

Translation as Invasion in Post-colonial Northern Ghana

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Declaration

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
in the Graduate Programme in the School of Religion, Philosophy, and Classics,
University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

I, Nathan Adam Esala, declare that

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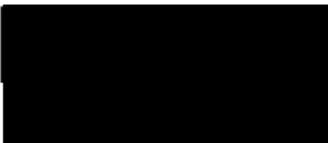
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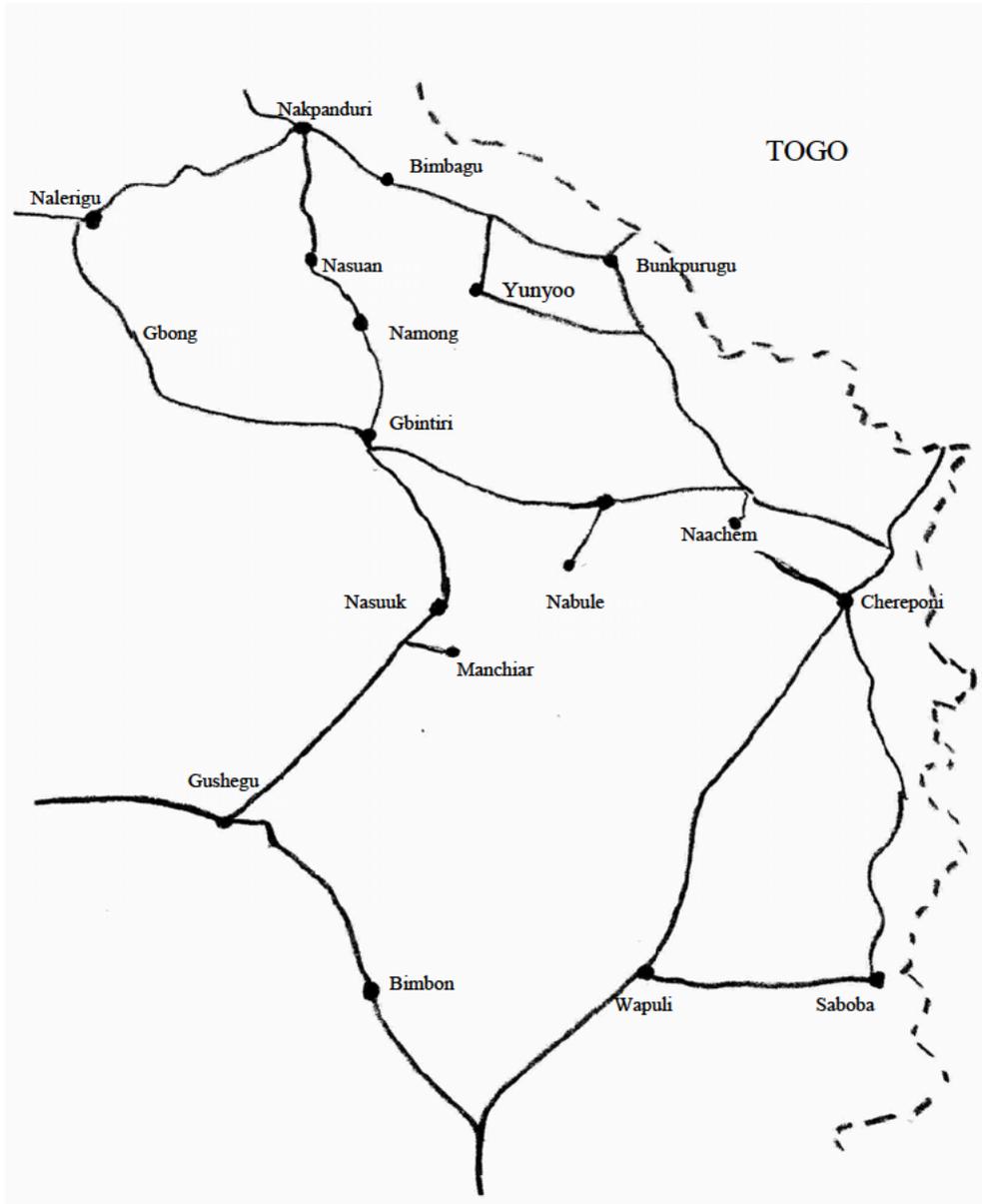
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Maps



Figure 1 A Map of Ghana <https://maps-ghana.com/map-of-ghana>



*Figure 2 A map of some of the communities in Ghana south of the escarpment
Painted by Yajim Amadu, digitally adapted by David Federwitz and Nathan Esala*

Abstract

This thesis explores agency in African translation practices across time and space. The foregrounded space of this study is the northern Ghanaian context, especially the area south of the Gambaga escarpment. In that space, the study uses Achille Mbembe's notion of "entanglement" as applied to time. Accordingly, the study traces translation practices in the northern Ghanaian context across entangled eras of time: indigenous time, indigenous/pre-colonial time, colonial/neo-indigenous time, post-colonial/neo-colonial time. The study describes a diversity of translation practices in each era, using an intentionally selected set of analytical tools to help the reader understand how and why the author is highlighting particular practices.

The study explores how colonial translation and religious translation have been entangled, often in a mirroring relationship. I describe the dominant paradigm of entangled missionary-colonial translation, translation as invasion. Some contemporary forms of African Christianity have become entangled in this dominant mode of translating: evangelical neo-colonial modes of translating, the developmentalist mode of translating, and the neo-liberal and neo-indigenous prosperity method of re-translating. Other Africans have recovered indigenous religious resources for Christian re-translation that resists missionary-colonial and neo-colonial neo-indigenous practices in various ways. Some re-translate to build community resilience. Some prophetically rework the method and purpose of translating. And still 'others' re-translate to resist the oppressive and extractionary intentions of the translation-as-invasion paradigm.

The study attempts to rework the translation-as-invasion paradigm. It describes a collaborative post-colonial mode of re-translating biblical texts for liberation in which translators become facilitators of translation for 'other' sectors of society. Facilitators offer the Contextual Bible Study method as a prompt to re-translate and re-interpret biblical texts from the perspectives of the study participants. Groups of 'ordinary' and 'marginalized' Africans participate with (biblical) ancestors as they re-translate texts in their projects of social healing.

The first case study involves groups of people living with bodily dis(abilities) who re-translate Job in ways that respond to the health and wealth gospel in their communities. The second case study explores women re-translating the story of Ruth for survival in a context where neo-liberal Christianity has allied itself with patriarchal custom and neo-patrimonial

economics. The final case study suggests that women and men re-translate ethnicity and patriarchy in the biblical text of Judges 6—9 as they resist forces that are causing inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic violence in their communities, violence that harms women's bodies, ravages the environment, and harms the community's moral base.

The colonial translation-as-invasion paradigm offers little room for neutrality. The conclusion of the study suggests that post-colonial emancipatory re-translation offers resources for conventional African Bible translation to rework the inner logics of invasion by 'remembering' why communities engage in re-translating, which perspectives are privileged in re-translating, how re-translating is carried out, and in what order re-translating should occur.

Introduction

A provocative title requires a bit of explanation. The background for the title of this thesis, “Translation as Invasion in Post-colonial Northern Ghana,” begins with two autobiographical stories.

In 2002 I was reading everything I could regarding the socio-linguistic context of northern Ghana because our family was preparing to go and live in a rural area among the northern Konkomba, Komba, or Bikɔɔm people.¹ The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana requested Lutheran Bible Translators, a parachurch organization based in the United States, to begin a language development project in northern Ghana in the area around Nasuan and Gbintiri, the area south of the Gambaga escarpment. There were many churches in the area, young churches, but because of a recent conflict some of the leaders of those churches had left, and there was a need to train people to read the Bible in the vernacular because literacy in English was quite low. The church had been engaged in literacy and agricultural development work there for two decades. Church leaders had decided that they wanted a written form of their language that more closely resembled the speech variety of the area around Nasuan and Gbintiri. They wanted to produce literature based on the local speech variety. This decision marked a shift in local strategy. Our mandate was to respond to this request, to produce literacy materials, and to engage in Bible translation.

The situation was complex. Bible translation began in a southern dialect of Konkomba in the 1960s. The early linguistic analysis suggested a need for a separate language development project for the northern dialect of Konkomba.² Sociolinguistic factors had caused local people to press for a unified written standard.³ In the 1980s, community and church leaders were content to work in the southern dialect of the Konkomba language. I wondered what had caused the change in strategy.

¹ The Komba people sometimes refer to themselves as Bikɔɔm. The Komba language is also referred to as Likɔɔnl, a member of the macro language family of Likpakpaaln. See footnote 88 and section 1.2.3.3, below. The reader should note that I choose not to use italics to mark words as foreign.

² Mary Steele, “Konkomba Dialect Survey” (Ghana Institute of Linguistics, 1966).

³ J. Andrew Ring, “Three Case Studies Involving Dialect Standardization Strategies in Northern Ghana,” in *Proceedings of the Summer Institute of Linguistics International Language Assessment Conference, Horseleys Green, 23-31 May 1989*, ed. Gloria E. Kindell (Dallas, TX: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1991), 281–87.

In 1994 an ethnic conflict occurred, sometimes referred to as ‘The Guinea Fowl War.’ My preliminary research indicated that the conflict was between the Konkomba and the Dagomba people. The latter group, the Dagomba, had a long history of chieftaincy.⁴ The former group, the Konkomba, organized themselves based on clans or kinship groups, and until the late colonial era, they had felt no need to organize kinship groups into a single hierarchically organized collective ‘ethnic group’ or ‘tribe.’⁵ Three other ethnic groups in northern Ghana also had a history and tradition of centralized chieftaincy: the Mamprusi, Nanumba, and Gonja. They came to the aid of the Dagomba and a major ethnic conflict ensued. More than 178,000 people were left homeless, 300 villages were destroyed, approximately 15,000 people were killed.⁶

Research indicated the conflict was about land rights, and in northern Ghana, land rights were connected to paramount chieftaincy. The Konkomba wanted to assert their rights to the land. Accordingly, they were attempting to get a paramount chief that would be over all Konkomba kinship groups. The Dagomba took offense because this innovation would weaken their authority. An ethnic conflict irrupted.

⁴ The term Dagomba is an anglicized term that refers to a subset of the macro ethnic term Dagbamba who inhabit the eastern kingdom of Dagbon. See chapter one section 1.2.2.2 below.

⁵ In colonial times ethnic and cultural groups were made into political units called ‘tribes’ with defined territories. Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1996), 24, 185; Mahmood Mamdani, *Neither Settler nor Native* (Harvard University Press, 2020), 11, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Neither_Settler_Nor_Native/ESL_DwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0. Colonial translation played a role in this transformation and continues to influence contemporary usage of the term in Ghana. In the 1970s academic literature began to switch to using the word ‘ethnic group.’ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*, 3rd ed, Anthropology, Culture, and Society (London; New York: Pluto Press; Distributed in the United States of America exclusively by Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 11. This distinguished academic usage of ‘ethnic group’ from the more clearly colonially inscribed meaning of ‘tribe.’ Carola Lentz, “Ethnicity in Ghana : A Comparative Perspective,” in *Ethnicity in Ghana: The Limits of Invention*, ed. Carola Lentz and Paul Nugent (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 1–28. For a discussion of the various theoretical models of ethnicity see Steve Tonah, “Introduction: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives on Ethnicity, Conflicts, and Consensus in Ghana,” in *Ethnicity, Conflicts, and Consensus in Ghana*, ed. Steve Tonah (Accra: Woeli Pub. Services, 2007), 3–24.

⁶ Julie Kaye and Daniel Béland, “The Politics of Ethnicity and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: The Case of Northern Ghana.,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 27, no. 2 (April 2009): 184.

In the early 2000s, much of the literature about the conflict that I was able to procure in print and on the web described the Konkomba as foreigners from Togo who had settled in Ghana only recently.⁷ Ghanaian media sources contributed to the perception that Konkomba were foreigners who settled in Ghana.⁸ Whereas classic anthropological sources indicated that Konkomba had been present on the land for a long time.⁹ Furthermore, Ghanaian historians had claimed that the ancestors of the Dagomba, not the Konkomba, were invaders from the east.¹⁰

Even my early research indicated that invasion is a contested term in northern Ghana, with political consequences. ‘Invader’ was a flexible label being applied from one ethnic group to another in an attempt to gain some rhetorical advantage in the court of popular opinion. In the colonial era, from the perspective of the British, to be an invader meant one was claiming the land based on the rights of conquest. The popular perception of history, “the received history” in northern Ghana, indicates that the Dagomba invaded and conquered indigenous groups, slaughtering the territorial elders.¹¹ However, after the 1994 conflict, at least temporarily, the claim shifted because it was more important in the post-colonial era to be indigenous to the land, to be autochthonous.¹²

The second autobiographical story that I offer as background for the title of this thesis took place four years later. In 2006 the recently formed Komba Literacy and Translation Project (KOLIBITRAP), a representative organization of local leaders headquartered in Gbintiri, Ghana, received some grant money from Lutheran World Relief to produce literature for women in the vernacular. Part of KOLIBITRAP’s literacy strategy focused on literature production because vernacular literacy classes using literacy primers alone were not enough to generate ongoing interest in reading. People needed interesting texts to read. One booklet

⁷ Benjamin Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality*, 1st ed (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 171.

⁸ Talton, 177.

⁹ David Tait, *The Konkomba of Northern Ghana* (London: Published for the International African Institute and the University of Ghana by the Oxford University Press, 1964).

¹⁰ A. Adu Boahen, *Ghana: Evolution and Change in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Longman, 1975), 9.

¹¹ Wyatt MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 23–24, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wrkqg>.

¹² Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 144.

had already been published called “Better Child Care.” The next booklet published pictures of the story of the biblical book of Ruth. Each picture had a simple sentence so women could practice decoding the local orthography. A local artist, Yajim Amadu, was commissioned to draw the pictures, and the project coordinator at that time, Rev. Samson Bilafanim, wrote the story testing the orthography being developed.

The following picture illustrates Ruth 2:5-7 as a young worker tells Boaz, the field owner, about Ruth, a foreign woman, who had requested to glean in his field.



Figure 3 Ruth went gleaning by Yajim Amadu (used with permission)

The caption at the bottom of the page read, “Ruf nan jon ki tan lier idi lier le.” The writer who authored the Komba text, translated it into English, “Ruth went to invade guinea corn.” I was fascinated to hear the word ‘invade’ used to translate the word ‘lier,’ a word normally associated with ‘gleaning.’ The picture illustrates the story from the perspective of the young man (2:6) recounting the narrative to Boaz. The men are in the foreground while Ruth is in the background. The semiotic translation of this written text into a visual illustration retains the masculine perspectival focus of Ruth 2:5-7. Does the gendered focus combined with Ruth’s status as a foreigner contribute to the translator’s perception of invasion? Is the young man in the narrative worried about a foreign home taking the produce of their field without paying for it, regardless of her need?

More historical than metaphorical

These two autobiographical stories indicate that notions associated with the English word ‘invasion’ have become part of the local consciousness; invasion is wielded with the great flexibility of metaphor. The research in this thesis is an attempt to understand the relevance of invasion in the present and the past. The invasion of the Volta Basin is a historical event that occurred in the late 19th century. The British actually invaded northern Ghana¹³ in 1896 with soldiers and weapons. They took over the rule of the area. Did such a decisive event ‘translate’ itself upon other cultural actions, reinterpreting them in what may be ‘invasive’ ways?

In this study, I am approaching translation as invasion as more historical than metaphorical. Scholars in the discipline of ‘translation studies’ have explored many metaphors to help describe what translation is and what it is not.¹⁴ I am following a different track, describing

¹³ At the time of the British invasion Ghana was known as the Gold Coast, and the portion of the Volta Basin that the British controlled became known as the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast.

¹⁴ James St. André, ed., *Thinking through Translation with Metaphors* (Manchester, UK; Kinderhook, NY: St. Jerome, 2010). A number of chapters in the book consider translation as X: translation as clothing (Van Wyke), translation as acting (Benshalom), translation as cross-identity performance (St. André), and translation as smuggling (Henik). Many other metaphors for translation have been picked up by scholars in the humanities with varying degrees of sophistication in their understanding of the complexities involved in translation such as colonization, migration, and education. See Deborah Shadd, “On Language, Education and Identity: Minority Language Education Within the Canadian Context” (Ph.D. Thesis, Ottawa, Université d’Ottawa / University of Ottawa, 2015), 204–6, <http://hdl.handle.net/10393/32777>. This study uses the translation as X formulation, but does not understand translation to always be invasive or to necessarily have an invasive aspect. Translation has

the variety of ways translation has been used in a particular geographic and social context over time. The chapters focus primarily on the context of what is known today as northern Ghana, especially on the area surrounding and south of the Gambaga escarpment. I apply theoretical tools to that context to help elucidate the breadth of the language, communication, and translation practices that are appropriate to the evolving material and social realities in that context. From the observations of these historical practices in that context across time, I offer a theory of translation as invasion that is drawn from the lasting impact of the colonial practice of translation on the practices of translation that preceded it and followed it. Colonial translation as invasion has reinterpreted pre-colonial translation and continues to shape post-colonial practices of translation.

I am not suggesting that translation is ontologically invasive.¹⁵ Despite the common perception of many northerners in the present time, I argue invasion is not as useful to describe the intention or the method of pre-colonial translation practices. I am also not suggesting that invasion was the same everywhere in Africa. "There were literally hundreds of European conquests of Africa, not one."¹⁶ I theorize about invasion and conquest because colonial invasions and conquests were so pervasive and relentless. Even though contexts are different, and the histories of invasion and conquest are different, by focusing on the translation practices associated with invasion and conquest, perhaps due to analogous experiences under European colonization, the theorizing done in this context will be useful elsewhere in Africa and beyond.

been practiced to support invasion and conquest in this and other contexts. This study argues translation as invasion has been invasively applied to prior and subsequent diverse practices of translation in the northern Ghanaian context. The translation-as-invasion metaphor attempts to reconfigure other practices of translation according to the terms of the invasion metaphor in order to support domination.

¹⁵ I am not arguing for George Steiner's notion of invasion as a necessary part of translation's hermeneutic motion. George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (London ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); George Steiner, "The Hermeneutic Motion," in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti, 2nd ed (New York: Routledge, 2004), 186–91; Lori Chamberlain, "Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation," in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti, 2nd ed (New York: Routledge, 2004), 306–29.

¹⁶ Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 97.

I am suggesting that the translation, published in the colonial-era, translating what Wyatt MacGaffey calls the pre-colonial invasion myth, was culturally invasive.¹⁷ Over time it has influenced the public consciousness regarding its sense of history in northern Ghana. Any analysis of the present or the past must deal with the colonial translation *of* invasion, and colonial translation practice *as* cultural invasion. The purpose of colonial translation was to support the logic of invasion. Accordingly, its method was also culturally invasive in ways described in chapter two.

Colonialism has been described as invasive with respect to African culture, religion, and politics.¹⁸ Historically, translation has been used to support the logic of colonial invasion. The focus of this thesis in chapters three through seven applies that claim to the history and practice of political and theological translation in northern Ghana in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Outline of chapters

Chapter one deals with indigenous pre-colonial time, using a set of theoretical tools that help describe the breadth of evolving language and translation practices in that era. Despite the common perception in contemporary northern Ghana, I argue against invasion as an appropriate description of the social dynamics in that era. Pre-colonial translation practices were not primarily designed to support indigenous invasion and conquest. They were focused on creating social unity for survival in the local context. I argue that in pre-colonial time the boundaries between ethnic groups and the distinctions between one language and another were more porous than they were reconstructed to be in the colonial era. In honor of that porousness, I make the de-colonial choice not to mark ‘foreign’ words with italics in this manuscript. That said, drawing on Achille Mbembe’s notion of the time of entanglement, I recognize there were different trajectories concomitant with each other in the pre-colonial era.¹⁹ The influx of new technologies and practices of trade, especially the slave trade, influenced by the colonial presence on the coasts of Africa, began to influence interior African societies. The great demand for slaves linked rural West African economies to the

¹⁷ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 19. See also Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Indignation* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2004), 56.

¹⁸ Okot p’Bitek, *African Religions in Western Scholarship* (Kampala: East African Literature Bureau, 1970), 80; Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for de-Colonization*, Rev. ed. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 12–13.

¹⁹ Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California, 2001), 14–16.

world economic system; local practices of translation were affected. Colonial-era translation picked up on social practices of dominance in pre-colonial time, conflating them in a way that made indigenous invasion appear to foreshadow colonial invasion.

Chapter two discusses the historical invasion of the Volta Basin, focusing on the British invasion of what is now northern Ghana. British colonial administrators engaged in translational interaction with African agents. Translation participants had to deal with the fact of British invasion. Colonial administrators tried to press their agenda to rule an area that was not economically profitable as cheaply and easily as possible. African translation participants had to work within that reality, either resisting it without appearing to be directly resisting it or 'making the best of it' by finding some local advantage through the interactions.

As time progressed the British coined a term for an old strategy of governance calling it 'indirect rule' and developing it into a modern colonial philosophy of governance. Written translation was called upon to support the underlying logic of indirect rule. Colonial administrators called for and made use of written translations of pre-colonial narratives that recounted actions of conquests. Certain pre-colonial practices of settlement and cultural interaction were treated as if they were invasions and conquests. The colonial publication of these coopted pre-colonial narratives was useful in establishing customary constitutions for kingdoms. Under indirect rule, large kingdoms were formally established and given relative autonomy under the British colonial power. Translation services were called upon again to help create official customary law that could be used to extract wealth from the populace to offset the expense of colonial overrule. Since armed conflict was outlawed by colonial law, customary law replaced raiding and armed conflict as a tool to extract wealth from the masses.

Chapter three discusses religious translation and introduces three practices of Christianity, exploring their associated practices of translation. The examples in this chapter are focused on the broader Ghanaian context rather than only the northern Ghanaian context because Christianity is a much younger practice in northern Ghana. The versions of Christianity identified in this chapter are all active in northern Ghana. In the latter half of the 19th century, the Basel Mission engaged in Bible translation in Gã and Twi. The translated Bible was presented to Africans in a frame circumscribed by missionary-colonial Christian doctrine. African independent Christianity responded to missionary-colonial Bible translation by accepting the Bible but exiting from spaces under missionary-colonial control. For African

Independent Churches (AICs) the Bible was used as a divining set for the purpose of social healing. It was also interpreted in a participatory manner by African Christian prophets who participated with the biblical characters and the biblical narratives. They extended trajectories in the narrative into their present world. The prophets used the Bible to help them build African communities for Africans who were marginalized by colonial systems. For the prophets, God's law was larger than social and political life and was not subservient to colonial market or military practices. The prophets and their communities engaged in re-writing the Bible using an active spirituality and authority. The third version of Christianity is called the new Christianity.²⁰ It is an African version of charismatic neo-Pentecostalism, with teachings that originated in the 1960s and 70s in the United States. The prosperity gospel works well with African beliefs about the primacy of the spiritual world and spiritual causation. However, the prosperity gospel individualizes the way it interprets the spiritual world in a way that African religions do not. The new Christianity works hand-in-glove with neo-liberal political and economic policies because the new churches interpret suffering and poverty as related to individual causes, and not systemic political or economic causes. The doctrinal framework of the new Christianity interprets the Bible in concert with the extractive interests of neo-colonialism. The translated Bible is circumscribed in the 21st century by these entangled forms of Christian practice.

Chapter four introduces a post-colonial experimental practice of re-translation that attempts to rework the translation-as-invasion paradigm. It begins with a discussion within post-colonial African theology between 'translation theology' and liberation theology, concluding that translation is a site of struggle at its sites of production and its sites of reception. Translation as a site of struggle is compared with Skopos theory's understanding of how competing intentions are managed in translational actions. To help negotiate the reality of post-colonial bodies entangled with neo-colonial forces, the chapter suggests that African bodies who are being marginalized by the current political, economic, and religious systems must be included as agents who re-translate texts of Scripture that they find relevant to social problems they are facing in their communities. Contextual Bible Study (CBS) is introduced as a method that reworks the agency involved in translating. Those who would qualify as translators under the missionary-colonial system are invited to actively collaborate with

²⁰ Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy* (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 2004).

marginalized groups in such a way that privileges the perspectives of poor and marginalized groups as they engage in translational action. In translation studies terms, CBS is described as a form of re-translation governed by an alternative logic, the logic of liberation. Liberation governs CBS's translational purpose and processes. The case study explores how a group of Bible translators began to experiment with the CBS methodology. The translators became facilitators who collaborated with people living with physical disabilities as they re-translated the book of Job by responding to the CBS questions. The expressed re-translations of people living with disabilities rework the colonial logics of translation by prioritizing the emancipatory logic of liberation. Their re-translations respond to missionary-colonial developmentalist approaches to people living with disabilities; they do not eschew the material-spiritual worldview of African religions. Their re-translations also respond to neo-colonial Christianity's health and wealth gospel; they evidence a communal rather than an individualist response to disabilities. The re-translations of people living with disabilities re-translate Job for social healing rather than retribution. They re-translate governed by an alternative logic compared to the translation-as-invasion paradigm. To rework the invasion paradigm activist scholars and translators do well to wait for marginalized communities to take the lead in projects of social change. While socially engaged scholars and translators wait for communities to lead social change, the chapter concludes by arguing that post-colonial re-translation for liberation continues the tradition of 'irruption' from the 'third world' in theological and translational method.

