production.

¹²⁴ Mr. Richard Lebile, SIU Coordinator, interview conducted by writer on April 3, 2003 in Carpenter.

¹²⁵ Three Roman Catholic Church Catechists, interview conducted by writer on May 25, 2003 in New Longoro.

¹²⁶ These workshops were preceded by national workshops that were held in Tamale in collaboration with the Akrofi-Christaller Memorial Centre for Mission Research and Applied Theology, Akropong-Akuapem. Personnel like Dr. Allison Howell, Rev. Professor Kwame Bediako and Professor Gillian Bediako were the resource persons.

workers, Marjorie Crouch and Patricia Herbert. The staff and activities of the Literacy and Development and SIU sectors were financed through the GILLBT office in Tamale. The IGA projects had financial support from the Tear Fund.¹²⁷ According to the DLP staff, apart from budgets for workshops, seminars and literacy days that were drawn from the New Longoro office, the rest of the budget for the project was drawn and allocated from Tamale. Local support usually came from the IGA projects and the little that communities contribute in cash and kind during literacy days.

DLP is growing and its motto is: *Nyopeo Taa Kpegri Do* (Unity is Strength). However, as far as financial support is concerned, the community still sees the Project as “*Broni toma*” (the white ladies’ work). How is the Literacy and Development aspect going to be sustained when it moves to the 5-Phase status of GILLBT? Responding to this question the Literacy Coordinator said, “We think that we should not rush into Phase Five. We want to develop our income generating base before”.¹²⁸

The Deg Language Project is not the only non-governmental organisation working in the Dega Hare. The Northern Empowerment Association (NEA) works in the area too. They focus on agriculture extension, education, women’s empowerment, developmental and environmental issues.¹²⁹ Even though it is observable that some of the goals of NEA overlap with DLP, they are not collaborating in the field as expected. There is no formal memorandum of understanding between the two organisations.

3.5. CONCLUSION:

The indigenous language factor in Christian mission has been very crucial. It is clear that wherever it has been taken seriously, it has helped to indigenise Christianity. The Church has been present in Dega Hare since 1934 and Dega Initiated Churches (DIC) started emerging in the 1990s. Even though the Bible translation strategy went to Dega Hare through the GILLBT, Dega have now taken over and they are running most of the activities. However, most of the funds are coming from external sources. The above background ushers the study into analysing the socio-cultural and spiritual impact of the strategy on Dega.

¹²⁷ A funding agency based in Britain.

¹²⁸ DLP Staff, interview conducted by writer on February 4, 2004 in New Longoro.

¹²⁹ Rev Dr David Mensah, interview conducted by writer on September 15, 2003 in Tamale.

Chapter Four

AN ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACT OF THE GILLBT BIBLE TRANSLATION STRATEGY ON THE DEGA

The Bible translation strategy of the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT) has been in Dega Hare since 1981. Out of it has come an indigenous initiative, the Deg Language Project (DLP) which is continuing with the Bible translation strategy. The New Testament has been translated into Deg and over three thousand Dega have become literate in Deg through the literacy program. In addition, the New Testament has been recorded on to audio cassettes so that even those who for some reason cannot learn to read can also hear God's word. A Gender Promotion Program (GPP) that aims at improving the lives of women through literacy and other developmental activities is also in place. Income generating activities like beekeeping, grain storage, animal rearing and a rural printing press have been set up to serve the communities and also generate income to support the DLP. This chapter seeks to analyse how the Bible translation strategy has impacted the socio-cultural life of Dega. The analysis will be based on the conceptual framework that Darrell Whiteman has constructed in relation to what he terms as Integral Human Development.

4.1 INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (IHD):

In his paper, "Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development"¹, Darrell Whiteman has attempted to ascertain the correlation between Bible translation and development. In the process he constructed a conceptual framework that others were invited to use to assess the correlation between Bible translation and development. Whiteman's model is therefore relevant for this study. These analyses will be based on observations and interviews aimed at understanding the underlying dynamics of the socio-cultural impact of the Bible translation strategy on Dega.

Whiteman begins by exploring the concept of development and states that the word 'development' is explosive, emotional and often politicized, especially when

¹ Whiteman, Darrell L., Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development, pp120-141 in Philip C. Stine (ed.), *Bible Translation and The Spread of the Church: The Last 200 Years*, Brill, Leiden, 1990.

discussing development in the 'Third World'. It is a term that has undergone some important semantic shifts which resulted in a breaking down of what he called the 'dominant paradigm of development' (DPD).² DPD ruled intellectual definitions and discussions of development and guided national development programs following World War II.³ He observed that development was usually perceived to be the same as modernisation which implied economic growth with a focus on technology and industrialisation. Countries were consequently categorised into modern, industrialised and underdeveloped or developing countries. Development schemes were aimed at bringing industrialisation to developing countries. However, the post World War II economic situations of the developing countries have proved that they have not developed as envisaged.

Whiteman points to another development paradigm, besides the dominant paradigm, that called for alternative values. This included respect for cultural values, the primacy of basic needs satisfaction, the creation of jobs, and the reduction of dependency.⁴ It recognised that development is essentially an ethical concern and that humankind does not live by Gross National Product (GNP) alone. He further makes reference to the Marga Institute (MI) Seminar held in 1986 in Colombo, Sri Lanka to discuss ethical issues in development.⁵ Participants suggested that adequate development must include five dimensions: an economic component, social ingredients, a political dimension, a cultural dimension and what was referred to as 'full life paradigm'. This was a change in focus from social changes that come about as a result of external influence, to those that were introduced through the participation of beneficiaries.

Whiteman then suggests an alternative development paradigm he describes as Integral Human Development (IHD). He defines IHD as

“a process by which people gain greater control over themselves, their environment and their future in order to realize the full potential of life that God has made possible.”⁶

² Whiteman, Darrell L., 'Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development', p120.

³ Whiteman, Darrell L., 'Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development', pp120-121.

⁴ Whiteman, Darrell L., 'Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development', p122.

⁵ Whiteman, Darrell L., 'Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development', p122.

⁶ Whiteman, Darrell L., 'Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development', p125.

In order to ascertain how Bible translation contributes to furthering integrated human development, Whiteman listed three characteristics of IHD. First of all, IHD “is integrated with the whole of life”.⁷ It does not consider economic development as more important than spiritual or socio-cultural development. He argues that the six basic components that make up human needs, namely, physical needs, social needs, self-esteem, purpose, security and spiritual needs, are the different components of the human community that must grow in a balanced way for there to be integral human development.⁸ Bible translation can be said to facilitate IHD where it gives people the capacity to address and meet these needs.

Whiteman suggests that for the sake of analysis, the development of the human person and community should be considered from four major perspectives: personal growth, material growth, social growth and spiritual growth. Each of these four areas embraces various other components. Personal growth includes self-respect and confidence, self-reliance, security, nutrition and health. Social growth includes participation, autonomy, solidarity, and education. Under material growth, we find things like transportation, communication, money, land ownership and land use. Spiritual growth contains components like faith, peace, hope, prayer and love.

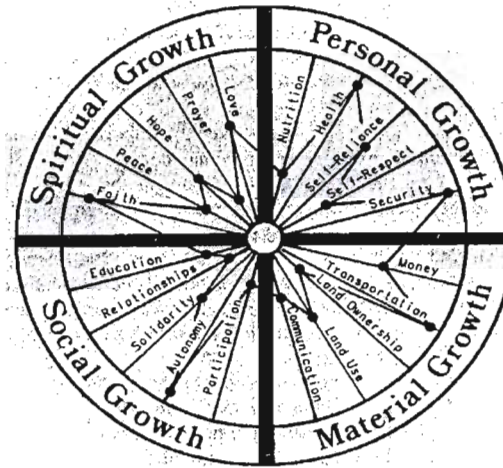
According to Whiteman, spiritual growth relates to a people’s relationship with the world of the supernatural. Where this relationship is characterised by fear and uncertainty it will inhibit development but where it is positive, it leads to growth. Taking a cue from William Haoma’s ‘Development Wheel of Rural Growth’, Whiteman explains further that the four areas resemble a bicycle wheel with the different components comprising the spokes of the wheel.⁹ The ride is smooth where the different components develop together but rough when they do not develop together.

⁷ Whiteman, Darrell L., ‘Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development’, p125.

⁸ Whiteman, Darrell L., ‘Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development’, p125.

⁹ Whiteman, Darrell L., ‘Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development’, p126.

Wheel of Integrated Human Development



Source: Darrell Whiteman, *Bible Translation and Development*, 1990, p126

The second characteristic of IHD, according to Whiteman, focuses on people, not projects. “It is concerned with the process by which people are developed, more than the products of development such as dams, hydroelectric plants, factories, etc.”¹⁰ The objective of any developmental project should be the ultimate benefit of the people. It is a process by which people are developed rather than bringing the products of development. In reality, development is people-centred and therefore only things that promote human welfare can be considered as development. Molefe Tsele has said that “development is not simply the number of BMWs driven around our capital cities, but is about the balanced development of a country’s people”.¹¹

The third characteristic is “the importance of the spiritual dimension and moral values”.¹² Whiteman has observed that wherever social and cultural development have occurred without due recognition of the spiritual dimension, it has fallen short of expectation.

Whiteman has further outlined what he terms as the three levels of human development, namely the individual level, the community level and the inter-community

¹⁰ Whiteman, Darrell L., ‘Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development’, p127.

¹¹ Tsele, Molefe, *The Role of the Christian Faith in Deryke Belshaw, Robert Calderisi, Chris Sugden, (Eds.), Development in Faith in Development: Partnership between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa*, Regnum Books International, Oxford, United Kingdom, 2001, p211.

¹² Whiteman, Darrell L., ‘Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development’, p127.

level.¹³ At the individual level, he points out that if one enters the pilgrimage of having the mind of Christ¹⁴ then he or she becomes a new creature with the potential of becoming a fully functioning being as God intended. God through Christ enables the individual to experience socio-cultural development toward the image of Christ. In this process, the Word of God communicated in the mother tongue, functions as a catalyst.

The community level of human interaction is very important since no individual exists in a socio-cultural vacuum. The Bible can be said to be a case book of God's interaction with human beings and has a great deal to say and teach about human interaction at the community level. As people read the Bible in their mother tongue they come to know about the Kingdom of God. According to Whiteman, "the more we understand the Kingdom of God, the more we see that it is a blueprint showing us how human beings should interact in a community".¹⁵ Theologically, however, the Kingdom of God is not just a blue-print or set of rules, but God's reign and sovereignty and its outworking in human society which has both present and future dimensions.¹⁶ Inter-community interaction is more complex because of the nature of human interaction between communities. Where there is inter-community conflict and strife, integral human development is adversely impacted.

Whiteman concludes his argument by quoting Larry and Willa Yost who see development as:

"A process whereby a community is strengthened so that it can creatively meet its needs (spiritual, mental, physical, social) through expansion of awareness, increased interaction within and without the community, and the development of effective utilization of available resources."¹⁷

He argues that there is a positive correlation between Bible translation and development in four areas: self-respect and dignity, expansion of a people's world, literacy and new

¹³ Whiteman, Darrell L., 'Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development', pp131-133.

¹⁴ Romans 12:1-2 and 1 Corinthians 2.

¹⁵ Whiteman, Darrell L., 'Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development', p131.

¹⁶ Ladd, George Eldon, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Popular Expositions on the Kingdom of God*, Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapid, Michigan, 1959, pp136-17.

¹⁷ Yost, Larry E. and Yost, Willa D., *A Philosophy of Intercultural Community Relations and a Strategy for Preparing SIL Members for Intercultural Community Work*, Dallas, Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1983, in Whiteman, Darrell L., 'Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development', p134.

sense of identity. He made this observation with the recognition that “we need more research to uncover the case studies that illustrate the connection”.¹⁸

This study is an attempt to contribute to uncovering some of the case studies that may illustrate the correlation between Bible translation and development. Whiteman’s model can be helpful and relevant in assessing the impact that the Bible translation strategy has had on Dega. The model is helpful because it can be applied to the so-called ‘developed world’ as well as to the ‘developing world’. His model also takes seriously the spiritual dimension of human development and this provides a paradigm for assessing the impact of the Deg New Testament on Dega Hare. However, the emphasis of Whiteman’s research is a little different from that of this study. He looked at Bible translation *per se* and development. This study is looking at the Bible translation strategy as a package which includes translation, literacy, community development and Scripture use.

If IHD is human-centred and holistic, then it must surely be an appropriate yardstick by which to measure the socio-cultural life of Dega in relation to the strategy. However, the nature of this study did not allow adequate time for a detailed survey. I have therefore, concentrated on the four major aspects of the IHD wheel namely, spiritual growth, personal growth, material growth and social growth without necessarily touching on all the individual corresponding components. So, how has the Bible translation strategy impacted Dega in their socio-cultural development?

4.2 SELF-RESPECT AND DIGNITY THROUGH LANGUAGE USE:

Darrell Whiteman has argued that “An important result of vernacular Scriptures is that people often gain a new sense of who they are in relation to God through Christ; they are loved, they are created in the image of God, and they are inestimably important as God’s children.”¹⁹ It can be shown that one thing that has helped Dega to gain a new sense of who they are in Christ is the use of their language. They are realising that God understands their language and they now understand his word much more clearly in Deg than they did in Asante-Twi.

¹⁸ Whiteman, Darrell L., ‘Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development’, p134.

¹⁹ Whiteman, Darrell L., ‘Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development’, p134.

Before the commencement of the Bible translation strategy, it was not uncommon for most Ghanaians outside Dega Hare to say that they had never heard of Deg. It was also not unusual for some Dega to refuse to identify themselves as Dega and speak Deg when outside Dega Hare, especially among the Akan speaking people of Ghana. During an Impact Assessment Seminar that was conducted in the course of the research,²⁰ a participant narrated his experience in this regard. He travelled about two hundred kilometres to the Sefwi Wiawso area in the Western Region of Ghana to visit a Deg relative. The relative had hidden his Deg identity so when he spoke to him in Deg he pretended as if he did not understand. Another lady participant confirmed this to be true and urged those present to be proud of their mother tongue.

Patricia Herbert who worked in Dega Hare as a Linguist-Exegete observed that Dega had low language esteem due to the attitude of their neighbours towards their language.

Culturally and ethnically they are regarded as inferior and indeed consider themselves so. Their own low language attitude has been reinforced by a neighbouring dominant Twi speaking group saying things such as: Deg? Is that a language? Can you do GCE O'level in it? Can you go to University with it? The Deg word for father, 'mee' has been referred to as the sound of sheep; the implication is that these are the sounds of animals. One Deg teacher never spoke Deg in public, only Twi, with the result that non-Deg did not know he was Deg.²¹

It was obvious that the Dega were facing an identity crisis before the Bible translation process began in Dega Hare.²²

During the first literacy day (a day when new literates are recognised and given certificates), the late paramount chief, Nnaa Kwaku Dimpo II remarked, "Today, our language is in books, so our language has been born".²³ The reduction of Deg into writing

²⁰ Deg Scripture Impact Assessment Seminar held at the St. Thomas Catholic Church, New Longoro on May 30, 2003.

²¹ Herbert, Patricia, *Exploring some of the Issues of Literacy, Language and Power at the Context of Development*, Dissertation prepared in partial fulfillment of the requirements for MA in Rural Social Development, Reading University, August 1990, p46.

²² The GILLBT expatriate resident team consciously sought to help the Dega develop greater esteem for their language. During their stay in Dega Hare, they decided not to learn Twi or speak English to any Deg. Whenever a Deg spoke English to them, they would respond in Deg. When the Dega recognised what they were doing, they remarked that if English speakers would speak Deg and were proud of it then why not the mother tongue speakers.

²³ Marjorie Crouch, interview conducted by writer on June 17, 2003 at the Halleluja House, Tamale.

definitely gave the Dega a new perception and appreciation of their language. It has given them a new esteem and a sense of pride in their mother tongue. Rt Rev Doni-Kwame who is a Dega proudly told me that he had sent a copy of the Dega New Testament to the international office of the World Council of Churches.²⁴ In addition, the entire New Testament is in audio form and being played on the local radio stations.²⁵ It has helped to preserve and transport Dega culture since language is a vehicle of culture. There is evidence that through the Bible translation strategy, the Dega no longer accept others perception of their language as being “the sound of sheep”. Peter Chiu who is a Dega from Jama shared with me that

The Scripture in Dega has brought renewed esteem for our language. Gone were the days when we felt shy to speak Dega when we moved outside the Dega Hare. I attended a Church meeting in Kumasi and when I was asked to pray, I prayed in Dega. I thought I was the only Dega present but after I prayed in Dega, other Dega present expressed their appreciation to me.²⁶

About seven years after the literacy program started, Pat Herbert observed this about Dega:

There was interest and pride at seeing their own language written down and a surge of enthusiasm in speaking pure Dega devoid of any Twi vocabulary. The Dega traditional stories, riddles, and proverbs were recalled and suddenly there was a flood of creativity by those who were already literate through government schools. They learned to write Dega through transitional primers and sent in manuscripts to be printed as post-primer materials.²⁷

Loss of self-respect or identity can make people disregard and neglect their indigenous wisdom and knowledge. Consequently, they can fail to utilise their potentials for socio-cultural development. Therefore, there is evidence that the Bible translation strategy is contributing to self-respect and dignity among the Dega which is consequently impacting positively on their social and personal growth. The strategy pioneered the linguistic development of Dega and has helped its use in varied ways. It has been a key

²⁴ Conversation with Rt. Rev. Doni Kwame in his house at Odorkor, Accra in October 2003.

²⁵ It was played on ADARS FM radio, Kintampo but the Project was planning to move it to Radio BAR in Sunyani which has greater coverage. Chat with Mr. J.C. Nandoma, the SIU Coordinator in January 2004, at New Longoro.

²⁶ Peter Chiu, interview conducted by writer on May 2003 in New Longoro

²⁷ Herbert, Patricia, *Exploring some of the Issues of Literacy, Language and Power at the Context of Development*, 1990, p47.

that has connected their heart language Deg, to God's Word and paved the way for indigenous theological enterprise. There is therefore further potential for individual and community growth.

4.3 DEG LITERATURE DEVELOPMENT:

Darrell Whiteman suggests in the Wheel of Integral Human Development that components like education, relationships, solidarity, autonomy, participation and communication help in the development of a people. Literature development is a part of communication and education, and has the potential to contribute positively to the other components mentioned.