Chapter five pursues the issue of agency raised in chapter four as it relates to African women's theologies and the prosperity gospel in contemporary northern Ghana. Chapter five continues a discussion from chapter one as it discusses the lenses colonial anthropologists have used to misinterpret matrifocal cultural practices that have been passed down from the indigenous pre-colonial era. Present-day African church communities have made an analogous move to colonial anthropologists by insisting on translating the name of God in more masculine ways than the grammatical categories and theological dispositions of most African languages would suggest. African women's theologies began responding to gendered translations in African theological discourse in a similar way that African theological discourse responded to Euro-American theological discourse. Mercy Amba Oduyoye called

African women's theology in the developing world as "the irruption within the irruption."²¹ The chapter continues with a discussion of feminist approaches and activist approaches to translation compared to Contextual Bible Study's overt theory of change. The case study engages young women in northern Ghana who are in school and vocational training by inviting them to engage in the process of re-translating the book of Ruth in the context of sugar daddy relationships. The case study compares notions of women's agency in the individualist neo-liberal version of Christianity that prioritize the consumption of luxury items as a measure of theological and social worth to women's agency in African women's theologies. Most of the women in the case study were engaging in sugar daddy relationships for survival. However, women's solidarity in northern Ghana, even among sectors of young women, was severely lacking. The case study explored the question of whether engaging men in the study might provide the potential for cross-sectoral solidarities between those women and men who are disadvantaged in the public transcript at the intersection of sexuality, economics, and theology. The conclusion argues for patient engagement with groups of women over time as they use CBS to re-translate biblical texts, reworking their theologies and solidarities at the same time as they do the deep sub-structural work to sustain the irruption within the irruption.

Chapter six analyzes the legacy of the translation as invasion model as it has been applied politically and religiously in post-independence Ghana. The chapter argues that application of the colonial model of translation as invasion in political and theological translation does not result in thorough-going post-colonial liberation. Rather, the result of the application of the translation as invasion model lends itself to inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts.

The first part of the chapter discusses the legacy of ranked ethnicity in northern Ghana. In the colonial era, colonial translation made some kinship groups into tribes of a lower status or caste. The Konkomba were the largest such group in northern Ghana. The Konkomba ethnic identity emerged in post-colonial Ghana in response to their collective experience of ethnically motivated marginalization. Neo-indigenous Konkomba organized themselves

²¹ Amba Oduyoye, "Reflections from a Third World Woman's Perspective: Women's Experience and Liberation Theologies," in *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge to Theology: Papers from the Fifth International Conference of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, August 17-29, 1981, New Delhi, India*, ed. Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, Virginia Fabella, and Sergio Torres (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983), 247-48. Oduyoye highlights the use of masculine language in theology that ignores and alienates women.

based on their emerging sense of ethnic identity. Missionary-initiated language development and Bible translation work among the Konkomba also began after Ghana's independence. These two strains of ethnic organizing, neo-indigenous and missionary-initiated, are brought into dialogue as strategies that politically and theologically responded to Ghana's inter-ethnic caste system. Two major inter-ethnic conflicts resulted. An analysis of the results of these conflicts is offered, including the role conventional translation, based on the translation-as-invasion paradigm, plays in the process. The second part of the chapter shifts to analyzing the intra-ethnic conflicts that have characterized the early 21st century in northern Ghana, asking how conventional Bible translation engages the stark realities of intra-ethnic conflict given elite males competition for traditional power, representative power, and economic power in Ghana's neo-patrimonial system. The chapter concludes with a call for religious re-translation offering a Contextual Bible Study that responds to the contemporary situation in which elites are actively seeking to manipulate ethnicity as part of their quest for power. Post-colonial re-translation resists the colonial translation-as-invasion paradigm without imitating its internal logic. The CBS offered brings indigenous religious resources together to respond to the devastating effects ethnic conflicts have on women's bodies and the environment, both of which have been moral building blocks to African communities since indigenous pre-colonial time.

The concluding chapter argues that CBS as post-colonial re-translation has the potential to do more than reverse the logic of invasion. In the three case studies, explored in chapters four through six, CBS as post-colonial emancipatory re-translation, led by marginalized groups in African communities, articulated visions that are the inverse of invasion. CBS is governed by an alternative logic to the logic of invasion and domination, a logic whose purpose and process facilitates life-giving discourses for social healing initiated by those on the bottom of social hierarchies. Through CBS marginalized groups rework their ideo-theologies, enacting healing for themselves, and offering that healing to other sectors in their communities. The theory of social change CBS works with argues that the pain-bearers of society are uniquely positioned to start the process of healing, beginning from the core of the community's collective social wounds, moving outward, offering healing to each layer of the social body, including the layers of the social body inhabited by conventional post-colonial translators.

From historical to metaphorical

The two stories I shared in the introduction above illustrate how the historical practice of translation as invasion has become a metaphor in northern Ghana with a dangerous internal

logic. As colonizers invaded northern lands, they projected invasion onto the local people to justify the logic of what they had done, simultaneously establishing the grounds for ongoing relationships that engage in exploitative neo-colonial extraction. As elites translate using the dispositions of the translation-as-invasion paradigm in their local contexts, they are in danger of reproducing the logic of invasion and extraction in their society. Certain Dagomba warriors projected invasion onto Konkomba ethnic groups, groups they have perceived to be a lower caste due to the logic of invasion, established through colonial-era translation. Educated men in local kinship groups project invasion onto women's gleaning practices, weakening traditional matrifocal practices while consolidating their rights to their exclusively defined patrimony. The internal logic of invasion has imprinted itself in African social systems through colonial translation. This thesis argues Africans can use post-colonial re-translation to rework the exploitative pathways invasion has established in their social bodies.

1 Chapter 1 Reconstructing pre-colonial translating practices in a northern Ghanaian context

The title of this PhD thesis, “Translation as Invasion in Post-colonial Northern Ghana,” suggests that colonizers who invaded what is now called northern Ghana left an indelible mark on contemporary translation practices in the region. Chapter two makes that argument when I discuss colonial translations *of* invasion and colonial translation practices *as* invasion. But what were translation practices like in ‘the north’ before Europeans invaded? Can a thesis talk about translation without tacitly referring to European understandings of the concept of translation?

Many indigenous words can be translated into English as ‘translate.’ Those indigenous words refer to cultural practices that are not necessarily the same as English practices of translating and translation. Northern Ghanaian languages describe translating as a process of turning language, emphasizing process over the finished product of translation.²² How can indigenous pre-colonial translating practices reconstruct translation without imposing English colonial practices on earlier times? How does scholarship reconstruct indigenous pre-colonial translating practices in a manner that is accountable to the communities who are the contemporary inheritors of those pre-colonial practices?

I propose to write about indigenous pre-colonial African translating practices in a manner appropriate to the time period by employing a particular set of theoretical tools. I have carefully selected these tools because I think they are appropriate for the northern Ghanaian geographical, political, and economic context. I argue these tools will help elucidate pre-colonial practices in the northern Ghanaian context in ways that are appropriate to the African present and responsible with the African past.

The tools I have selected can also be compared to a set of lenses, a pair of glasses, or spectacles. Whether they are aware of it or not, all people view the past through a set of lenses. Colonization has given Europeans and Africans a set of lenses that many people use to look at the past. Colonization translates pre-colonial history in a way that attempts to justify or explain colonial invasion and ongoing neo-colonial relations. In other words, many of us

²² The abstract verbal noun ‘translation’ can be translated into the language of Likɔ̀nl as ‘ileen a labirim’ or ‘speech turning’, but whereas the English emphasis appears to be on the finished product of translating, the emphasis in Likɔ̀nl appears to be on the process of turning speech or turning language.

who have gone to school have come to view pre-colonial history through processes influenced by colonial translation. Colonial (mis)translations offer history to us in a way that is already theorized. Colonial mistranslations of the past offer Africans ‘whose eyes have been opened’ a set of spectacles without telling them they are wearing spectacles with colonial strength prescription lenses. Even those who have not gone to school have been influenced by colonial translations of law, chieftaincy, and more.

In order to be accountable to African communities, I am explaining what lenses I am using to view and describe the past. People can try on these lenses and look through them in order to compare them to the lenses they are already wearing. I believe the lenses I am employing have the potential to offer glimpses of the pre-colonial world before it was made to be a logical prelude to the colonial era. I hope to offer glimpses of what the pre-colonial world might have looked like when trajectories other than colonization, but also including colonization, were still open possibilities. However, if communities observe that what I am describing is not useful, they can more easily adjust the lenses inside their spectacles, because I have been explicit about the lenses I am using to view and describe past practices. In the process, I hope to make it clearer how the colonial lenses make the world look. That way, Africans influenced by colonialism can make more informed choices about the lenses they prefer in order to view and describe the past. Being explicit about how one prefers to view the past is important for building the present and future in ways that are life-giving.

1.1 Disentangling pre-colonial life worlds and translating practices

In northern Ghana, the colonial era engaged in acts of (mis)translation of the pre-colonial era by privileging so-called ‘state’ societies over and against what were called ‘stateless’ societies. Some scholars argue that these two kinds of societies are more like each other than they are different. They have lived alongside each other for millennia.²³ There is no need to posit a fundamental conflictual relationship between them. These scholars describe a different picture of the past compared with colonial translations of state and stateless societies.

The pre-colonial era was not a static time for African communities. Cheikh Anta Diop observes that looking at the pre-colonial era from the present era is difficult because in the indigenous pre-colonial era clans and tribes “had already undergone a very complex

²³ Philip D. Curtin, ed., *African History* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978), 82.

evolution.”²⁴ Most scholars agree that there was a wave of settlers into what is now called northern Ghana perhaps beginning 400 to 500 years ago or more. This settlement process initiated a series of changes in the northern context. The settlement process does not have to be understood in terms of invasion and conquest.²⁵

The northern context changed again in the 18th century, when the demand for slaves in the world market increased. Some social groups responded by becoming slave-raiding societies. They became a part of the slave supply chain, something they did not understand fully. Some societies responded in self-defense and self-preservation, struggling to survive the slave trade, attempting to minimize their victimization.

The pre-colonial time period was far from static. Many changes occurred and there were many creative responses to those changes that have resulted in a remarkably life-affirming culture in the northern context. The way social groups translated in a contextually grounded manner contributed to their largely successful method of living in a marginally fertile environment and in negotiating the internal violence of the slave trade. In what follows I re-read the data regarding indigenous pre-colonial translating practices by using theories that better account for the diversity of practices on the ground in that era.

In the first section of this chapter I present some of the theoretical lenses that I have selected for describing pre-colonial life worlds and translation practices in northern Ghana. First, I discuss the way translation is related to trade, and technology, what Michael Cronin calls the 3 T paradigm. Cronin argues that a balanced analysis of culture must consider the relationship between these three factors that influence social expansion.²⁶ Second, I introduce Achille Mbembe’s notion of the entanglement of time. Mbembe’s notion of time as multiple helps prevent reading the past as a necessary prelude to the social progress of the present. Third, I discuss the notion of the internal African frontier. This concept, developed by Igor Kopytoff, is particularly useful for the context in northern Ghana, northern Togo, and their adjacent areas. It is especially relevant for the geographic space south of the Gambaga escarpment, the landscape in northern Ghana that I am focusing upon in this study. The

²⁴ Cheikh Anta Diop, *Civilization Or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology*, ed. Harold J. Salemson and Marjolijn de Yager, trans. Yaa-Lengi Meema Ngemi (Brooklyn, NY: Lawrence Hill Books, 1991), 119.

²⁵ Boahen, *Ghana*, 9–10.

²⁶ Michael Cronin, *Translation in the Digital Age*, *New Perspectives in Translation Studies* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2013), 3.

African frontier thesis helps describe the variety of social bodies in the northern Ghanaian context who have different but interpenetrating social organizations and social histories. Fourth, I discuss Carola Lentz's two principles of belonging as a pre-colonial notion of ethnicity. Lentz's principles demand people rethink the way language and culture work as identifiers, and this has implications for translation and multilingualism. Fifth, I discuss oral tradition. Oral tradition includes a multiplicity of genres. Each genre has an expectation for performance on certain occasions, in certain places, by certain peoples. I highlight John Miles Foley's concept of an ecology of oral poetry to discuss performance genres of oral poetry in social dialogue. Sixth, I describe pre-colonial religious practices of translation as contextually grounded spiritual and social problem solving. Seventh, I focus on women's roles in translation drawing upon Ifi Amadiume's re-reading of pre-colonial kinship which argues that matrifocal morality was fundamental to African pre-colonial social relations. Finally, I describe the kind of writing I am engaging in when I claim to be disentangling the pre-colonial strand of the African time of existence.

1.1.1 The 3 T paradigm of cultural analysis

History is full of surprises that undermine the interests of present-day narratives. Martin Bernal illustrates this as he argues against the common conception that ancient Greek culture was the product of Indo-European or Indo-Hittite invasion. Bernal argues for the recognition of Semitic and Afro-Asiatic influences on Greek culture.²⁷ Drawing upon Bernal, Michael Cronin argues that in order to prevent geo-political bias in the ordering of historical events, one must take into account the "3 T paradigm": trade, technology, and translation.²⁸ A proper reading of these influences offers a more balanced analysis of culture and will prevent Eurocentric overreach, because translation and technology couple together—as the wrong kind of people are translating and the wrong kind of people are reading translations.²⁹

In the pre-colonial era, groups used technology differently. They engaged in trade differently. And they used translation in a manner related to practices of trade and use of technology. The fundamental form of social organization for the region of present-day northern Ghana was the kinship model of an agricultural society. Many kinship groups focused on local agricultural

²⁷ Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1987).

²⁸ Cronin, *Translation in the Digital Age*, 3.

²⁹ Cronin, 19–21.

production and relied on other groups to facilitate trade and to use communication technologies over geographic distances. Some kinship groups were located on trade routes and got more involved in trade. Some groups engaged in distance-crossing technologies, such as the control of the camel and the horse. Horsemanship proved to be an important technological development in the northern context. As the pre-colonial era progressed and as the world economy created greater demand for human slaves, the control of technologies like horses and warring tools became useful to control trade routes and to garner resources for trade. Groups competed for the control of trade and used force to extract resources for trade. Other groups were raided for resources, including especially slaves. The chapter describes how trade, technologies, and translation practices were part of the paradigm of social expansion in the pre-colonial period in a focused area in northern Ghana.

1.1.2 Entanglement of time

Achille Mbembe offers some analytical language that I find very useful in describing the challenge of discussing material practices across different eras of time. Mbembe writes, “All human societies participate in a *complex* order.”³⁰ Mbembe describes African societies as they relate to themselves in a “multiplicity of times, trajectories, and rationalities.”³¹ Mbembe argues that conventional views of time are insufficient because they perceive of time in a linear fashion as a current that carries individuals from a background to a foreground, with the future emerging necessarily from the past. By contrast,

This time of African existence is neither a linear time nor a simple sequence in which each moment effaces, annuls, and replaces those that preceded it, to the point where a single age exists within society. This time is not a series, but an *interlocking* of presents, pasts, and futures, each age bearing, altering, and maintaining the previous ones.³²

Mbembe’s notion of African time suggests that within a community’s 21st century experience in northern Ghana, contemporaneous experiences of the pre-colonial and the colonial eras are still vibrant, operating according to the logics of their ages, even though they are embedded in post-colonial realities. These ages are distinct but entangled.

³⁰ Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 8. (Emphasis original.)

³¹ Mbembe, 9.

³² Mbembe, 16. (Emphasis original.)

While Ghana's liberation ostensibly occurred on March 6, 1957, using Mbembe's notion of African time, the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial ages are embedded in one another; they "interpenetrate one another"; they are "entangled."³³

Gerald West identifies four periods of African time: indigenous time, indigenous-pre-colonial time, colonial neo-indigenous time, and post-colonial/neo-colonial time.³⁴ Indigenous time is African time untouched by colonial influence. Everything after indigenous time is entangled and thus more than one trajectory happens at the same time. Indigenous pre-colonial time is that time when European interests were encroaching in the colony along the coasts of Africa, but Africans were in control in the interior.³⁵ Any access that post-colonial scholars have to indigenous pre-colonial time and its texts have been shaped by the "encounter with imperialist forces."³⁶ Nevertheless, post-colonial scholars are committed to a critical recovery of pre-colonial indigenous practices and resources, recognizing them as "hybrid", in projects of decolonization.³⁷ Colonial neo-indigenous time refers to the times when Europe invaded Africa, culminating in the stages of the mad scramble for Africa.³⁸ In colonial neo-indigenous time, colonial representatives and African counterparts translated their concepts into one another. For example, colonial 'translations' of what constituted an African tribe transformed indigenous categories into colonial and neo-indigenous categories. These translations were negotiated by colonial representatives and African agents and were "marked by moments of unexpected and often also undiscerned moments of mutual instrumentalisation."³⁹ Colonial administrators and African agents did not always understand the same thing in their

³³ Mbembe, 14, 16–17.

³⁴ Gerald O. West, "African Biblical Scholarship as Post-Colonial, Tri-Polar, and a Site-of-Struggle," in *Present and Future of Biblical Studies: Celebrating 25 Years of Brill's Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Tat-siong Benny Liew (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2018), 243.

³⁵ Gerald O. West, *The Stolen Bible: From Tool of Imperialism to African Icon*, Biblical Interpretation Series, volume 144 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), 85.

³⁶ Musa W. Dube Shomanah, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis, Mo: Chalice Press, 2000), 51.

³⁷ West, "African Biblical Scholarship as Post-Colonial, Tri-Polar, and a Site-of-Struggle," 253.

³⁸ "There were literally hundreds of European conquests of Africa, not one." Sundkler and Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, 97.

³⁹ Carola Lentz describes colonial ethnography and historiography as a process of negotiation by colonial and African agents, Carola Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, International African Library 33 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the International African Institute, 2006), 72.

negotiated translations and transactions. Intentional and unintentional misunderstanding characterized their negotiations.⁴⁰ In chapter two I discuss colonial ‘tribal’ translations and neo-indigenous responses.⁴¹ In chapters three and four, I discuss colonial Bible translation as a kind of transaction. The last category West describes is post-colonial / neo-colonial time. The combination of the prefixes ‘post-’ and ‘neo-’ to the noun ‘colonial’ suggest that colonial influence and the struggle against it are inherently entangled in the present era.⁴² Each age can have more than one trajectory.

Mbembe’s notion of entanglement is important for describing translation practices appropriate for the ethos of the era. Mbembe speaks of each age as having a distinctive set of material practices that form the “languages of life” or “life world” of that age.⁴³ Mbembe

⁴⁰ Jean and John Comaroff provide a cogent analysis of the first interactions between the Tswana in southern Africa and the Nonconformist white missionaries from England as a two-sided narrative, “a dialogue at once poetic and pragmatic. Based on the exchange of words and things—and on profound misconceptions all around—it laid the ground for the long conversation, the drawn out process of colonization, that was to follow...But do not be misled: despite the fact that the colonization of the Tswana began with polite ceremony rather than with a crashing military onslaught or a crippling economic invasion, there was, hidden in the politesse, oblique forewarnings of later struggles. Both the assertion of the ruler and the riposte of the ruled were given expression in these initial moments.” *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, vol. 1 (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 171, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=35136>. Gerald West combines the Comaroffs’ analysis with James Scott’s discussion of infrapolitics in his analysis of the early encounters in South Africa. West, *The Stolen Bible*, 111–12.

⁴¹ I will be arguing in chapter two that the category of ‘Konkomba’ as an ethnic marker was a loose self-identifier until after the implementation of customary law. Customary law hardened ambiguous categories for the purpose of categorization and extraction. For a theoretical discussion that deconstructs the ‘tribal model’ of African societies on a historical basis and posits the ethnically ambiguous model of ethnic identity based on the notion of the internal Africa frontier see Igor Kopytoff, “The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture,” in *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*, ed. Igor Kopytoff (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 3–7.

⁴² The hyphen is intended to reference the ongoing struggle within (post-colonial) time. Gerald West writes, “Here I deliberately reintroduce the hyphen in ‘post-colonial’ to signify the long tensive and resistant transactions that take place from the moment, different in different African contexts, that the missionary-colonial package shifts from an exploratory to an exploitative enterprise.” Gerald O. West, “African Culture as Praeparatio Evangelica: The Old Testament as Preparation of the African Post-Colonial,” in *Postcolonialism and the Hebrew Bible: The Next Step*, Semeia Studies 70 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 193. For a discussion of struggle within post-colonial translation see section 4.1.5 and footnotes 685 and 715.

⁴³ Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 15.

indicates that translation in indigenous pre-colonial time may be significantly different than translation practices in colonial neo-indigenous time. Translation is not one thing and may look different depending on the life world in which it is practiced.

1.1.3 Internal African frontiers

A third conceptual tool I find useful in reconstructing indigenous pre-colonial practices is Igor Kopytoff's description of internal African frontiers. Frontiers are characterized by open resources in geographical spaces and a sparse population. Kopytoff recognizes that geographical frontiers "on the fringes of the numerous established African societies" have long been part of the process of forming and reforming African society.⁴⁴ Kopytoff's analysis is opposed to the tribal model of social construction which, Kopytoff argues, is a nineteenth century European notion that did not work well for describing European history and works less well for describing African history.⁴⁵ The concept of tribe is hyper-focused on common descent, common blood, and common historical experience. A tribe shares common customs, polity, language, character, and group identity. The tribe is like an embryo that matures through time preserving some of its ethnic essence. As I describe in the next chapter, colonial administrators found the concept of the tribe useful. In the European understanding one person belongs to one tribe. Each tribe has a clear line of hierarchy and a clear set of customary laws. The colonially influenced translation of tribe continues to carry some of its colonial meaning into the post-colonial neo-colonial age, even though it has never described African 'ethnic' realities very well.⁴⁶

Kopytoff offers a qualified diffusionist model of cultural development as an alternative to the tribal model.⁴⁷ To describe the diffusionist paradigm, Kopytoff begins with what he calls "ethnically ambiguous marginal societies."⁴⁸ These are societies that do not fit the colonial tribal model well, and thus they frustrate the categorizing proclivities of administrators. Euro-American anthropologists have tended to avoid these ambiguous groups as well. While the official history of an ethnically ambiguous group may appear to conform to the tribal model, further research often reveals that within the same kinship group people came from several

⁴⁴ Kopytoff, "The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture," 3.

⁴⁵ Kopytoff, 4.

⁴⁶ Tonah, "Introduction: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives on Ethnicity, Conflicts, and Consensus in Ghana."

⁴⁷ Kopytoff, "The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture," 33–35.

⁴⁸ Kopytoff, 5.

different areas. Their founders were refugees of war or famine; they were disgruntled segments of a different kinship group; they were losers in succession struggles; or they migrated as a result of evil sorcery accusations. An ethnically ambiguous group's spoken language is often the same on the surface, but in private, groups maintain a diversity of dialects and accents. Such groups emerge out of a local frontier, and eventually they may develop into full-fledged societies. African society has regularly produced these ethnically ambiguous groups, and over time they may organize themselves in a manner that more closely resembles the tribal model. The memory of their earlier more ambiguous ethnic existence is retained in the origin stories of mature African societies.⁴⁹ A metaphor that describes this diffusionist model is a magnet that attracts "the ethnic and cultural detritus produced by the routine workings of other societies."⁵⁰

One theoretical advantage of Kopytoff's model is that Kopytoff identifies different kinds of frontiers and frontier processes that produced societies at various stages of development. Some frontiers are places for an established society to expand. Kopytoff calls an established and expanding community a metropole. A metropole expands into a frontier. Kopytoff refers to the newly forming community as a periphery. This is especially true if the new community duplicates the organization of its metropole. Some frontiers produce "trade diasporas" or "military diasporas." What colonizers perceived as more established societies were themselves "products of the frontier."⁵¹

Not all frontier societies were duplicates of a metropole. Sometimes, immigrant compounds became the nucleus of a new hamlet.⁵² Settlers were attracted to this hamlet. Eventually it became a village.⁵³ Sometimes settlements joined with other settlements and became a new polity or a new society.⁵⁴

Frontier societies engaged in processes of fission and/or fusion. Processes of fission⁵⁵ involve a group leaving its original kinship group and going towards a perceived frontier area. Once

⁴⁹ Kopytoff, 5, 25.

⁵⁰ Kopytoff, 7.

⁵¹ Kopytoff, 15, 30.

⁵² The importance of being the first settler offers a kind of seniority in a community. Kopytoff, 22.

⁵³ The settlers may come from the same metropole or adjacent metropolises. Kopytoff, 26.

⁵⁴ Kopytoff, 6.

⁵⁵ Kopytoff, 18–20; 23–25.

they arrive, the new group may fuse with other similar groups, forming a unit. Sometimes fusion involves one group conquering another.

The fission process might result in a replication of the metropole society. If that occurs the metropole society essentially expands its boundaries with an outpost on the frontier.