The Bible translation strategy has raised the Deg language to a literary level and provided the basis for literature production in Deg. It has opened the literary door to Dega who have become literate in Deg. Dega Hare is no longer only an oral society but also a literate one that can pass on traditional wisdom and knowledge in written form. It has expanded the worldview of Dega by connecting them to the world beyond Dega Hare through written materials. Forty-seven books in Deg have been produced by Dega themselves which cover topics such as riddles, proverbs, health issues, environmental issues and the abridged form of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana (see appendix 11). GILLBT Literacy Consultants organise writers' workshops for Dega literates and they are encouraged to write on topics of their choice. Jacob Teh told of how out of his own initiative, he was writing a book in Deg.

I started Maala school when I was 35 years and now I am a Maala teacher. I am writing a book in Deg entitled, "*Nfi n fi gyimaa, mu ni weka*" (Had I known is always at last). I have bridged into English and I am now able to learn from others through reading. I know my left to right and I do not have to wait for someone to direct me. I write my own letters and even teach my children how to read and write Deg.²⁸

Teh's argument in the book is that if Dega had taken education more seriously when it was first introduced to Dega Hare, they would have benefited more. Here is a Deg who is connecting to his past in order to learn lessons that can enhance his social growth, education and participation.

²⁸ Jacob Teh, interview by writer on May 30, 2003 in New Longoro.

The Deg Language Project has formed an editorial board comprising Dega to co-ordinate and edit materials within Dega Hare. The edited copies are sent to the GILLBT Printing Press at the headquarters in Tamale for printing. These books are sold at subsidised prices and some are kept in the community library for people to read. Locally developed materials have contributed to building relationships at the community level as Dega read about each other.

The DLP has built a language centre comprising offices and a community library in New Longoro. Because of the presence of the Press, people within the community print messages pertaining to funerals, marriage cards and other community-based activities in the mother tongue. As more than three thousand Dega are now able to read, dissemination of information about social activities like funerals, marriages and other meetings in Dega Hare has become widespread and it is contributing to the social growth. Information dissemination, if used profitably, augments education, relationships, solidarity and participation.

4.4 MOTHER TONGUE LITERACY AND EDUCATION:

Darrell Whiteman argued that “The primary key to whether or not literacy contributed to development is if the vernacular literacy leads to literacy in a language that has a wider community of readers with a large volume of literature and economic system to sustain it.”²⁹ Mother tongue literacy started in Dega Hare in 1983 and according to the DLP literacy office, 3,092 Dega have become literate in Deg and about 1,751 have bridged into either oral or written English. It is significant to note that 1,290 of the literates are females. Pat Herbert recalls that “when the literacy program started in 1983, not one single woman would join a reading class as it was said among the Dega that education was only for men”.³⁰ The situation has changed now and women are not only students of Maala schools but thirty of them are teachers and seven are supervisors.³¹ The new status of the women is likely to impact them personally, socially, materially and spiritually.

²⁹ Whiteman, Darrell L., ‘Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development’, p135.

³⁰ *Pat's News*, Prayer letter #115 of September 2003

³¹ 2002 Annual Report of the GILLBT, p16

The vernacular literacy has led some Dega to bridge into English language which has wider communication that connects to economic activities. In some cases, literacy in Deg alone has enhanced the economic activities of some Dega traders and farmers who became literate in Deg through the Maala School. During an interview with Namoa Kofi Kuma, a seventy-two year old Maala graduate, he was asked how he had benefited from it and in his comments he stated: "I am a farmer and involved in teak plantation. Because of the Maala school, I am able to take measurement and plant them according to the stipulated spaces. I am able to measure the acreage of my farm".³² Because Kofi Kuma is literate in Deg and has even bridged into numeracy and English, he is serving his community in various ways. He is the chairman of the Teak Farmers Association in the Dega Hare communities and also has served as the chairman of the New Longoro Unit Committee. Maala school has helped to expand the awareness of Dega like Namoa Kofi Kuma and increased their interaction both at the community and inter-community levels.

Some Dega like Gabriel Mante and Daniel Pambo became literate in Deg and English and bridged into formal schools. I met Gabriel Mante when he came to New Longoro to write his Basic School Certificate Examination (BSCE) and he shared the following with me.

I was eight years old and in primary two when my father became blind. Since I was the only grown up son, I had to stop school to lead him around. Later Maala School was started in my village when I was already twenty-two years. The classes were held in the night and I did not usually take my father round in the night so I decided to attend those classes. It did not take long and I could read and write Deg. I became a voluntary teacher in 1987. By 1988 I had read all the Deg books and also started a number of new classes.

In 2000 Junior Secondary School (JSS) was started in my village and since I could read and write English, I decided to go to school. By then my younger brother was old enough to take my place in leading my blind father. I already had three children when I was starting JSS. I was allowed to go to JSS 2 after I had been tested. When I started, my father was happy and encouraged me for he was sorry that I had to stop schooling because of his blindness. My father became blind in 1972 and died in 2002.

People around were saying that I would divorce my wife because I would not be able to feed her and the children if I started school. But I combined school with farming. I closed from school at 2 pm and went to farm at 3 pm and returned home at 5.30 pm to prepare to study in the

³² Namoa Kofi Kuma, interview by writer on January 28, 2004 in New Longoro.

night. I used farm produce and animals that I reared to feed my family and pay for my schooling. I want to continue to the Senior Secondary School.³³

Daniel Pambo is a young man from Jama. Like Mante, Pambo had to lead his blind father around and so did not get the chance to go to school. He enrolled in the Maala School (Deg Literacy Class) in 1985 after his father had died. Pambo worked very hard and soon completed the Advanced Mother Tongue stage. He was encouraged by his literacy supervisor to bridge into formal school which he did in 1987. Because he already had literacy skills in his mother tongue, he performed very well in his academic work. He qualified for Senior Secondary School and continued to Teacher Training College. He is now a professional teacher and serves as a role model to many adult learners.³⁴ Another Deg, Francis Govina Nudjor went to a Roman Catholic Seminary through the Maala School.

George Nsia started formal schooling but stopped at primary 2. When adult literacy classes started in his village, Tichila No.1, in 1984 he was already 14 years old. He could not sit in the Maala class with his own father because of respect for him but struggled to learn on his own. Then the Literacy Supervisor, Mr. Peter Chiu, saw how determined he was and encouraged him to attend the adult literacy classes. When he joined, he did so well and even helped his father at home. Peter convinced George's father to send him to formal school and he started at primary four. Within the first year, he had been promoted to primary six. He sat for the Common Entrance Examination when he was in the Middle School (now Junior Secondary School) and went to Tamale Secondary School (Senior Secondary School). He has completed the University of Cape Coast and is now working in a western country.³⁵

There are also stories illustrating how Dega parents who became literate in Deg through the Maala schools became more interested in the education of their children because their awareness had been expanded. Kwame Ibrahim told me that he taught his children how to read and write Deg before they started formal school. He now takes their

³³ Gabriel Mante, interview by writer on April 8, 2003 at New Longoro. Mr. Mante is from Sabule but I met him in Longoro when he was there to write his final JSS examinations.

³⁴ Story taken from the Literacy and Development office report, April 2003, Tamale.

³⁵ George Nsia's story was narrated to writer by Mr. Peter Chiu, Mo Literacy Coordinator in May 2003.

education more seriously because he has experienced the value of being literate. He told me with a smile, “Now when *krachifoɔ* (literates) are signing their names I can sign mine too. I no longer thumb print.”³⁶

The above cases illustrate how the language and literacy aspects of the Bible translation strategy have impacted individual Dega. Mother tongue literacy has made over three thousand Dega literate in Deg and some have even bridged into formal education. Daniel Pambo who was leading his blind father and had little potential for personal growth is now experiencing material and spiritual growth as a teacher and church leader. It has also become apparent that one way to enable parents to take the education of their wards seriously is to first help them to have access to literacy. However, a more detailed survey is needed to determine the full impact that the mother tongue literacy aspect of the Bible translation strategy has had on Dega using the IHD wheel. Such a survey is beyond the scope of the present study.

4.5 OCCUPATION AND ECONOMY:

Darrell Whiteman has mentioned components like land use, transportation, money, security, self-reliance, health and nutrition that contribute to personal and material growth. In these areas, the strategy has impacted Dega at the individual level as well as the community level. The Deg Language Project itself has provided job opportunities to some Dega. The Project is now in the fourth phase and employs ten full-time workers and other part-time workers.³⁷ In addition, the grain storage and sales have helped the subsistence farmers in the area. Farmers usually take loans to work on their farms and are expected to pay their creditors when they harvest their crops. Farm produce is cheaper during the harvesting seasons but becomes expensive at the lean seasons.

By the lean season, the subsistence farmers have little or no money to buy expensive food from the market. The Deg Language Project bought the farm produce during the harvesting seasons, stored and sold them back to the community during the lean season at prices cheaper than on the open market, thus providing people with the

³⁶ Ibrahim Kwame of Jama, interview conducted by writer on June, 2003 in New Longoro.

³⁷ Information from the DLP Manager, Mr. Stephen Mensah, October 8, 2003

opportunity to buy food at affordable prices. It has also provided income to the Project's budget.

Maala School graduates who successfully bridged into formal schools have found good job opportunities. Daniel Pambo is a professional teacher, George Nsia has completed University and working in a western country and Francis Govina is training to become a Roman Catholic priest. Further research is needed to interview all the Maala school graduates who are gainfully employed in order to gain a better understanding of the full socio-economic impact of this program.

The strategy has given Dega the tools to creatively develop available resources. The major occupations of some of the women who have gone through Maala School are either farming or trading. Some of them testified that their trading activities had been impacted positively because they can now write down their transactions.³⁸ They used to lose money because they could not remember all the names of debtors and the amount of items that were bought on credit. The situation has changed now that they do not depend on their memory but write them down in Deg.

Martha Akosua Anane of Bosuama has become a Maala school teacher and it was evident that her being literate in Deg is helping her trading activities.³⁹ The economic capacity of individual Dega like Martha Akosua Anane has the potential to impact positively on their nuclear families, the Dega Hare and of course, the nation at large. Economic growth has the potential to enhance nutrition, health, self-reliance and security. These are just some instances of how the Bible translation strategy is contributing to the personal as well as the social and material growth of Dega.

4.6 DEGA INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP:

Darrell Whiteman believes that there is a positive correlation between vernacular Scriptures and development in the following areas: self-respect and identity, expansion of a people's world, literacy and a new sense of identity.⁴⁰ In Dega Hare, leadership is considered very important and leadership serves as catalyst for these components to

³⁸ GPP women, interview conducted by writer on May 2003 in New Longoro.

³⁹ Information from Peter Chiu, the Literacy and Development Coordinator, New Longoro, February 2, 2004.

⁴⁰ Whiteman, Darrell L., 'Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development', p134.

enhance development. However, it was formerly not easy to find leaders who were literate to take up leadership positions in the communities. Since chiefs are chosen from specific clans, it does not matter if the royal is literate or not. Non-literate chiefs have to rely on those who are literate to keep their records and handle their correspondence.

The Chief of Yaara took advantage of the Maala School and has become literate in Deg. He shared with me how the Maala School had helped him to read and write letters in Deg.⁴¹ He used to dictate his letters to others who were literate to write for him. What he did not like about this was that he had to send confidential letters to others to write or read for him. He was happy that he did not have to send confidential letters to others again but can now write them in Deg. He had been corresponding in Deg with his brother who was in a Western country. The Chief of Chebrenyoya has also become literate in Deg and it is impacting his leadership. He is reading the Deg New Testament and as the leader of the singing group in his local church, he writes and teaches Scripture songs in Deg.

The Bible translation strategy is contributing to raising the self-respect, dignity and self-confidence of some indigenous leaders. For example, the chief of Yaara had become literate in Deg and reads the Deg New Testament. He is a founding member of Dega Christian chiefs that meet to deliberate on socio-economic development issues in Dega Hare. The strategy is also helping Christians to be more effective leaders as in the case of Mr. Kra of Mansie⁴² who became literate through Maala and is now a leader in the Methodist Church. He is a leader of a Bible study group and also reads the Deg New Testament in Church.

Sometime ago it was difficult to find literate Dega to serve on local committees in the communities and churches as well. As a result of the number of people who have become literate in Deg through the Maala School, it is now comparatively easy to get literate Dega to serve on committees. Kofi Kuma who is a graduate of Maala School served as the chairman of the New Longoro Unit Committee. He related how the Maala School had helped him:

Through the Maala School I am able to read funeral and other invitation cards even in English. I still go to the Community Library to borrow books

⁴¹ Yaarakoro, interview conducted by writer on June 30 at Yaara.

⁴² Mr. John Kra, interview conducted by writer on June 29, 2003 in Mansie.

comparisons to set standards, the women of Mo Communities studied had generally attained an average level of empowerment.”⁴⁶ It is uncertain what she meant by “attained an average level of empowerment” and she did not discuss the factors that contributed to the women’s level of empowerment. However, the Gender Promotion Program Coordinator of DLP, Theresa Saahane recalled that Mrs. Kwapong met with the GPP women in New Longoro and some of them were given micro financing assistance. The literacy program of the Bible translation strategy covers all the areas Kwapong sampled and her findings suggest that the strategy has made a positive impact on the empowerment of Dega women. The Maala School has given the Dega women the capacity to read and write Deg with some degree of numeracy.⁴⁷

The Gender Promotion Program (GPP) also encourages Dega women to become literate in Deg. In addition, Dega women meet to discuss pertinent cultural issues pertaining to their empowerment. Workshops aimed at empowering the Dega woman cognitively are organised on topics like ‘Healthy Motherhood’, ‘Girl-Child Education’ and issues on widowhood rites and inheritance. It was noted in chapter two that traditionally, Dega believed that if a Deg widow inherits the property of her deceased husband or even stays in the marital home, his spirit will kill her. After the death of a husband, a widow returns to her father’s home virtually empty-handed. Some Dega women disclosed that they felt reluctant to invest in properties with their husbands for fear that they will labour in vain.⁴⁸ This illustrates Whiteman’s observation that where the relationship with the supernatural world is characterised by fear and uncertainty, development is inhibited.⁴⁹

Through workshops and knowledge of Scripture, some Dega women have started relating some Dega cultural practices like the widowhood rites to the Scriptures. I was told of a woman who stayed in her deceased husband’s home and went to their farm contrary to traditional beliefs and practices, but nothing bad happened to her.⁵⁰ There was another woman from Apesika SDA who had stayed in her marital home for more than

⁴⁶ Kwapong, Olivia, *The Level of Empowerment of the Women in the Mo Communities of the Brong Ahafo Region*, a thesis presented to the Institute of Adult Education, University of Ghana in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy in Adult Education, September, 2001.

⁴⁷ Meeting with DLP Staff in New Longoro on February 4, 2004.

⁴⁸ Some members of GPP, meeting with writer in May 2003 in New Longoro.

⁴⁹ Whiteman, Darrell L., ‘Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development’, p126.

⁵⁰ Meeting with GPP in New Longoro in May 2003

five years.⁵¹ These actions are evidence of new levels of self-reliance, self-respect, security and personal growth the women have attained as argued by Whiteman. This in turn provides evidence that the GPP has been a means of intellectual, cultural and economic empowerment to the Dega women.

Through the GPP, the New Longoro members have ventured into income generating activities like batik (cloth), soap and pomade making and some cooperatively cultivate groundnuts (peanuts). The economic empowerment of the women is likely to impact all the four areas on Whiteman's wheel of IHD. Material growth enhances social participation, nutrition and health. Women also come together to discuss issues in life that work against them. The project has produced books like 'Facts About Immunization', 'Healthy Motherhood' and 'Living with HIV/AIDS in the Community' in Deg. During an evangelistic outreach, the SDA Church allowed the Senior Literacy Supervisor to introduce and read the contents of the HIV/AIDS book to the gathering. Thirty copies were purchased mostly by women.⁵² However, it was beyond the scope of this study to locate and interview those women to ascertain how this reading material had been of benefit to them. This is an area of further research that is necessary. However, these activities indicate an expanded awareness and a growing level of self-respect and dignity of the Dega women.

4.8 THE SCRIPTURE AS A UNIFYING FACTOR:

The Bible translation strategy in Dega Hare attempts to integrate the Scriptures with the whole of life and therefore places great emphasis on the spiritual dimension of development. It also aims to be a people-centred program. As mentioned in chapter two, Dega started as a fragmented society due to the way they migrated to the present area. Geographical demarcation divided them further when the Ashanti and Northern territories and later the Brong Ahafo and the Northern Regions were created. The district assembly system also divided the Dega into three district assemblies namely, Kintampo, Bole and Wenchi. Further fragmentation came through chieftaincy systems. The Longoro in the southern part of the Black Volta River kept to the Asante system of chieftaincy. Some of

⁵¹ Nandoma, J.C., New Longoro, February 2, 2004.

⁵² Mr. Daniel Nsiah, meeting with DLP Staff on February 2, 2004, New Longoro.

the Mangom in the north took to the Asante system while others did not. These events polarised Dega Hare and they have been struggling to remain united. Whiteman has observed that where there is intercommunity conflict and strife it destroys integral human development.⁵³

According to Whiteman, IHD influences human interaction between communities. Is there any evidence that the Bible translation strategy has contributed to community and inter-community peace and unity that are necessary foundations for development? A listening group of the Faith Comes By Hearing (FCBH), the audio Scripture, testifies:

FCBH program is bringing us together very often. This has created some good and cordial relationship among us. There is a chieftaincy dispute in our village, but during listening times members from both parties come together to pray for unity. Observers wonder why people who take different stands are one in this program.⁵⁴

Peter Chiu tells of another case where through the Faith Comes By Hearing (FCBH) program, people from different factions have been sitting together to listen to God's word.

It is helping to foster unity when conflicting parties come together to listen to God's Word through the FCBH program. At Mansie, the town was divided but when the FCBH program came to the village, the two factions came together to listen to Scriptures in their own language. Eventually the enmity was broken and they are now together and it has improved the social life of the town.⁵⁵

Under the leadership of Emmanuel Ataakorekpa some youth from New Longoro and Bamboi were using Scripture from the Deg New Testament to compose songs in their indigenous styles to bring the two communities together. "One of my aims was to start the choir and use it as a uniting factor within the district", ⁵⁶ says Emmanuel. Some of the song titles are *Korowii ten en kon a bel a won le obe* (When God gives somebody a thing, nobody can take it from the person) and *Buala dingari* (Rainbow). He explained that in Dega tradition, the rainbow is a sign of hope and depicts complete hope and dependence on God.

⁵³ Whiteman, Darrell L., 'Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development', p132.

⁵⁴ FCBH Coordinator's report., 1999.

⁵⁵ Peter Chiu, interview conducted by writer on May 2003 in New Longoro.

⁵⁶ Emmanuel Ataakorekpa, interview conducted by writer on May 2003 in New Longoro.