Alternatively, the fission process might also represent a radical break from a parent society, but Kopytoff maintains this was rare in African society.⁵⁶

The fusion process might result in an established society absorbing new bands of strangers into the already established relations of the ‘first’ settlers. If the band of strangers could not be ‘adopted’ as junior kinsmen, they might be ejected from the area.⁵⁷ In this kind of frontier situation, new settlers could not establish independent settlements, they had to be incorporated into “established networks of small polities acting as kinship groups.”⁵⁸

The African frontier thesis works for describing the ethnogenesis of the different ethnic societies who inhabit and influence the area around the Gambaga escarpment, the area that I am primarily focusing on in this study. These societies, sometimes described as state and stateless societies in the anthropological literature, may have been at different stages of similar developmental processes in the pre-colonial era.⁵⁹ For the region encompassing contemporary northern Ghana, the frontier thesis suggests that those groups that have developed into kingdoms are kinship societies that have incorporated more groups below them in a pyramid structure. There are not two social origins in the region, but social origins are multiple. Groups underwent similar processes. The processes were constantly evolving. Larger polities fused and incorporated more subgroups in their hierarchical structure. Because of their control of technologies and opportunities for trade they became ritual kingdoms.⁶⁰ But there was an ebb and flow to ritual kingdoms as well.

The African frontier thesis is important for describing how translation might have functioned within the life world of indigenous pre-colonial time. So much of what contemporary scholars and translation practitioners assume to be true about translation has been colored by colonial models of ethnogenesis. But coming to understand that frontier areas were crucial in

⁵⁶ Kopytoff, 28.

⁵⁷ Kopytoff, 31.

⁵⁸ Kopytoff, 31.

⁵⁹ Kopytoff, 7–8.

⁶⁰ Kopytoff, 51–52.

the pre-colonial formations of kinship will change the way ethnicity and language were understood and practiced in the pre-colonial era. If kinship, ethnicity, and language were viewed differently in the pre-colonial life world then it follows that translation practices and processes looked different as well.

1.1.4 Two principles of belonging: deemphasizing language and culture

Our discussion of pre-colonial kinship patterns on the African frontier has already pushed us into a discussion about pre-colonial practices of social identity, ethnicity, and language. Carola Lentz has described how notions of social identity shifted from the pre-colonial to the colonial periods. Lentz's focus is northwest Ghana. The focus of this study is in northeastern Ghana, with a special focus on the landscape and peoples living in the area south of the Gambaga escarpment. Lentz's strong theoretical background applied to a similar context makes her work especially relevant for this study. Lentz points to two models that often dominate contemporary perceptions of ethnicity. The British model is that of a family tree. The tree model assumes an original ethnic unity followed by increasing differentiation as people migrated over time. The mosaic model is a map of tribal names where each area represents a tribe. Lentz argues that both models "greatly hinder our perceptions of pre-colonial realities."⁶¹ Instead, scholars must think, Lentz argues, in terms of "networks and clusters, centres and peripheries...mobility, overlapping networks, multiple memberships of groups and the context-dependent drawing of boundaries."⁶² Lentz offers two Dagara words, two principles, as two forms of belonging. Lentz claims these principles are still discernible today underneath the colonial and post-colonial transformations in northwestern Ghana. "*Yir* which according to context can be interpreted as house, local kinship group, or patrician, and *tengan*, earth shrine parish, were the two central building blocks of the local society."⁶³ The first principle "constitutes a supralocal community." It encompasses "a European ideology of descent" but remains open to acceptance of "non-kin-related outsiders."⁶⁴ The

⁶¹ Carola Lentz, "Contested Identities: The History of Ethnicity in Northwestern Ghana," in *Ethnicity in Ghana: The Limits of Invention*, ed. Carola Lentz and Paul Nugent (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 138. Emphasis original. When I quote an author, who uses italics to mark words from languages other than English, I will preserve the author's convention.

⁶² Lentz, 138.

⁶³ Lentz, 138.

⁶⁴ Lentz, 138. For a discussion of kin terms used for political relations and for corporate ownership see Kopytoff, "The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture," 37–41.

second principle marks out an internal geographic space, “the ritually affirmed neighbourhood.”⁶⁵ These two forms of belonging define boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘others.’ These two principles have been overlain and drawn upon by colonial transformations, but they persist on the local level in the present. Note how Lentz’s language fits well into Mbembe’s paradigm of entanglement of time, and Lentz’s analysis implies an entanglement of space in the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras.

Lentz makes an important claim about language and culture in relation to these two principles of belonging in the pre-colonial era.

Language and culture play no central role here. *Yir* and *tengan* can integrate people of different dialects and languages, and require only a minimum core of cultural commonness (recognition of the earth deity, the rights of the first settlers and so on.)⁶⁶

If Lentz’s analysis of pre-colonial belonging is correct, communication between people in ‘an earth shrine parish,’ ‘a territory,’ or ‘a neighborhood’ must take place but the language in which communication takes place is not a major focus.⁶⁷ Given the common cultural background across much of sub-Saharan Africa, much can be assumed between people who do not speak the same language.⁶⁸ Furthermore, since most migration was from within the same subregion, most of the migrants probably spoke variations of languages within the same larger language family. While this does not mean languages are mutually intelligible, it does mean people can learn each other’s speech varieties more easily.

What does this imply about translation, language learning, and multilingualism? It appears that the pre-colonial emphasis of societies organized by real and fictive kinship and territory would be on language learning and multilingualism.⁶⁹ Multilingualism as a term might even be misleading, because we are talking about a world with a myriad of dialects that are

⁶⁵ Lentz, “Contested Identities: The History of Ethnicity in Northwestern Ghana,” 138.

⁶⁶ Lentz, 138.

⁶⁷ These are all possible translations of the concept of *tengan*.

⁶⁸ For a theory on why is it that there is so much political and cultural similarity between distant African societies see Kopytoff, “The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture,” 8, 10, 15, 76.

⁶⁹ Anthony Pym, *On Translator Ethics: Principles for Mediation between Cultures*, Benjamins Translation Library, v. 104 (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Pub. Co, 2012), 31. Polyglotism describes “a situation in which many members of a community are highly proficient in more than one language. This is not to be confused with multilingualism where many languages are used in a community but not necessarily by the same members.”

intermixed in terms of their linguistic and social connections. Naoki Sakai describes the way one speaks in such a heterolingual context with the term ‘heterolingual address.’⁷⁰ When addressing others with a heterolinguistic assumption, one cannot assume understanding. Heterolingual address translates as a part of speaking, not as an ancillary step to addressing someone.⁷¹ By addressing others in a heterolingual manner, groups understand each other in the midst of linguistic and cultural diversity.

1.1.5 Oral tradition: pre-colonial indigenous conversations

African frontiers were spaces of internal contestation and multiple groups settling and integrating with one another in a variety of ways. What processes did those groups develop to dialogue internally and externally? I engage oral tradition, not so much in the details of its various poetics, but in term of its communicative pathways, because the performance of oral poetics reveals a variety of indigenous long conversations.

John Miles Foley, founder of the journal *Oral Tradition*, uses the word oral poetry to describe the myriads of genre that make up oral tradition.⁷² He uses the phrase “ecology of oral poetic forms” to describe how genre of oral poetry are living traditions that interact with one another in a similar way that an ecosystem’s life forms interact and depend upon one another.⁷³ Oral poetic genre exist alongside each other, interacting and depending upon each other in a shared context. Oral poetry is distinguished from other forms of speech by having a discernible speech register.⁷⁴ Often oral poetry utilizes contexts for live performance. A study of oral poetry references material practices, performance environments, situations, and genre. The performance of oral poetry assumes an audience that is familiar with its tradition. Foley

⁷⁰ Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On Japan and Cultural Nationalism*, Public Worlds, v. 3 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 1–17. Sakai distinguishes between homolingual address and heterolingual address. Homolingual address is the Eurocentric norm for translation which assumes an ethnos and another distinct ethnos. In heterolingual address “the translator has to enunciate for an essentially mixed and linguistically heterogeneous audience.” Sakai, 9.

⁷¹ “As the practice of translation remains radically heterogeneous to the representation of translation, translation need not be represented as a communication between two clearly delineated linguistic communities.” Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity*, 15.

⁷² John Miles Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 22–57.

⁷³ Foley, 215.

⁷⁴ “Oral poets compose in a specialized register, a rule-governed and resonant language, under the assumption that the original and primary audience will understand the poem on its own terms...the event of performance and the context of tradition provide a significant and empowering frame of reference.” Foley, 138–39.

thinks it is important not to limit the study of oral poetic genre only to those genres that found their way into literature, or to those poetic forms that have interesting cross-cultural parallels. This is “to separate the organism from its environment; isolating it from other organisms and the context that nourishes them all...”⁷⁵ That is why Foley advocates describing the breadth of oral poetry as an ecology within a tradition. Interpreting oral tradition as an ecology is an intracultural practice more than an intercultural practice. Kopytoff’s analysis of the African frontier is that there was a great deal of pan-African cultural similarity, despite linguistic and lineal differences between individuals and groups. One could argue that even interlingual communication is intracultural.

In the pre-colonial era on occasions of funerals, yir or extended ‘houses’ traveled to other tengan or ‘shrine territories’ to help perform the necessary rites to maintain the social link between and within communities. Houses across territories shared similar cultural scripts regarding what was expected to happen during funerals. Multiple dialects and languages were likely to be present during a funeral. Performers used poetic speech registers with an expectation of multi-dialectical reception. Performers of oral tradition built upon shared cultural expectations and spoke with a heterolingual understanding of communication. In this way oral performances during funerals offered an opportunity for performers and audiences from different houses and territories to develop shared language within their shared cultural script around funeral rites.

I should note that describing oral tradition includes religious practice. There is no hard line between culture and religion. They are intertwined. I mention this because I spend an entire section of this chapter describing religious practice as a contextually grounded spiritual-social translation practice.

1.1.6 Divination as a spiritual-socially contextually grounded translating practice

African frontiers were spaces inhabited by spiritual agents. Migrants settling into the frontiers had to engage those spiritual agents. Jon Kirby describes the spiritual forces active in northern Ghanaian contexts. Kirby describes how those spiritual agents become active in people’s social lives. Spiritual agents are the source of people’s social problems. Divination is a religious practice of spiritual-social translation that helps people solve the problems they experience in a harsh environment and in a diverse and violent social context. Kirby describes a kinship-based value system and a corresponding kinship-based divination

⁷⁵ Foley, 215. Foley felt this process of isolating genre from context ensured misreading.

practice. Kirby also describes what he calls the estate-based value system influenced by Islam and a variety of divination practices influenced by Islam. Divination practices were pluralistic. Thus, the variety of divination practices served to help people negotiate between their different cultural value systems.

1.1.7 Re-interpreting pre-colonial kinship through the lens of gender

Kirby's study of African religion depends upon the tools of participant observation and other analytical tools developed in the discipline of anthropology. Similarly, Foley's study of oral tradition merges the discipline of studying the Classics with anthropological studies of oral tradition. Amadiume has argued that a number of respected European anthropologists have misinterpreted pre-colonial African realities through the overlay of their own Eurocentric and masculine biases. My own embodied 'lenses' for viewing the world have Eurocentric and masculine biases. It behooves me to consider Amadiume's perspective as a check on my own biases and biases within the disciplines and theories I employ.

Amadiume argues that in pre-colonial Africa two systems operated at the same time, one patriarchal and other matriarchal. Matriarchy operated as a separate autonomous system alongside patriarchy. This fundamental insight has been missed by European male anthropologists who have interpreted the pre-colonial foundations of contemporary African ritual practices through a European patriarchal lens. These scholars emphasize pre-colonial practices of patriarchy but cannot discern in a coherent manner pre-colonial matriarchal trajectories and practices.⁷⁶ Contemporary northern Ghanaian cultures have been labeled patriarchal in their practices of kinship and inheritance. But it turns out this is a significant misreading of the data. The ordinary Dagbamba kinship group inherits in a bilateral fashion.⁷⁷ Amadiume argues that African societies have "matriarchal roots."⁷⁸ These matriarchal roots are connected to pre-colonial goddesses, religious shrines, and ancestor worship. For Amadiume's critique to be valid, it is not necessary to argue that all African societies practiced matriarchal inheritance in the way that contemporary Akan cultures practice it in southern Ghana. The evidence of these pre-colonial practices are still present in contemporary ritual in northern Ghana, but most European anthropologists have imposed

⁷⁶ Ifi Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion, and Culture* (New York: Zed Books, 1997), 29–51.

⁷⁷ "The ordinary Dagbani family is not really patrilineal; instead, it is a bilateral kindred with a patrifilial bias, descending from a distinguished great-grandfather or other ascendant." MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 95.

⁷⁸ Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 29–51.

European gendered biases in their interpretation of African practices.⁷⁹ Amadiume recognizes that matrifocal practices have eroded over the past five hundred years, beginning with the patriarchal influence of Islam and then magnified by European imperialism.⁸⁰ But Amadiume claims matrifocal practices still persist in most cultures, and the fundamental priority of the mother and the child are manifest in African culture. Therefore, it is crucial to my re-reading of pre-colonial African time to employ a gender-critical frame to the analysis. A gender critical frame looks out for tendencies that perceive patriarchal practices, but are blind to matriarchal and matricentric practices in religion and translation, and misinterpret them as part of the patriarchal frame.

A pre-colonial gender critical frame is important for our analysis of indigenous pre-colonial translation practices because women play critical roles in pre-colonial communication connecting homes and territorial shrines—Lentz’s principles of yir and tengan. Given the use of oral tradition as a frame for understanding pre-colonial translation, women’s genre of oral tradition must come into our analysis alongside men’s genres and activities. A balanced description of indigenous pre-colonial translation must attempt to account for the breadth of practices, structures, genders, and gendered practices in indigenous pre-colonial time. A balanced description of indigenous pre-colonial gender will be important for chapters five and six as I discuss post-colonial gendered re-translations of biblical texts.

1.1.8 Disentangling pre-colonial translation practices by writing

So how do I describe translation practices in Africa in a manner that reflects the life world of the pre-colonial era? I must disentangle the pre-colonial strand of time so that we can scrutinize it and understand some of the practices that form its “languages of life” or its “life world.”⁸¹ Then when the times are entwined again we may understand better how the pre-colonial, the colonial, and the post-colonial ages are embedded in one another.⁸² There is a danger, as Eric Hobsbawm has warned, that in the attempt to unravel the separate threads of the web of history we may end up destroying it.⁸³ So rather than writing a history, this

⁷⁹ Amadiume, 32.

⁸⁰ Amadiume, 104.

⁸¹ Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 15.

⁸² Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, 1:39.

⁸³ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848* (New York: New American Library (Mentor Book), 1962), xvi.

approach of describing translation practices is something akin to writing a social archaeology.⁸⁴ I am attempting to describe some of the material practices of translation as part of life world of the pre-colonial age.

1.1.9 Section one summary

The theories elucidated above are tools that help to discern some of the planes and contours of the past age. The past age is best described by Mbembe's notion of the time of entanglement. I have applied certain theories to Mbembe's notion of entanglement, such as: Cronin's 3 T paradigm of social expansion, Kopytoff's notion of Africa's internal frontiers, and Lentz's pre-colonial principles of belonging. From this combination, a pre-colonial life world begins to emerge that appears to be discontinuous with the present. In other words, our present entanglement with the past makes us think we know the pre-colonial era already. But the theoretical tools employed here, tools that have been honed to work with the uniqueness of the pre-colonial life world, unearth a pre-colonial past that may appear unfamiliar to us. That is what Mbembe's notion of time leads us to expect. The African time of existence is not a linear flow of time, such that one age emerges logically from the preceding age in a manner that reveals a logic of social progress. The dominant theories Euro-Americans have received from the Enlightenment, and which many Africans have also received from colonial translation practices, interpret the pre-colonial world in terms of social progress. The tribal model of ethnogenesis and the pre-colonial invasion myth, which I discuss in detail in chapter two, describe the pre-colonial world in a way that naturally leads into the colonial world. The theories I employ in this chapter help us discover material practices in the pre-colonial world that expand the narrow view of colonially influenced historiography. These theories elucidate the data from the pre-colonial era with multiple indigenous trajectories in dialogue with one another. The glimpses of the pre-colonial world these theories offer disrupt the story of 'social progress' which the Enlightenment wants to tell by expanding the possibilities. Some important trajectories of the pre-colonial life world diverged from the trajectories forged in colonial translation. On the other hand, there were trajectories in the pre-colonial world that colonial translation picked up. Colonial translation emphasized those trajectories to the exclusion of other potential trajectories in order to tell its story of social progress.

⁸⁴ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, 1:55.

1.2 Introducing a context in pre-colonial northern Ghana

The set of analytical tools I have just outlined were specifically selected because each one helps me understand the pre-colonial life world of translation in northern Ghana in a manner that resonates with my life experience and my ongoing critical analysis of that experience. In this section I introduce the specific context within northern Ghana that I lived in for ten years. This geographical area and the people living within that area have been the starting point of my academic inquiry into entangled translation practices. I introduce this context so the reader can understand how the theories I have chosen both emerge from the context and shape the context I am describing.

I focus on a context within northern Ghana, one geographical area – the area south of the Gambaga escarpment. The geography has no hard borders. The area is linked to a much larger region. I am not only speaking of what is known as the Northern Region, or the Upper East, or the newly inaugurated North East Region—three of contemporary Ghana’s sixteen regions. In the pre-colonial era territorial boundaries were far less rigid. Contemporary political boundaries were defined after the scramble for Africa at the end of the 19th century.

Kopytoff’s notion of ‘ecumene’ is useful to describe the way one context interacts with a broader area. An ecumene can be defined as “a large region that represents a sphere of persistent and effective interaction among a group of societies that have been influencing one another and have been shaped to some significant degree by a shared history.”⁸⁵ The danger in focusing on a narrow context is that one may get the impression of separate cultural groups and miss the interweaving of group relations. Some watchwords within the concept of ecumene are heterogeneity, uncertain borders, and center-periphery relations.

The context south of the Gambaga escarpment refers to a geographical marker in an area that is part of a larger ecumene or region. The descriptions below incorporate a lot of data that is technically outside the specific context I am highlighting, but as will soon become apparent, there is much from the contexts and societies in the larger ecumene or region that influence the local context I am focusing on.

⁸⁵ Igor Kopytoff, “Ecumene,” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, ed. James D. Wright (Elsevier, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1016/B0-08-043076-7/00852-4>. See also Kopytoff, “The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture,” 10–12.

1.2.1 The land and waters south of the Gambaga escarpment

The Gambaga escarpment is a series of steep rocky cliffs and several sheer drop-offs of several hundred meters facing to the north. The escarpment in the West starts near the town of Gambaga⁸⁶ and extends eastward to Nakpanduri to Bunkpurugu and then into Togo. Nakpanduri is located about 45 kilometers east of Gambaga. The Eastern Corridor road⁸⁷ cuts through the escarpment area from north to south. As one moves along the Eastern corridor road from the town of Nakpanduri south toward the town of Nasuan the land gradually descends, but there are still many rocky hills and valleys. By the time one reaches the town of Gbintiri, some 50 kilometers to the south, the elevation is almost the same as the bottom of the escarpment cliffs, just north of Nakpanduri.

In pre-colonial times, the rocky areas and hills provided some security from raiders who had mastered the use of horses. The advantage of horses was minimized in these conditions, and the elevated rocky areas provided good hiding places or places to spot raiders from a distance.

The soil immediately south of the escarpment is characterized as *litaanbiiril*, ‘sandy land,’ in the *Likɔɔnl* or Komba language.⁸⁸ The escarpment itself is significantly sandstone. The towns of Nakpanduri and Nasuan are part of *litaanbiiril*. As one moves further to the south, the elevation of the land slowly descends, to the point where eventually the soil is referred to as *litangbanl*, ‘rocky land.’ The town of Gbintiri is part of *litangbanl*. It is more like gravel. The difference in soil is related to the land’s elevation and water erosion. The difference in soil affects surface temperatures, water retention, affecting which crops one plants, and how early one plants crops. There is one rainy season from May through October, providing between

⁸⁶ Gambaga was inhabited by the British during the scramble for Africa when the British invaded the Volta basin from the south in 1896. It was the initial capital of the Northern Territories until that capital shifted to Tamale in the early years of the twentieth century.

⁸⁷ The Eastern Corridor Highway is an international north and south road, extending from Tema in the south to Bawku in the north and eventually into Burkina Faso. It is also referred to as N2.

⁸⁸ *Bikɔɔm* refers to a network of kinship groups who speak varieties of language. Their speech varieties are referred to collectively as *Likɔɔnl*. The *Bikɔɔm* family of kinship groups are one family of kinship groups among a half a dozen or more that make up the *Bikpakpam* or *Konkomba* macro group. *Bikɔɔm* kinship groups are located in northeastern Ghana and northwestern Togo. The word *Bikɔɔm* has been anglicized as *Komba* and referred to in colonial literature and anthropology as *Komba* or by the more general term *Konkomba*. See J.-C. Froelich, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo*, Mémoires de l’Institut Français d’Afrique Noire, No 37 (Dakar: IFAN, 1954), 245–46; Tait, *The Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, 151.

750 millimeters and 1050 mm of precipitation. The dry season extends from November into April; however, climate change threatens the rhythms of rainfall. The rivers and streams generally move from the escarpment in the north southwards and eastwards, eventually flowing into the Oti River which drains into Lake Volta, which in turn drains into the Atlantic Ocean.

The escarpment provides a convenient geographical boundary, marking what Kopytoff has called an internal frontier. Kopytoff argues that the notion of frontier is above all a political fact, “a political definition of geographical space.”⁸⁹ My emphasis on the geography of the area south of the Gambaga escarpment should not be overplayed. Geographical frontiers are easy to identify and tend to metaphorically project one’s perception of the geographical space onto the political or social realities present in that space. Geographical frontiers are often described as empty and uninhabited when in fact they are populated. Geographic frontiers are the easiest to describe but they are not the only internal African frontiers, and there is material and cultural movement across geographical boundaries.

1.2.2 Indigenous social settlement patterns on the frontier

The area around Gambaga, both north and south of the escarpment, was a frontier area. It was far to the north of the Asante empire, and marginal from the perspective of the northern Sahelian societies. Bands of settlers came to this area from every direction. This convergence made the area an internally contested frontier.

Settlers arranged themselves into kinship groups. Agricultural production was the primary activity of kinship societies. An individual farmer could produce food for sustenance plus a little excess. Kinship societies sought to attract people to increase the excess produce of their group to help make them less vulnerable and more sustainable.

Trade was another economic activity. Trade routes along the Oti River connected the Hausa states in middle Niger with Kumasi, the center of the Asante kingdom. From the south trade goods included cloth, gold, kola nut, and European goods such as guns and gunpowder. From the north goods included iron, talismans, horses, luxury goods from the Mediterranean, and slaves.⁹⁰ The Dagbamba, Gonja, and Anufɔ societies became increasingly involved in trade in the 18th and 19th centuries in the northern ecumene. I will describe the Dagbamba and Anufɔ

⁸⁹ Kopytoff, “The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture,” 11.

⁹⁰ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 13.

societies because of their proximity to the Gambaga escarpment. I will only refer to the Gonja because they are located 300 kilometers west and south of the escarpment.

The area of convergence around the escarpment created a cultural situation where groups influenced and related to each other. There was subjugation, cooperation, intermarriage, and competition. Ethnic identity was fluid and could change in one to two generations.

In this section, I describe the agricultural kinship group pattern, followed by two societies, the Dagbamba and the Anufo, each of which developed a metropole-frontier settlement pattern. The last group is a bit different; Hausa-speaking Muslim traders attached themselves to Dagbamba communities. After I describe these four settlement patterns, I further describe their intertwined practices of technology, trade, and translation.

1.2.2.1 The settlement patterns of agricultural kinship societies

As stated, the area south of the Gambaga escarpment was a frontier area. It is difficult to establish when migration began. In the oral tradition of some of the kinship groups, there are stories of individuals and small groups migrating to the escarpment to minimize the effects of raiding.⁹¹ The rocky area was useful for hiding and was difficult for horses to traverse. Some oral traditions indicate the area was good for farming. Due to its elevation, rivers could not as easily erode its soil. The soil at the areas of highest elevation would run off into the valleys. The soil was fertile enough to support a farmer. Each laborer could produce enough food for oneself plus a little extra. The more people a kinship group had, the more potential food excess they could produce for their collective. The elders of a kinship group controlled excess food.⁹² In these societies, elders are men and may include post-menopausal women who married into other clans but live nearby.⁹³

⁹¹ Those stories reference time after the Anufo migration that occurred around 1750.

⁹² In the informal diaries of the British Commissioners of (South) Mamprusi district in the years prior to independence the district commissioners indicated that the Konkomba country, as they called it, provided a lot of grain and that its people were able to sell grain surpluses to communities to their north. They bought guns, and they were willing to pay taxes. "Informal Diary: Gambaga [1940-47]," Endangered Archives Programme, figs. 37, 44, accessed May 15, 2018, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-4-94>.

⁹³ As Amadiume's research indicates, women's roles have been larger in the past, but they have been suppressed. Today the role of mangazia or women's organizer persists. She is often the sister of a chief or a tindana. Women's bilaterally independent structures have been attenuated.

Migrants into areas often met other groups already living there or migrating around the same time. Speaking about an analogous era in northwest Ghana Carola Lentz asserts,

However, neither non-kinship nor cultural or linguistic differences represented a fundamental barrier to the integration of new settlers. Accounts of migration are full of episodes which report the adoption of a new language and new customs in the course of adjusting to a new habitat.⁹⁴

During that time of migration, communities underwent processes of fission, leaving ‘home’ groups and migrating into territories on the frontier. There is much evidence that groups came from elsewhere in the traditions of individual kinship groups in communities the author is familiar with who live south of the escarpment such as Nasuan, Gbintiri, Bimbagu, Kpanlori, Goregu, Jimbale and other communities. The small size of a new settlement in a frontier area made it vulnerable. Sometimes, new settlements became subservient to groups that had arrived previously. In some cases, settling groups fused together with other migrants into one kinship group while retaining memories within the kinship group of their historical fusion.⁹⁵ In addition to farming, settlers could eat fruits, leaves, hunt, and fish. Settlers established themselves in an area by attracting and producing as many people as they could so they could produce more surplus food and have more labor. The need for reproduction was jealously guarded and competed over. The kinship group needed reproductive partners from outside the kinship group to help the group reproduce. Every newborn child was claimed by a kinship group. The default pattern in the region is that male children belong primarily to their biological father’s kinship group. Matrilineal relations remain an important way to connect homes across kinship groups and across territories. Female children have a dual kinship trajectory. At birth females belong primarily to their father’s kinship group. At marriage their primary membership is transferred to their husband’s kinship group. Women retain a ritual

⁹⁴ Lentz, “Contested Identities: The History of Ethnicity in Northwestern Ghana,” 151. I know individuals alive today who are according to their patrilineal relations are from the Binaaŋmiim kinship group of the Bikɔɔm (Komba) people, but they live today inside a Bimoba (Moba) town, and have become Bimoba. This reveals bilateral systems are still operative when convenient.

⁹⁵ Benjamin Talton offers two examples of internal “fusion” in outsider-insider relations. The first example is among the Kpalba and the second among the Bichabob, both Konkomba speaking kinship groups living in communities near Saboba. “In both cases, preexisting groups allowed outsiders to settle within or near them. The apical subclan initially recognized the outsiders as strangers, but within a relatively short period accepted them as “insiders.” *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 28–29.

link to their paternal kinship group, a link that is made ritually explicit after their death.⁹⁶ There are some ritual links related to shrines that are based woman's connection to her mother's house. In southern Ghana among the Akan societies, kinship group membership follows the matrilineal line.

There were a number of ways for men in a kinship group to obtain wives, and several different forms of marriage. The dominant form of marriage was betrothal. A young man would betroth at the age of 20 and work for years for the father of the woman he was betrothed to marry. Sometimes homes from different kinship groups made an exchange of women. Sometimes, one could purchase a woman. In his classic late colonial era anthropological study of the Konkomba communities, David Tait⁹⁷ delineates a number of rules of marriage, the effect of which was to "exchange goods against the rights *over* women."⁹⁸ There was also a type of marriage to a lover despite betrothal to another man. One could also steal a woman from her natal home and force her to marry. These marriages caused conflict between kinship groups.

Conflicts often developed with neighboring kinship groups over marrying women, farming, and fishing rights. If a conflict could not be controlled by a pre-established ritual connection between kinship groups, the conflict could develop into a protracted feud that might last many years.⁹⁹ While groups may be enemies with each other on some level, they may also intermarry and may find tense ways to cooperate. Kinship groups resisted domination from

⁹⁶ The exceptions to this can be related to a male's infertility such that another person may secretly donate sperm to the wife of an infertile member of the group. Or in cases where there were no male children due to none being born or death, and when there is no hope of producing male children, there were practices where daughters can be called upon to be a caretaker of a dead brother's wife or her father. Rose Mary Amenga-Etego, "Marriage without Sex? Same-Sex Marriages and Female Identity among the Nankani of Northern Ghana," *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 4 (2012): 22–24.

⁹⁷ Tait's analysis of marriage patterns among many ethnically ambiguous kinship groups who spoke similar dialects of Konkomba in the late colonial era certainly reaches back to trajectories established in the pre-colonial era. Tait's area of focus is perhaps 50-150 kilometers south of the area I am focusing on. But there is much linguistic and cultural similarity regionally with many of the kinship groups discussed in this section. Tait's analysis should not be taken as the only practices of the pre-colonial era, given that these practices developed in frontier societies over periods of time and in response to significant pressure from raiding due significantly to the expansion of the global market and the slave trade from 1750-1810.

⁹⁸ Tait, *The Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, 105, 113. (Emphasis added.)

⁹⁹ Tait, 148.

competitors, but they were not internally egalitarian.¹⁰⁰ Sometimes, kinship groups feigned subordination to powerful neighbors biding their time, hoping for an opportunity to politically assert themselves.¹⁰¹ Internally, hierarchy was related to being the first settler, and being the oldest.¹⁰²

During the pre-colonial era, many settlers came and successfully established themselves in kinship groups such that kinship groups became numerous. Sometimes differences in speech mark these kinship distinctions. Other marks of difference are retained by kinship facial marking patterns and other practices that help maintain cultural memory. Kinship groups established special ritual alliances with other kinship groups, including cooperation in performance of funeral rites.¹⁰³ Most kinship groups south of the Gambaga escarpment were within walking distance of each other.

Wherever settlers came from in the ecumene, in general, their culture and languages were similar enough to each other. In a relatively short time settlers were able to understand each other. It may be that during the time of raiding and migration, the speech patterns of kinship groups coalesced through increased contact with each other. Three to five major varieties of language emerged in the area, with a significant amount of multilingualism. There were many spoken varieties of Dagbamba, including varieties of Mampruli and varieties of Kusaal. There were many spoken varieties of Komba and Bimoba.¹⁰⁴ The Anufɔ spoke an Akan language. Hausa and Mande were spoken by literate Muslims and traders. A number of other languages may have been spoken. It may be in the early pre-colonial period when kinship alliances were still forming that some groups who consider themselves different today, were

¹⁰⁰ Kopytoff, "The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture," 35.

¹⁰¹ Kopytoff, 30.

¹⁰² Other skill-based hierarchies included knowledge of plants and medicine, and knowledge of blacksmith work, and knowledge of divination.

¹⁰³ Tait, *The Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, 127–32.

¹⁰⁴ Both Bimoba and Komba belong to the Gurma language family. Oral accounts from Mɔɔr (Bimoba) speaking kin groups suggest they migrated from east to west towards present day Nakpanduri. Oral accounts from Likɔɔnl (Komba) speaking kin groups indicate they migrated primarily from the south and from the east. The Binaaŋmiim kinship group who speak Likɔɔnl and who identify as Bikɔɔm (Komba) and more broadly as Bikpakpam (Konkomba) are related to the Tamuŋ kinship group who speak Mɔɔr and identify as Bimoba or Moba.

more aligned. And the opposite may be true as well. Groups who considered themselves different may now be more aligned.

1.2.2.2 The Dagbamba settlement patterns

Perhaps four hundred years ago or more, groups of settlers migrated into the area around Gambaga, coming from north and east of Gambaga. There may have been many groups of settlers. Some of these settlers coalesced into the Dagbamba people.¹⁰⁵ They established kinship societies among themselves and with settlers migrating from other areas. At least one group of settlers gained a technological, military, and trade advantage over the others through their mastery of the horse,¹⁰⁶ firearms¹⁰⁷, and warring strategies.¹⁰⁸

At least one set of settler kinship groups established themselves as ‘royals.’ The Dagbamba oral tradition indicates they were not the firstcomers into the area, but eventually became the dominant group into which other kinship groups assimilated. These Dagbamba kinship groups established the cult of ‘nam’, or chieftaincy. Nam is essentially a system of ‘skins’, or to use European language, a system of ‘thrones.’ When one becomes a chief, one is said to

¹⁰⁵ Local traditions trace the ancestry of the Mossi-Dagomba dynasties to Toha Zie, who is said to have come from an original home east of Lake Chad, on the road to Mecca, and to have migrated from Hausaland to settle in Mali, whence his son Kpogonumbo moved to the Gurma country south of the Niger bend, whence in turn Kpogonumbo's son Na Gbewa (Na Bewaa or Na Bawa) also travelled further south again to establish himself near Pusiga. The Dagbamba peoples split after Na Gbewa due to conflict. The Mamprusi, Dagomba, and Mossi traditions differ slightly. According to A.A. Iliasu's reconstruction of three oral traditions Na Gbewa's son, Na Tohugu went to Gambaga and then to Mamprugu. Na Sitobu, his younger brother, went to Nabare and then to Yendi. Na Sitobu's son, Na Nyagse founded Dagbon's capital in Yendi. The Mossi kingdom developed as the result of a marriage from a Mamprusi princess with a hunter. The Nanumba kingdom developed as a result of a conflict between Sitobu and his brother Nmantambo. "The Origins of the Mossi-Dagomba States," *Research Review* 7 (1971): 99–101. The tradition that early founders rode horses may be anachronistic. Robin Law, *The Horse in West African History: The Role of the Horse in the Societies of Pre-Colonial West Africa* (Oxford; New York: Published for the International African Institute by Oxford University Press, 1980), 13.

¹⁰⁶ Law, *The Horse in West African History*, 9. Law distinguishes between the importation of horses into West Africa, which Law judges to have occurred in the first millennia BCE, and their use in warfare which Law judges to have occurred in the 13th or 14th century.

¹⁰⁷ The use of firearms also was not as decisive of an advantage as one might think. The sound of the firearms was more influential due to the lack of accuracy. See Law, 141–43.

¹⁰⁸ Susan Drucker-Brown, *Ritual Aspects of the Mamprusi Kingship*, African Social Research Documents, v. 8 (Leiden: Afrike-Studiecentrum, 1975), 67–71.

ritually eat nam.¹⁰⁹ The system is based on loyalty to the politics of nam and the internal hierarchies nam established and maintains through ritual power. These were the early days of what would become the kingdom of Mamprugu. Early Mamprugu “may have been only a confederation of independent chiefs” where one was the first among equals.¹¹⁰ Nam was distributed among the royals across a number of communities.

Trade in this early phase of the indigenous pre-colonial era involved kola nut produced north of the area but desired in the south. The kingdoms of Dagbon and Gonja competed for this trade. Iron became an important product produced in the Basaar country, east of the Oti River, well to the south of the Gambaga escarpment. As slaving became more important the demand for iron increased.¹¹¹

In about 1690 Na Atabia came to power in Mamprugu as a reformer with trading interests. It may have been at that point or earlier that Na Atabia in the position of Nayiri became the undisputed ritual king of the Mamprugu politics of nam, the top of its system of chieftaincy. At some point either before or after ascending to the position of Nayiri, the tindamba ‘territorial shrine owners’ who held the rights of being first settlers from the other Dagbamba kinship groups were integrated into the hierarchy of offices that support the ‘skin’ or ‘throne’ of Nalerigu.¹¹² Some of the tindamba who were not from ‘royal’ Dagbamba kinship groups were integrated into the local hierarchy in Nalerigu as elders with special offices.¹¹³ Many of these elders are important for their role as ‘kingmakers’.

Within the kingdom of Mamprugu, five provinces were consolidated under Nayiri. The provinces are regarded as the patrimony of distinct segments of the royal group, each founded by a descendant of a Mamprusi king. West of Nalerigu are the provinces of Kpasinkpe,

¹⁰⁹ Drucker-Brown, 31.

¹¹⁰ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 22.

¹¹¹ MacGaffey, 14.

¹¹² According to Drucker-Brown, there are a few Mamprusi “priest-chiefs” who are both the tindana, “the land head” and the holder of nam. These include: Sadugunaba, Bawkunaba, Gambarana, Zanduurana. Drucker-Brown, *Ritual Aspects of the Mamprusi Kingship*, 88–89.

¹¹³ Drucker-Brown, 47–57. The Elders include special titles from those who migrated from early communities conquered by Dagbamba royals. Tindamba of “conquered” kinship groups retain ritual practices in the enthronement of a new chief. Drucker-Brown, 93.

Wungu, and Janga. To the east of Nalerigu, there is Yunyoo.¹¹⁴ Yunyoo is an important outpost of the Mamprusi kingdom, located in the area south of the escarpment, the area in focus in this study. According to Nehemia Levtzion, Na Atabia also established 'skins' to the north and east of Nalerigu among the Kusasi during his reign that were important for trade between Hausaland, Fada-N-Gurma, and Gambaga.¹¹⁵

The preceding paragraphs in this subsection represent a possible reconstruction of one of the settlement patterns in the Western Dagbamba kingdom of Mamprugu.¹¹⁶ The superior control of horses was key in establishing the Dagbamba royals over the first settlers in the area around Gambaga and on the frontiers where they expanded.¹¹⁷ The memories of the conquest of these kinship groups are ritualized during Damba festival. For Muslims Damba festival recounts the birth of the prophet Mohammed during the month of Damba. For Mamprusi tradition, Damba festival involves a dance for Nayiri by the tindana¹¹⁸ chief of Gambaga.¹¹⁹ The dance appears to be related of the establishment of nam through conquest. There may have been violence in establishing the hierarchy of nam in the area, but technological superiority may not have been hard to demonstrate. Perhaps technological superiority

¹¹⁴ Drucker-Brown, *Ritual Aspects of the Mamprusi Kingship*, 3. I do not include Gbankurugu here since it was established after colonial rule.

¹¹⁵ Nehemia Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa: A Study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the Pre-Colonial Period*, Oxford Studies in African Affairs (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1968), 124.

¹¹⁶ Mamprugu has been defined as "a heartland or centre where the authority of rulers was never seriously challenged, and a common identity exists based on a political definition. On the periphery, however, such authority was either less acceptable or relations were finally broken off, due to acculturation and the construction of new identities." Michael Schlottner, "'We Stay, Others Come and Go': Identity among the Mamprusi in Northern Ghana," in *Ethnicity in Ghana: The Limits of Invention*, ed. Carola Lentz and Paul Nugent (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 60.

¹¹⁷ First settlers are sometimes called in the anthropological literature 'acephalous autochthones.'

¹¹⁸ Tindana can be translated as 'territorial owner' or loosely 'headman.' Alternative spellings are tendana, tendaana, tindaana.

¹¹⁹ The first settlers of communities in the Dmampulli (Mampruli) language are known as tengbiisi 'descendants of the earth' or dagbamba sabila 'black Dagomba.' Schlottner, "'We Stay, Others Come and Go': Identity among the Mamprusi in Northern Ghana," 53. Drucker-Brown's includes a narrative from the Gambarana about the meaning of Damba festival. The Gambarana was a tindana, and may have been an earlier Dagbamba settler than Na Bewaa who is said to be the first Nayiri. Drucker-Brown, *Ritual Aspects of the Mamprusi Kingship*, 94–95.

facilitated submission. For the tindamba of some of the earliest subjugated groups, the ascendancy of Nayiri over the system of nam included important posts in the court of Nayiri.

Important categories within society are royals, elders, commoners, warriors, and strangers. Royals are children and grandchildren of past kings, as traced through male descent. However, careful ethnographic work may uncover situations when chieftaincy was passed through women.¹²⁰ Royals compete for ‘skins’ all over the kingdom.¹²¹ Commoners are everyone else in the kingdom. People who identify as other ethnicities can also be commoners. Royals must marry commoners. It may be that royals alone controlled horses in the pre-colonial era.¹²² Elders are non-royal offices integrated into Nayiri’s court, mentioned above. There can be elders in other communities associated with other Mamprusi skins. Warriors are often commoner kinship groups from other areas who are loyal to Nayiri and who fight for Nayiri in battle.¹²³ There are also other commoner categories such as drummers.¹²⁴

In the pre-colonial period, there was no ethnically homogenous group known as Mamprusi. In the early post-colonial era, Drucker-Brown argues that the category Mamprusi has no clear set of characteristics and a fuzzy set of boundaries. Many kinship groups consider themselves to be Mamprusi. They share some similar cultural practices, such as: exchanging kola nuts in marriage practice, similar facial markings, a method of thatching a grass roof, and speaking in a manner like royals. They share similar taboos, such as not eating horse, dog, or donkey meat. At the same time many Mamprusi kinship groups practice marriage rites like their ethnically ‘other’ neighbors. They thatch their roofs like their neighbors, and they are polylingual, like their neighbors.¹²⁵ People do assimilate to Mamprusi culture. They can become Mamprusi; however, the precise characteristics that contribute to being a Mamprusi person are hard to pin down. Is it the dialect of speech? Is it the way one handles oneself that distinguishes a Mamprusi person? There are those who live in Nalerigu, who come from

¹²⁰ One such situation was recounted to me regarding an important Mamprusi outpost.

¹²¹ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 160–62. In the colonial and post-colonial era, the notion of “non-royal” chiefs came into existence. Susan Drucker-Brown, “Local Wars in Northern Ghana,” *Cambridge Anthropology* 13, no. 2 (1988): 97.

¹²² Drucker-Brown, *Ritual Aspects of the Mamprusi Kingship*, 68–69.

¹²³ Drucker-Brown, 69–71.

¹²⁴ Drucker-Brown, 41. Drucker-Brown indicates drummers and gbandari say they are “owned by the princes.”

¹²⁵ Drucker-Brown, 21.

other kinship groups who speak and carry themselves in a manner indistinguishable from those who may be identified as Mamprusi people.¹²⁶ Michael Schlottner argues that distinctions between Mamprusi and non-Mamprusi are rarely made in the ritual centers of Mamprugu. “Despite use of ethnic names citizens of Mamprugu are categorised by their service for chiefs, their titles or the lengths of residence.”¹²⁷

Perhaps three or four hundred years ago the Dagbamba extended their frontier to the south beyond the escarpment area. The southern kingdom of Dagbon was established in Yendi. Tradition indicates this occurred very early when the oldest son of Na Gbewa established Mamprugu, and his younger brother, Sitobu, established Dagbon. Dagbon became the powerful eastern Dagbamba kingdom.¹²⁸ Yendi was located on the eastern trade route, and because of their control of trade, and their relation to Muslim scholars, beginning in around 1715, the Dagbon kingdom under Na Zanjina was able to establish real power at the top of its hierarchy.¹²⁹ South of Yendi is the kingdom of Nanumba, another Dagbamba kingdom, the center of which is located in Bimbilla, under the Bimbilla Na. This pattern of southern migration illustrates the iterative process between metropole and expansion to a frontier. Frontier societies imitate the metropole and eventually they become a new metropole and expand further into the frontier.¹³⁰

1.2.2.3 The Anufɔ settlement patterns

According to written records and ethnographic research carried out in the beginning of the 20th century, around the year 1750, a band of marauders from the town of Ano, located in present day Côté d’Ivoire, traveled to what is present day northern Ghana. Their band

¹²⁶ Drucker-Brown, 24–25.

¹²⁷ Schlottner, “‘We Stay, Others Come and Go’: Identity among the Mamprusi in Northern Ghana,” 62. One wonders to what extent this has changed due to the rekindling of the conflict between Mamprusi and Kusasi in the first decade of the 21st century focused in Bawku.

¹²⁸ Phyllis Ferguson argues that Dagbon was refounded in the 17th century by Na Zanjina, a wealthy trader and convert to Islam who made extensive use of Muslim experts to organize Yendi as a trading state. Phyllis Ferguson, “Islamization in Dagbon: A Study of the Alfanema of Yendi” (Thesis Dissertation, Cambridge, Eng., 1972). See also MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 32.

¹²⁹ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 22–23.

¹³⁰ A.A. Iliasu’s summary of the historical data could be interpreted using the theory of metropole and frontier expansion. “The Origins of the Mossi-Dagomba States,” 105.

included two noble Wattara kinsman, a group of musket-carrying foot soldiers from the Anyi-Bawule substratum of their society, a group of Wattara horsemen, and a number of Muslim scholar amulet-makers.¹³¹ Initially they served as mercenaries for chiefs in the towns of Yagbum (among the Gonja) and Nalerigu (among the Mamprusi Dagbamba) to help those chiefs gain better control of their frontiers. Yagbumwura and Nayiri are the titles of the kings of the Gonja and Mamprusi kingdoms.¹³² The western and eastern trade routes traveled back and forth from the coasts to the northern Sahelian societies. It may be that by aiding the Gonja and Mamprusi chiefs, the band of Anufɔ marauders realized an opportunity to control trade themselves, rather than acting as mercenaries. The year of the Anufɔ migration, 1750, corresponds to the time when slaves became a fundamental part of the production of all commodities in the world economy. Immanuel Wallerstein notes, “the export of slaves from Africa to the Western Hemisphere rises quantitatively until 1750, after which it remains at a high level until 1810.”¹³³ Eventually after a conflict with Nayiri, the Anufɔ marauders traveled east and settled among the Gurma inhabitants of Kunjuku, renaming it Sansanne Mango.¹³⁴ They spread out along the banks of the northern Oti River¹³⁵ a dividing line between present day northern Togo and northern Ghana.

From their metropole in Sansanne-Mango, the Anufɔ people raided many communities for slaves and goods.¹³⁶ They were able to control a significant portion of the eastern trade route,

¹³¹ Jon P. Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufɔ of Northern Ghana*, *Collectanea Instituti Anthropos*, vol. 34 (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1986), 33, 35, notes 38 and 47.

¹³² “In both Mamprugu and Gonja, sectional chiefs exercised more effective power than their overlords, the Nayiri and the Yagbumwura respectively.” MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 22–23. The alternative spelling Yagbonwira is the spelling I adopt in this thesis.

¹³³ Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, “The Three Stages of African Involvement in the World-Economy,” in *The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa*, ed. Peter Claus Wolfgang Gutkind and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, Sage Series on African Modernization and Development, v. 1 (Beverly Hills, Calif: Sage Publications, 1976), 32.

¹³⁴ Sansanne means camp in Hausa.

¹³⁵ The Oti river separates part of the boundary between Ghana’s eastern boundary and Togo’s western boundary.

¹³⁶ Kirby lists the following “Paragurma” groups: BiMoba, Natchaba, Dye (of Mogou, Paiö, Boni, Tchanaga, Tamioti, and Gando), Bou-Bankam (of Sadori, Kountouare, Panga and along the Kara river), the Kombas or Bou-Kombon also called Kpan-kpam (in the west trans-Oti), and the Konkombas or Kpalibam (to the south and along the Oti river). Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufɔ of Northern Ghana*, 35.

located north and east of Yendi. This trade route was from Hausaland in the north and Kumasi and Asanteland in the south. The Anufɔ were not as interested in ruling as they were in garnering slaves and booty. The Anufɔ controlled a large territory collecting tribute from roughly 200,000 people.¹³⁷ The major reason for their success in raiding and trading was their mastery of superior technology including horses, guns, and a complex military strategy.¹³⁸ They remained in control of their portion of the trade route for 120 years until the beginning of the colonial era, which for them began in 1896.

The Anufɔ nobles and soldiers did not farm.¹³⁹ Each major household had territories to raid and gather tribute. The communities south of the Gambaga escarpment around Nasuan and Gbintiri were on the western edge of Anufɔ raiding. Some of those communities established themselves as warriors, serving particular Anufɔ houses and offering tribute to particular ‘Commoner’ houses around Mango. It may be that some communities on the western edge sent their tribute to frontier communities of the Anufɔ in the Nalori area of present-day Ghana, who in turn sent tribute to houses in Sansanne-Mango.¹⁴⁰

There are similarities between the Dagbamba (Mamprusi) settlement practices and the Anufɔ practices. However, the Anufɔ settlement of the area occurred at a time the world economy was booming based on the slave trade. The Anufɔ strategic location on a trade route, their control of technologies, and the hunger of the world economy, contributed to Anufɔ engaging in raiding and demanding tribute from a wide area. I now turn to the Hausa-speaking Islamic settlement pattern that facilitated trade from one area to another. Without the Hausa-speaking Muslims who were located in each major trade community, there would have been no smooth way for trade to move from Hausaland to the Asante kingdom passing through Sansanne-Mango, Yendi, or Gambaga.

1.2.2.4 Hausa-speaking Muslim settlement patterns

The Hausa-speaking Islamic settlement pattern is significantly unlike the previous three patterns. Islamic traders did not set up their own independence in their own territories. They settled in established communities with markets like Sansanne-Mango, Yendi, Gambaga,

¹³⁷ Kirby, 37 note 58.

¹³⁸ The detail of the Anufɔ weaponry and military strategy is outlined in Kirby, 38.

¹³⁹ This is different than among the Mamprusi nobles, who continued to value practices of farming. Drucker-Brown, *Ritual Aspects of the Mamprusi Kingship*, 15.

¹⁴⁰ Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufɔ of Northern Ghana*, 47.