Two of the examples given above provide evidence that people are now praying and listening to God's word together, where there had been internal strife in a town previously. The third example shows the beginning of evidence that youth are now trying to creatively bring people together between towns. They are examples of social growth that has begun among the Dega. There is evidence that their coming together to listen to Scripture helps to build positive relationships, increases social solidarity and enhances social participation. However, further research is required to sensitively analyse the definitive impact that the Dega Scriptures are having on inter-community conflicts.

4.9 CONCLUSION:

In assessing the socio-cultural impact of the Bible translation strategy on Dega, reference has been made to Whiteman's Integrated Human Development (IHD) model. The assessment in this chapter has concentrated on the socio-cultural aspect of the Bible translation strategy in Dega Hare.

The discussion above illustrates some aspects of the BTS's impact on the socio-cultural life of Dega in the four areas mentioned. Deg has been added to the list of Ghanaian languages that have been developed linguistically. In the words of the late Mohene, Nnaa Kwaku Dimpo II, Deg "has been born". Through the literacy program, many Dega have become literate in Deg and some have even bridged into formal schools successfully. The program has initiated writing creativity as illustrated through the production of indigenous literature. Dega who hitherto were passing on traditional information orally from one generation to another are now writing down Dega wisdom in the form of riddles, proverbs and stories. There has been educational growth for traders and farmers who are now able to record economic transactions. The strategy has also been a source of empowerment to the Dega woman. Through the GPP, women have been given the ability to participate in decision-making and also to discuss cultural beliefs and practices that work against them.

Even though not all the IHD components have been equally developed, it can be deduced from the sampled testimonies that the Bible translation strategy among the Dega is impacting them positively and contributing to their integrated development. The next chapter will assess how the strategy has impacted the spiritual life of Dega.

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE SPIRITUAL IMPACT OF
THE GILLBT BIBLE TRANSLATION STRATEGY ON THE DEGA**

In his study of “Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development”, Whiteman cites a story that was told by Jacob Loewen concerning an American University that undertook the Vicos Project in Peru to bring development to some 2000 Huasipongos “debt servants” who lived in the Peruvian Highlands.¹ The people were to be empowered economically through a high yield of crops like potatoes. The Project was successful but the men used their entire extra yield to brew beer and got drunk. In fact, they got so drunk that they could not organise themselves to farm the following season. When the coordinator was asked what he would do differently if he had the chance to start again, he remarked, “I would introduce a good dose of old-fashion religion because without a change of value systems, what we really have achieved is a bigger and better beer bust”.²

The above story illustrates that without the spiritual and moral dimensions of development, developmental efforts may not be as beneficial as intended. The Integral Human Development (IHD) theory therefore recognises the integral nature of human beings and communities and thus submits that development must be holistic and balanced. According to Whiteman,

The category of spiritual growth contains a people’s relationship with the world of the supernatural. If it is mostly negative and characterized by fear and uncertainty then this of course will inhibit their development. If on the other hand it is primarily positive and full of hope and love, as we believe it can be for all Christians, then it leads to growth.³

Similarly, the Bible translation strategy aims to have a strong spiritual development component through Bible translation and Bible use activities.

¹ Whiteman, Darrell L., ‘Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development’, in Philip C. Stine (ed.), *Bible Translation and the Spread of the Church: The Last 200 Years*, Brill, Leiden, 1990, pp127-128.

² Whiteman, Darrell L., ‘Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development’, p128.

³ Whiteman, Darrell L., ‘Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development’, pp125-126.

Darrell Whiteman's model of Integrated Human Development (IHD) is going to be used again in this chapter to assess the spiritual impact of the strategy on Dega. I will analyse how the IHD has occurred in the three levels⁴ and also the correlation between the Bible translation strategy and development in the four areas Whiteman enumerated.⁵ The components under the spiritual growth: faith, peace, hope, prayer and love are not easy to assess, but are relevant for understanding the spiritual impact of the Bible translation strategy on Dega. In order to understand the correlation between the use of the Deg New Testament and the spiritual impact that the Bible translation strategy has had on Dega, the chapter begins by assessing the use of the Deg New Testament. The impact of the Bible translation strategy on developing indigenous Christian music and theology will also be discussed with particular reference to stories illustrating this impact.

5.1 THE USE OF THE DEG NEW TESTAMENT:

Whiteman has observed that "Around the world stacks of translated Bibles gathering dust attest to the fact that people have not always wanted or valued vernacular Scriptures".⁶ It is therefore necessary to begin by assessing the factors that promote the use of the Deg New Testament and those that do not promote its use. Are the copies of the Deg New Testament being used or are they just gathering dust? The Deg New Testament was dedicated and given to the Dega on 14th February 1991. Two thousand copies were printed and five hundred were purchased on the day it was dedicated. As at January 2004, 1,539 copies had been purchased by individuals and Churches.⁷

The perception of people about the Bible is a factor that has a bearing on whether or not they will use the Scriptures. Gerald West refers to what he describes as the dilemma that confronts black South Africans in their relation with the Bible in the following anecdote: "When the white man came to our country he had the Bible and we had the land. The white man said to us 'let us pray'. After the prayer, the white man had

⁴ Individual, Community and Inter-Community levels.

⁵ Whiteman, Darrell L., 'Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development', 1990, pp131-134. The four areas are: Self-respect and dignity, Expansion of a peoples' world, Literacy and New Sense of Identity.

⁶ Whiteman, Darrell L., 'Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development', 1990, p136.

⁷ Information gleaned from Mr. Daniel Nsia of DLP office in New Longoro, Marjorie Crouch, Patricia Herbert and Heartbel Osei in Tamale, February 2004.

the land and we had the Bible.”⁸ The anecdote points to the way the Bible was used by the perpetrators of colonialism and apartheid to oppress the Black South Africans and take over their land. It also “reflects the paradox of the oppressor and the oppressed sharing the same Bible and the same faith”.⁹

In the case of Ghana, the colonial powers did not take land away from the people. However, there was a similar sentiment expressed by the critics of Bible translation in Ghana and other parts of Africa. The Bible was seen as “a colonial tool that weasels its way into native cultures to subvert and exploit them”.¹⁰ The Dega perception about the Bible is quite positive and the fact that the Bible is the Word of God is not disputed. Even those who do not go to Church have high regard for it. Dega refer to the Bible as “*Korowii nyoa wo bul*”, “God’s spoken word”. I presented copies of the Deg New Testament to Dega Chiefs as I visited them during my research and they received them with grateful attitude.¹¹ The Deg New Testament is not linked to oppression.

People also tend to either read the Bible or hear it read when they realise that what it offers is relevant to their life situations. Wayne Dye, a Wycliffe Bible translator suggests that, “People respond to the Gospel in proportion to their conviction that God and his Word are relevant to the concerns of daily life.”¹² He calls this “Personal Relevance”.

In response to a question as to how the Scriptures help solve family problems, a respondent said he found the Scripture most helpful in dealing with family problems and difficulties. They came together to pray and discuss Scripture whenever they had family problems and they always ended up reunited.¹³ Another said, “I find the Scripture most helpful in dealing with family problems because when I hear the Scriptures preached concerning the difficulties that some people went through in the Bible and yet stood firm, I also follow their examples when in difficulty.”¹⁴

⁸ West, Gerald O. *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible*, Sheffield Academic Press, 1999, p9.

⁹ West, Gerald O., *The Academy of the Poor*, p9.

¹⁰ Sanneh, Lamin, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Cambridge, UK, 2003, p107.

¹¹ Deg New Testament presented to Mansiekoro on June 2, 2003 at Mansie.

¹² Dye, Wayne T., *Bible Translation Strategy: An Analysis of its Spiritual Impact*, WBT, Dallas, Texas, 1985, p39.

¹³ Church member interview at Jama on June 7, 2003 conducted by Peter Jabuni.

¹⁴ Methodist Church Members, interview conducted by Peter Jubuni on June 12, 2003 in Jama.

Assessing the impact that the Deg New Testament has made on Dega, participants at the impact assessment seminar that was held in New Longoro¹⁵ were agreed that the Deg New Testament has helped to allay the fears of witchcraft in the area.¹⁶ They added that passages like “You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world”,¹⁷ have been very encouraging to some of them.

I observed that even though some Dega youth had acquired properties such as buildings in locations outside Dega Hare, very few had made any attempt to build within Dega Hare. I therefore attempted to find out why. Traditionally, young men and women could not possess their own properties but had to invest them in the name of the elderly.¹⁸ If a young man farmed and managed to build a house, then he had to give it either to his biological father or his uncle. It is believed that witches will kill the young man if he failed to hand over the ownership. The result has been that a number of Dega youth still fear to invest in Dega Hare. The situation is changing and this has been attributed to the presence of Deg Scripture.

There is a traditional belief in Dega Hare that the youth should not plant fruit trees for whoever did will not survive its fruits. The youth believed this because they witnessed the sudden death of those who disobeyed this taboo. This belief in the taboo deprived the Dega youth and the entire community of economic and ecological gains from fruit trees. However there is evidence of change in attitude to this taboo among Christian youth because some have survived the fruits of trees they planted. Asked how the Bible Translation Strategy contributed in allaying this fear, J.C. Nandoma said that a number of Dega youth who had passed through Maala schools were in Churches and biblical passages like “What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?”,¹⁹ have helped them to overcome fear of witchcraft and taboos like fruit planting. These stories affirm Whiteman’s assertion that “Vernacular Scriptures open people up to a larger world in time and space and presents them with alternatives.

¹⁵ Scripture Impact Assessment Seminar held on May 30th, 2003 at the St. Thomas Catholic Church, New Longoro.

¹⁶ There is the need for detailed research to ascertain how this has reduced witchcraft related disputes in Dega Hare.

¹⁷ 1 John 4:4 (NIV).

¹⁸ Mr. Nsiah, interview conducted by writer on July 2, 2003 in New Longoro.

¹⁹ Romans 8:31. Quoted from the NIV.

This is nearly always liberating and empowering”.²⁰ The Bible translation strategy has exposed some Dega youth to larger world spiritually, physically and materially. This has enabled them to see alternatives and to make different choices. It implies that the faith and hope they have in God has helped them at the individual and community levels.

Another factor that has promoted the use of Scriptures in Dega Hare is the literacy foundation that the Deg Language Project has laid. Those who have become literate in Deg have the desire to read the Deg New Testament which happens to be the most advanced literature in Deg. Some read it in order to improve their reading skills in Deg. The New Testament that is recorded on audio cassettes is also motivating people to learn to read Deg so that they can read the Scriptures themselves. The Mansie SIU supervisor reported that as they listen to the audio New Testament, some have testified that they can now read Deg better; especially it has helped them to learn to pronounce the Hebrew and Greek names.²¹ Three catechists of St. Thomas Roman Catholic at New Longoro were asked how the Deg New Testament was helping them in their leadership and Richard Bofo had this to say: “I could read Twi in the primary school and later bridged into Deg. The Deg New Testament has helped me to work as a catechist. I bought one at four thousand *cedis* and started reading it in Church. I later bought five extra copies for friends who became interested as they heard me reading”.²²

There are equally factors that inhibit the use of the Deg New Testament. The multi-lingual nature of Churches in Dega Hare poses a great challenge to using the Deg New Testament. The membership in most Churches in large towns like Kintampo, New Longoro and Bamboi comprise speakers of Deg, Dagaati and Twi, even though the majority are Dega. The way the Methodist Church in New Longoro has solved this is to use Twi which is considered common to all members. They read the New Testament in Twi even though the Deg New Testament is available and preach in Twi.²³ There is therefore the general notion that all Dega speak and understand some Asante-Twi.

²⁰ Whiteman, Darrell L., ‘Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development’, 1990, p134.

²¹ Mansie SIU Supervisors, interview conducted by writer on June 2, 2003 at Mansie.

²² Three catechists of St. Thomas Roman Catholic Church, interview conducted by writer on May 25 2003 in New Longoro.

²³ Church visit the writer made, New Longoro Methodist Church, May 25, 2003.

However, according to the language survey that was conducted in 1979²⁴ in four Dega communities before the Bible translation strategy was commenced, the notion that most Dega understand Asante-Twi is erroneous. The average comprehension of Twi was 14.8 percent and Deg was 90.5 percent. As a Twi speaker, I know that the fact that one is able to speak and comprehend the routine Twi that is used in commerce and ordinary conversation does not mean that he or she will understand all the Twi words used in the Bible. A number of Dega who were interviewed attested to this fact.

An elderly Deg man who was blind and a regular member of the SDA FCBH listening group had this to say:

I thought I could understand the Asante-Twi Bible very well until I listened to the Deg New Testament through the FCBH program. For example, I understood the parable of the labourers (Matthew 20:1-16) better when I heard it in Deg.²⁵

With enthusiasm, he made a fervent appeal to the translators to produce the Deg Old Testament as soon as possible. Maame Akosua Fra of *Duu Korowii* Church said, “The Deg Scripture has helped me to participate meaningfully in the Bible study discussions”. Another member, Hanna Anane also said, “It has helped my children. In my former Church where Scriptures were read in Asante-Twi, my children used to ask me what they meant. Now they understand and do not ask those questions again”.²⁶

Peter Chiu has equally observed that whenever the Deg New Testament is read, the faces of members, especially the elderly and children, brighten up with smiles. He cited an instance where he did spontaneous translation of a passage from Deuteronomy because it had not been translated yet. After the service a blind member remarked, “You tell us that the Old Testament is not in Deg but you read it this morning and it sounded so good”.²⁷ The Twi Bible may be read to the Dega but the one that sounds ‘so good’ in their ears is the Deg Scripture. As Kwame Bediako has rightly observed, “In matters of

²⁴ Language Survey Report, GILLBT Linguistic Department, 1979, p2.

²⁵ Mr. Paul Kupor: Blind (man) listener of FCBH, interview conducted by writer on Longoro, January 26, 2004 in New Longoro.

²⁶ Members of *Duu Korowii* Evangelical Church, interview conducted by writer on Sunday, February 1, 2004 in Kintampo.

²⁷ Peter Chiu, interview conducted by speaker on May 2003 in New Longoro.

religion, no language speaks to the heart, mind and inner-most feelings as does our mother-tongue”.²⁸

After over a decade of the Deg New Testament, some Dega still see it as a matter of prestige to read the Twi New Testament and also preach in Twi. During my research time in Dega Hare, I sat in a Church service and even though the Preacher was a Deg he preached in Twi and never said a word in Deg. It is also a fact that some Dega preach in Twi because they do not know the Deg words for some of the Biblical key words like “justification”. Through the Scripture-In-Use program the Deg Language Project organises workshops for elders and preachers and supplies them with a list of such words in Deg.

Inaccessibility of copies of the New Testament for prospective buyers was also recognised as a factor inhibiting usage. I observed that there were enough copies of the Deg New Testaments available and the price was also affordable. However, the distribution system was ineffective and therefore made them inaccessible. Copies were only available at the Deg Language Project office in New Longoro. People had to travel from the over forty communities in order to obtain copies because some of the past agents who sold them, could not render honest accounts.

As the New Testament is already in Deg and the Old Testament is being translated, how has it impacted the primal religious beliefs and practices of Dega? Has the religiosity of the Dega, coupled with the Bible translation strategy helped in the development of indigenous theologies?

5.2 EVANGELISM AND CHURCH GROWTH IN DEGA HARE:

In 1981 when the Bible translation strategy started in Dega Hare, there were about forty Churches in the forty-six communities. After over two decades of the strategy, the number of Churches has increased to ninety.²⁹ Even though the strategy cannot claim to be the only contributing factor to this growth, it has contributed in a number of ways to it. The Deg New Testament has started impacting discipleship and growth in Churches that are preaching and teaching in the mother tongue. Preachers and teachers do not

²⁸ Bediako, Kwame, *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience*, Regnum Africa, Akropong, 2000, p32.

²⁹ Information supplied by the Deg Language Project Manager, Mr. Stephen Mensah.

have to make spontaneous translation but can now read from the New Testament. It is now easier and more interesting for the Dega Churches to conduct group studies of the New Testament. *Maala* School graduates are able to read the Deg Scriptures fluently and participants understand it better and so are able to make meaningful contributions.³⁰

The Chief of Yaara remarked, “Unlike when the Scripture was read in Twi, now that everything is in Deg the elderly people in the village are coming to Church”.³¹ The use of the Deg New Testament is therefore, attracting many more Dega to Church, especially the elderly people and children. They scarcely travel outside Dega Hare and so have very little comprehension of Twi. Sabule Roman Catholic Church had fifteen members and one year after using the oral Deg Scriptures (FCBH) the number had risen to sixty-seven and twenty-five had been baptised. A Church had been planted at Soora through the FCBH with eight adults and twenty-seven children.³² There are 113 listening groups in the forty-six communities comprising 2,159 adults and 1,221 children, making a total number of listeners of 3,380.³³

One of the four areas that Whiteman argues that it has positive correlation between Bible translation and development is the fact that the vernacular Scripture helps to expand people’s world. “It opens people up to a larger world in time and space and presents them with alternatives.”³⁴ This is depicted in the testimony of a 62 year old man:

We have been in the darkness for too long. So all that we have been hearing are selected portions of the Bible? Portions that suit the preacher were preached to us and that is why we are taught about only one or two topics. Now FCBH has made me in particular, to know even the ancestors of our Lord Jesus Christ, the teachings of Christ, the love of the Lord and what he will come in future to do. I am now changed. FCBH is saying all and nothing is left.³⁵

In one of his reports, the Coordinator of the program wrote:

There is a growing number of Christians in our communities since the introduction of FCBH. In our previous report we mentioned blind people as enjoying FCBH programs. This time it has spread to traditional

³⁰ Comments from participants of the Impact Assessment Seminar held on May 30th, 2003 at New Longoro.

³¹ Yarakoro, interview conducted by writer in front of his palace on June 30, 2003 in Yaara.

³² DLP Staff, interview conducted by writer on February 4, 2004 in New Longoro.

³³ Binabiba, Winston S. Theovision International, Monitoring Visit report, February 2004.

³⁴ Whiteman, Darrell L., ‘Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development’, 1990, p134.

³⁵ From the FCBH Coordinator’s report dated December 1999.

believers and Muslims. There is a listening group at Jama mainly for Muslims.³⁶

One group of people who have found the oral Deg New Testament very edifying are the visually impaired in Dega Hare. A twenty eight year old blind man from New Longoro made this remark after he had listened through the entire New Testament.

I was two times blind but thanks to FCBH, I can now see partially. I can now hear the Lord himself speaking to me in my own language.³⁷

This is an expression of a new sense of identity and self-respect which is going to impact positively on this blind man.