Bimbilla, or Salaga. The Muslim groups depended upon powerful rulers like Nayiri from Dagbamba societies for protection as they established trade outposts along trade routes that crossed long distances. Levtzion has documented some of the early history of Islamic trade in the Middle Volta 'states' in the pre-colonial period including among the Gonja, Anufɔ, Dagbamba of Dagbon, Dagbamba of Mamprugu, and among the so-called 'stateless' peoples.¹⁴¹ I will focus on the settlement pattern among the Dagbamba of Mamprugu around the Gambaga escarpment. However, the pattern is similar throughout the kingdoms of the Volta Basin.

Levtzion reports that during Na Atabia's reign as Nayiri in the first half of the 18th century trade was growing between Hausaland and the Volta Basin. One of the trade routes passed from Hausaland through Fada-N-Gurma and Kupela and then through Gambaga. Na Atabia secured that route by establishing three Mamprusi skins in the Kusasi area, located to the north and east of Gambaga in the communities of Sinibaga, Binduri, and Bawku.¹⁴² The Mamprusi princes raided the traders along that route. In order to stem the raiding, an agreement was reached. Na Atabia appointed a Muslim toll-collector named Mangoshi over the traders in exchange for not raiding the traders. The fact that Na Atabia appointed a Muslim to such an important position may be an indication that there were Muslims in Gambaga before Na Atabia's reign.¹⁴³ Mangoshi introduced an imam named Mahmud to Na Atabia. Mahmud was described as a learned Hausa. Mahmud procured an agreement from Na Atabia stating he would follow what was accepted by Islam. When this agreement proved unworkable Mahmud swore that neither he nor his descendants would be imam in Gambaga. The imamship was then given to Imam Adam from a Gurma family. Gurma is the language spoken around Fada-N-Gurma in present day Burkina Faso to the north and east of Gambaga. The family of Imam Adam continued the imamship into the present era.¹⁴⁴ In chapter two I will describe how the imam at Gambaga was a very important translator for the British officials after British invasion of the Volta Basin. Hausa was the key language British administrators used to communicate with chiefs and tindamba in diverse communities across

¹⁴¹ Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa*, 51–162.

¹⁴² Levtzion, 124.

¹⁴³ Levtzion, 125.

¹⁴⁴ Levtzion, 126–27. Levtzion recounts the relationship between Imam Adam's family with the Asantehene in Kumasi. There is documentary evidence among the Copenhagen Manuscripts which corroborates the oral tradition regarding the relationship between the family of the Gambaga imamship and the Asantehene.

long distances. I note that the use of Hausa did not depend on being ethnically Hausa. The cultural spread of Hausa style Islamic religious and cultural practices across the trade network is sometimes referred to as ‘Hausaization.’

1.2.3 Four indigenous pre-colonial language and translation practices

I have just introduced the context south of the Gambaga escarpment and placed it in its larger regional setting or ‘ecumene.’ I proceed by summarizing the language and translation practices that are layered on top of one another in the pre-colonial era in this area. I describe four interrelated indigenous pre-colonial language and translation practices.

1.2.3.1 Kinship-based translation practices on the frontier

Settlement of the area surrounding the escarpment came from many directions, with many genealogically different, but socio-culturally similar groups. Language differences were not extreme, so language learning and multilingualism were the norm. Social belonging was based on prioritizing relationships with the groups living within the same territorial area, with the greatest rights belonging to the firstcomers. The hierarchical logic of the firstcomer was embedded across the regional value system. In addition to belonging to a territorial shrine, belonging also included one’s home identity in the present location and remembering one’s prior home location in other territories. The issue of translation from a perspective of social organization was achieved through incorporation. I would characterize cultural translation as a tension between collective processes of incorporation and resisting incorporation.

Incorporation meant joining a fused kinship group that was usually dominated by the firstcomer group or by a more powerful latecomer group. Resisting incorporation into the dominant kinship structure meant that subordinate groups join the fused group, but they also ‘bide their time’ until they can assert themselves more independently. Greater passage of time, more integration, and equal access to power can make internal distinctions less relevant or necessary.

Cultural integration and translation often involved marriage links between two homes from two different kinship groups. There are two views on this. It may have been that in indigenous time, women remained in the home of their mothers. Men were the mobile element who exchanged agricultural labor for sexual access to a mother’s daughter. As indigenous pre-colonial time progressed, at some point men remained in their father’s territories and women became the mobile element in marriage. Marriage involved the transfer of women’s bodies from one home to another, and one kinship group to another. The transfer

included women's language and culture knowledge and the opportunity to teach that knowledge in the new home through day-to-day interaction, the performance of rituals, and oral tradition. I will discuss these two views below in the sections on oral tradition and women's roles in translation processes.

1.2.3.2 Nam based translation practices of incorporation between metropolises and frontiers

Some of Dagbamba settlers, who came from Gurma or Hausa areas, controlled horses. This power over horses probably enabled Dagbamba settlers to engage in trade and war in the territories where they settled. Some Dagbamba settlers established themselves as royals; all others were commoners. It may be that the status of royal was based on the technological advantage of horsemanship. At least by the reign of Na Atabia around 1690, the skin of Nayiri became the highest over all other Dagbamba skins. Nayiri became the king. The ritual kingdom of nam creates a pyramid structure out of the kinship social structure. In Nalerigu, subjugated groups from around the area were incorporated as elders into the high court of Nayiri. The office of tindana, held by the descendants of the firstcomers, is not removed but comes into a relationship with the politics of nam.¹⁴⁵

Linguistic and cultural translation in this model involves incorporation and assimilation into the hierarchical structure of the dominant order. The magnetic power of the dominant Dagbamba language and culture attracted nearby cultural groups into its orbit, especially as Dagbamba moved into frontier areas. Dagbamba royals established skins in new territories by incorporating elders from other kinship groups who were firstcomers in the area. Dagbamba royals duplicated their metropolises on the frontier in an iterative fashion. Subordinate groups translated themselves into the royal system to the extent that they become culturally indistinguishable from each other. Distinctions between dominants and subordinates were internally enforced through historical memory, ritualized practices, and power relations.

1.2.3.3 Anufɔ raiding and trading translation practices on the frontier

The Anufɔ language is an Akan language, a different language family from the Mole-Dagbanli language families of the north. Evidently, Anufɔ marauders were able to communicate in heterolingual contexts. They may have relied on Hausa, in part, as evidenced

¹⁴⁵ The more 'fused' groups are, the more formalized is the relationship between these offices. In some cases, especially on the frontiers, fusion was not very thorough and at times firstcomers and chiefs became more adversarial. Other times, subordinate groups of commoners retained language and culture practices from home and related to Mamprusi royals in a manner not so different than allied kinship groups.

by the incorporation of Hausa words into their language. Sometimes marauders might have spoken their own language without being understood, making use of translators, whom they controlled. After they settled in Sansanne-Mango, Anufɔ practices attracted many of the kinship groups they subdued. Some household slaves from Mango were placed into villages to intermarry with local populations and contributed to the process of ‘Anufɔization.’ Client peoples tried as much as possible to learn the language and culture of the Anufɔ as a way of coping with Anufɔ raiding.¹⁴⁶ People would learn the Anufɔ language and culture, give their children Anufɔ names, and try to make alliances involving tribute to Anufɔ houses to reduce the chances of themselves becoming targets of raiding. Translation in the Anufɔ metropolises was more of an integration of the trade and raid practices, with the value systems associated with those practices, with the kinship-based value system. The integration was managed by different shrines and diviners. I will come back to divination as a translation practice in the third major section of this chapter, below.

In addition to ‘Anufɔization’ which attracted people into its orbit, another possible result of the Anufɔ raiding practices was that kinship-based societies who the Anufɔ raided may also have been drawn together in a defensive posture. The kinship groups who live south of the Gambaga escarpment have names that are many and various. The family tree theory assumes that all of these kinship groups are genealogically related. However, the frontier thesis would suggest these groups began forming alliances and counter-identities on the African frontier in response to being raided. Perhaps they began speaking more like each other due to the pressure of Anufɔ raiding. Certain indigenous speech varieties may have coalesced during this time. For instance, one of the common speech varieties south of the Gambaga escarpment is known as Likɔɔnl, which is anglicized as Komba. Likɔɔnl is a mutually intelligible dialect of the larger Likpakpaanl language family. According to the rules of noun classes in Likpakpaanl, the people who speak Likɔɔnl would be identified as Bikɔɔm. However, very few kinship groups identify themselves as Bikɔɔm. Bikɔɔm may be a term that means people who are ‘taboo.’ It may be a derogatory term but also a term of mystery and power.

1.2.3.4 Islamic trading and translation practices on the frontier

Pre-colonial Islamic trading and translation practices are interwoven into the other three translation and language practices analyzed above. Muslim traders were interested in establishing trade outposts over long distances such that their network engaged with each of

¹⁴⁶ Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufɔ of Northern Ghana*, 39–40.

the communities and practices already described. Islam was a key factor in establishing the trade and translation network because Islam established a common religious and legal framework for the traders. Islam provided a writing system, a common worship system, a common greeting system, a common eating system, and a common legal system that helped standardize expectations for traders along the trade route.

Muslims in the Volta Basin were minority communities that found ways to practice their religion in a manner willing to make compromises with the dominant religious practices of their neighbors. For example, Levtzion notes that minority Muslim communities who wanted to maintain relations in their communities had to intermarry with ‘pagans’ in a manner that was forbidden, at least according to a strict interpretation of Islamic law. Nevertheless, these Muslim groups had to make pragmatic choices to make their local alliances work.¹⁴⁷ Across their large network, Muslim trade communities had to make many different local negotiations, while still maintaining a larger network of relationships that operated on a more ‘universal’ plane. The Muslim groups successfully negotiated between a more ‘universal’ cultural and linguistic system and a more local cultural and linguistic system. Their series of translational negotiations contributed to their success in trade over long distances.

In Gambaga, the Muslim imams who came from Imam Adam came from a Gurma family that had relationships with imams in Hausaland. Muslims established mosques so Muslim traders could live in market communities such as Gambaga.¹⁴⁸ Among Dagbamba and Anufɔ societies, literate Muslims provided commercial services (credit, accounting, information, and Islamic law). These were essential technological and translational supports for the expansion of trade in those communities.¹⁴⁹ In addition to writing as a technology of trade, it was also a technology of spiritual power.

¹⁴⁷ Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa*, 137.

¹⁴⁸ Levtzion, 124–26.

¹⁴⁹ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 9; Ferguson, “Islamization in Dagbon,” 97.

Among the Anufɔ communities, Islam was practiced by nkaramɔm, ‘book-men.’¹⁵⁰ Muslims were part of a mid-level pre-colonial social class below rulers and above slaves.¹⁵¹ In Gambaga, Muslim traders were a level below Nayiri and Dagbamba royals. Nayiri cooperated with the Gambaga imam and the Muslim traders, but he also established social distance. During Na Atabia’s reign, Mamprusi forces repelled a Gurma invasion of Gambaga. Subsequently, Na Atabia moved the seat of royal court from Gambaga to Nalerigu, 10 kilometers to the east. This may have been to maintain some distance between his royal palace and the Muslim traders after the Gurma invasion. ‘Pagans’ and Muslims kept distinctions between each other. However, in the pre-colonial period they did intermarry with each other.¹⁵²

For both Dagbamba and Anufɔ groups, translation practices featured in the services of Muslim scholars and traders. Muslims were part of a mid-level in society and their spoken and written language services were useful in trade and accounting. The power of their books and amulets were also part of their spiritual and cultural power.

1.2.4 Three critical analyses of indigenous pre-colonial society

I have introduced the context of the Gambaga escarpment and the land to its south. I have also introduced four settlement and translation patterns among interrelated groups. In what follows I will offer three critical analyses of interrelated indigenous pre-colonial relations in the area south of the Gambaga escarpment. The first critical analysis involves the consideration of the colonial theory of essential ethnic difference between social organizations in the northern context. The second critical analysis involves the pre-colonial dynamic of social class formation and how the world economy influenced class formation in the northern context. The third critical analysis looks at the way gender relations changed during indigenous pre-colonial time and the way those changes have been misread by scholars.

¹⁵⁰ Among the Anufɔ nkaramɔm refers to Muslim scholars, and nyemɛferefɔm refers to Muslim worshippers. Among Akan speaking people in southern Ghana, nkaramom refers to Islam as a religion and nkaramofuo refers to Muslims.

¹⁵¹ Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufɔ of Northern Ghana*, 23–24. See Kirby’s footnote 15 for a discussion of the mid-level Muslim “book” class and footnote 17 and 18 for a discussion of the slave class.

¹⁵² Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa*, 137.

1.2.4.1 Critical analysis: one society or two?

In my description of four social settlement patterns and their corresponding practices of language and translation in the area around the escarpment, I have attempted to avoid leaving the impression that differences in social-settlement patterns are based on ethnicity, tribe, or race. In the colonial era political kingdoms were viewed as fundamentally superior to loosely affiliated and variably allied kinship groups.¹⁵³ In the colonial era, this assertion of superiority was attached to racial and ethnic superiority. Anthropologist Wyatt MacGaffey criticizes such binary cultural analysis.

Though the received history, generally accepted by scholars speaks of two civilizations of different origin and composition, close ethnographic attention dissolves the supposed contrasts between religion and politics, kinship and kingship, matrilineal and patrilineal descent, tindana and chief, states and stateless, invader and aborigine. These oppositions are morally loaded, implying relations of superiority and inferiority to which northerners today are sensitive.¹⁵⁴

The basis of what MacGaffey calls the received history was formed by colonial era anthropologists who used social evolutionary theory to interpret the data they observed and documented. MacGaffey cites colonial anthropologist of northern Ghana R.S. Rattray who argues that he discovered something that had never been noticed before—that the conquerors and the conquered in African society belonged to different races. MacGaffey writes, quoting Rattray,

The present societies had been formed when bands of patrilineal conquerors, "better armed, better clothed, familiar with the idea of kingship or chieftainship in our modern sense" overcame indigenous matrilineal peoples with Earth priests and introduced the "new and unheard of" idea of territorial and secular leadership in place of the immemorial institution of a ruler who was the high priest of a totemic clan and dealt only in "spiritual sanctions."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ There appears to be a relationship in the pre-colonial life-world between technological and ritual superiority.

¹⁵⁴ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 8.

¹⁵⁵ MacGaffey, 25. MacGaffey cites R. S. Rattray and Diedrich Westermann, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland* (Oxford: The Clarendon press, 1932), xii.

MacGaffey's post-colonial descriptive work re-reads the anthropological data. MacGaffey's interpretation of society in 21st century Dagbon reveals that the two major offices within Dagbon, the chief and the tindana, have to a great extent imitated each other. A chief is like a tindana and a tindana is like a chief. In contemporary Dagbon, the outward appearances of the two offices are nearly identical, except in the case of a female tindana.¹⁵⁶ There is a key difference, however. Competing for chieftaincy involves hierarchy, competition, and violence. The office of tindana is not competed for. In fact, nobody wants the office.¹⁵⁷

While MacGaffey recognizes there are differences between so-called state and stateless societies, he argues these are not essential differences. Ultimately what appear to be binary differences are not ethnic or racial differences, but tensions inherent in the overall region, or what I am referring to as the northern ecumene. MacGaffey argues that these tensions did not emerge when two societies collided evolving into an eventual unity. Instead, these tensions emerged from an original cultural unity.¹⁵⁸ MacGaffey's analysis of the northern ecumene fits well with Kopytoff's notion that ritual kingships emerged from kinship systems. The seed of one is inherent in the other.¹⁵⁹ The kinship society works well for the early stages of growth on the frontier, but if the settlement continues to grow the kinship model threatens the authority of the founding or dominant group.¹⁶⁰ The dominant group has to decide how it will negotiate those changes and their perceived loss of priority. In some cases, societies would resolve the tension by fission. In other cases, the dominant group found another model of social organization. The ritual kingdom is one such model. The ritual kingdom takes the fictive kinship model and embeds it in a pyramid structure where the dominant group

¹⁵⁶ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 96–97.

¹⁵⁷ "The principle difference between chiefs and tindanas is that whereas chieftaincy is a matter of hierarchy, competition and potential violence, shrines are egalitarian ("for everybody"), and that nobody wants the tindana position, let alone competes for it. The sign of a tindanas office, a horsetail, .. has to be accepted." MacGaffey, 83.

¹⁵⁸ MacGaffey, 9. MacGaffey points out his position is the inverse of Peter Skalník who argued that the two societies engaged in violent conflict and later emerged into a dual unity. The dual unity is like an alliance. "The alliance between immigrants and tindanas came to be represented as marriage between the chief and the tindana's daughter." MacGaffey, 119. See also Peter Skalník, "Early States in the Voltaic Basin," in *The Early State*, ed. H. J. M. Claessen and Peter Skalník (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), 472.

¹⁵⁹ Kopytoff, "The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture," 15–16, 30, 51.

¹⁶⁰ Kopytoff, 48.

becomes a royal class. There is a potential for violence at this point, but the threat of violence might be enough of a threat. Positing an original unity between kingdom and kinship social formations does not preclude the use of violence in protecting or preventing the dominance of a royal class. Even after hierarchy was established, pre-colonial societies had to cope with violence as part of the ongoing social order.¹⁶¹

The point I am driving at is that societies in the Volta Basin were underlyingly more similar than they were different. The notion of hierarchy which emerges in kingdom-based societies through the politics of *nam*, is nascently present in kinship societies with their emphasis on the priority of firstness and seniority. This is not to say that one necessarily leads to the other, but to say the possibility is there. The point is that all the social groups in the northern ecumene were indigenous people who migrated from within the ecumene or from nearby. The state and stateless distinction has more to do with internal social formation than it has to do with ethnic, let alone racial difference. Even the Anufɔ in present day northern Ghana, whose social organization originated with migrations from the forest regions of southern Cote d'Ivoire, are indigenous descendants of the slaves of the Sansanne-Mango Anufɔ. Anufɔ slaves were the children of indigenous men and women most of whom were Anufɔized.¹⁶² When the slaves of the Anufɔ royals moved into the African frontier to the west of Mango and settled in the Nalori area of present-day Ghana, they intermarried with indigenous men and women from that area. Clearly, there is no essential ethnic difference. Kingdom and kinship are two political developments within African culture from the same social base.

1.2.4.2 Critical analysis: pre-colonial social class formation

Another important critical analysis moves from racial or ethnic difference to an analysis of social class in the northern context. The analysis of social class more realistically describes the kind of social difference that developed in the area south of the Gambaga escarpment and persisted into colonial and post-colonial time. Bernard Magubane writes,

To sum up: prior to the advent of imperialism there were in Africa certain societies with no state machinery but there also existed societies that had developed to a point

¹⁶¹ African polities, like pre-modern polities elsewhere in the world, could cope with internal violence in ways that are difficult for modern Western states to conceive. Kopytoff, 20. See also Georg Elwert, ed., *Dynamics of Violence: Processes of Escalation and de-Escalation in Violent Group Conflicts*, Beihefte = Supplements to "Sociologus," Heft/No. 1 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1999).

¹⁶² Commoners with a capital 'C' were the children of royal daughters who married local men.

where social classes appeared and where governmental functions were reserved for a minority who exercised power in an exclusive way.¹⁶³

I have already noted the development of system of nam and the development of a royal class within Dagbamba society. The way the system of nam replicated itself in Nalerigu, Yendi, and Bimbilla is a good example of how the royal class system expanded into the frontier of the African interior in the indigenous pre-colonial era.¹⁶⁴ In a different way the expansion of Muslim traders is another example of indigenous pre-colonial social class formation. Muslim imams and traders filled an important role making trade possible through their language, religious, and cultural practices. Muslim traders and imams filled a middle role that cooperated with Dagbamba royals. The bottom rung of pre-colonial social formation were those commoners from Dagbamba kinship groups and other kinship-based societies. The land tenure systems operated on the frontier. This system established a vital source of material sustenance for commoner kinship-based groups. The royals and traders knew that their survival also depended on the vitality of the agrarian system. The agrarian system depended on the successful farming of commoners and disparate kinship groups. There was an internal motivation for cooperation. This summarizes one form of indigenous pre-colonial social class development.¹⁶⁵

The development of social class was intensified by the slave trade. European trade posts were founded on the peripheries of Africa in the late fifteenth century. Edward Alpers suggests that for the first century or more trade occurred in a more or less ‘normal’ fashion where each side of trade saw themselves to be profiting. Wallerstein identifies a break occurred in ‘normal’ trade relations around 1750. The slave trade ceased to be trade in ‘luxury’ items, rather slaves became a crucial part of the production of every commodity in the world economic system.¹⁶⁶ The number of slaves imported into the world economy yearly rose significantly until 1750.

¹⁶³ Bernard Magubane, “The Evolution of Class Structure in Africa,” in *The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa*, ed. Peter Claus Wolfgang Gutkind and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, Sage Series on African Modernization and Development, v. 1 (Beverly Hills, Calif: Sage Publications, 1976), 177.

¹⁶⁴ In the African interior, their awareness of an imperial presence on the coasts grew over time.

¹⁶⁵ My research was unable to document the ways that a pre-agrarian hunter-gatherer system worked and how that system may have morphed into the agrarian social system I describe. More research into oral tradition and anthropological social theory is required.

¹⁶⁶ Wallerstein, “The Three Stages of African Involvement in the World-Economy,” 50, note 3.

From 1750 onwards the yearly number of imports stayed consistently high until 1810.¹⁶⁷ Imagine what that meant for the rural northern ecumene and what that did to the internal class relations that had already developed. The soil around the Gambaga escarpment with limited rainfall – seemingly only useful for subsistence agriculture – significantly contributed to the world economic boom during this era.

Magubane describes how the invasive world economy transformed African interiors.

The violent penetration and rupture of traditional precapitalist societies and the subjugation of their economic life to the profit impulse of the Western bourgeoisie constitute the fundamental class reality of modern Africa.¹⁶⁸

The system of raiding practiced by Dagbamba and by Anufɔ societies are good examples of the way the world economic system penetrated, raided, and transformed pre-colonial kinship societies and kingdoms alike. At the root of that transformation was the European hunger for profit.

The critical analysis of pre-colonial social class suggests that the invasive penetration of the world economic system into the northern ecumene significantly ruptured social relations, increasing the use of brute force and domination, creating the possibility of maintaining ongoing exploitative economic relationships on the local level. Additionally, there were no “secondary multiplier effects” from capitalist growth that got invested back into the local economy.¹⁶⁹ None of those profits ‘trickled down.’ The natural resources that the northern ecumene provided the world economic system in the form of human slaves ‘translated’ into significant wealth accumulation in the West.¹⁷⁰ But in the northern ecumene, the ‘translation’ of bodies from Africa to the West resulted in ruptured social relations and left little, if any, economic profit behind.

1.2.4.3 Critical analysis: matricentric pre-colonial practices

Another critical lens that affects the way people view pre-colonial social and translational patterns in the northern context is the lens of gender. As mentioned above, Ifi Amadiume,

¹⁶⁷ Wallerstein, 32–33.

¹⁶⁸ Magubane, “The Evolution of Class Structure in Africa,” 179.

¹⁶⁹ Magubane, 184–85.

¹⁷⁰ Magubane estimates that Africa grew economically only 20% between 1650 and 1900 while Europe grew 600%, and Asia over 300%. 177.

building upon the work of Cheikh Anta Diop, has provided an important re-interpretation of pre-colonial African society through the lens of gender that applies to both ‘state’ and ‘decentralized’ systems.¹⁷¹ In Amadiume’s view, indigenous pre-colonial African societies were built on the foundation of mother and child.¹⁷² This relationship is the foundation of kinship,¹⁷³ the most basic economic unit,¹⁷⁴ the foundation of morality,¹⁷⁵ a divine feminine power that structured society¹⁷⁶ and necessitated certain administrative functions in society for women.¹⁷⁷ The mother-child relationship, which Amadiume describes as matriarchy, was

¹⁷¹ “Critical of Diop's bias for empires, I have shown how his methodology resulted in a dichotomy between state systems and the decentralized systems, ignoring a critical analysis of the complex relationship between both systems.” Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 24.

¹⁷² “The central focus, therefore, is the understanding of the matriarchal roots or structures of African societies. If we take into consideration the widely practiced custom of mass exodus by women, taking only dependent babies, we can see societies reverting again to matriarchy—consisting of mothers, sons, and daughters. In this situation, ‘father’ status reverts back to that of an outsider. How would society be reconstructed under these circumstances? The range of possibilities is indeed very wide.” Amadiume, 37.

¹⁷³ “It seems to me that the main problem in these theories of kinship is the construction of woman as an object to be moved or owned. If kinship is determined through the one constant and certain person – the mother – and if we remove the concept of movement and ownership and focus on the African concept of collectivism and usufruct access to land, we are back to the basic matriarchal tripartite structure or what I might call the matriarchal triangle consisting of mother, daughter, and son. These kinship terms should be seen as classifications in a grouped collective sense and not in the European individualistic sense.” Amadiume, 75.

¹⁷⁴ “In Nnobi social structure, the *mkpuke*, which I regard as the matricentric structure of matriarchy, is the smallest kinship unit and the smallest production unit. It is a good example of where the structure of the production unit determines the consumption unit, for it is a unit which eats what it produces. It produces for self-consumption; it is an autonomous, household-based unit. Also this relation of production has an ideological base in a female gendered motherhood ideology of *umunne* or *ibenne*, which has wider political implications.” Amadiume, 18.

¹⁷⁵ “In African religion mystical powers and worldly prosperity are gifts inherited from our mothers. The moral ideals of this system encouraged the matriarchal family, peace and justice, goodness and optimism, and social collectivism; the shedding of human blood was abhorrent.” Amadiume, 102.

¹⁷⁶ “In the all-encompassing matriarchy, all Nnobi were bound as children of a common mother, the goddess Idemili, the deity worshipped by all Nnobi. The matriarchal ideology provided the logic of overall administration. four days of the week each named after a goddess in whose honour the market was held, festivals associated with life cycle events associated with goddesses.” Amadiume, 84–85.

¹⁷⁷ “In Nnobi, the *Ekwe*, titled women, the earthly representatives of the goddess Idemili, who controlled the village Women's Council, holding overall rights in village assemblies. The *Ekwe* system can therefore be seen as a political matriarchal system, which was, however, in dialectical or structural relationship with the *umunna*

a different ideological construct in tension with patriarchy.¹⁷⁸ It spurred anti-colonial acts of resistance.¹⁷⁹

These matricentric practices occurred alongside patricentric practices. Both sexes governed society using parallel but also independent systems that communicated with each other in a bilateral fashion. Matricentric practices began to be weakened in some societies through the influence of Islam and the changes brought about by European trade, especially the slave trade on the coasts of Africa, which as I argued above, also had tremendous impact on life in the African interior.¹⁸⁰ Eventually Christianity and colonization would further weaken matricentric practices. Despite these influences, indigenous pre-colonial cultures continued to practice bilateral inheritance and bilateral social governance practices built upon a matricentric foundation. Amadiume argues that in pre-colonial times dominating patricentric and patriarchal practices increasingly began undermining matricentric practices to the extent that patriarchy has become the dominant practice, even in societies with matrilineal inheritance practices. The remnants and traces of bilateral matricentric practices remain. However, much Eurocentric male scholarship interprets those remnants and traces in a way that supports an invasive imperial patriarchal practice.

base the patriarchal system, both in dialogue with each other. The middle ground for manoeuvre is a third classificatory system: the nongendered collective humanity, *Nmadu*, person, which is again based on non-discriminatory matriarchal collectivism, as a unifying moral code and culture generating affective relationships as opposed to the political culture of patriarchy, imperialism, and violence." Amadiume, 85.

¹⁷⁸ "Patriarchy and matriarchy are social and political ideologies which directly decide the role and status of women in society; how society is to be organized; and how social subjects are to relate to one another. They are also ideologies which decide the degree of violence and abuse of human rights that is permissible in society." Amadiume, 101.

¹⁷⁹ "African women did not have this prominence handed to them on a platter of gold. They fought bravely to achieve it, and to maintain their power and self-esteem. They used every means and strategy available to them, from peaceful demonstrations to mass women's walkouts and exodus – even resorting to total war when all else failed. All of these means were employed to oppose the British colonial rule in Africa, the most famous of this opposition being the Igbo Women's War in 1929. Throughout our past history, because women rarely applied these extreme strategies of struggle, whenever they did, their demands were met. Women were regarded as the very embodiment of African society and custodians of African culture. They therefore commanded the highest respect. In the eyes of the European colonialists, however women were not sacred. They consequently shot and killed African women who protested against colonial rule." Amadiume, 104.

¹⁸⁰ Amadiume, 104.

Laura Grillo focuses Amadiume's argument on matrifocal morality. Grillo argues that matrifocal morality and rituals of what she calls "female genital power"¹⁸¹ were the building blocks of social cohesion on the African frontier in indigenous pre-colonial time.¹⁸² Grillo relates matrifocal morality to Kopytoff's frontier thesis. One of Kopytoff's key arguments was that individuals and groups who migrated to the African frontier were able to fuse and construct their kinship groups without too much struggle and in remarkably similar ways because they shared similar cultural assumptions. Without these shared pan-African cultural assumptions, scholars would expect to find much more diversity across African cultural formations than they find. What were some of those cultural similarities?¹⁸³ In addition to the principle of 'firstness,' Grillo argues that matrifocal morality was a second key moral building block that all settlers in West African frontier societies shared.¹⁸⁴ The Akan cultures of southern Ghana are more related to the Ivoirian forest cultures Grillo focuses her research upon than the cultures of the northern ecumene. Nevertheless, the universality of Grillo's

¹⁸¹ Grillo's fieldwork involves an interpretation of similar anti-witchcraft rituals among related patrilineal and matrilineal societies in Côté d'Ivoire's forest region in which post-menopausal women march naked in the middle of the night to secure an important initiation festival. Grillo offers "a deep hermeneutical reading of the Abidji festival, its parallel among the matrilineal Adioukrou, and the women's rite that overarches both." Laura S Grillo, *An Intimate Rebuke Female Genital Power in Ritual and Politics in West Africa* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 15.

¹⁸² "My hypothesis is that this matrifocal morality was the kernel of the original *ecumene* carried into the frontier." Grillo, 128.

¹⁸³ Kopytoff argues that the main reason African settlers migrating from different areas were culturally similar was that the settlers came from a "Neolithic Saharan-Sahelian cultural ecumene. This process of occupation by Africa's present "indigenous" population has occurred relatively recently in comparison to the peopling of most other major continental areas of the world before the post-fifteenth century European expansion...In Africa, the immigrants did encounter small groups of Pygmoids, Bushmanoids, and Cushites (and whatever other populations there might have been that have left no traces for scholars upon which to build their reconstructions of the past). But these original populations have scarcely left any traces on the present population...In this respect, the slate was essentially clean. As the initial tidal frontier crept across Africa, the frontiersmen were bringing with them a basically similar kit of cultural and ideological resources. It is thus not surprising that Sub-Saharan Africa should exhibit to such a striking degree a fundamental cultural unity." Kopytoff, "The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture," 10. See also Kopytoff's discussion of pan-African cultural principles; 15, 75-76.

¹⁸⁴ Grillo, *An Intimate Rebuke Female Genital Power in Ritual and Politics in West Africa*, 138-39. Grillo's analysis "deep hermeneutical reading" integrates of the principle of firstness and the ritual power of river genie as connected to female power. Grillo, 145-46.

argument for African frontiers should be further tested in societies that have developed dominant patrilineal practices, such as those in present day northern Ghana, northern Togo, and Burkina Faso.

Amadiume has offered one such re-reading of matricentric practices in a northern Ghanaian culture. Amadiume re-reads Meyer Fortes's interpretation of Tallensi cultural practices, suggesting that a bilateral system existed in northern Ghana. The Tallensi are located just to the west of Nalerigu. They are one of the decentralized kinship-based societies who in the early indigenous pre-colonial history of the area were incorporated into the system of nam.¹⁸⁵ Fortes constructed a masculine system for the Tallensi. For example, he claimed that Tallensi women could not reach full personhood.¹⁸⁶ Fortes is unconcerned about female ancestresses and female spirits despite admissions of their presence.¹⁸⁷ Amadiume argues Fortes's interpretation of specific Tallensi kinship¹⁸⁸ and ritual practice was a "masculinization of the data."¹⁸⁹

Regarding Amadiume and Grillo's thesis, it is important to recall that pre-colonial societies went through a "very complex evolution."¹⁹⁰ Therefore, one cannot assume that pre-colonial practices that feature masculine principles today have always been practiced in the same way. There is a real possibility, given my own Americo-European influences, of interpreting data in masculinizing manner, as Amadiume illustrates. The following statement is an example of how to read the evolution of pre-colonial patriarchal practice differently.

The basic presence of the matricentric unit and its matriarchal principle in African social structures, I argue, means that even male-focused ancestor worship, although

¹⁸⁵ Drucker-Brown, *Ritual Aspects of the Mamprusi Kingship*, 9, 35–36, 71, 94.

¹⁸⁶ Meyer Fortes and Jack Goody, *Religion, Morality and the Person: Essays on Tallensi Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 264. Amadiume engages and contests this data. Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 32–33.

¹⁸⁷ Fortes and Goody, *Religion, Morality and the Person*, 75.

¹⁸⁸ Amadiume highlights Fortes' own interpretation of the importance of *soog* kin, that is matricentric kinship which goes back five generations. Fortes and Goody, 183–84; 285. Amadiume critiques, "Here then is another ideological system which is in binary opposition to patriarchy, but Fortes does not describe its social base or the process of production and reproduction of this ideology of matriarchy." Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 35.

¹⁸⁹ Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 85.

¹⁹⁰ Diop, *Civilization Or Barbarism*, 119.

separate in its binary opposition to patriarchy, is not monolithically masculine, that is, consisting solely of male symbols and masculine principles and values.¹⁹¹

Amadiume's pre-colonial gender-critical lens is important for my descriptions of pre-colonial life worlds and indigenous pre-colonial translation practices which emerge from pre-colonial life worlds. In subsequent sections of this chapter I apply Amadiume and Grillo's thesis to my reading of pre-colonial religious practice and oral tradition.

1.2.5 Section two summary

In the second section of chapter one, I introduced the geography and social context of the Gambaga escarpment, which serves as the specific context that has shaped the questions and research for this thesis. I described four settlement patterns in the area around the escarpment in the pre-colonial era. While the discussion of these four settlement patterns has been influenced by perceptions of ethnicity in colonial and post-colonial time, I attempted to interpret each of these settlement patterns in a pre-colonial framework using the tools outlined in section one. In so doing, I avoid reading perceptions of ethnicity from subsequent time periods back into the pre-colonial era. Then I described some pre-colonial language and translation practices associated with each of these settlement patterns. I argued that on the frontier, settlers were in the process of making and remaking their kinship identities undergoing the processes of fission and fusion. Since the underlying culture of all settlers was similar, language could be practiced flexibly. People acquired languages and merged their identities pragmatically. The Dagbamba nam-based language and translation practice attracted others into its political and linguistic orbit. Similarly, the Anufɔ raid-based cultural and translation practices attracted nearby kinship groups into its orbit. However, acts of raiding also contributed to kinship groups forming counter-identities and defensive alliances. These defensive alliances may have resulted in the convergence of diverse speech varieties into mutually intelligible speech varieties, categorized as dialects in a dialect chain. The Islamic Hausa trade-based translation practice is unique among the four practices mentioned. Muslim Hausa speakers created local alliances while maintaining language and religio-cultural continuity across long trade routes. The Hausa settlers brought the benefits of trade, a market, translation skills, writing skills, and an Islamic value system to host communities. Host communities provided protection, agricultural produce, a willingness to integrate, and a contextualized stability to Hausa traders.

¹⁹¹ Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 36.

Then I applied three critical lenses to my introduction of pre-colonial society, probing for Euro-American biases in my descriptions of pre-colonial social dynamics in the northern ecumene. Each of these critical perspectives remains relevant as I move forward describing religious practice and oral tradition in the next two sections of this chapter.

1.3 Religious practice, shrines, and divination related to trade and translation in pre-colonial northern Ghana

In section two of this chapter I introduced the context of the Gambaga escarpment, the histories of settler communities, and the communication and translation practices associated with those communities. I started describing religion by focusing on the influence of Islam within the broader context of African religious practice. In the third section of this chapter I explore religious practice in the northern ecumene more fully. I focus on the way that African religions contributed to practices of translation in indigenous pre-colonial time.

The frontier area of the Volta Basin was a rural area, and thus African religious practice has a rural and agricultural orientation. As described above, Islam, as an African religious practice, was practiced by traders across great distances who had to rely on local alliances. As local markets developed, urban centers introduced a new kind of social practice as frontiers developed into new metropolises. African Muslims in the Volta Basin in indigenous pre-colonial time had no choice but to be integrated in a reciprocal fashion into the African religious environment. The integration of Muslim religious practice into and alongside African religious practice along the trade routes provided Muslim traders with religio-cultural continuity, facilitating trade and translation. The communities of the Gambaga escarpment were connected with the larger trade network in the northern ecumene. Many practitioners of African religions did not want to convert to Islamic practice. Thus, Islam was practiced quite harmoniously alongside of practitioners of African religions.

Due to the rural and agrarian realities of African life in the frontier, African religions are closely linked to the environment. African religions offer Africans, including Muslims, the opportunity to try to gain some control over the harshness of their environment through processes of divination connected to local territorial shrines. Recall Lentz's two principles of belonging, the home and the local territory. The principle of the home crosses territories as homes from different territories are united through alliances, marriages, and funerals. The principle of the local territory is governed by a territorial shrine that looks over all inside its

‘skin’¹⁹² and connects the living human community to the ancestors, other creatures, and other spiritual forces in the area.

How did religious and translation practices help people survive the harshness of their climates? How did religious and translation practices help people deal with raiding and the violence of the pre-colonial era, amplified during the slave-trade?

African religious spiritual and material practices and their associated practices of pre-colonial translation ground communities in their contexts: ecologically, spiritually, and socially. How does religious practice and religious translation find moral grounding in the spiritual-material environment? How does religious practice and religious practice find moral grounding in terms of social practice?

I describe African religious practice in the northern ecumene as a contextually grounded spiritual-social translation practice. To help me do so, I engage Jon Kirby’s analysis of religious practice among the Anufɔ of northern Ghana. Kirby focuses on the Nalori Anufɔ, a set of communities located near the town of Chereponi. Chereponi is located 50 to 60 kilometers to the east of Gbinitiri, one of the communities on the southern end of the section of the Gambaga escarpment I am focusing on in this study. Kirby, a Canadian Catholic priest and anthropologist, was initiated into the practice of divination by a Bikɔɔm diviner named Bongo (Kirby refers to the Bikɔɔm collective of kinship groups with the anglicized word Komba). Kirby also worked extensively with two other diviners, each of whom represented a different sector of society in the Nalori vicinity, one a Muslim Anufɔ diviner, and the other an Anufɔ African religious diviner. Kirby compares the way Komba kinship groups practiced religious divination in rural areas and the ways that Islam influenced divination among the Anufɔ. Kirby explores divination practices in the market center of Chereponi with divination practices among rural Anufɔ communities. Kirby also looks at how communities adopting Islam (Islamicization) used divination to gradually shift their religious practice.

¹⁹² This concept of a shrine’s skin operates in parallel with the ‘skin’ of chieftaincy. However, these two systems are not precisely the same, because a royal who Nayiri appoints as a chief to sit on a royal skin, is a stranger to the local shrine territory. Once a chief is enskinned inside the territorial shrine’s skin, he must cooperate with a tindana who maintains the territorial shrine. In some cases, the tindana and chief could be the same person.

Kirby frames religious practice in northern Ghana among the Anufɔ and their neighbors as “problem-solving,” understood in the broadest sense.¹⁹³ Kirby’s research took place in the 1970s and 1980s, providing a snapshot of indigenous African religious practices in post-colonial neo-colonial time. However, based on Mbembe’s notion of entanglement, Kirby’s analysis reveals some of the interlocking practices of pre-colonial time. The processes of evolving religious practice were active in the pre-colonial era. Kirby captures this evolution in his analysis. I will use Kirby’s research carried out in post-colonial neo-colonial time with the help of the analytical tools described in section one of this chapter to describe indigenous pre-colonial time. One danger of using Kirby’s data and attempting to read it back into pre-colonial times is that Kirby’s research took place many generations after the Anufɔ raiding of nearby kinship groups had ended. Kirby’s description of religious practice reflects a time that in some ways was less conflictual than the zenith of Anufɔ raid and trade practices in pre-colonial time. Nevertheless, I find the data useful because the data illustrate the way African religious practice helped communities manage their conflict. Eventually conflictual relations between adjacent groups would settle as they intermarried with each other. The harshness and contingencies of the African spiritual-material environment forced groups to work together to survive. Their shared spiritual-social environment presented them with individual and collective problems. Their patient contextually grounded religious practices emphasized interdependence and collective problem-solving. I suggest that despite differences in chronological time, Kirby’s analysis remains useful for describing religious and translation practices in entangled pre-colonial life worlds.

1.3.1 Mystical spirits and shrines

African religious practice in the ecumene of northern Ghana, northern Togo, and southern Burkina Faso has always been integrated into ecology. From indigenous perspectives, the land formations, the rivers, the hills, and the valleys are independent non-corporeal beings with mystical power.¹⁹⁴ In unsettled areas, Kirby refers to these non-corporeal beings as the “spirits of the wild.”¹⁹⁵ Once an area is farmed successfully, the spirits of the wild come into

¹⁹³ “Anufɔ conceive of their world as a constant struggle to maintain control over the forces within and without, i.e., of the material and spiritual universe, in order to avoid or contain personal or social misfortune.” Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufɔ of Northern Ghana*, 81.

¹⁹⁴ Kirby, 54.

¹⁹⁵ Kirby, 57.

a relationship with the burgeoning human community being established.¹⁹⁶ A human community comes to relate to the mystical powers in the local environment in a particular territory at a territorial shrine, or *litingbanl* in the *Likɔɔnl* language. A *litingbanl* is an important place to connect the mystical power inside a territory's 'skin.' There can be many shrines in a *tiŋ* that have different histories and uses. A *tiŋ* is terrain occupied by a human community. *Tiŋ* is the source of life and livelihood for the community inside its boundaries. The somewhat flexible boundary of a *tiŋ* is referred to as *kitingbɔŋ*, 'skin of a territory'. The person who maintains a territorial shrine is called *utindaan*, the steward of the human community in the territory.¹⁹⁷ An *utindaan*, also referred to as *tindana* in Mole-Dagbanli languages, is responsible to keep the territorial shrine in harmony with the human community living inside it so that life can be fruitful and productive. Lentz indicates that maintaining relationship with the territorial shrine helped firstcomers and latecomers become an integrated community.¹⁹⁸ An *utindaan* works in concert with the individuals who hold a special office in relation to shrines. That office is called a *diviner*, one who is chosen by mystical medicine to maintain a shrine. I will speak more on the role of *diviners* below.

Kirby places spiritual agents into different categories: the high God, territorial spirits, kin-related spirits, personal spirits, spirits of the wild, and medicine spirits.¹⁹⁹ Shrines can be classified in a similar way. There is no shrine for the High God, but there are territorial shrines, kin-related shrines, personal shrines, shrines of the spirits of the wild, and medicine shrines.²⁰⁰ Each shrine is oriented to help human communities and individuals solve particular problems and avoid social misfortune that life in the world presents to them. Each spirit and shrine deal with problems appropriate to its level. Territorial shrines deal with area level issues. Kin-related shrines are for dealing with household and inter-household relations across territories. Kirby explains, kin-related spirits are derived from territorial spirits. Kin-related spirits come from houses located inside a different territory. "The 'house god' is associated with that (female) ancestor through whom the link was first established."²⁰¹ Other

¹⁹⁶ Kirby, 58.

¹⁹⁷ MacGaffey describes the shrine as in charge of a *tindana* which is the Dagbanli word for *utindaan*. *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 78.

¹⁹⁸ Lentz, "Contested Identities: The History of Ethnicity in Northwestern Ghana," 151.

¹⁹⁹ Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufo of Northern Ghana*, 55–65.

²⁰⁰ Kirby, 66–74.

²⁰¹ Kirby, 59.

kin-oriented shrines are the burial places of ancestors that are still known and maintained. This is related to Lentz's dual principles of belonging: the house is an inter-territorial principle, whereas the territorial shrine is the most local principle. Personal spirits are communicated with through personal shrines that are derived from kin-oriented spirits that in turn derive their power from other territories. The personal spirit and its personal shrine are connected to a specific ancestor from a kinship link in another territory. The matrilineal connection is crucial in establishing a personal link across territories and kinship groups. An important aspect of the personal spirit is the reincarnation of a specific ancestor.

Drawing on Amadiume's argument mentioned initially section 1.1.7 above, Amadiume posits that most African societies have an underlying matrifocal component that has been progressively attenuated over the last five hundred years. The kin-oriented shrines and personal shrines derived from matrilineal relations may be evidence of the underlying bilateral system, still evident in religious practices in the context along the Gambia escarpment. In order to identify further evidence of bilateral matriarchal religious practices, one could look for matrifocal divinities related to the environment, associated with specific shrines that govern social practices such as market fertility and governance.

Rose Mary Amenga-Etego has provided research useful for describing contextually grounded translation practices. Amenga-Etego is a religious scholar at the University of Ghana who hails from the Upper West region of Ghana. Amenga-Etego identifies herself as a native researcher, a "hybrid" Nankani woman engaging in research in her native community.²⁰² Amenga-Etego uses a process she calls negative questioning to discover things from the elders that as a native person she is expected to know. Using this method, Amenga-Etego learned about the ritual of entering the earth or the land. This ritual is performed at night by a tindana and a set of assistants (perhaps diviners) in the rivers, caves, and sacred groves of the community. The ritual begins in the community's territorial shrine and enters "the spiritual depths of the land" as a ritual that "predicts the crops, livestock and fortunes of the following year."²⁰³ The ritual takes place beneath the land. The type of crop the community should focus on planting that year and the skin of the type of animal they should focus on raising that

²⁰² Rose Mary Amenga-Etego, *Mending the Broken Pieces: Indigenous Religion and Sustainable Rural Development in Northern Ghana*, Religion in Contemporary Africa Series (Trenton, N.J: Africa World Press, 2011), 227, 242–43.

²⁰³ Amenga-Etego, 227.

year are brought to the surface for the kinship group members to observe. Amenga-Etego argues the ritual contributes to food security by channeling the community's limited resources. The ritual can also be described as an ecological translation practice. The tindana and associates go into the earth, spend time there, and then bring a set of materials to the surface that can be interpreted in a way that guides the human community. The earth, through a mediated practice of translation, offers life-giving guidance to the community.

1.3.2 Religion as problem-solving

African contexts are spiritual contexts that affect human social life. Spiritual agents can offer guidance, as Amenga-Etego has shown. They can also bring misfortune into human life. Kirby argues that for the Anufɔ²⁰⁴ and the Komba in the Nalori area, life is conceived to be “a problematic state, a series of misfortunes which are defined and interpreted in terms of the favour, the wrath, the neglect, or bribe-induced hostility of some mystical agent or another.”²⁰⁵ Human beings' relationships to other human beings and things in the world are paralleled and grounded by relations between human beings and spiritual agents. To successfully navigate through life and avoid misfortunes, humans must manage their relations with spiritual agents, both individually and collectively. The way to discern which mystical agents are causing individual and collective misfortune is through the process of consulting shrines through divination.

The mystical agent that animates a shrine needs to be appealed to in order to remedy the cause of the problem that an individual or group is facing. “Each shrine offers a standard solution to specific problems.”²⁰⁶ If the remedy does not work, then the definition of the problem must be rearranged. As the process moves along, failure to solve a problem “leads to problem redefinition, new solutions will be sought in different and usually less specific, broader-based shrines.”²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ Kirby argues that the Anufɔ in the Nalori area were local populations who Anufɔized. The Anufɔ are descendants of Anufɔ slaves from Mango and the local populations of their current locale. The Nalori Anufɔ were cut off from their cultural metropole in Mango after the portioning of German Togoland. “No longer Komba and not Anufɔ in the Mango sense, they are the severed limb that is growing a body, they are creating a new identity.” *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufɔ of Northern Ghana*, 49.

²⁰⁵ Kirby, 50.

²⁰⁶ Kirby, 51.

²⁰⁷ Kirby, 51.

To help people discern how to negotiate the many spiritual agents active in their contexts, they rely on a process called divination to help them diagnose the cause of their problems and the remedy needed to rectify the situation so they can realign themselves with the spiritual agents active in their contexts. As they do so, they may also remedy any parallel misalignment with human actors on the material and social plane.

Divination is an important part of African religious practice. It involves a process of translation helping a client understand the spiritual-material causes of problems that require some form of redress or renewal. Solving a problem on the vertical level, spiritually, should solve a problem on the horizontal level, socially.

1.3.3 Divination practices

To understand how the process of diagnosing and identifying a solution works, it is important to know a bit more about the divination process, the role of diviner, and the different practices of divination that have developed. Edward Evans-Pritchard defines divination as “a method of discovering what is unknown and often cannot be known, by experiment and logic.”²⁰⁸ Evans-Pritchard also argues that the instrument of discovery is a human being inspired by medicines or by ‘ghosts.’ Oracles, on the other hand, do not rely on the instrument of a human being inspired by medicines or ghosts. Oracles rely on mechanical techniques which do not require a diviner for facilitation or interpretation.²⁰⁹ Oracles are concerned with social problems, whereas divination centers the individual’s perspective on social problems.²¹⁰

Following Kirby, I will focus on consulting shrines through divination. Consulting shrines through divination requires a human agent to mediate the process. I have already mentioned the utindaan or tindana who helps mediate the process of divination at a territorial shrine.

²⁰⁸ Edward Evan Evans Pritchard and C. G Seligman, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*. (Inglaterra: At The Clarendon Press, 1937), 11; referenced in Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufɔ of Northern Ghana*, 106.

²⁰⁹ Evans Pritchard and Seligman, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande.*, 10; referenced in Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufɔ of Northern Ghana*, 106.