Philip Ebenezer Mere, a leader of the Deeper Life Church at Mansie told me that about fifty members were meeting to listen and discuss the Scriptures through the FCBH program. He testified that he had learnt to read the Deg New Testament better by listening to the audio Scripture in Deg.³⁸

It can be deduced from the above that the BTS has impacted evangelism and Church growth in a number of ways in Dega Hare. Dega are reading the New Testament and elderly Dega who would not go to church because they could not understand the Scripture read in Asante-Twi are now going to Church. Through the FCBH program, Dega like the blind who cannot learn to read for some reason, are hearing God speak to them in their heart language.

5.3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDIGENOUS THEOLOGIES:

Theology, which is literally, the science of God, is simply defined in an English dictionary as “the study of religion and religious ideas and beliefs”.³⁹ Etymologically however, the word comprises two Greek words, *Theos*, meaning God and *logos*, meaning study.⁴⁰ Theology can therefore be defined as the study of God or the discussion of issues about God. It relates to one’s response to God and cannot be confined to only the intellectual arena. Theology, therefore, began even in the pre-Christian era of Dega and it is not only those who are scholar theologians that theologise but the Dega who pray to

³⁶ From the FCBH Coordinator’s report December dated 1999.

³⁷ From the FCBH Coordinator’s report date December 1999.

³⁸ Philip Ebenezer Mere, Deeper Life Church, interview conducted by writer on June 29, 2003 in Mansie.

³⁹ *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, New Edition

⁴⁰ Halsey, William D., (Ed. General), *Collier’s Encyclopedia*, Crowell-Collier Corporation, 1968, p269.

Korowii through *Voga* also discuss God. It is not only those who have had formal training in hermeneutics that read the Bible but the Maala School graduates also read the Deg Scriptures and theologise as well. Mother tongue Scriptures facilitate indigenous theologies where culturally appropriate categories and idioms are used in the translation.

A good translation must communicate the meaning of the original message accurately, clearly and naturally. The message of the original language (Hebrew and Greek) is told again as exactly as possible in a natural way, in the receptor language like Deg.⁴¹ It implies that each mother tongue Scripture is peculiar and special. Even though the Deg New Testament conveys the universal message of the Bible, the cultural words and idioms used are peculiar to Deg. In order to communicate the meaning of the source text accurately and effectively in the receptor language the translators make careful study of that culture. They study the meaning of words and expressions that refer to traditional beliefs and the supernatural world.⁴² A few illustrations from the Deg translation may help to explain this fact.

In Deg, God cannot be used in a possessive form like “my God” so phrases like “God, whom Abraham worshipped” and “the God that the Israelites worshipped” were used. *Korowii* is the name for God and he alone is God and none other. So there is nothing like a plural form of *Korowii* in Deg as we have ‘gods’ in the English Bible and “*anyame*” in the Asante Bible. In fact, the word “*anyame*” is not meaningful in Twi because *Onyame* is the only word referring to God and cannot be made into plural. “In an illuminating observation on how the Akan divine name, *Onyame*, came to acquire a plural form, *anyame*”, says Bediako, “Christaller notes that the term was ‘merely introduced’ (by missionaries) in order to describe the religious outlook of people who were presumed to be polytheists!”⁴³ This was one word that was introduced by the early missionaries and it depicts their perception of the Akan primal religious beliefs. However, the word used as ‘gods’ in English is translated in Deg as *Voga* and they are

⁴¹ Barnwell, Katharine, *Bible Translation: An Introduction Course in Translation Principles*, Summer Institute of Linguistics, Dallas, 1992, p8.

⁴² Barnwell, Katharine, *Bible Translation: An Introduction Course in Translation Principles*, p8.

⁴³ Bediako, Kwame, Biblical Exegesis in the African Context – The Factor and Impact of the Translated Scriptures in *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol.6, No.1, June 2003, p 21.

not *Korowii*. *Korowii*, as used in the Deg New Testament should make it easy for Dega to identify with the God they have known all their lives.

In Deg, it is not meaningful for the Holy Spirit to indwell someone; he rather sits on someone. For example, in Acts 2:4, *Korowii Domadεεge* sat on the disciples. Because homosexuality is not part of the Dega culture, no cultural category was found but a phrase like “two men greet each other like a man and his wife” was used. Since the culturally appropriate and meaningful Deg words and idioms are used in Deg Scripture, it is very suitable for what Adamo has described as African cultural hermeneutics or vernacular hermeneutics, to take place in the Dega Church.⁴⁴

Pastor Philip Anane is a Deg who became literate through the Maala School. Even though he has not attended any theological college, he is the pastor of *Duu Korowii* Evangelical Church. He uses Deg Scripture in his teaching and preaching and even teaches on the local ADARS FM radio in Kintampo. When he was asked how he prepared for the radio program, he said, “Sometimes I prepare before going to the studio and other times I depend on the Holy Spirit to give me what to say”.⁴⁵ He recalled some of the lessons he taught on ‘The Tower of Babel’⁴⁶ and said, “When God changed their languages, strangely enough, spouses and their children could speak the same languages”. He added that he taught this to demonstrate that God loves the Dega and their language is important. Pastor Anane is able to theologise because of the Scriptures in his mother tongue. Affirming the importance of the mother tongue Scripture, Pastor Anane said, “When Christ returns he will speak to us in our mother tongue that He has given us. He will speak to Dega in Deg. Again, the angels that God has assigned to attend to us usually speak our mother tongues to us and we should be interested in our mother tongue Scripture.”⁴⁷

Theology, however, is never done in a vacuum but always in a cultural context. The cultural beliefs and worldviews of people who theologise are reflected in their theologies. That is, the Dega context is seen as both providing the critical resources for biblical interpretation and the subject of interpretation. Justin Ukpong has described this

⁴⁴ Adamo, Tuesday David, The Use of Psalms in African Indigenous Churches in Nigeria, in West, Gerald O., & Dube, Musa W., *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends*, Brill Academic Publishers Inc., Leiden, 2001, p336.

⁴⁵ Pastor Anane, interview conducted by writer on February 1, 2004 in his house, Kintampo.

⁴⁶ Genesis 11:1-9

⁴⁷ Pastor Philip Anane, interview conducted by writer on April 10, 2003 in his house, Kintampo.

as Inculturation Hermeneutics.⁴⁸ The Bible translation strategy has, therefore, provided the Dega church with the Scripture in Deg and given them the tool for indigenous theologies. It has put the Scripture in the hands of non-scholar Dega theologians whom Gerald West describes as the “ordinary reader” of the Bible.

They ‘read’ differently; their ‘reading’, I would suggest, is more akin to ‘rewriting’ than to reading in any scholarly sense... The Bible they work with is always an already ‘re-membered’ ‘text’ – a text, both written and oral, that has been dismembered, taken apart, and then remade and re-membered.⁴⁹

In the case of Dega, what is making ‘re-membering’ of Scripture possible are mother tongue literacy and availability of both the written and oral Deg Scripture. This became evident during a discussion that ensued after the New Longoro SDA FCBH listening group had listened to a passage on tax payment from Matthew 17:24-27.⁵⁰

Listeners applied the passage to some of their traditional beliefs and practices and questioned the traditional levies for *som too* (sheanut ritual) that are used to buy animals to sacrifice to earth deities. A woman listener asked if she should give in cash or kind towards the purchase of chickens to sacrifice to the local deities. Each Deg woman is levied to pay a bowl full of sheanuts to the *Haankoro*. Knowing that the Christian women would refuse to contribute towards the sacrifices, the *Haankoro* told them that the collected sheanuts were for her and not for the purchase of items to be used in sacrifices. After a long discussion, listeners concluded that Christian women should pay their levies to the *Haankoro* since the reason she had given for collecting them was not contradictory to their Christian principles. The oral mother tongue Scripture provided the platform for Applied Inculturation Theology, not in a theological college classroom but a Church building in New Longoro. Listeners were able to apply Scriptures to their immediate socio-cultural context and felt needs. The Deg New Testament is initiating a process of indigenous hermeneutics in Dega Hare. It is expected that this will be augmented when the full Bible is placed into the hands of the Dega in the near future.

⁴⁸ Ukpong, Justin S., *Developments in Biblical Interpretation in Africa: Historical and Hermeneutical Directions*, in Gerald O West and Musa W. Dube, *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends*, Brill Academic Publishers, Inc. Leiden, 2001, p23.

⁴⁹ West, Gerald O., *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible*, Sheffield Academic Press, 1999, p95.

⁵⁰ SDA FCBH Listening Group, on Saturday, 24th January 2004 in New Longoro.

5.4 DEVELOPMENT OF INDIGENOUS DEG SONGS FOR CHRISTIAN WORSHIP:

Songs play an integral role in Christian worship but the struggle over the use of indigenous African music in Christian worship started long ago. In an article published in 1958, Nketia posed a pertinent question. “What good is it to the African to come regularly to a service conducted in a language and a musical idiom which he does not understand?”⁵¹ Ghanaian musicologists like Ephriam Amu had struggled sometime ago to introduce indigenous Akan way of singing and drumming in the worship of the Church in Ghana.⁵² The struggle however, has taken another form in ethnic groups like Dega where Twi songs have been used in worship for a long time because they did not have the Scriptures in their mother tongue. While some are making efforts to use Deg in Christian worship, others are sticking to Twi or at best, putting Deg words to Twi and English tunes, a practice that Nketia has described as obscure.

“As translations, however, many hymns have very serious defects. They are not always as clear as they could be: they reflect the poetic habits of western writers. And in the instances of which I know, attempts are made to create an entirely new poetic language through the use of unusual word groups, and sometimes of difficult syntactical arrangements. These often make for obscurity.”⁵³

Hymn writers are products of their cultures and they write about things that are relevant to their cultural context. The hymns may be translated beautifully into Ghanaian languages but how relevant are the words to the felt needs of Dega? The hymns may not tell about witchcraft that is frightening the Dega or about the ancestors that are so dear to them. Locally composed songs address the needs of Dega and move them to dance meaningfully.

⁵¹ Nketia, J.H., The Contribution of African Culture to Christian Worship, in *The International Review of Missions*, Vol. XLVII, #187, 1958, pp265-266.

⁵² Agyeman, Fred, *Amu the African: A Study in Vision and Courage*, Asempa Publishers, Accra, 1988, pp90-91.

⁵³ Nketia, J.H., *The Contribution of African Culture to Christian Worship*, p273. In Ghana for example, the Methodist Church has put Twi words to British tunes and some of them have semantic problems and are sometimes difficult to sing. For example, the Methodist hymn, “O for a thousand tongues to sing ...”,⁵³ has been translated into Fante Twi literally as “Meenya ngvirama apem matow ndwom ...” The literal tongue in the mouth is used and not tongue as languages. In Akan idiom, to have “thousand tongues” is to be a liar. The new Asante Twi version has translated it as “Menya kasa-pem mato ndwom ...” Kasa (language) was used instead of Asante Twi word, *tekyerema*, the tongue.

Aware of this, the Bible translation strategy, through the Scripture-In-Use program, is helping Dega to first appreciate their own indigenous music and accept the fact that they can worship God with indigenous musical instruments and songs. Some of the Dega churches are now worshipping Korowii with songs they have composed from their experiences with God and the Deg Scriptures.

Edward Banchagla is one of the Dega composers that participated in some of the workshops. He shared some of the Scripture songs he had composed and why he composed them with me. "I lost a cousin that I loved and was so disturbed that I could hardly sleep, eat or work. I therefore decided to fast and pray to God to help me. In the course of prayer, God consoled me with a passage from the Deg Scriptures and I composed a song out of it."⁵⁴

<i>Bolarwa Korowii he gbo so me siedawe he ne.</i>	Merciful God, I trust you alone.
<i>Bolarwa Korowii me kpɔ nte tee.</i>	Merciful God, I offer myself to you.
<i>He gboso dee ba men lee,</i>	You alone can save me.
<i>Me kpɔ nwaa bwa do he nɔn ta.</i>	I hand over all my worries to you.

"I sang this song many times and I learnt that even though people around us may attempt to console us, real comfort comes from the Merciful God." A more thorough study of the theologies of Dega Christian songs is needed to ascertain the extent of the influence of Scripture and the theologies emerging from them.

5.5 PRIMAL RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES:

Dega are very religious and they migrated with their deity. Respondents and participants at the Impact Assessment Seminar attested to the fact that *Voga* worship has not been as prevalent as it was in the past. Paulina Afia Nuro who was in her fifties decided to go to Church after she had heard the Scriptures through the FCBH.

I listened to God's message in my own language from the cassette. The message sank into my heart and I decided to go to Church. I used to worship *vog* with my husband. I spent a lot of money buying goats and chickens for rituals but to no avail. I would rush to the *vogre* when I had any bad dream, and I would be directed to make the required rituals. I have followed *vog* from my youth and found no help so I have decided to stop. I am now free. Unfortunately, my husband is still following the *vog*.

⁵⁴ Edward Banchagla, interview conducted by writer on February 5, 2004 in New Longoro. The song was made from 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.

Before I found Christ and joined the Church, I could not forgive those who wronged me. Then I heard from the tape that God expects us to forgive others as He has forgiven us. Now I can forgive those who wrong me.⁵⁵

Nuro's encounter with the Gospel has assured her of God's forgiveness and so she can also forgive others. Although Whiteman does not refer to issues relating to forgiveness in his model, it is evident in Nuro's story that she can now interact with others in her community and participate better in community activities.

Madam Akosua Anane is an elderly blind woman who is a regular member of the SDA FCBH at New Longoro. She stated:

I was a very good composer and singer of traditional *Bachame* (come and help me) songs. I used to sing throughout the night during funerals. The singing went on with lots of cola nuts chewing and alcohol drinking. I composed songs that were full of insinuations and words that were abusive and provocative to my enemies. Alcoholism was therefore one of my main problems and I had severe headache. Through listening of God's words in Deg, I have been able to stop drinking alcohol and even stopped chewing cola nuts. The headache has stopped and I am not using my money to buy cola nuts and alcohol.⁵⁶

Listening to God's word has helped Akosua Anane stop using addictive substances. She has also stopped composing abusive and provocative songs. However, she does not indicate that she is now using this gift of composition to express her response to God.

The strategy appears to have influenced the annual ritual of sacrificing a cow to *Hare* at the beginning of the farming season. According to Peter Chiu, "In Jama, inhabitants were to contribute and purchase a cow every year to sacrifice to *Teo*. Now such communal contribution has stopped and the annual sacrifice is not as popular as it was in the past."⁵⁷ He added that as Church members were exposed to the Deg Scriptures either through reading or hearing, they became more resolved not to pay towards the annual sacrifices.

The Mansiekoro complained, "Unfortunately whenever I invite them they refuse to come because they regard our activities as idolatrous." During the farming season around May and June 2003, I was in Dega Hare and crops that had germinated were

⁵⁵ Madam Paulina Afua Nuro, interview conducted by writer on June 29, 2003 in Mansie.

⁵⁶ Interview with Madam Akosua Anane in her house at New Longoro, January 26, 2004.

⁵⁷ Peter Chiu, interview conducted by writer May 2003 in New Longoro.

drying up because the rains had stopped. So during the Impact Assessment Seminar that was held on Friday, May 30th 2003, I asked participants to pray for rains. The Methodist Minister present led us to pray for rains and it rained the following day which was a Sunday. On Monday June 2 2003, I was with the Mansiekoro, Nnaa Okofrobuo Agenda Mensah II and his elders at Mansie.⁵⁸ As I was interviewing them it started raining and so I remarked, “We prayed last Friday for rains and thank God that it is raining again”. Then Nnaa retorted, “We also sacrificed a whole cow on Saturday to our earth deity and it is raining now. So, what sent the rains, your prayers or our rituals?” This question engaged us in a long discussion but in the end Nnaa Agenda Mensah II remarked, “We know that your way of asking for rains is better because it did not cost you a cow. If the Christians here will gather and pray for rains, then we will not go through such rituals.”

The reaction of the Christians in refusing to respond to the invitation of Mansiekoro illustrates a problem that is repeated in many churches. The usual response to cultural issues has been a negation of an entire practice without thinking through the underlying meanings. Andrew Walls has said that “conversion is the turning, the re-orientation, of every aspect of humanity – culture specific humanity – to God”.⁵⁹

On the other hand, the Chief of Chebrenyoo, Nnaa Akangbon Kinto II, who attends the Roman Catholic Church and leads the choir, illustrates a shift in his spiritual allegiance. He became literate through the Maala School and reads the Deg New Testament and also listens to the audio Scriptures. As the leader of the community he leads his people in celebrating the yam festival every year. He invites the Parish Priest of the area to pray over the yams instead of taking them to the earth deity.⁶⁰ This is indeed a controversial but a proactive action. One of his elders told me, “Nnaa wants to convert us all into Christianity but we will not agree. He should pray for us in Church and we will also pray for him before the Vog”.⁶¹

The above illustrations show that some Dega Christians are still struggling with their response to cultural issues. They seem to respond negatively without understanding

⁵⁸ Mansiekoro, Nana Okofrobuo Agenda Mensah II and his elders, interview conducted by writer on June 2, 2003 in Mansie.

⁵⁹ Walls, Andrew F., *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, Orbis Books Maryknoll, New York, 1996, 28.

⁶⁰ Some of the new yams are taken to the shrine of the earth deity during the celebration.

⁶¹ Naa Akangbon Kinto II and some of his elders, interview conducted by writer on July 1, 2003 in Cheberinyoo.

and thinking through the positive meanings. Even though some like the Chebrenyoya chief has started the process of engaging the Gospel with their traditional beliefs and practices, constant encouragement is needed to enable them to use the Scriptures to interpret their cultural rites.

5.6 ECCLESIASTICAL HEGEMONY:

The vernacular Scripture is helping Dega Christians to understand the Gospel and to apply it to their living situations. This eventually expands their worldview and gives them a new sense of identity that also gives them the confidence to question what goes on in the Church. Pastor Anane and others began to question why the Deg New Testament would not be read in a Church on Dega Hare. A sixty-two year old blind man realised how much he was missing through selective thematic preaching after hearing consecutive Scripture reading through the FCBH program. These are illustrations of the influence that Deg Scriptures are beginning to have in breaking down ecclesiastical hegemony. The choice of Church leaders had been based on person's ability to speak and read Twi or English because Twi was the language of the Church. This is changing and Maala graduates are leading Churches in Deg.⁶² Dega churches are now singing Deg songs and members from other ethnic groups join them in singing. A SDA Pastor who was a Deg was posted to New Longoro but he decided to use Twi instead of Deg. The members resisted him and insisted that since he is a Deg, he should use Deg. In the end, he was transferred from New Longoro because of his insistence on using Twi.⁶³ Through the Bible translation strategy, some of the Dega Churches are beginning to assume a new sense of identity and responsibility.

5.7 CONCLUSION:

In Whiteman's conclusion, he states:

"There can be no development without change. The change that occurs in persons and communities when they encounter the Word of God in their own language is a change that can be so powerful that it leads to positive growth and integral human development."⁶⁴

⁶² Meeting with DLP staff, New Longoro, February 4, 2004.

⁶³ Meeting with DLP staff, New Longoro, February 4, 2004.

⁶⁴ Whiteman, Darrell, Bible Translation and Development, 1990, p141.

Through the Bible translation strategy the Scripture has been made available to Dega and some are either reading or listening to it. The Scripture has opened new options to Dega and has provided new choices for individual as well as community integral human development to take place in Dega Hare.

One factor that has promoted the use of the Deg New Testament is the fact that the Dega find the Scriptures relevant to their life situations. There is evidence emerging of Dega Christians beginning to compose songs and relating the Scriptures to their life issues which ultimately can contribute to the development of indigenous theologies. However, these two areas require much more research for a more definitive understanding of the nature of Deg theology. Meanwhile the spiritual impact assessment leads to the concluding chapter which summarises the findings and outlines some recommendations.

CONCLUSION

6.1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

The focus of this study has been on the Bible translation strategy of GILLBT among the Dega of Ghana. It has attempted to ascertain how this strategy has impacted the socio-cultural and spiritual lives of Dega. The hypothesis this study sought to investigate is that the Bible translation strategy of GILLBT among the Dega people of Ghana has impacted positively on their socio-cultural and spiritual lives and has therefore enhanced their integral human development. In this concluding chapter, an attempt has been made to summarise the general findings on specifically, the spiritual and socio-cultural impact that the Bible Translation Strategy has made on Dega Hare. The chapter ends with recommendations from the writer.

The study commenced with research into the historical and ethnographical background of Dega. This is not only to provide a context for this study, but to help address the problem that little information had been written about the Dega. They are located in both the Northern and Brong Ahafo Regions of Ghana. However, it came to light that more than half of Dega live in the other eight regions of Ghana. The ancestors of Dega migrated from various places in the Gold Coast. Some came from the Sisaala land in the Upper-West Region; some claim to have been the original settlers and others joined them later. They have had close alliance with Asante and Boron and have therefore been influenced by some Akan traditions, especially their chieftaincy system. However, it has become evident that Dega have distinct cultural beliefs and practices that are more akin to other *Gur* ethnic groups in Ghana. It also became evident that the protracted chieftaincy disputes are hampering the integral development of Dega Hare.

The study traced the emergence of the Christian Church and the Bible translation strategy of GILLBT into Dega Hare, both of which had not been previously documented. The Bible translation strategy has given Dega the New Testament in Deg and the Old Testament is about sixty percent drafted. More than three thousand Dega have become literate in Deg and some have bridged into English and formal schools. The Deg New Testament has been recorded on audio tapes and many Dega have been given the

opportunity to hear God's word in their own language. The strategy has given birth to the Deg Language Project (DLP) which is working towards becoming a non-governmental organisation. However, over ninety-five percent of DLP financial support comes from external sources, mostly through GILLBT. The DLP management is not involved in planning the annual budget of the Project and have not been connected to most of their external donors. As far as financing is concerned, DLP has always been given 'fish' but has not been taught how to fish. However, attempts are being made to generate funds through the Income Generating Activities (IGAs) but they have to be developed further if they are to make meaningful impact on DLP budget.

6.1.1 Spiritual Impact:

Darrell Whiteman contends that "spiritual growth contains a people's relationship with the world of the supernatural".¹ Where this relationship is characterised by fear and uncertainty it will inhibit development but where it is positive, it leads to growth. The Bible translation strategy (BTS) has made some positive impact on the spiritual lives of Dega and the Deg Scripture is serving as a catalyst of growth. There were forty Churches in Dega Hare when the strategy started in 1981. As at the end of 2003, the number of churches in the forty-six Dega communities had increased to ninety and the activities of the BTS have contributed to this growth as illustrated in Chapter five. Particularly, the Maala school and the audio Scripture program (FCBH), have made significant contribution to this growth.

Even though it is not easy to ascertain the extent of impact of the BTS on Dega primal beliefs and practices, there is evidence that it is beginning to make impact on the lives of individual Dega and even some communities. Dega are very religious and hold great allegiance to their traditional deities like *Teo*. For example, despite their historic exploits in inter-ethnic wars, they would not bring any war booty home because *Teo* tabooed them. However, some Dega like Afua Nuro and Nnaa Akangbon Kinto II are redirecting their allegiance to Jesus Christ after reading or listening to *Korowii nyoa wo bul*. The strategy is yet to have the desired impact on the elderly Dega, most of whom still hold unflinching allegiance to *Nnaa Teo*. The Evangelical Christ Apostolic Church

¹ Whiteman, Darrell L., 'Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development', 1990, p126.

(ECAC) which started in 1995 within Dega Hare seems to attract Dega chiefs. Six of them are members already and one of the chiefs, the Yaarakoro explained that the use of Deg Scripture has been the main motivating factor.

There was great fear of witchcraft in Dega Hare. According to Peter Barker, this was one of the factors for migration. The study has revealed that the Scripture in Deg is helping to allay this fear. It is demonstrating the power of the Christian Gospel to set people free from fear and consequently placing them on the path of integral human development.

The presence of the Deg Scriptures has started impacting some of the cultural beliefs and practices like *som too* (the annual sacrifice to *Hare*), *pidia*, and the widowhood and inheritance rites. The Chief of Chebrenyoya attends the Roman Catholic Church and he became literate in Deg through the Maala School. He is influencing the celebration of the Yam Festival and instead of taking the yams to the shrine, he invites his Parish Priest to pray over them.

The study has unearthed some pre-Christian beliefs and practices of Dega that can be used to serve as bridges to the Christian faith. In the performance of the *Lwejena* (Big Funeral), the Chief Executioner invites the men within a community to go round and hunt for death. After some time of hunting, they report to the traditional leaders “we found that wicked death; fought a fierce battle and killed him”. It is certainly not true that death has been killed but their activity is a symbolic one demonstrating a desire to destroy the power of death over their lives. And if this desire is connected to the Christian doctrine of Jesus Christ’s victory over death, Dega will not have to go far before walking on familiar grounds.

Kwame Bediako has observed that “... it is through hearing in African mother tongues ... that African theology emerges to edify not only the African Church but the Church world-wide”.² Although the strategy has helped to put the Scripture in the hands of many Dega: literate, illiterate and even the visually impaired, not much is being done to propel indigenous vernacular hermeneutics. Apart from Dega Church leaders like Pastor Anane of Duu Korowii Evangelical Church, not many Pastors within Dega Hare

² Bediako, Kwame, *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience*, Editions Cle and Regnum Africa, 2000, pvii.

are using the Deg New Testament seriously. One problem is that most of the trained Pastors in Dega Hare are not mother tongue speakers and so theologise in Asante-Twi rather than Deg. Although the Seventh Day Adventist Church has five Pastors who are Dega, only one is in Kintampo and he is using Asante-Twi rather than Deg.

The Word of God in the mother tongue enables the Holy Spirit to minister to people about culturally relevant issues that are valuable to them. What appealed to a 62 year old man after he had listened through the entire New Testament in his mother tongue was the fact that Jesus also has ancestors. This bears out what Andrew Walls has intimated, as noted in the first chapter, that through the mother tongue Scripture, persons could experience the presence of the incarnated Christ in a way that is likely to boost their self-image which will eventually impact on their personal development positively. Contrary to the expressed view of anthropologists that missionaries are destroyers of culture, through the fruit of mission work, this man has been helped to connect his cultural value to Christ Jesus.

Dega who have become literate in Deg are being trained and encouraged to document their cultural beliefs and practices. Books on various aspects of Dega culture have been written, such as *Dega Deene ne Baweere net opera* (The clans, towns and days of Dega) and *Deg Wobobeela (1/2)* (Deg Riddles 1&2).

The BTS has promoted the use of Scripture songs in Dega traditional music styles and Dega are composing Scripture songs in Deg. Some Dega like Edward Banchagla and Emmanuel Ataakorapka have started composing Deg Scripture songs in indigenous tunes and styles. Other Dega like Madam Akosua Anane who was a composer and singer of *Bachame* has not been encouraged to use her talent since becoming a Christian. Encouraging her and other Dega to use their gifts is likely to open the composition of praises and prayers similar to that of Afua Kuma³.

The study has revealed that the Bible correspondence course in Deg was one of the main sources of Bible education to the communities. All the three Roman Catholic catechists that were interviewed testified that they memorised some Scripture verses through the course which they could still recall. It became evident that this helpful program had stopped due to lack of funding.

³ Kirby, John Fr., *Afua Kuma Ayeyi ne Mpaebɔ: Kwaebirentuw ase Yesu*, Asempa Publishers, Accra, 1980.

The findings have shown that the distribution and sales system of the Deg New Testaments is not effective. They are not accessible to many Dega within Dega Hare and the majority of Dega outside Dega Hare seem to be forgotten.

As intimated by Kwame Bediako, the fact that Dega are hearing God's message in their mother tongue has initiated authentic religious encounter with the divine realm. It is likely that the coming of the full Bible in the near future will augment such encounters and impact Dega at the personal, community and inter-community levels.

6.1.2 Socio-Cultural Impact:

The linguistic development of Deg has helped to place Deg language among written languages in Ghana and consequently given some sense of pride and dignity to Dega. Dega are now proud of their language and some are even preaching in Deg over local FM radios. Although the over three thousand that have become literate in Deg represents a small percentage of Dega, they are already impacting the socio-cultural lives of Dega through Deg literature writing, economic activities and leadership responsibilities. Through the Gender Promotion Program, Dega women have been empowered cognitively and are impacting development both at the personal and community levels. Unfortunately, it was observed that the enthusiasm that greeted the Maala Schools in the early years has stagnated and even decreased in the case of female learners.

Nevertheless, the strategy is contributing to reduce the illiteracy rate in Dega Hare. Again, the Dega traditional notion that education was not for females is changing. A number of Dega women have gone through the Maala School and some have become teachers and supervisors.

The BTS is also helping to break through social and ecclesiastical hegemony, especially in language use. Because Asante-Twi was the language of the Church (and during important meetings within the communities), leadership positions went to Dega who were conversant in Twi. Since Deg is gradually becoming the language of the Dega Church, members who are literate in Deg have started holding leadership positions and leading Bible study groups in their Churches. A number of women testified that they can now contribute during Bible studies and found them very interesting.

Over two decades of Bible translation strategy of GILLBT in Dega Hare has made some positive impact on the Dega at the individual and community levels. The study has demonstrated that there is a positive correlation between Bible translation and the integral development of people groups like Dega. In chapter one, Lamin Sanneh was quoted as saying that Bible translation usually has a revolutionary effect on a hitherto illiterate group like Dega. The BTS cannot be said to have had a revolutionary effect on Dega Hare. However, the necessary foundation has been laid over the two decades to make a revolutionary impact possible in the future. In order to achieve this, the following recommendations have been given for consideration.

6.2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

6.2.1 Christian Engagement with Spiritual and Social Felt Needs:

Dega Christians, like Christians anywhere, need to be equipped to engage with their traditional worldview in order to turn what they have to God and to appreciate the fact that conversion is a process. For example, the annual ritual of redeeming the land (*Hare Kwaara*) is more than simply sacrificing a cow. The fact that they gather to ask for rains and good harvest at the beginning of farming seasons is a good gesture albeit the means of petition. It shows how religious the Dega are and bridges can be built to connect their religiosity to Christ. Harold Turner has observed that people who have strong primal religious background like Dega have “made the greatest response to Christianity ...”⁴ and his six-feature analysis of primal worldview can be very applicable here. Instead of rejecting totally the annual sacrificial rites, Dega Christians can seize the opportunity to organise annual prayer days to ask God for rains. The Gospel and Culture activities of the Scripture-In-Use program could provide the needed help.

It became evident that one of the factors that promote the usage of the Deg New Testament is when people realise that the Deg Scriptures are relevant to their felt needs such as widowhood rites, chieftaincy disputes, environmental hazards, and female genital mutilation (FGM). DLP Scripture-In-Use program can join the HIV/AIDS prevention campaign since Scripture has helpful teachings on sexual issues. Scripture can be an effective tool to stop the spread of this pandemic since it prohibits premarital sex and

⁴ Turner, Harold W., *The Primal Religions of the World and their Study*, 1977, pp27-37.

marital infidelity. There are a number of things that the DLP SIU program can do to help respond to the protracted chieftaincy disputes in Dega Hare. As a non-denominational group, DLP is well placed to mobilise Dega Christians to pray about such issues. This is one of the areas that DLP can collaborate with groups like NEA.

It is recommended that DLP promotes the use of the Mother Tongue Scripture so that the Dega will appreciate the relevance of *Korowii bul* (God's word) in their daily lives. The stories in the Bible are similar to our stories and God has given them to guide us. The Deg Scripture will therefore have effective impact on Dega materially, socially, physically and spiritually and eventually contribute to their integral human development.

6.2.2 Networking and Collaborating with other Organisations:

I observed that even though DLP was not the only non-governmental organisation working in Dega Hare, little networking and collaboration were going on between them and the other NGOs such as the Northern Empowerment Association (NEA) and the Ghana-Canada In-Concert Program. Networking in computer science terminology, is "the linking of computers so that users can exchange information or share access to a central store of information".⁵ This term has been used to describe how organisations can link up for common purposes. We are living in a global village and no one organisation can contribute all that is needed to bring human integrated development to Dega Hare. Networking and collaboration with organisations that have similar objectives will complement the work of DLP; provide learning opportunities for staff and save them from overlap and unnecessary duplication.

6.2.3 Maala School:

Through interactions with Maala graduates who bridge into formal schools, it became clear that they face problems with mathematics because they lack the requisite foundation. Whenever Maala graduates join formal schools they are usually promoted to higher classes because of their high performance in writing and reading. For example Gabriel Mante was promoted to JSS two and when I met him in New Longoro he confessed that mathematics was his major problem. It is important that DLP introduces a

⁵ Midkiff, Scott F., *Networking*, Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2002.

program to teach mathematics in Deg, especially to those who intend to bridge into formal schools. We can take a cue from what the early Basel Mission schools in the southern part of Ghana did. Rev. Bellon, the principal of the Middle School at Akropong, Akuapem, wrote the “*Twi Kasa Mu Akontabu Kyere (Instruction in Arithmetic) for schools on the Gold Coast in which Tshi (Chwee) Language is taught*”.⁶ It has Twi words for square (*ahinanan*), triangle (*ahinasa*), multiplication (*ahorowye*) and other mathematical terms.

Traditional leaders in Dega Hare like the Jamakoro and the Mansiekoro observed that the Maala School classes were not as vibrant as they were at the beginning of the program. For example, from 2000 to 2003, the total number of learners has stagnated between 3,020 and 3226. It is recommended that DLP initiates new strategies to stir up the enthusiasm in Dega Hare, particularly among female learners. While the contribution of DLP to the eradication of illiteracy in Dega Hare is commendable, more work needs to be done. Even though literacy statistics were available, they did not indicate the number of learners that had graduated from the various stages, those who had completed all stages, and those who had moved to formal schools. Statistical information giving these details will be more helpful for DLP and GILLBT in general, to have a more realistic picture of the actual literacy situation.

6.2.4 Deg Newspaper or Newsletter:

The *Bweewaa* (Deg Newspaper) attracted Peter Chiu, the Literacy and Development Coordinator to work with DLP. Unfortunately the production of this paper has ceased for financial reasons. They were given out freely as expatriate staff bore the costs of the paper. This could not be sustained when they left Dega Hare. The newspaper will help to disseminate information at the inter-community level and enhance integral development. It could also be a means for the over three thousand Dega that have become literate in Deg to find something to read and even contribute articles in Deg. I am therefore recommending that the production of *Bweewaa* should resume. It can be a weekly, monthly or quarterly paper and it should be for sale. The producers can include

⁶ Bellon, C.H. *Twi Kasa Mu Akontabu Kyere (Instruction in Arithmetic)*, Evangelical Missionary Society, Basel, 1872.

advertisements and announcement column for businesses and funerals and charge appropriately. It may also be possible to look for sponsorship from the over 28,000 Dega that are scattered over the eight other regions in Ghana.

6.2.5 Scripture Distribution, Sale and Statistics:

In chapter five, reference was made to the problems of Scripture distribution and sales. The Deg New Testaments were only sold from New Longoro because some of the agents did not honestly account for what was sold. It was dedicated and given to Dega in 1991 and 2,000 copies were printed. As at January 2004, 1,539 had been purchased and 461 were in stock.⁷ This means that 1,039 New Testaments have been sold in the intervening twelve years, which is an average of 87 per year. I observed that even though copies of the Deg New Testament were in stock, they were not easily accessible to prospective buyers. Copies were available at the DLP office in New Longoro and GILLBT offices in Tamale and Accra. It is, however, important that copies of the New Testaments should not only be available and affordable but also be accessible to people who may decide at any given time to purchase copies. I recommend that zonal Supervisors should sell the New Testaments so that when they default the amount can be deducted from their allowances.

Again, the sales are done mostly within Dega Hare and this meant that majority of Dega were not reached. According to the demographic records of 2000 Population Census, out of a total population of 55,174, about 26,194 live within Dega Hare and 28,980 live in the other eight regions of Ghana. Since distribution and sales are based mostly within Dega Hare, more than half of Dega have not been given the opportunity to purchase copies of the New Testament. I also observed that the main means of promoting the Deg New Testaments are those that usually characterise dedication days, what the Coordinators may carry around during their routine supervision trips and what is done through the Faith Comes By Hearing program. Again those outside Dega Hare were completely left out. I recommend that copies of the Deg New Testament are sold in all leading Christian Bookshops in Ghana. In addition, promotional advertisements can be made on FM radios and even the National Television network.

⁷ Statistics from both GILLBT storage in Tamale and DLP storage in New Longoro.

It was difficult gathering the statistical data of Deg New Testament distributed, sold and the number in stock. I observed that it was an epitome of what was prevailing in other projects as well. I recommend that the Scripture-In-Use department should follow up and develop updated statistical data that will be readily available.