²¹⁰ Kirby identifies three types of oracles in Anufɔ society: corpse-carrying oracles which are used after a person died of anything other than old age, splitting the kola oracle often associated with ‘Tigare’ which is used to determine the presence of anti-life sorcery or witchcraft, oracles of ordeal such as the broom oracle which is used to determine the guilt of an individual accused of practicing anti-life sorcery, and spirits of the wild oracles. Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufɔ of Northern Ghana*, 106–11.

Among the Komba an utindaan is the oldest living male relative of the lineal group who first farmed in that territory. In addition to utindaan another office is set aside for maintaining shrines and doing the work of divination.²¹¹ The work of divination requires gifts that not every person has.²¹² The ‘diviner’ is a specific office that requires special spiritual insight into “what cannot be experienced empirically through the senses or deduced by logic.”²¹³ Divination uses a physical method to interpret spiritual causation. Diviners may use mbolbil ‘a divination stick’ or iboolig ‘cowrie shells’ to help them divine the spiritual agents that cause individual and social problems. One of the words for diviner among the Anufɔ is anyumbannafo ‘a four eyed person.’ In Likool the office of diviner is referred to as uboo. It is the senior office among the people useful for divining causes of death or causes that lead to death.

Kirby was initiated into the office of diviner in the Nalori area by a Komba cowrie-shell diviner, but he also spent hours learning from and interviewing a Muslim sand-diviner, and two Anufɔ cowrie-shell diviners, one Muslim, and one practitioner of African religions.²¹⁴ Kirby lays out divination practices among the Nalori Anufɔ along a spectrum with a pole on either end. The first pole is the rural kinship-based practice of divination using cowrie shells among the Komba. The second pole is the Islamic practice of sand divination. The Anufɔ practices of cowrie-shell divination mediate between those two poles.

Kirby charts these poles on a scale of pessimism to optimism, objectivity to subjectivity, and particularity to generality. The kinship-based cowrie-shell divination practice of Komba societies represent the first set of descriptors: pessimistic, objective, and particular. Komba diviners have honed their craft in the rural agrarian environments of the African frontier where disparate kinship-based societies made alliances and enemies. Kirby characterizes Komba diviners as pessimistic, because they anticipate their clients experiencing “misfortune

²¹¹ Kirby, 103.

²¹² On the last day of a second funeral the cause of a person’s death is divined by uboo ‘a diviner’. Prior to that act of divination there is a story told by ubaan ‘a questioner’ who serves as a diviner’s associate. Then the diviner questions the questioner to see if he told the story correctly. Essentially the story gets told a second time. The story is a foundational story that includes the origins of the key social offices of pre-colonial society: diviner, questioner, medicinal healer, blacksmith, sewer, and ‘secret’ medicine sewer.

²¹³ Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufɔ of Northern Ghana*, 105.

²¹⁴ Kirby, 127, note 45.

or disrupted familial or social relations (including relations with the ancestors).”²¹⁵ Komba diviners look retrospectively into the past for unbalanced relationships with ancestors and spiritual agents that require redress and renewal to avoid misfortune. The future is viewed as unknown whereas the past is known. Kirby characterizes Komba diviners as more objective in the way they interpret the cowrie shells, because they articulate ‘particular’ sacrifices to specific shrines in a consistent manner based on the ‘objective’ way they read the cowrie shells that they toss onto the ground.

Muslim sand divination represents Kirby’s second set of descriptors: optimistic, subjective and general. Cowrie shell divination performed by a Muslim Anufō diviner is similar in outlook to sand divination. Kirby characterizes Muslim divination, including Muslim sand divination and cowrie shell divination, as optimistic, because the diviners use more general broad-based statements that orient the client more toward the future than the past.²¹⁶ Muslim diviners operate in a framework that “values predictability and planning.”²¹⁷ They take a more literate and scholarly approach. Muslim sand divination was practiced mostly in the urban centers because that is where Islam was practiced along trade routes.²¹⁸ The written word is seen as “the source of all truth rather than the ancestors.”²¹⁹ Amulets and talismans derive their power from the words and phrases of the Qur’ān.²²⁰ Muslim diviners are characterized as more ‘subjective,’ because the way they read their symbols leaves more room for interpretation. The offerings or sacrifices they suggest are more general in the sense that a Muslim diviner is less likely to name specific shrines and specific sacrifices as necessary actions to avoid misfortune. The Muslim diviner leaves more room for the client to make an interpretation and then decide upon appropriate action. Anufō cowrie shell divination, even as performed by a non-Muslim diviner, is also more ‘optimistic’ in outlook than the Komba cowrie shell divination. The actual cowrie shells used by Anufō diviners had

²¹⁵ Kirby, 115.

²¹⁶ Kirby, 117.

²¹⁷ Kirby, 114.

²¹⁸ Sand divination is described as a set of sixteen distinct figures which correspond to the arrangement by groups of four. The combinations are interpreted. See Kirby, 119–21.

²¹⁹ Kirby, 114–15.

²²⁰ Kirby, 115.

more 'positive' and 'neutral' symbols among them as compared to the symbolic meaning of the Komba cowrie shells.²²¹

For indigenous pre-colonial translation, divination as translation of spiritual-social causation is not a singular practice. Divination as translation is a pluralistic practice that adapts to the outlook of society. Divination adapted its practice to Islam and the requirements of urban societies engaging in trade over long distances. As social practices changed, divination adapted, becoming more 'optimistic', leaving more room for clients to interpret the specific causes and specific remedies appropriate to their situation. At the same time the kinship practices continued alongside the evolving practices influenced by Islam. I submit the 'traditional' kinship practices were evolving as well, making calibrations depending on changing social contexts. Divination is a pluralist practice that translates the spiritual causes of social problems for clients to interpret. There are urban and rural variations of divination, Muslim and non-Muslim. Kirby's research indicates that all of these factors influence the way divination as translation takes place. Accordingly, Kirby argues that divination is a process that "mirrors society back to itself. If the society is pluralistic the mirrors are many and varied."²²²

1.3.4 Divination processes

Now that I have described some of the ways divination practices evolved in the pre-colonial northern ecumene, I turn to describing specific processes used in divination, including the translation processes divination uses. People make frequent trips to diviners to find out what actions are required of them to rectify any "underlying disorder" caused by "disharmonious relations with offended mystical agents" in order to avoid misfortune.²²³ All sectors of society use diviners to help them navigate through life, to help them solve the problems they are facing. Even a tindana visits a diviner.

When a client approaches a diviner, normally a client gives no information to the diviner. However, the diviner observes as much information as possible regarding the client's body

²²¹ Kirby received his cowrie shells as part of his initiation which was performed for him by a Komba diviner named Bongo. Ako, one of the rural Anufɔ cowrie shell diviners Kirby interviewed told him, "If you leave these among your cowries you will always be seeing bad things about your clients." This indicates that specific Komba cowrie shells have more specific shrine designations and thus they may be interpreted as more 'negative' symbols which require more specific and more 'objective' action to ease the problem. Kirby, 147.

²²² Kirby, 152.

²²³ Kirby, 113.

while keeping in mind the details of the current moment.²²⁴ Through the divination process the cause of the client's problem is diagnosed, and through the same process a remedy is suggested. How specifically this diagnosis and remedy is articulated depends on the kind of diviner one is addressing. The final act of what to do is left up to a client. The divination process usually involves clients consulting more than one diviner and more than one shrine as they try to solve their problem. A person "proceeds from diviner to diviner and shrine to shrine until he either solves his problem or adjusts himself to it."²²⁵ The divination process reaffirms the social structure to clients and helps them remain legitimized members of society. "In this way, the divination process also acts as a social sanction."²²⁶ However, "besides re-affirming the status-quo, the divination process articulates gradual shifts in meaning and value. It has its finger on the pulse of social change and records this through the gradual differences in interpretations given to events...."²²⁷

The masculine language Kirby uses is not merely convention. Kirby's data is patriarchal in the sense that, among the Nalori Anufɔ, Kirby indicates only men can be diviners, and that husbands perform divination on behalf of their wives.²²⁸ Even though this is disturbing, I urge the patient reader to continue to remain open to the value of Kirby's data, and pre-colonial divination as translation. I will address the important issue of gender in section five of this chapter, and in chapter five of the thesis.

Kirby outlines the process of divination in three stages. The first step is to determine the source of the problem.²²⁹ The diviner assumes that the problem is a result of broken relations between the visible and invisible worlds. In cowrie shell divination the diviner throws cowrie shells to help determine the source of the problem. "The cowrie shells have meaning according to the way they lie in relation to one another or to themselves in three-dimensional space and according to their colour coding i.e. white, black, or red elements."²³⁰ Kirby describes eight spacio-structural elements in relation to the way the cowrie's fall.²³¹ The eight

²²⁴ Kirby, 142.

²²⁵ Kirby, 112.

²²⁶ Kirby, 112.

²²⁷ Kirby, 112.

²²⁸ Kirby, 115–16.

²²⁹ Kirby, 136–39.

²³⁰ Kirby, 128. "Thus every cowrie has the potential to indicate colour, sex, acceptance or non-acceptance." 128.

²³¹ Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufɔ of Northern Ghana*, 128–30.

spacio-structural elements are interpreted in terms of five themes: misfortune, fortune, source of misfortune/fortune, situations of potential or real trouble, and solution to potential or real trouble.²³² The second step is to determine the offering or sacrifice necessary to alleviate the spiritual agent causing the problem.²³³ The third step is for the diviner to conclude the session with an optimistic note of confidence.²³⁴

Kirby describes the interpretative process as depending on three factors. The first factor is the viewpoint of the diviner acquired by “successive accumulation of information and its integration.”²³⁵ The second interpretative factor is the new symbolic information from the cowries. The third factor is the “model of the ideal Anufō society”²³⁶ against which everything else is measured. In a divining session the process of throwing cowries is an iterative process, using these three factors to interpret what a client should do to realign one’s relation to spiritual agents. The decision about what to actually do, what sacrifice or offering to make, is left to the client.²³⁷ Only the client knows what has already been done, what other diviners have said, and what resources are available.

Even though divination involves interpreting spiritual causation that cannot be deduced by logic, the interpretation process works with normal human logic. There is also an emotional aspect, “an emotional surge” that sharpens the reason the diviner uses.²³⁸

Kirby describes the process of divination as a process of phrasing and rephrasing the problem facing a person. “Unsolved problems are those which have not yet been phrased properly.”²³⁹ The longer the problem-solving process goes, the deeper the person must dig into the established traditional system sanctioned by the ancestors. However, if it becomes clear the system cannot answer the question, the person is freed to look outside the system, to ‘leave it to God.’ As the values of society are challenged, the system gets pressed tighter and tighter

²³² Kirby, 130–32.

²³³ Kirby, 138–40.

²³⁴ Kirby, 140–41.

²³⁵ Kirby, 141.

²³⁶ Kirby, 141.

²³⁷ Kirby, 143.

²³⁸ Kirby, 142–43.

²³⁹ Kirby, 153.

“until there is one clear core – the ancestors.”²⁴⁰ If the ancestors cannot address the problem, “the Anufɔ turn to the more expansive concept of God for meaning.”²⁴¹

The divination processes Kirby describes elucidate our growing description of indigenous pre-colonial translation practices. Neither a diviner nor a client has immediate access to spiritual causation of social problems. Divination involves a process, a mediated translational and interpretative process. The three factors involved in divination: a diviner, cowrie shells, and a client in a social context are analogous to the three poles involved in hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the process involved in interpreting any text.²⁴² The hermeneutical translation process results in potential interpretations that the diviner offers to the client. What I mean by interpretation is that the diviner offers a diagnosis to the spiritual cause of the problem and a suggested solution, an appropriate offering or sacrifice. (Some diviners are more specific about diagnosis and solution than others.) The client may measure the diviner’s diagnosis and solution against other diagnoses and solutions the client has already heard. Divination is a repeatable process. A client can try the translation process again with a different diviner on a different day and see whether the interpretation offered confirms in the client what needs to be done, or if the next diviner expands or limits what needs to be done. Ultimately, whatever action is taken depends upon the client, who has gone to multiple diviners, knows what offerings or sacrifices have already been made, and knows what can be afforded. The client as a member of the community is seeking actions that make life better, by redressing or renewing spiritual relations that are connected to social life.

The next section shifts to describe how divination can make life better on the social plane. I have touched on how divination reaffirms social practice and how divination can also slowly recalibrate social practice, even as it works on the spiritual-relational plane. How does divination help society deal with the social contradictions in their evolving social context?

²⁴⁰ Kirby, 153.

²⁴¹ Kirby, 153.

²⁴² The African tri-polar model of biblical hermeneutics is described in a very similar manner as having three poles: text, context, and reader. Jonathan A Draper, “African Contextual Hermeneutics: Readers, Readings, and Their Options between Text and Context,” *Religion and Theology* 22, no. 1–2 (2015): 3–22; West, “African Biblical Scholarship as Post-Colonial, Tri-Polar, and a Site-of-Struggle.”

1.3.5 Problem-solving amidst social contradictions

Having described the spiritual agents active in northern contexts and the process of avoiding misfortune through divination, I turn to describing some of the difficult social problems that recurred for communities in the northern ecumene in pre-colonial time.

Kirby indicates that most of the difficult social problems people in the Nalori area face stem from inherent contradictions within their social organization.²⁴³ Writing in the late twentieth century, Kirby argued that life in northern Ghana was in transition. While that was true then, and remains true today, it was also true in the pre-colonial era. What were some of those transitions and tensions in pre-colonial time?

1.3.5.1 Two contradictory principles in kinship groups

Kopytoff argues that tensions in African kinship groups stem from the “co-existence of two potentially contradictory principles.”²⁴⁴ One is the principle of hierarchy, a part of all African relations.²⁴⁵ Authority lies with the one that came first, the elder. The older members of a kinship group assert this principle to their own advantage. For example, older men acquire more wives leaving younger men out. The second principle is the principle of equal potentiality. The corporate interests transcend the individual’s interests. The kinship group owns equally all its members, and each male member has the potential, if he lives long enough, to become an elder or a chief. Women were only occasionally privileged based on this principle of equal potentiality, which is another contradiction. These two principles of hierarchy and equal potentiality created some dissonance. The contradictions had the potential to foster resentment for younger male kinship group members, who not inconsequentially, produced the most food for the group.²⁴⁶ When it comes to women’s collective position in African social groups, the contradictions have arguably gotten worse over the last five hundred years.

²⁴³ Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufo of Northern Ghana*, 85–87.

²⁴⁴ Kopytoff, “The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture,” 18.

²⁴⁵ “A hierarchical ethic means that one finds it normal to be at either side of a culturally sanctioned hierarchical relationship.” Kopytoff, 36.

²⁴⁶ Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, “The Political Economy of the African Peasantry and Modes of Production,” in *The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa*, ed. Peter Claus Wolfgang Gutkind and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, Sage Series on African Modernization and Development, v. 1 (Beverly Hills, Calif: Sage Publications, 1976), 95.

1.3.5.2 Two value systems and the contradictions in each system

The value system of the kinship group was the starting point for social order in the pre-colonial era, especially on the African frontier. As Kopytoff pointed out, this system was not without its internal contradictions. During the pre-colonial era in the northern context, a second value system emerged along the trade routes that functioned differently than the kinship-based value system. The second value system, introduced by expanding societies' use of technology in service to trade was based more on a network of relationships across kinship groups in the arenas of politics, economy, and religion. This second value system incorporated Muslim practices and opened up the possibility for a different avenue to social power in the pre-colonial era, especially for younger male kinship group members. However, younger women were not offered corresponding pathways to social power.

Kirby describes these as two different value systems that can inhere within a single individual.²⁴⁷ What Kirby calls the estate-based value system appeared in the region in the early pre-colonial period, increased rapidly after 1750, and continued to increase and evolve in the colonial and post-colonial periods. Across the northern ecumene, beginning in the pre-colonial era, the estate-based system was being integrated across kinship groups. Not all kinship groups inculcated these values in the same way at the same time, but increasingly this second set of values has joined the first set. In the post-colonial era, these two systems, operating alongside each other, have become part of everyone's experience to a greater or lesser degree across the ecumene.²⁴⁸

The kinship system was the fundamental pattern of social organization across the northern ecumene in the pre-colonial period.²⁴⁹ The kinship-based value system emphasizes ascribed status.²⁵⁰ Ascribed statuses are rooted in birth order, and the rule of 'firstcomer.' The kinship-

²⁴⁷ "There are two types of value systems operative among the Nalori Anufɔ and they are both present to a greater or lesser degree in every individual." Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufɔ of Northern Ghana*, 83.

²⁴⁸ Kirby, 81–93.

²⁴⁹ Kirby, 83. Kirby argues that among the Anufɔ many people in the same kinship group are not actually descended from the same ancestor, nevertheless, they may claim affiliation with the same ancestor and address each other by kinship terms. I have argued, following Kopytoff, that this kind of fusion is the rule not the exception for all kin groups, especially in their early stages of development.

²⁵⁰ Kirby observes that the poor must default to the system of ascribed status of the kinship-based value system rather than acquired status of the estate-based value system. Kirby notes that not enough power makes an

based value system emphasizes sameness, economic equality, and “a hierarchical distribution of access to political and religious power by age.”²⁵¹ The value system emphasizes harmonious relations among kinship members and directs people to avoid ‘bad fate’, ‘bad death’, ancestor sanctions, and elder sanctions or oaths.²⁵² Attitudes to avoid include brashness, individualism, conceit, an entrepreneurial spirit, and independence, because these threaten the gerontocratic order of elders and ancestors.²⁵³ As argued above, there are contradictory principles inherent in the kinship system,²⁵⁴ and these contradictions were differently addressed in the pre-colonial era by the emergence of the estate-based value system. It would appear that the kinship-based value system was constructed bilaterally, with parallel patrifocal and matrifocal practices. Drawing extensively on Amadiume, but also on Kopytoff, Grillo argues the moral base of this system was matrifocal morality and what she refers to as “female genital power.”²⁵⁵

The estate-based value system governs relations between people who are not kinship members. Kirby notes the early Anufɔ marauders epitomized these relations. They were a collaboration of horsemen, tradesmen, foot soldiers, and clerics who worked together for raiding. This value system is based on achievement, and is maintained through networks of political, economic, and religious interdependencies.²⁵⁶ Achieved status can be acquired by force, exceptional ability, technological know-how, political skill, or economic entrepreneurship. The social positions one can achieve through this value system include becoming a chief, craftsman, trader, or malam. Today they include positions of teacher, clerk, politician, soldier, and policeman. The moral authority for this value system is based on the possession of power. One justifies one’s use of power by accruing greater power. “The rich

individual talaka, a Hausa word used among the Anufɔ which can be translated ‘poor man’ or ‘despised slave’. Kirby, 87, note 7.

²⁵¹ Kirby, 83.

²⁵² Kirby, 83.

²⁵³ Kirby, 83.

²⁵⁴ Kirby, 86–87. Kirby argues the kinship-based system cannot live up to its own ideals. Sameness and equality are not achieved due to hap and stance, differences in sex, ability, sickness, accident, temperament, and preference. Equality is not always desirable or applied in the same way. Rules and sanctions from ancestors and elders are not applied impartially.

²⁵⁵ Grillo, *An Intimate Rebuke Female Genital Power in Ritual and Politics in West Africa*, 2, 15, 128.

²⁵⁶ Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufɔ of Northern Ghana*, 84.

and powerful are thus ‘moral’ and poor are ‘immoral’ by this internal criterion.”²⁵⁷ The entrepreneurial and competitive spirit “eschewed by the kinship-based value system are thus a prerequisite for the estate-based system.”²⁵⁸ A competitive use of economics, politics, and religion is assumed in this value system. Without powerful shrines and ritual power, one cannot achieve economic and political success.²⁵⁹ The estate-based system also has matricentric elements, which Kirby does not explore. The spirit of creativity and relations that extend beyond territory are matricentric concepts. The Tallensi concept of soog refers to matricentric kinship relations.²⁶⁰

The estate-based value system, like the kinship-based value system, has internal contradictions, especially given its over-identification with patriarchy. The estate-based system exposes society to the dangers of too much competition and insecurity. “To completely equate morality with the use of power is to invite chaos and anarchy in the this-worldly sphere as well as absolute insecurity about the other-worldly sphere.”²⁶¹

When pressed to their extremes, the differences between the two systems can be characterized as independence against interdependence, differentiation against sameness, entrepreneurial spirit against a non-consumer attitude. Male prestige is gained through accumulation of capital rather than through accumulation of women and children. Power is gained through political intrigue rather than power gained through the aging process.²⁶²

Kirby argues, “Each value system when pushed to the extreme creates a problematic situation.”²⁶³ Kirby argues that the two value systems and the shrines associated with them serve to balance extremes experienced by the limitations of the alternative system. I would argue that a greater gender-critical focus within each value system would also help balance internal contradictions. Following Amadiume and others, I suggest that in indigenous time a more balanced bilateral gender system existed. This was attenuated as indigenous time

²⁵⁷ Kirby, 84.

²⁵⁸ Kirby, 84.

²⁵⁹ Kirby, 84.

²⁶⁰ Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 33.

²⁶¹ Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufo of Northern Ghana*, 85.

²⁶² Kirby’s analysis of the two value systems are both masculine in outlook. Applying a matricentric ideology to Kirby’s analysis would provide an important corrective and deepening of this analytical tool.

²⁶³ Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufo of Northern Ghana*, 86–87.

morphed into indigenous / pre-colonial time. The results of the slave-trade in the northern ecumene strengthened patrifocal practices and attenuated matrifocal practices.

1.3.5.3 Divination as balancing contradictions within and across value systems

Divination helps people translate and interpret the contradictions they experience within their internal value systems. A diviner works to help society ‘balance’ the tensions within the value system he or she²⁶⁴ is working with. On the other hand, the value systems are not independent of each other. People intermarry, experience similar social problems, and over time their value systems and their method of spiritual-social problem solving influence each other.

In pre-colonial time I noted that divination practices evolved in different ways to serve the diverse needs of different sectors of society in urban and rural contexts, Muslim and non-Muslim, and those somewhere in between the two. People were exposed to divination practices that were calibrated differently. This exposure happened quite naturally, because people lived near each other, related with each other, experienced similar problems, and were willing to experiment with evolving divination practices. Therefore, divination practices not only helped people negotiate the contradictions within a single value system, divination practices helped people translate between the value systems influencing their lives. That is the positive evaluation of divination as translating between value systems.

The negative evaluation of divination as translating between value systems is the gradual attenuation of matricentric practices that happened over the indigenous pre-colonial period within indigenous systems. With Amadiume, I fault Eurocentric male scholars for their contribution and perpetuation of this masculinization of the data. I also fault the slave-trade for its hyper-masculinizing effects on pre-colonial practices, including practices of divination in the northern ecumene.²⁶⁵ I will describe some approaches to addressing this problem in the entangled African present when I discuss post-colonial practices of re-translation in chapters three through six.

²⁶⁴ While Kirby’s data indicates there are no female diviners among the Anufo, following Amadiume’s theory I suggest that female diviners may have been more common among the diverse kinship-based shrines prior to the proliferation of the slave trade. The lack of female diviners is symptomatic of the problem of hyper-masculinization. MacGaffey’s research among the Dagbamba did identify female tindamba. MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 96–97.

²⁶⁵ Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 13.

1.3.6 Section three summary: Divination as a spiritual-social translation process in indigenous pre-colonial time

In the third section of chapter one, I described African religious practice focusing on divination practices and processes. Along the way I have been distilling those aspects of divination that contribute to a description of indigenous pre-colonial translation practices. Amenga-Etego described the process of a tindana and associates going into their territorial shrine and into the earth itself to discern collective agricultural and animal husbandry practices for the coming season. In the going into the land ritual, the land itself is conceived as a significant participant through which a mediated translation process offers collective social guidance.

Focusing more closely on divination practices and processes, I described divination as a mediated translation process used to attune people to the spiritual-social causes of misfortune in their lives. Offenses to spiritual agents are grounded in the local context. Spiritual agents, including the ancestors, are the primary causes of individual and collective misfortune.²⁶⁶ Diviners help people determine spiritual causation through a hermeneutical translational process that depends on three poles: the diviner, the data from the symbols, and the contextual situation of the client in community. Within those three poles, spiritual causation is discerned. Discerning causation does not involve direct communication with spiritual agents; it is a mediated process, a process of translation. The translation process arrives at an interpretation of the client's problem, involving a diagnosis and a remedy of spiritual-social causation. The client is the one who ultimately decides on how to appropriate the interpretation by choosing what action to take. If the action solves the problem, fine. If not, the spiritual-social translation process continues. The problem gets redefined more broadly, as causes are discerned to be on a higher level. I described divination as a spiritual-social translation process that reinforces the social order by trying a series of prescribed solutions to problems that individuals are experiencing in contexts where communities experience similar problems. At the same time divination is an open and repeatable spiritual translation process that helps society confront contradictions it may not otherwise be able to solve. All the options are explored until none is left, and at the end the person is released to God as a legitimized member of society.

²⁶⁶ Ancestors may inhabit features of the landscape, graves, or other shrines, such as calabashes, pots, or other objects in or around the home. Ancestors can remain fickle like humans.