6.2.6 Mother Tongue Scripture Program for Children:

I observed also that the SIU programs within Dega Hare were adult based and children were neglected. There was no program for children but it is better to reach them with the Word of God in Deg while they are still young. A program aimed at helping the Deg child to develop interest in reading the Deg Scriptures will be a rewarding investment. This will help them to cultivate positive attitudes towards Scriptures in their mother tongue.

6.2.7 DLP and the 5-Phases Model:

Discussions that I held with the DLP Staff on the GILLBT phasing model indicated that some of them had little or no understanding about the model and its implications. In fact, some of the staff had never seen documents on the model. DLP was in Phase III in 1991 and move to Phase IV three years later.⁸ Eleven years later, the Literacy Coordinator is saying that DLP does not have the financial capacity and structures to move into Phase V. I recommend that the phasing model should be discussed with both the management and staff of DLP so that they are helped to own them. Instead of a standard model for all GILLBT projects, it is recommended that individual projects be allowed to make alterations and come up with that which will work best in their own context. Again, the model applies to only the Literacy and Development facet of the project, leaving the translation and Scripture promotion aspects. Since all the facets of Bible translation strategy stand together as an integral body, it has been observed that making an NGO which focuses only on Literacy and Development will be potentially problematic. I recommend that the phasing model should be reviewed to include all the facets of DLP.

⁸ GILLBT Annual Reports: 1991, 1993/4.

6.2.8 Towards Financial Sustainability of DLP:

The Bible Translation Strategy is capital intensive and it is difficult to raise the entire budget from within a project location in Ghana. Nevertheless, it is necessary that the management and staff of DLP are involved in mobilization of funds, budget planning and implementation. GILLBT is currently handling DLP finances in the mode of the dominant paradigm of development and funds are mobilized for DLP rather than engaging them in the process. The critical issue in relation to the phasing model is the financial sustainability of DLP. The current human, financial and structural capacity of the Project ought to be strengthened before it can move into Phase 5. It is imperative that management and staff are adequately involved in the financial administration of the Project.

6.2.9 Integral Human Development as Model for Assessing BTS Impact:

I have found Darrell Whitman's Integral Human Development model appropriate for assessing the impact that the Bible Translation Strategy has had on Dega. It is particularly helpful because it takes the spiritual as well as the social indicators seriously. I would recommend that the model is adapted and developed to assist GILLBT in evaluating how the BTS of GILLBT is impacting people groups in Ghana and beyond. It will be helpful to review the spiritual growth components to include other components like righteousness and forgiveness. However, to make adequate use of the model, more intensive research needs to be conducted in every facet of the work to gain a complete picture of the issues.

6.3. CONCLUSION:

Whiteman has asserted that the ideal integral development in a community should conceptually resemble a bicycle wheel. The different components represent the spokes and when they develop together the wheel will be round and the ride should therefore be smooth. Where some of the components are developed and some are neglected then "we get aberration of development that is no longer conceptually like a wheel".⁹ Then the ride

⁹ Whiteman, Darrell L., 'Bible Translation and Social and Cultural Development', p126. Whiteman adopted the wheel from William Haoma of the Solomon Islands.

will not be as smooth as expected. When the Bible translation strategy in Dega Hare is assessed from the perspective of the bicycle wheel, then the impact has not been equal in the four areas and weaknesses are evident. For example, inter-community conflicts and strife persist in Dega Hare. Chieftaincy disputes are destroying some of the integrated human development gains in Dega Hare.

It is evident that there has been more impact at the individual level rather than at the community and inter-community levels but this is not surprising since the Strategy has been functioning for a little more than two decades in Dega Hare. It can, therefore, be concluded that there is substantial evidence to demonstrate that when a people have the Scriptures translated into their mother tongue, it impacts their spiritual and socio-cultural lives and consequently enhances their integral human development.

The nature of this research did not make it possible for me to apply all the components of the IHD wheel. Further research on the impact of the BTS on Dega Hare using all the components will also be very insightful. A number of Dega who became literate in Deg have bridged into formal schools and some are gainfully employed. Time did not permit me to trace and interview all of them. This is another area of research that will help to further determine how the BTS has contributed to personal and community growth of Dega. A theological analysis of Deg sermons and the Deg Scripture will surely yield fresh insights into the appropriation of Scripture at the grassroots for the benefit of the wider Christian community.

I trust that the recommendations given above will help to bring greater impact when implemented. It is however my hope that this attempt will encourage more research, especially from Dega scholars, to unearth the total impact that the Bible translation strategy has made on Dega Hare.

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Chief and elders of Kandige, Kandige, June 30, 2003.

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Gabriel Chiu, New Longoro, April 9, 2003.

John Chewa, Carpenter, April 6, 2003.

SDA Church leaders at Santekwaa in March, 2003.

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Rev. Dr. David Mensah at Tamale on September 15, 2003.

Pastor Philip Anane at Kintampo on April 1st, 2003.

Three Catechists of the St. Thomas Roman Catholic Church, New Longoro, at New Longoro on May 25, 2003.

Noah Apem, Northern Empowerment Association (NEA) at Carpenter in April, 2003.

Marjorie Crouch on June 17, 2003 at the Halleluja House, Tamale.

Patricia Herbert on June 17, 2003 at the Halleluja House, Tamale.

Mr. Bomfe, the District Chief Executive of Kintampo in his office at Kintampo, June 4, 2003. Mr. Bomfe is a Deg and served on DELACO.

Gabriel Mante at New Longoro, April 8, 2003.

Jamakoro in his palace at Jama, April 5, 2003.

Mansiekoro and elders at Mansie, June 29, 2003.

Theresa Saahene, GPP Coordinator, at New Longoro, May 2003.

Richard Lebile, SIU Coordinator at Carpenter, April 3, 2003

Naa Akangbon Kinto II and some of his elders at Cheberinyoa, July 1, 2003.

Longorokoro in his palace at New Longoro in May, 2003.

Madam Paulina Afua Nuro, Mansie, June 29, 2003.

Philip Ebenezer Mere, Deeper Life Church, Mansie, June 29, 2003.

Gabriel Mante on April 8, 2003 at New Longoro.

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Jogboikoro and Nomoa Kwasi Briama at Jogboi on January 28, 2004.

Opanin Kwaku Seidu, New Longoro, January 26, 2004.

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Rev. Fr. Otmar Auinger on January 26, 2004 at New Longoro.

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Catechist Alex Badu, Weila on January 2, 2004.

Deacon Augustine Kwabena Binka, Bamboi, January 29, 2004.

Pastor Emmanuel Kateri, January 26, 2004 at New Longoro.

Mary Steele on February 27, 2004 in Tamale.

George Maaluge Kombian, National Literacy Coordinator, in Tamale, March 1, 2004.

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Literacy Supervisor for Jaman area, Mr. Basofa Tawia at the DLP office in New Longoro, February 2, 2004.

Namoa Kofi Kuma at New Longoro on January 28, 2004.

Duu Korowii members on Sunday, February 1, 2004, Kintampo.

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Madam Akosua Anane in her house at New Longoro, January 26, 2004.

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Appendix 1

**Impact Assessment of the
Deg Bible Translation Project
(MTh (African Christianity) Dissertation Questionnaire)**

Personal Information:

1. ID # :
2. Interviewer Name:
3. Date: _____ Time: _____
4. Church Type:
5. Denomination and Location:
6. Gender: Male _____ Female _____
7. Age: _____ Clan: _____
8. Education level: None _____ Primary _____ JSS _____ SSS _____ Tertiary _____
9. Marital Status: Single _____ Married _____ Widowed _____ Divorced _____
Polygynist _____ (# of wives _____)
10. Ethnic group of spouse: Same _____ Other _____
11. Number of languages spoken: Mother Tongue _____ Others: _____
12. Dialect: _____
13. Leadership Position in Community: _____
14. Profession/Occupation: _____
15. Religious Affiliation: Traditional/Primal Religion _____ Christianity _____
Islam _____ Others: _____
16. Church Position: Pastor _____ Elder/Deacon _____ Others: _____

A. The Dega People of Ghana:

1. Please tell me what you know about the origin of the Dega people.
2. Who have you heard were the ancestors that led the Dega people to this land?
3. You call yourselves Dega and speak Deg but outsiders call you Mofoɔ. Tell me the story behind these names.
4. What are the main occupations of the Dega?
5. What is the inheritance system of the Dega people?
6. Tell me the distinctive roles of a Dega mother and a Dega father.
7. What do you find peculiar about the architectural style of indigenous Dega housing?
8. Tell me about the indigenous traditional leadership structure of Dega.
9. What will you say have been added, from other cultures, to the traditional leadership structure?
10. Tell me all you know about Dega chieftancy.
11. What do you know about how formal education came to Degaland?
12. Archival records indicate that there have been long term chieftancy litigations in the Degaland, especially between North and South Mo.
 - a) What do you know about this?
 - b) How has it impacted the social and cultural development?
 - c) Can you suggest any solutions?

B. Dega Primal (Traditional) Religion & Cosmology:

12. Before the Dega people were exposed to any other religion from outside, how were they relating to Korowii (God)?

13. According to the Dega tradition, where did man come from and where does he go from here?
14. Tell me some of the indigenous religious beliefs of the Dega people.
15. Traditionally, what will a Dega say about Korowii and the spirit world?
16. Tell me about the Dega customary rites on: pregnancy, birth, puberty, marriage, death, burial and funeral.
17. What about widowhood rites?
18. Name all the festivals in the Degaland that you know.
19. Which one will you consider as the most important and how is it celebrated?
20. What language is used during: libation pouring, interaction with local deities like Teo and the ancestors.
21. Can any other language be used and if not why?

C. The Emergence of the Church and the Bible Translation Ministry:

22. When and how did the Church come to Dega land?
23. What mission groups have worked in the Degaland?
24. What period and what was their major thrust of activity?
25. Which mission and denominations have been involved in the Bible translation?
26. What will you say about programs that have been implemented to meet the ongoing needs of the Dega community? (For example: literacy, community development, leadership and management training, etc.)
27. What language is used in your local Church during the following activities:
Bible Reading _____ Preaching/Teaching _____ Singing _____
Announcement _____ Bible Study _____ Prayers _____
28. Which language is considered as appropriate to use in Church?
29. From your assessment, what impact will you say the Bible translation ministry has had on the Dega church?
30. How has it impacted the Deg language?
31. What impact has the Bible translation project had on vernacular literacy rates and on reading by the Dega people?
32. Enumerate both the positive and negative impact that the project has had on the Dega community as a whole.

D. Social and Cultural Impact:

33. In your opinion, how has the Bible translation ministry (translation, literacy, SIU and Community Development) impacted the following areas of Dega life?

<i>Area</i>	<i>Impact</i>
Marriage	
Family	
Occupation	
Education & Literacy	
Economy	
Traditional Leadership	
Widowhood Rites	

Other Customs	
Funeral	
Self-esteem of Dega	
Use of Deg	
Other ways:	

34. Tell me of a case you know where any aspect of the Bible translation ministry has impacted the cultural or social life of a Dega community or person.

E. Religious Impact:

35. In your opinion, how has the Bible translation ministry (translation, literacy, SIU and Community Development) impacted the religious life of the Dega? (Indicate if the impact has been positive, negative, or none).

<i>Area</i>	<i>Impact</i>
Primal/Traditional Religious practices	
Festivals	
Seeking help from Vog	
Fear of Witchcraft	
Fear of spirits	
Consulting soothsayers	
Church Growth	
Indigenous Theology	
Church Music	
Dega Initiated Churches (Like ECAC)	
Worship in Churches	
Knowledge of God	
Other ways:	

36. What do you think are the factors that contribute to the use of the Deg New Testament?
37. What about the factors that inhibit the use of the Deg New Testament?
38. Tell me of what you have heard about how the Deg New Testament has impacted a person, a church or community.
39. What other comments will you want to add?

Appendix 2

Copy of Invitation Letter to the Assessment Seminar

Deg Language Project
P.O. Box 1,
New Longoro, Mo

22nd May, 2003

Dear Sir/Madam,

INVITATION TO SCRIPTURE IMPACT AWARENESS SEMINAR

The Deg Language Project invites you to a Scripture Impact Assessment Seminar on the topic:

THE YEARS OF THE DEG NEW TESTAMENT
ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE DEG SCRIPTURE
ON THE DEGA COMMUNITY”

Date: Friday May 30th, 2003
Venue: St. Thomas Catholic Church, New Longoro
Time: 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Pastors/Priests/Ministers and two other representatives from each Church are invited.
Please treat this letter as very important and urgent!

God’s Word is Power, God’s Word is Life, God’s Word is Prosperity! Come let us discuss how best our people can appropriate God’s Word.

Yours in His Vine Yard,

(Signed)
Richard Lebile
(FCBH/SIU Coordinator)

Appendix 3

SCRIPTURE IMPACT ASSESSMENT SEMINAR DEG NEW TESTAMENT: 1991 - 2003

DISCUSSION GROUPS:

- 1. Religious: (Three Groups)**
 - Primal/Traditional Religion:
Divination (Dependence on Soothsaying), Dependence on Vog, Syncretism
 - Christianity:
Music, Worship, Preaching, Teaching, Bible studies, Announcement, Church Leadership, Indigenous theologies, Dega Initiated Churches (DIC), Church Planting.
 - Factors for non-usage and usage of the Deg New Testament, Gospel Inculturation, FCBH, Jesus Film.
 - The availability, accessibility and affordability of the Mo Scripture.
- 2. Cultural beliefs and practices: (Two Groups)**
 - Festivals, Fear of Witchcraft, Rites: Burial, Funeral and Widowhood
 - Chieftancy and other forms of local leadership
 - Dega Cosmology (Dega view about the world: God, spirits, man, etc.)
- 3. Social/Linguistic:**
 - Prestige in the use of Deg, Dega self-esteem
 - Family structure
 - HIV/AIDS and Sexuality
 - Education and Literacy in Deg
- 4. Economic/Politics & Other Developments**
 - Occupation, Poverty level, other developmental activities
 - Political leadership from Unit Committees, etc.
 - How has the project impacted the economic welfare of Dega people?

QUESTIONS:

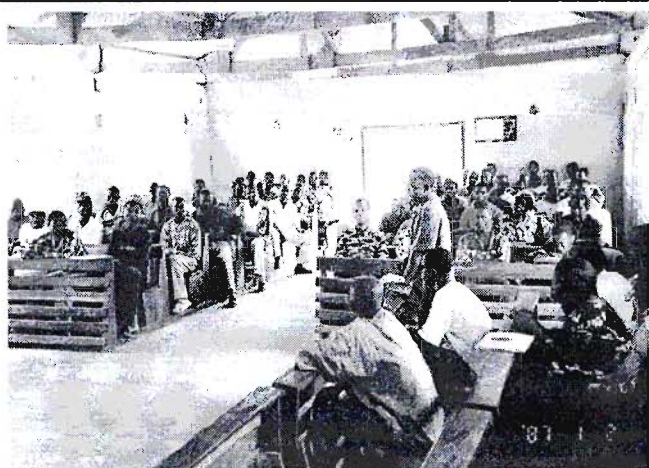
1. How was the situation before the emergence of the Bible translation ministry?
2. How is the situation like after 10 years of Deg New Testament? (How has the emergence of the Bible translation ministry of Bible translation proper, literacy, community development and Scripture-In-Use impacted the situation?)
3. What are our expectations after the next ten years? (Where do we want to go by the next ten years?)
4. What should we do to meet our expectations? (How are we going to get there?)

Appendix 4

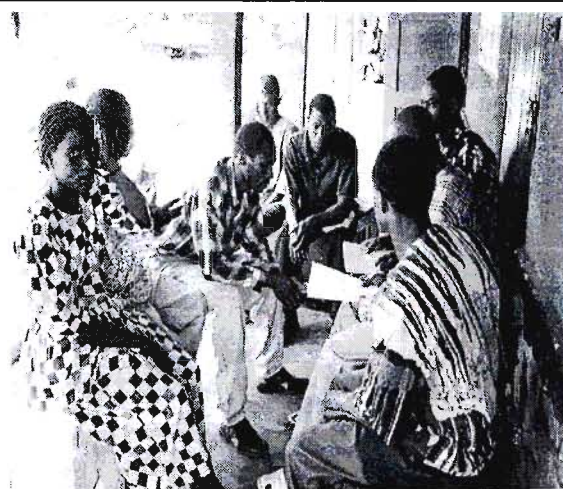
Impact Assessment Pictures



**Participants of the Scripture Impact Assessment Seminar
held on May 30, 2003 at the St. Thomas Roman Catholic Church. New Longoro**



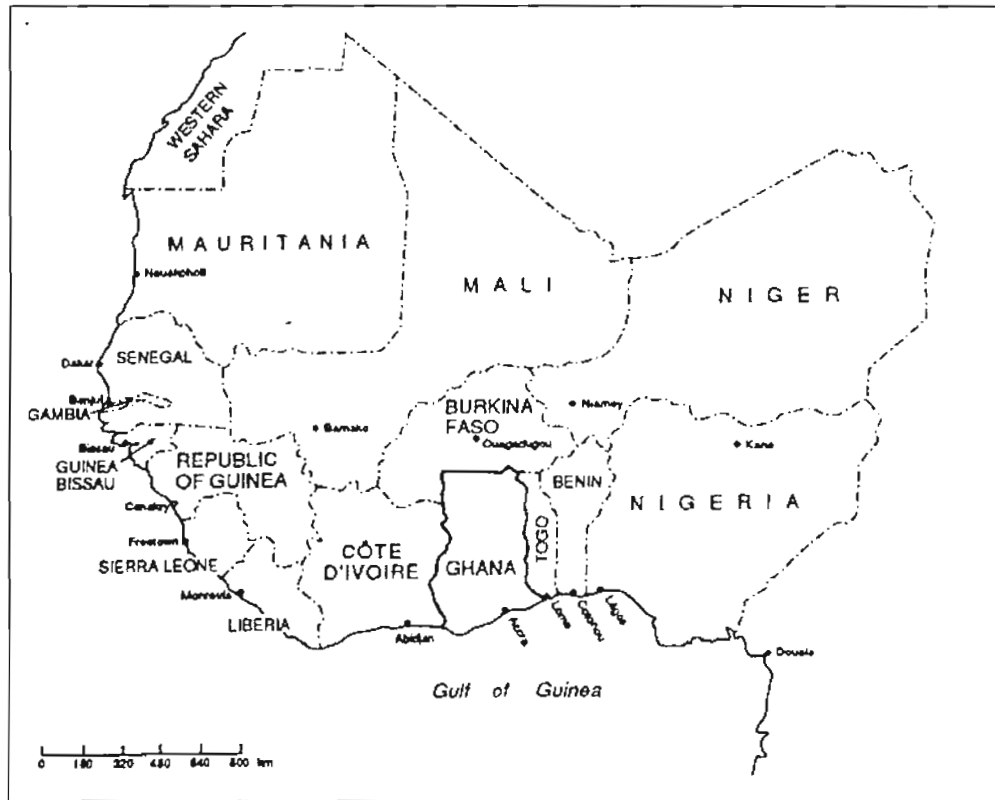
Participants interacting during the Seminar



Participants in a Discussion Group

Appendix 5

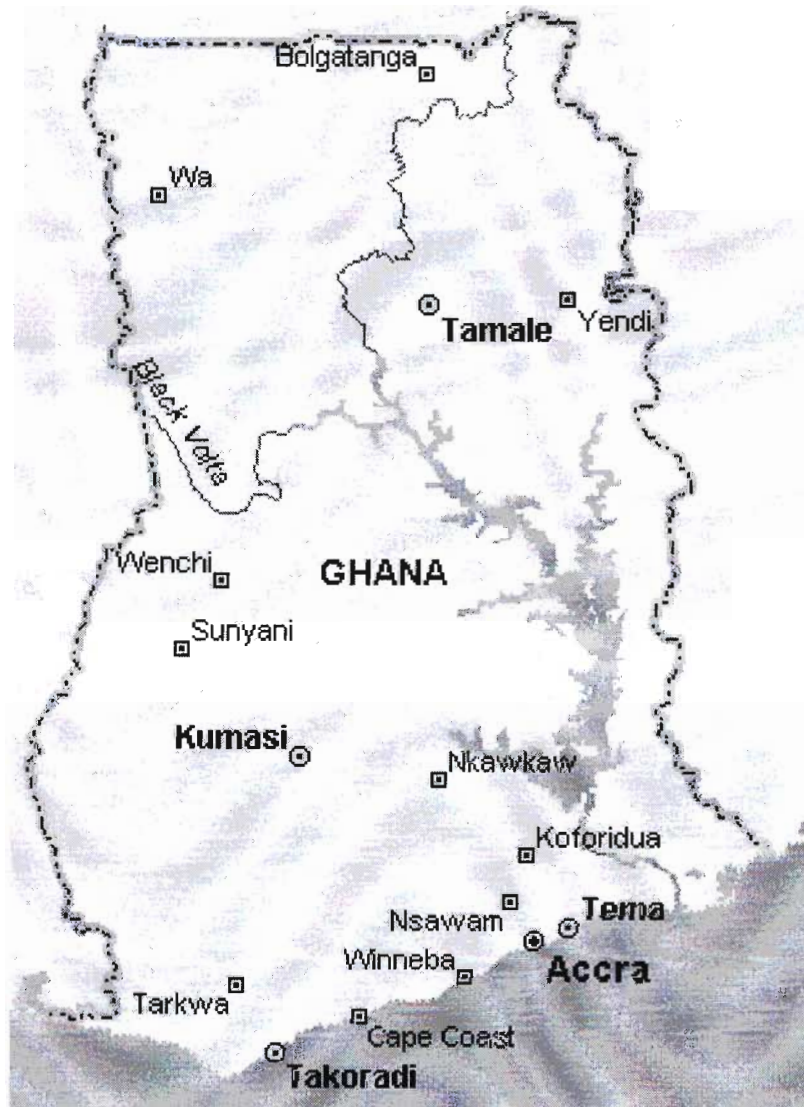
Ghana and West Africa



Source: Dickson, Kwamina B. and Benneh, G. (1988) *A New Geography of Ghana*. Longmans, London, p2.

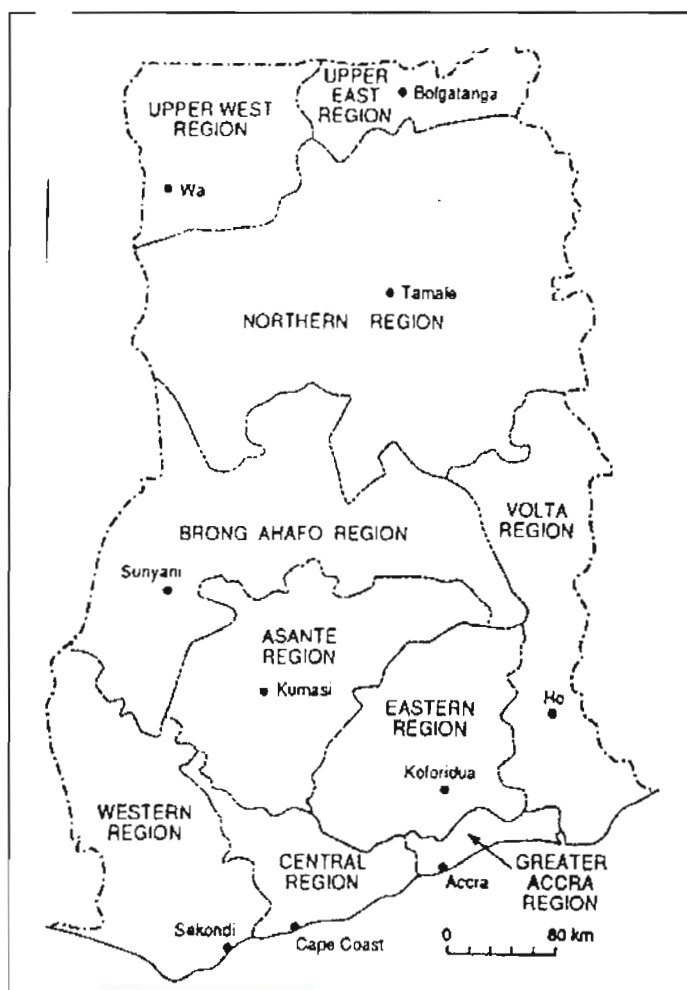
Appendix 6

Map of Ghana showing the Volta River



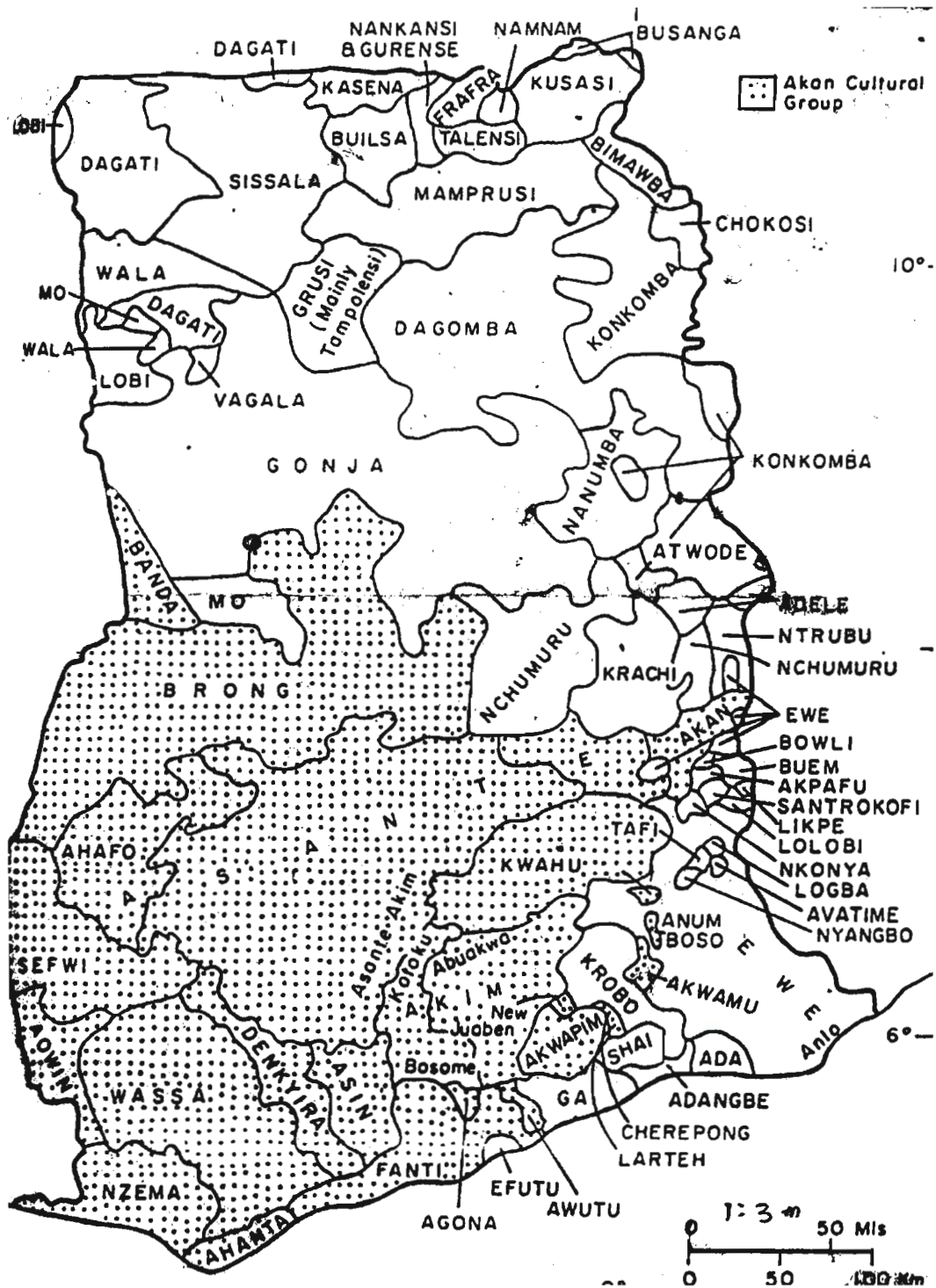
Source: Department of Survey, Tamale

Appendix 7
Administrative Regions of Ghana



Source: Dickson, Kwamina B. and Benneh, G.
(1988) *A New Geography of Ghana*, Longmans,
London, p6.

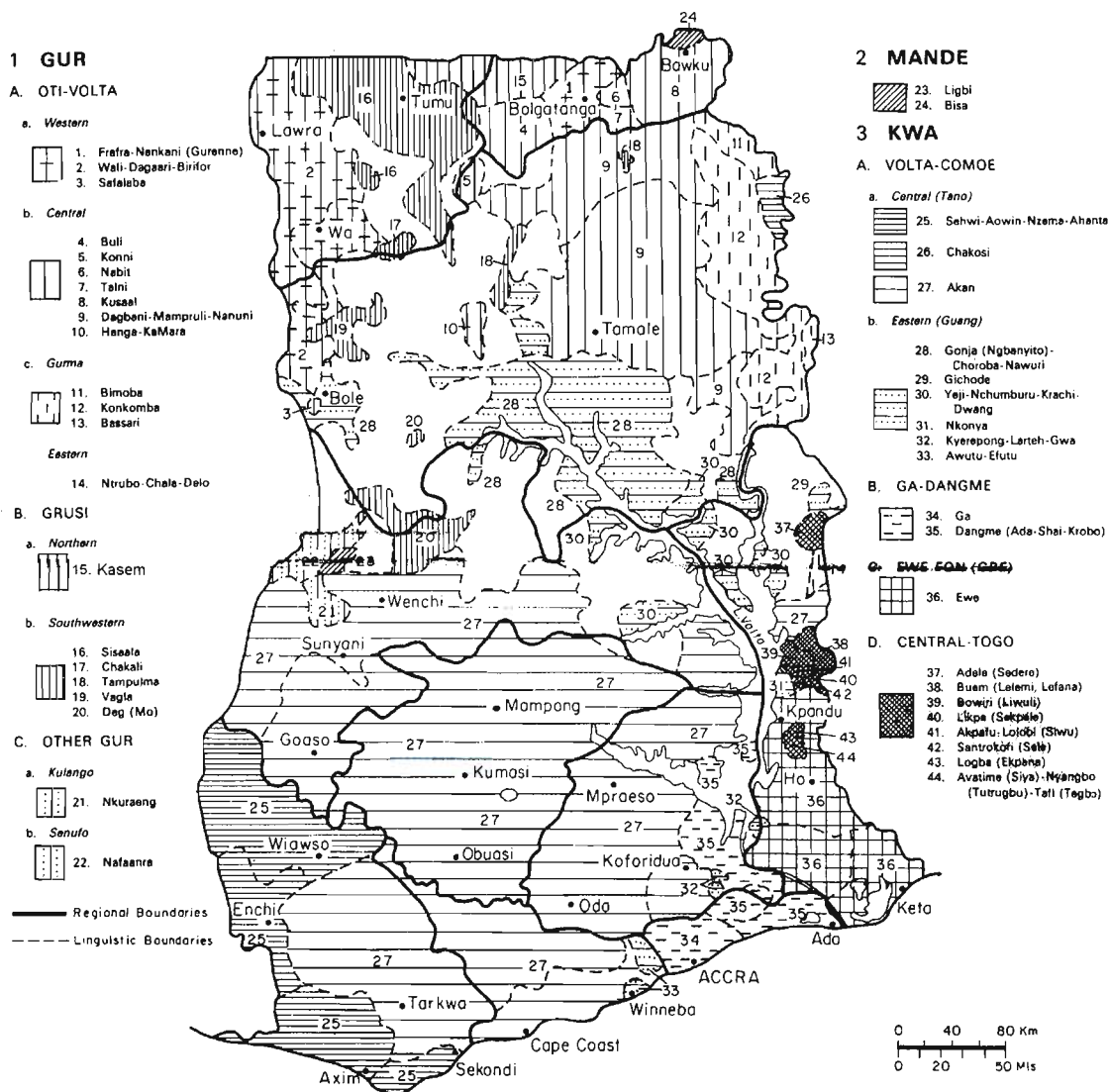
Appendix 8 - ETHNIC MAP OF GHANA



Source: 1960 Population Census of Ghana – Special Report

Appendix 9

LANGUAGE MAP OF GHANA



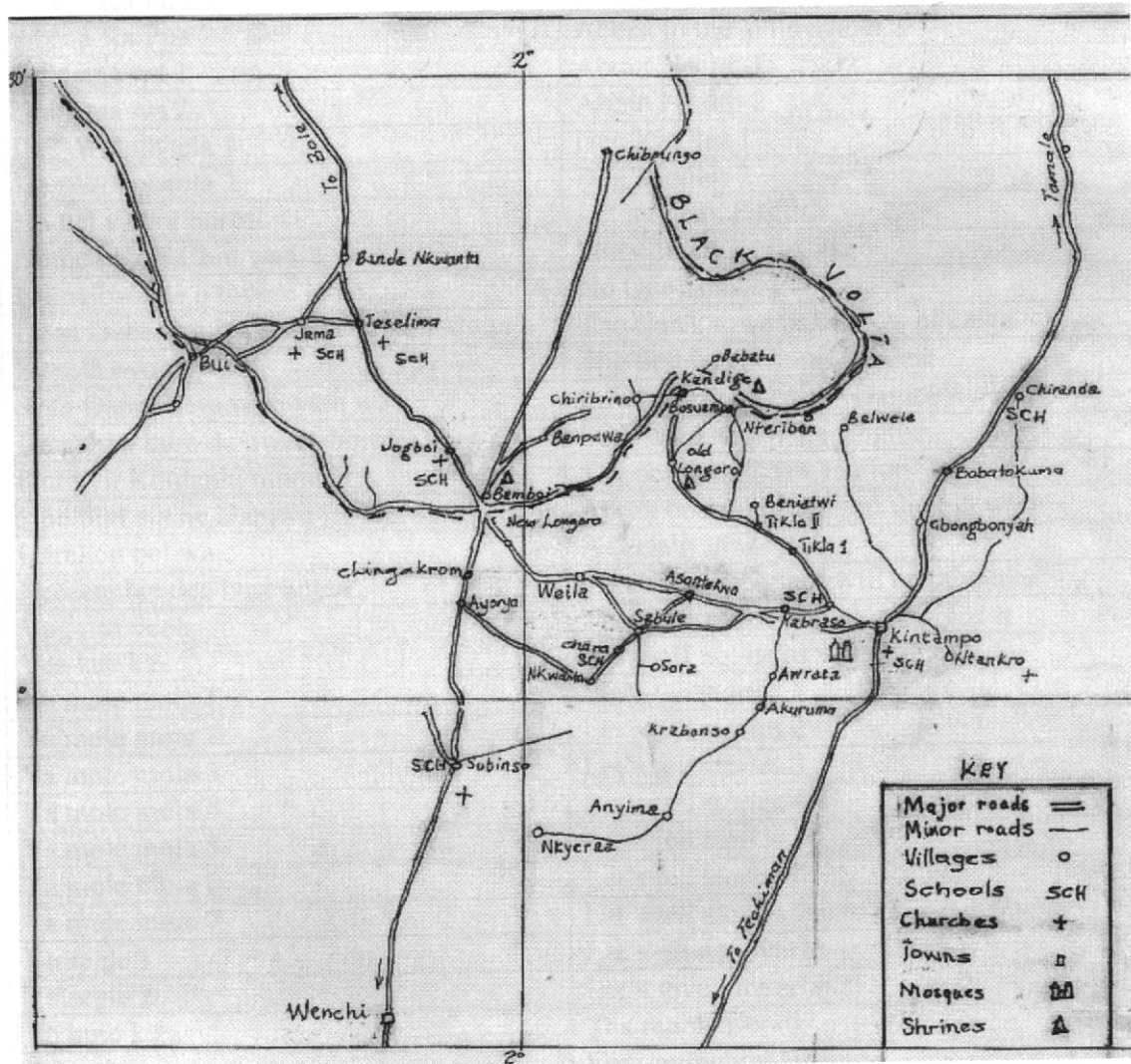
FD/001

Adapted from Map of Ghanaian Languages by Language Centre, Legon and Ghana Institute of Linguistics, 1980
 Drawn in Dept. of Geography, Legon

Aug., 1982

Appendix 10

MAP OF MODEGA TRADITIONAL AREA



Appendix 11

LIST OF DEG LITERACY BOOKS

TITLE OF BOOK IN DEG	TITLE OF BOOK IN ENGLISH
Abena Ka Pua 1	Abena in the Wilderness 1
Abena Ka Pua 2	Abena in the Wilderness 2
Bokpega wa 1	About Health 1
Bokpega wa 2	About Health 2
Deg Wobobeela 1	Deg Riddles 1
Deg Wobobeela 2	Deg Riddles 2
He gel ya bol borofo	Let's Speak English
Nomoa Kofi Chiu waa	Story about Kofi Chiu
Nomelbwa aa o toperre jeme	No One knows the end
Dega Deene ne Bweere ne topera	The clans, towns and days of Dega
Sitoola nyo nepor	The first has become the last
Sofo Danel Kwame bwara wa	Life history of Pastor Daniel Kwame
He gel ya kure de dwere borofo	Let's read and write English
Korowii Kontanla mumpar	The beginning of Creation
Kpo bini ala ne Danjwe jen belwa	About bush animals and the big wall
Harekon bel wa	A certain snake
Noniete bie dee bere anjen	The young Leopard will be the older
Vog naa veoh	The ancestor of god has rejected it
Yaa kee ka	We shall not be as we were
Ya mole mola 1	Let's tell stories 1
Ya mole mola 2	Let's tell stories 2
Ya mole mola 3	Let's tell stories 3
Ya mole mola 4	Let's tell stories 4
Ya mole mola 5	Let's tell stories 5
Ya mole mola 6	Let's tell stories 6
Ya mole mola 7	Let's tell stories 7
Ya segle 1	Let's give proverbs 1
Ya segle 2	Let's give proverbs 2
Ya kure kwa	The number book
Hare chog	Environmental Damage
Bechale Hela	Children's Play
Ya kule Deg de chwere 1	Let's read and write Deg 1 - Mangom
Ya kule Deg de chwere 2	Let's read and write Deg 2 - Mangom
Ya kure Deg de chwer 1	Let's read and write Deg 1 - Longoro
Ya kure Deg de chwer 2	Let's read and write Deg 2 - Longoro
Pal taa o doo nerege	The hoe does not deceive its owner
Toohna Deera	Bee Keeping
Toma a ache ke Gaana bi eke o e	The duties of a citizenship
N mmee ban a n dor	Father, look how I am
Gaana mane mmara jen La	The Abridged for of the 1992 Ghana

	Constitution
Haah bokpega te	Healthy motherhood
Bechale Toga	Facts about immunisation
Bo he mane too	Pay your taxes and help build Ghana
Sigeeti nyoe kee he bokpega? Kpo bokpega	Smoking or Health? Choose health.
Ge ya ne near baa do Eesi a ape so ya bweere ta	Living with AIDS in the Community
Gbambwee koor a fog wile	The clan weepness of Gbambwee

Source: DLP Office in New Longoro, January 2004.

Appendix 12

GILLBT LITERACY PROGRAMS 5-PHASE MODEL (Revised in January 2003)

While each project is language specific, with goals and strategies which depend on local factors and background, there is a general progression which is common to all projects, and which may be specified in the following five-phase model. Strategic Planning and Review (SPAR) takes into account factors such as demography, language use, social structure, education, etc. in applying the model in an appropriate way to each project.

BASIC RESEARCH (Approximately 2 years):

This should be conducted before a formal literacy program begins. It would include the following:

1. Community relations – seek approval and begin.
2. Prepare cultural and social studies.
3. Prepare a linguistic analysis and orthography (Orthography Committee)
4. Prepare transitional materials (Language with wider communication (LWC) to Mother Tongue) if appropriate.
5. Prepare trial primers- first post primers.
6. Teach trial classes to test material.
7. Review methodology in light of experience.

PHASE 1: BEGINNING LITERACY (1-2 YEARS):

1. Further build on community relations.
2. Brief/orientate literates, using transitional materials (if appropriate).
3. Identify and train potential teachers (men and women).
4. Use primers in class settings (Basic Mother-Tongue stage).
5. Hold local writers workshop for teachers and good students.
6. Modify the strategy as cultural and social pressures indicate (continue at all the phases).
7. Revise primers where necessary and reprint ready for Phase 2.
8. Prepare additional post-primer booklets for Phase 2, including functional materials.
9. Test students and hold Literacy Day/s to award certificates (continue annually).
10. Identify potential supervisor/s for Phase 2.
11. Assess readiness for Phase 2.

PHASE 2: TRAINING AND ONGOING LITERACY (APPROX. 2 YEARS):

1. Train facilitators for Advanced classes and additional facilitators for Basic classes.
2. Start advanced Mother Tongue (MT) classes with an emphasis on reading for comprehension.
3. Expand Basic classes and conduct remedial classes for strugglers.
4. Train and appoint potential supervisor/s.
5. Hold local writers workshops and produce additional reading materials.

6. Establish local Editorial Board to review material for publication.
7. Prepare “Bridge” materials (for oral English and other LWC)
8. Prepare more functional materials relating to community needs (health, agric, etc.)
9. Identify and train potential facilitators for Phase 3.
10. Involve more community members on project issues.
11. Prepare for expansion into new parts of the language area.
12. Initiate the groundwork for a literacy committee.
13. Hold annual literacy day/s and assess progress towards Phase 3.

PHASE 3: TOWARDS SELF-MANAGEMENT:

1. Establish a Literacy Committee.
2. Encourage community decision-making as they draft a constitution and guidelines for the project committee.
3. Conduct writers’ workshops.
4. Encourage the production of more functional materials (e.g. citizenship rites, etc.)
5. Train teachers, supervisors and Literacy Committee members.
6. Expand classes to new areas and further develop Advanced MT classes and numeracy.
7. Start Oral English classes.
8. Prepare materials for bridge to Written English and start classes when ready.
9. Provide some training on record keeping, bookkeeping and general management.
10. Ensure records are kept of graduates at each level.
11. Increase local participation and gradually withdraw direct management by GILLBT.
12. Introduce some Income Generating Activities (IGAs) as appropriate.
13. Encourage targets for local funding or programme costs.

PHASE 4: SELF-MANAGEMENT:

1. Management is in the hands of the local Literacy Committee.
2. Encourage the Committee to establish good control of the project, including financial management, distribution and sale of materials, adequate reporting, and making new appointments of project staff.
3. Continue and expand the ongoing literacy programme at all states.
4. Encourage production of new literature through writers’ workshops.
5. Strengthen link between literacy and development needs (e.g. micro finance).
6. Prepare a written agreement with GILLBT, defining relationships and the role of GILLBT as advisor and in providing consultancy services.
7. Define the extent of GILLBT’s commitment to ongoing funding for the project, including IGAs.
8. Encourage the project to raise funds from available sources, local and external, and give assistance with preparing funding proposals.
9. Turn over project assets acquired through GILLBT to the project.

PHASE 5: NGO STATUS:

1. Register the literacy programme as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO).

2. Prepare a new agreement between GILLBT and the NGO to define GILLBT's role. E.g. assist networking with other NGOs and donor agencies, endorse funding applications, etc.
3. Build relationships with other NGOs and government agencies in learning new skills.
4. Strengthen human and financial resources, training and development activities to meet the programme needs.
5. Encourage community ownership of all aspects of the programme.

STAGES OF LITERACY:

The five-phase model for the development of literacy programmes recognizes four stages of literacy development:

1. Basic Mother Tongue
2. Advanced Mother Tongue and Numeracy
3. Oral English, and
4. Reading and Writing English.

Source: Literacy and Development Department, GILLBT, Tamale through Mr. Joshua Osei, Literacy Coordinator.

Appendix 13

LIST OF THE PARAMOUNT CHIEFS OF MO AS NARRATED BY LONGORO HERETI AND ELDERS

<i>No.</i>	<i>Kooro</i>	<i>Clan</i>
1.	Dimpo I	Paaga
2.	Damkwa	Damkwa
3.	Takyi	Leera
4.	Koku	Paago
5.	Kekereke	Damkwa
6.	Mensah Taku	Leera
7.	Sele	Paago
8.	Baneenpo	Damkwa
9.	Kwaku Firi	Leera
10.	Kpaah	Paago
11.	Kwame Teo	Damkwa
12.	Yaw Dagbi	Leera
13.	Kwaku Jega	Damkwa (Distooled)
14.	Kwasi Addae	Damkwa (Distooled)
15.	Kwaku Dimpo II	Paago
16.	?	Leera (In dispute)

Source: Interview with Longoro Hereti Kwame Adjei at Old Longoro on January 30, 2004.

Appendix 14

LIST OF THE PARAMOUNT CHIEFS OF MO AS NARRATED BY JACOB TEH OF KANDIGE

<i>No.</i>	<i>Kooro</i>	<i>Clan</i>
1.	Kwaku Kpaa	Paaga
2.	Kekereke	Damkwa
3.	Takyi	Leera
4.	Dimpo I	Paago
5.	Kwaku Teo	Damkwa
6.	Fua	Leera
7.	Sele	Paago
8.	Mfajo	Leera
9.	Yaw Dagbi	Leera
10.	Kwaku Jega	Damkwa
11.	Kwasi Addae	Damkwa
12.	Kwaku Dimpo II	Paago
13.	?	Leera (In dispute)

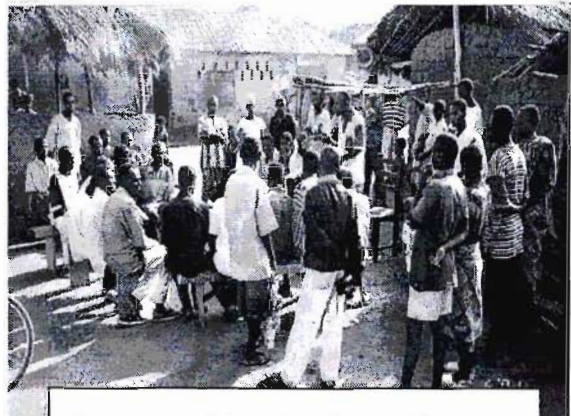
Source: Interview with Jacob Teh at Kandige on January 30, 2004.

Appendix 15

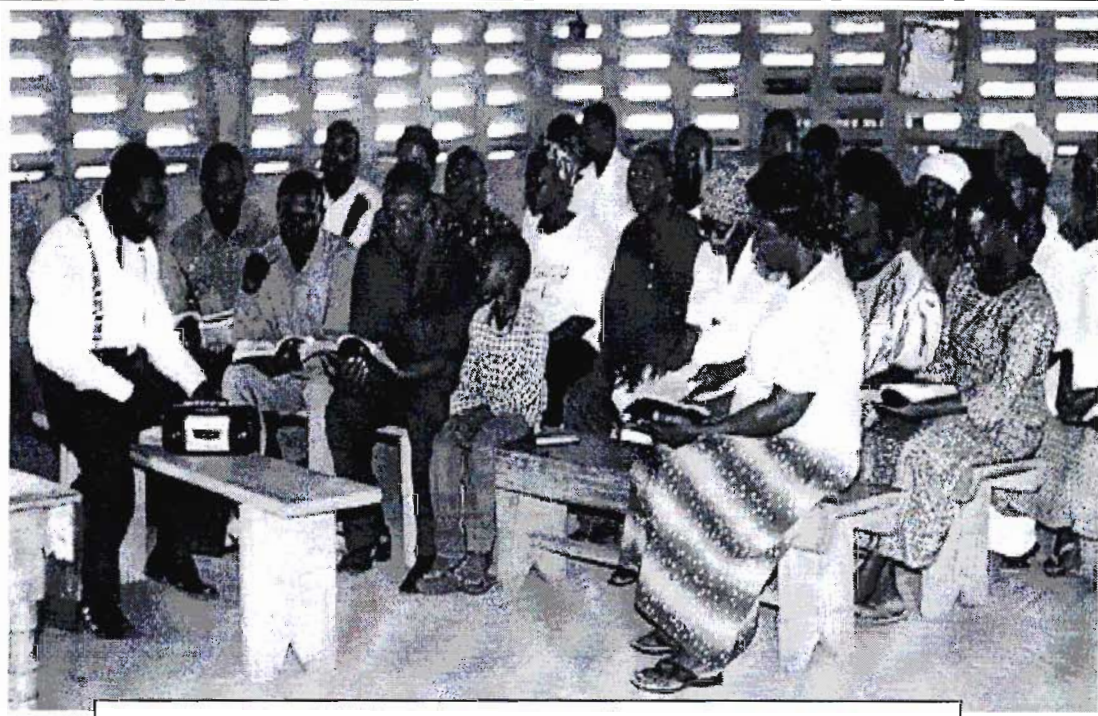
Faith Comes By Hearing (FCBH) Classes



A Listening Group in a Home



Community Listening Group at Mansie



SDA FCBH Listening Group in New Longoro

Appendix 16

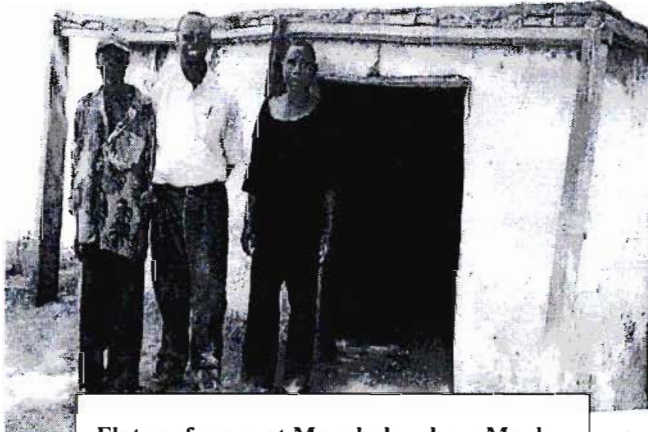
Various Architectural Styles in Dega Hare



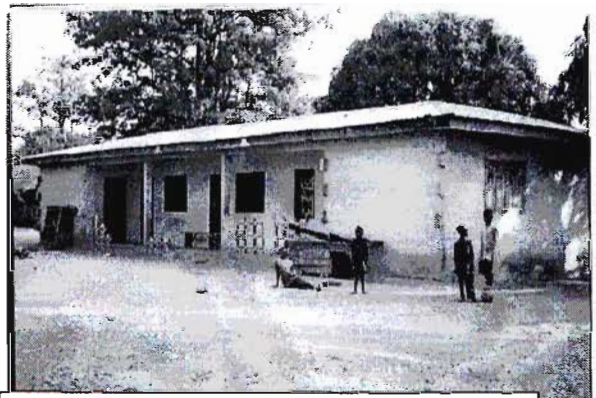
**Old flat mud roof in Longoro.
Standing in front is the head of Nandoma Clan**



Rectangular Grass roof house

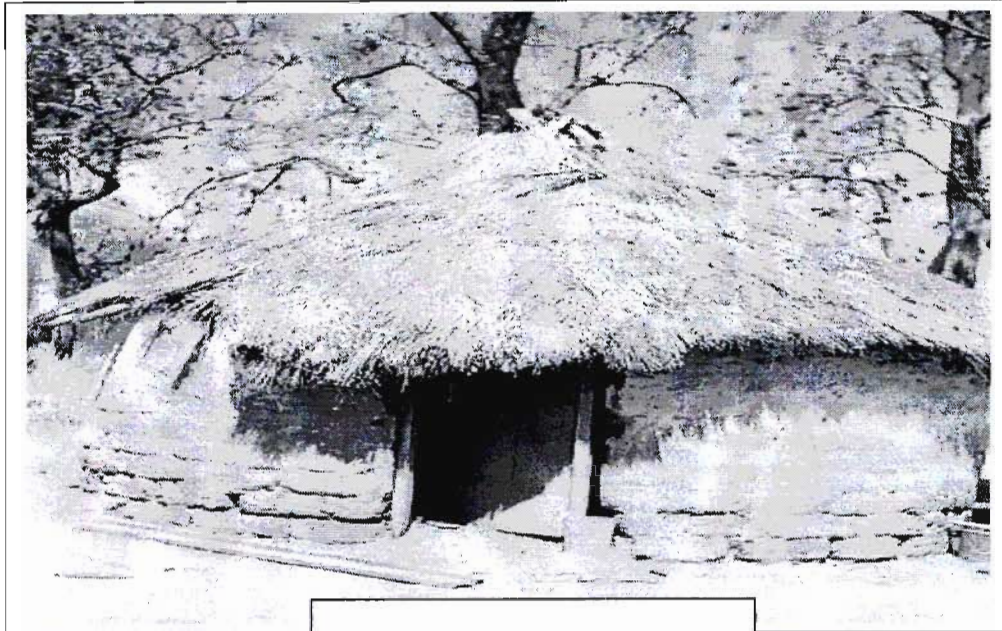


**Flat roof room at Manchala where Maala
was believed to have sunk into the ground.
Writer (in the middle) posed with two
family members.**

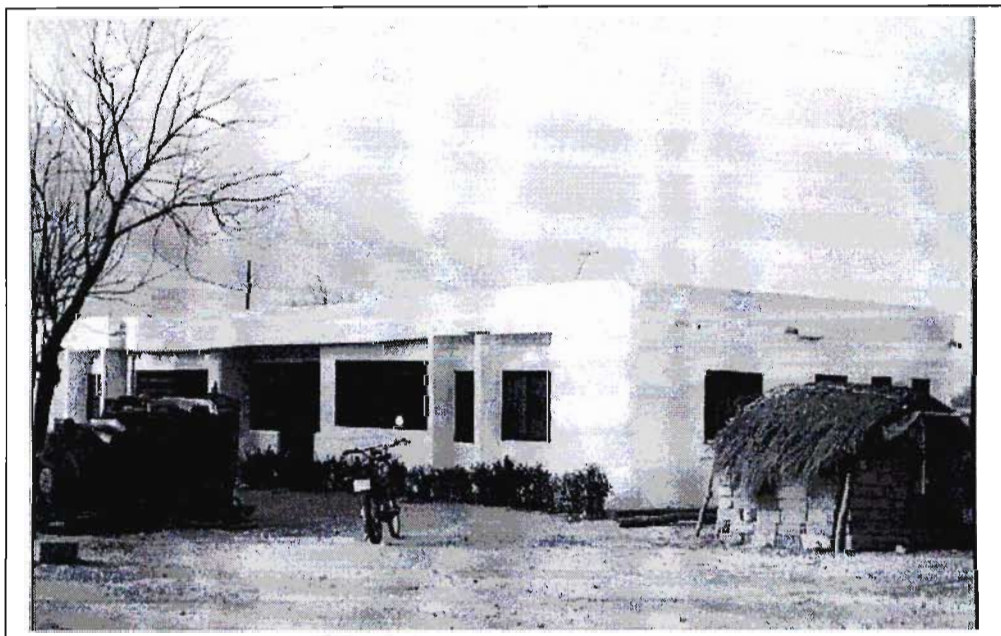


Rectangular Aluminum Roof House

(Appendix 16 Cont.) - Mo Architecture



Vog (Earth deity House)



Modern House in Bamboi

Appendix 17 – Literacy Activities and Other Pictures



Demonstration of Cotton spinning and clay pot molding



Best 2003 Adult literacy student (in smock) receiving award



Setting DLP Beehives



Interview time with Longoro Harete and elders

Source: DLP Literacy Office and Writer