In indigenous pre-colonial time, divination accommodated itself to the societal changes brought about by Islam and the practices of long-distance trade. Divination was and continues to be a pluralist spiritual-social translation practice that responds to changes in people's outlook and changes in their social context, including the changing dynamics of rural and urban life. Divination helps people attempt to balance or calibrate the contradictions they face in their society as people experiment with different value systems that view social morality and social responsibility in different ways. Different diviners and different divination practices have been calibrated to serve these value systems all along the spectrum. Divination was a pluralist practice that influenced related practices. In pre-colonial time as people experimented with different divination practices and different diviners, they were exposed to different ways to view their problems on the spiritual-social level. In this way, divination served as a form of value-system translation, cultural translation, and religious worldview translation.

Because divination was adaptable and because society was willing to experiment with different divination practices, divination revealed itself to have significant intercultural and interreligious translation potential. Divination can be described as having cross-value system translational potential. Perhaps this is one reason why societies in the northern ecumene were able to cope with the violent pre-colonial practices of raiding and trading between them without deteriorating into ongoing violence. Even so, I suggested that the pre-colonial shift toward patriarchal practices is a lamentable result of the slave-trade in the northern ecumene that has ongoing consequences in African social life.

At the beginning of this section I asked how pre-colonial religious translation was useful in dealing with the tremendous economic and social changes that occurred during the pre-colonial era. I wondered how religious translation practice provided a moral check upon indigenous practices of raiding. The divination practices I have described as a process of hermeneutical translation and interpretation oriented to help people solve spiritual-social problems has provided some answers to those questions.

Moral accountability between people outside one's in-group may not have been a concern in pre-colonial African contexts.²⁶⁷ However, all social groups present inside the same territorial

²⁶⁷ "Rather than existing as an entity in itself morality is a function of social relationships. Thus, as the relationship nexus changes between Muslims and non-Muslims or one kinship group and another, so also do

shrine had to relate to the spiritual agents in that place, such as the ancestors, or the spirits of the wild, who were connected quite closely to the fertility of the earth, the trees, the waters, and other features of the territory. When people from nearby territories intermarried, their kinship shrines connected to their territorial shrines became interlinked. People could not live life successfully without engaging across shrines, territories, and social value systems. Diviners, who were sensitive to spiritual-social relations, helped people diagnose the causes of their spiritual-social problems and to redress the spiritual-social imbalances by making offerings to shrines. Diviners were able to do this because the spiritual agents active in these shrines were concerned about the goodness of life inside their territory and homes. Diviners simultaneously remained sensitive to the shifting problems of clients, and the shifting value systems and perspectives of the clients themselves. This patient approach to solving problems through spiritual-social translation helped societies survive violence in the pre-colonial era. However, societies did not emerge from the violence of pre-colonial time unharmed. The attenuation of valuable matricentric practices is one result of those violent times, a reality reflected in most divination practices in the northern ecumene. Nevertheless, divination as a flexible spiritual-social translation practice was key for communities as they struggled in a harsh environment, navigated complicated social relations, and survived the damaging effects of the slave-trade.

I have described the way divination acted as a spiritual-social form of translation with an emphasis on translating and interpreting spiritual causes as a first order of business for solving spiritual-social problems. Now I shift my attention to exploring more direct human to human forms of social communication. In the following section I explore oral tradition as a useful practice for describing indigenous pre-colonial translation practices in the northern ecumene of West Africa.

1.4 Oral tradition as a window to social translation practices in indigenous pre-colonial time

In the fourth section of this chapter, I explore pre-colonial forms of language use in oral tradition as frontier societies developed relationships and alliances with each other. I have two goals in this section related to subsequent chapters in this thesis. First, this section describes how oral tradition worked in performance on particular social occasions in pre-

their moral obligations change to one another.” Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufo of Northern Ghana*, 135.

colonial time. This is an important baseline for the discussion in chapter two, when I discuss how certain genres of oral tradition were translated to support colonial rule. Second, this section emphasizes the way different genres of oral tradition are part of a larger whole, an overall ecology. During the social performance of a funeral in pre-colonial time, many genres of oral poetries contributed to an ongoing social dialogue. The practice of multi-sectoral social dialogue will be important in chapter four as I discuss post-colonial practices of re-translation as dialogical across social sectors.

The performance of oral tradition during particular social occasions was a major way that indigenous societies developed social links across homes, territories, and kinship groups.²⁶⁸ Performing oral tradition included engaging in dialogue using formal speech registers. These speech registers were ways to continue traditions from the past and to calibrate those traditions to the present. Oral tradition includes many genres of formalized speech.

On a particular social occasion, such as a burial or a funeral, many genres of oral poetry are performed over the course of several days. These genres are performed by certain sectors of society at specific times. Taken together, all the oral poetries during burials and funerals contribute to a part of the overall ecology of oral tradition in a culture or set of cultures. Each genre of oral poetry exists in relation to the entire ecology. Each genre of oral poetry is part of a social performance and participates in an ongoing dialogue.

1.4.1 Oral poetry used in burial and funerals

The following chart is a partial and preliminary list of some of the genre of oral poetry used in burial and funerals among the Bikpaṅaab kinship group in Nasuan. These poetic forms exist in relation to a larger ecology of oral poetry.²⁶⁹ The list was developed by the author with the help of young men from the Bikpaṅaab kinship group, the kinship group of ‘first settlers’ in the town of Nasuan where I lived. These poetic genres and the cultural practices associated with them were practiced in the pre-colonial era. During performance, pre-colonial time takes center stage. I have tried to account for the reality that subsequent eras have penetrated the pre-colonial era by employing some appropriate theoretical filters to calibrate

²⁶⁸ Cronin, *Translation in the Digital Age*, 11. Cronin suggests translation helps a community extend outward to complexify its relations while still maintaining its social link, which, according to Christian Grataloup, does not want to be over-stretched. Christian Grataloup, *Faut-il penser autrement l’histoire du monde?* (Paris: Colin, 2011), 44–45.

²⁶⁹ Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*, 215.

for the changes in the way I and others experience these realities in the present. Applying theories to the data help ‘disentangle’ the strands of time so we can look at them without unraveling them. Then when the times are entwined again, in the present lived experience of entangled time, I hope people will better understand the ways in which the past contributes to the lived reality of the present.

The Bikpaṇaab are one kinship group with formal relationships with a number of other kinship groups in the area south of the Gambaga escarpment. An individual home may also be ‘married to’ homes from a number of different kinship groups. Today most of these kinship groups speak dialects of Likɔɔnl and other languages. In Nasuan, during the performance of a funeral, most oral poetry is performed using Likɔɔnl with occasional code-switches into Mampruli, and the peppering of borrowed words throughout. I have heard performances in Mampruli, Kusaal, and Mossi languages interspersed with Likɔɔnl. Even when homes speak different languages, there is significant knowledge of each other’s languages.

In performance of particularly archaic forms of oral poetry, sometimes words or phrases from a language from the distant past are recollected and articulated. These may be remnants of an earlier speech variety used by an ancestor in indigenous pre-colonial time. This is a reminder that what we experience now of pre-colonial time has been refracted in various ways. Eras of time interpenetrate each other.

Table 1 A partial list of poetic styles used in Bikɔɔm burials and funerals

| | | Specific name | Sector of society | Performance notes | Function | Degree of improvisation |
|----|---------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. | After death | Ikpemɔɔr | Women | | Lament | |
| 2. | Music and dancers | Tinachinn | Male ‘in-laws’ are the organizers | in-laws to the dead ‘hire’ musicians and dancers (no words) | Entertain the funeral house | High |
| 3. | Grinding stone death song | Ikpilan | Women (old and young) | Sing while grinding sorghum to prepare for the funeral | | |
| 4. | Women’s dance | Litituunl | Women | An order of service for dancing/singing | | |
| 5. | | Nabanl | Women | | Praise/insult | |

| | | | | | | |
|-----|---|-----------|---|--|-------------------------------------|------|
| 6. | | Ibɔŋal | Women | | Proverbs | |
| 7. | | Imɔchegil | Women | Women act out clearing a fresh land to farm | | |
| 8. | Warrior songs (also during dry funeral greeting day?) | Ijielan | Whole group | March around the house 3x for men 4x for women. On the 3 rd day of the burial when they plaster the grave. Kikatien | | |
| 9. | Funeral dance | Iwalan | Young men | 2 competitive singers, group responds | Praise, insult, proverbial secrets | High |
| 10. | End of funeral dance songs | Isolin | Young men | Same 2 singers | Clan praises followed by fresh song | |
| 11. | in-law dance (2 nd dry funeral only) | Ichalan | Older women – (backed by an older man) | uchalangor leader Ulancheer responder, men dance | Advice to widows, proverbial | High |
| 12. | Epic diviner (dry funeral only) | Tikpobɔɔr | Ubɔɔpiir Diviner colleague Ubɔɔ diviner (men) | The first story is told, then the diviner tells the story again in question form “Did you tell them that...” | An ethnogenesis story | low |
| 13. | Divining (dry only) | Bu tibɔɔr | Diviner with elders | Throw cowrie shells and interpret them | Discover causes | |
| 14. | Purifying the widow (dry) | | | | | |
| 15. | Burying the blood | | Utindaan ‘Territory head’ | | | |
| | Other songs? | Inakpalan | | | | |

1.4.2 Oral tradition as indigenous conversations

John Miles Foley says it well when he argues that the context of communal life is what produces artful communication not for the sake of art, but for the sake of living.²⁷⁰ Similarly, the interest of this chapter is in translation for the sake of living in the pre-colonial era. How did homes from different kinship groups communicate and translate for a better social life?

In the particular event of a person's death, there are several opportunities for various groups within a society to reinforce various aspects of social links between homes and to insert social commentary. After a person dies, a series of poetic genres are performed by men and women who have some relationship to the dead person. There are slots to fill for *mantotiib* 'ritual allies,' *chõortiib* 'those married to the (funeral) home,' fellow kinship group members, and other community members. There are opportunities to perform oral poetry during the burial rites, the wet funeral, and the dry funeral. Burial rites take three days. A wet funeral is usually held within a year or so after the burial during the dry season. It also takes three days to perform. A dry funeral is often held two or more years after the burial and concludes the funeral rites. A dry funeral takes six days to perform.

Those who perform oral poetry at a burial or a funeral, are usually those who are virtuoso performers or emerging performers of a particular formal register of poetic genre. There are some ritual performances that must only be done by certain relatives to the dead. The order of events is generally known. The elders are always overseeing the events. There are some genres that must be done in a prescribed way, others have much more flexibility. Some genres involve sponsored performances where an in-law must 'hire' singers and dancers for the bereaved family. In the chart above, the column labeled "sector of society" indicates whether a genre must be performed by women, men, or other requirements of the occasion. There are opportunities for different sectors of society to perform for one another their laments, their grievances, their insults, their praises, and their jokes. These performances are often sung, taking place over a period of two years or more. Taken together the performances constitute a kind of indigenous social dialogue. They are part of an even larger ecology of poetic forms that depend upon each other and interact with one another.

Funerals are intercultural and interlinguistic events. Sometimes there are two or more performances in two or more languages going on at the same time. In the performance of *iwalan* 'funeral dancing songs' sometimes there are two circles with two singers in each

²⁷⁰ Foley, 189.

circle. There can be different performance languages in each circle. One might be Mampruli while the other might be Likɔ̀nl. In the performance of ichalan ‘in-law songs’ during the dry funeral, there are supposed to be separate dancers and singers for each in-law of the dead.

During the liminal phase after the death of a person in leadership, an old man, a chief, an utindaan ‘territory head,’ or an elderly mother or grandmother of the kinship group, there is a period where particular social relationships are empowered to speak more critically than under normal circumstances. At the time of Nayiri’s funeral, Drucker-Brown argues that the uterine grandchildren, that is the Nayiri’s daughters’ children, are in a particularly unique position. During the reign of Nayiri these uterine grandchildren have access to the court because Nayiri recognizes they are not a threat to his rule. They learn many of the court secrets. But once a new Nayiri is enskinned, the former Nayiri’s grandchildren will be dispossessed of their access to the court. Nayiri’s uterine grandchildren are Mamprusi or Konkomba commoners who, but for an accident of birth having born to women children of Nayiri rather than male children of Nayiri, would be able to contest for chieftaincy. So, during the funeral and through the use of oral performance, these privileged but soon to be dispossessed grandchildren, have opportunity to joke, share secrets, and critique the royals.²⁷¹ Something similar takes place among communities at the kinship group level.

In Drucker-Brown’s description, one sees something of the matricentric bilateral practice that Amadiume asserts is an important ritual and moral basis of African societies.

1.4.3 Translating the performances of oral tradition

In the pre-colonial life world, different kinship groups come together to ritually maintain their social link after the death of one of their interrelated members. During the burial and funerals, an extensive social dialogue takes place, using many poetic genres and involving many sectors of related kinship groups and societies. There is a motivation for people to want to understand the social dialogue, to laugh at the jokes, to hear the secrets, to hear the social criticism, and to glory in the praises. Because funerals involve kinship groups who speak different dialects and languages, and because linguistic capacity and the knowledge of the formal speech registers of oral tradition are always something that is growing among the kinship members, people communicate in a manner that assumes the need for multidirectional translation. Sakai refers to this as heterolingual address. (See section 1.1.4

²⁷¹ Susan Drucker-Brown, “The Grandchildren’s Play at the Mamprusi King’s Funeral: Ritual Rebellion Revisited in Northern Ghana,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 5, no. 2 (June 1999): 181–92.

above.) The performance of a funeral also fuels the desire for understanding, for explanation, for linguistic translation in a narrow sense, and for cultural translation in a broad sense. The performance of a funeral activates a significant social motivation to learn formal speech registers to engage in a dialogue across homes and across territories. People ask each other what is being communicated and provide their own collective translations along the way. Attending funerals and being exposed to formal language across territories offer opportunities to expand communal linguistic capacities, cultural knowledge, and to participate in social dialogue.

1.4.4 Section four summary

I had two goals for this section related to the performance of oral tradition and translation that lay an important foundation for the analysis of colonial and post-colonial translation. I described oral tradition as a series of performances related to particular social occasions, such as burials and funerals. The entire social event is important and the particularities of each performance matter. Establishing the occasional nature of performance genres will be relevant for chapter two's discussion of colonial translation of oral poetry. Second, I highlighted the dialogical nature of performance genre. I emphasized that all these genres exist in relation to one another. They are performed as a kind of multi-sectoral social dialogue. This aspect of oral tradition will be important as I describe the dynamics of post-colonial re-translation in chapter four. I also described the performance of oral tradition as a multilingual event which fuels the desire for multi-directional translation as a necessary component of social dialogue.

The final section of this chapter will lay the foundation for chapter five of this thesis, where I will discuss women's agency in post-colonial re-translation.

1.5 Highlighting women's roles related to translation in the pre-colonial era

In the pre-colonial life world during the performance of a funeral, sectors of women and men have significant opportunities to use their voices for social commentary in the performance of poetic genre. In this section I will further explore the roles of women as translators between homes from different kinship groups, located within different territories. In addition to women translating, women were "translated" between homes.²⁷² While the practice of

²⁷² Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991* (London; New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Granta Books; In association with Viking, 1991), 117. One does not need to "borne across the world" to be "translated."

exchanging women was not the only practice of the pre-colonial era, it was a practice that emerged in the pre-colonial era and continues as a social practice in areas south of the Gambaga escarpment. When I speak about women being translated, I am consciously using an older definition of translation from the Latin: “to carry across from one place to another.”

Discussing women’s agency in pre-colonial life-worlds will provide an important foundation for chapter five of this thesis, when I discuss women’s agency in post-colonial re-translation for liberation. I ask, how are women being translated? When and where do women translate? When do women translate for themselves?

1.5.1 Women as transactions between kinship groups?

In his classic late colonial era anthropological study of Konkomba kinship groups in northern Ghana, David Tait argues that marriage between Konkomba societies involved an “exchange of goods against the rights *over* women.”²⁷³ How does Tait’s claim look when viewed from the theoretical lenses I have chosen to help the reader perceive the variety of practices in indigenous pre-colonial time?

According to Kopytoff’s frontier thesis, kinship groups ‘owned’ all of their members, both male and female. The assertion of individual autonomy was not effective for survival on the frontier. Given that kinship groups on the frontiers needed to attract people to gain more agricultural workers and to generate small surpluses for their collective, they also needed to reproduce kinship group members without losing the integrity of their groupings. If women were viewed as the mobile members of society then it would follow that kinship groups would exchange goods for the rights over women in order to reproduce.

To make such an arrangement work, complex rules were needed to make sure the trades were equal with preventions for inbreeding. The rules of marital transactions among kinship groups were controlled by the elders. The oldest man of the kinship group was called the *uyudaan*, the ‘owner of the heads’ of that kinship group. Kinship groups established themselves on the frontier once they had enough people to survive, a modest surplus controlled by the elders, and systems in place for social life. As the groups got larger, such that they could not be administrated fairly, some men and women might split off and go to the frontier to establish a society similar to the one they left, but in a space that offers the opportunity for more control of the processes and resources.

²⁷³ Tait, *The Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, 105, 113. (Emphasis added.)

It is important to recall as I argued in section 1.2.4.3 above that Amadiume, drawing on Diop, argues that men, not women, were the mobile element in early indigenous pre-colonial societies. Husbands came to wives. Men provided agricultural labor for access to women's daughters.²⁷⁴ Amadiume points out that Lévi-Strauss's alliance theory underlies many of the arguments that see women as objects to be exchanged by men.²⁷⁵ Amadiume argues that rather than focusing on movement and ownership, scholars should focus on the African notion of collectivism and usufruct access to the land. This will return scholars to the fundamental tri-partite relationship between mother, daughter, and son.²⁷⁶

While the current perception in northern Ghana is that men stay in their paternally controlled territorial shrine, Amadiume and Diop's argument make us wonder whether this has always been the case. The practice of men working for a number of years in order to marry a younger woman could easily be practiced in a way where the man was the mobile element of society. Even in current marital practices, many wives reside in their paternal natal community rather than in the home of their husband. Amadiume estimates that indigenous practices began to change 500 years ago and were sped up by the slave-trade, arguing that pre-colonial society has been evolving toward stronger patricentric practices. In early indigenous pre-colonial time society may have been structured such that women stayed in the locations of their mothers and men were the mobile element of society.

Currently, in northern Ghana, the dominant memory of pre-colonial time is that women were the mobile element of society. Rosemary Amenga-Etego describes a woman's identity as split between participation and membership in her natal home attached to her father's lineage, and participation and membership in the home of her husband attached to his father's lineage. At marriage ownership of a woman is transferred from her natal group to her husband's natal group. But this transfer is not total; she retains some link to her natal home and her father's kinship group throughout her life.²⁷⁷ When women die, ritual processes must take place in her married home before her funeral is brought back to her natal home, at which point other

²⁷⁴ Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 74–77.

²⁷⁵ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. Translated from the French by James Harle Bell, John Richard von Sturmer, and Rodney Needham, Ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969). In relation to translation and the metaphors of invasion, see also Chamberlain's aforementioned critique of Steiner's reliance on Lévi-Strauss Chamberlain, "Gender and the Metaphors of Translation," 320–21.

²⁷⁶ Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 75.

²⁷⁷ Amenga-Etego, *Mending the Broken Pieces*, 166–67; 255–56.

rituals must be performed.²⁷⁸ This split or dual kinship identity has social and material consequences. Women are restricted from ritual privileges in society. Women do not participate in the inheritance of land or animals in either of their kinship groups.²⁷⁹ To use Tait's analysis, women illustrate the principle of the "extended home," a principle that operates between homes within two kinship groups that are typically located across territories.²⁸⁰ The effect of transferring a woman between two houses, or sets of women between a series of houses, creates the potential for bonding across kinship group lines. One could view women as matrilineal glue that brought disparate sets of kinship groups into a potentially more cohesive unit. When kinship groups spoke different dialects and languages, the women functioned as linguistic and cultural teachers. Alternatively, sometimes kinship groups engaged in cycles of competition with each other. During those times, marriage and disputes over women caused feuding.²⁸¹

1.5.2 Pre-colonial structural compensation for women's roles: An issue of entanglement

In the pre-colonial era in the northern ecumene, the economy was subsistence based, and the cultural 'rules' were set up for that era's economy and structure. Amenga-Etego's research among her own Nankani people indicates that the pre-colonial rules made it such that

women had control over their property regardless of its nature or quantity. Properties which consisted of small portions of diverse foodstuffs and other items were properly preserved and kept for emergencies in women's storage pots in their *detinma* (round huts), traditionally known as *toollumm* (warmth or heat). Men were barred by taboo to search or take anything from these... Women's *toollumm* items, although often used for the family's welfare, were privately owned.²⁸²

The same structure holds across many societies in the northern ecumene. One could argue that this rule was a structural compensation given a woman's disadvantaged position due to

²⁷⁸ These rituals are linked to matricentric shrine practices discussed in section three of this chapter.

²⁷⁹ Women cannot own land. They can own a garden behind the house for vegetables. Domestic animals are traditionally for the man. Women can own cattle, sheep, goats, and fowls, but cannot inherit animals. Amenga-Etego, *Mending the Broken Pieces*, 167.

²⁸⁰ Tait, *The Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, 101. The extended home is similar to Lentz's principle of yir described in section 1.1.4 above.

²⁸¹ Tait, 148.

²⁸² Amenga-Etego, *Mending the Broken Pieces*, 279–80. While Amenga-Etego is an indigenous member of Nankani society, this information was obtained in dialogue with Ayogwine Awuni.

her dual identity in the kinship society structure. This rule is part of the life world of the pre-colonial era that has been embedded in the present. As the trade and technological realities of subsequent eras have shifted, how has the rule shifted? One obvious change in the colonial and post-colonial eras is the transition from a subsistence economy to a cash economy. The influence of the cash economy was sped up by colonization and has contributed to a number of cultural changes. Kirby has identified the following changes: inheritance practices shifted from father to son, marriage patterns changed, divorce increased, breakdown of alliances through marriage, loss of power and prestige among the elders, breakdown in the division of labor, and the accumulation of capital among the female population.²⁸³

I will pick up on Kirby's last point, the issue of accumulation of capital among the female population, as an issue of entanglement. One could argue that the transition to a cash economy demands adjustment to the pre-colonial cultural rules. Men in the regions of the northern part of Ghana are increasingly feeling marginalized in the cash economy and the perception is that women's private ownership of goods enables women to be containers of private wealth in a manner that is in some sense perceived by men as unfair. In many cases this results in an increase in women being accused of witchcraft because, it is claimed, women do not share their private goods with the kinship group. Women are accumulating goods as a result of their businesses in the cash economy, but it is claimed, unlike men, they do not have a cultural obligation to share with the broader kinship group. However, recall that in the pre-colonial era, women linked a house within their natal kinship group to a house within their married kinship group. Is that kind of linkage still happening? And is it happening in a way that benefits men as much or more than women?

Amenga-Etego argues that in a patriarchal context in the post-colonial era, men find ways to manipulate a woman's status as a container of private wealth for their own ends. Locks can be broken, and bags and pots can be broken into. And while the greed of the individual is one characteristic of anti-life sorcery, it is a characteristic that men also participate in, and yet it is women who receive the brunt of the blame for social greed.

Amenga-Etego indicates that many northern women feel that pre-colonial cultural traditions served to maintain practices that were intrinsically unfair to women. Amenga-Etego observes that many women are breaking with tradition in the present. They are not content to perpetuate pre-colonial traditions that maintain patriarchal domination. Mercy Amba

²⁸³ Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufo of Northern Ghana*, 214. See note 57.

Oduyoye's social and theological work among the Circle of Concerned Women makes similar claims.²⁸⁴ While some scholars have pointed out that the oppression of women in the pre-colonial era can be overemphasized,²⁸⁵ Oduyoye warns against the danger of what she calls "basking in the glory of 'old shells' retained to govern social relationships, when the material causes that gave rise to those structures are no more, or are fast fading away."²⁸⁶

There is a crucial need for critical and discerning analysis of the past. African communities must do the hard work of recovering indigenous practices, while acknowledging that the material basis of the pre-colonial life world has significantly shifted. The pre-colonial past was entangled with life-giving and death-doling trajectories. Acts of appropriating the past require careful hermeneutical calibration. Scholars working with communities need to be explicit about the tools they use to appropriate the past, and their purposes. The explicit intention to reconstruct life-giving practices in the present will be the subject of chapters three through six.

1.5.3 Women as cultural translators and technology sharers

Amenga-Etego describes a woman's role in society as follows. First, she argues, "Hers is to expand the family networks, through in-law relationships and later through her offspring."²⁸⁷ Second, her role is to help the men in her life with their tasks. For example, a woman is expected to help men in agricultural labor.

²⁸⁴ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995); Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa*, Theology in Africa Series (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004).

²⁸⁵ In her biographical portrait of Yaa Akyawaa Yikwan, Ivor Wilks argues that among elite Akan women, when they became post-menopausal, women were eligible to become elders. They no longer posed a danger and were considered "ritual men." Ivor Wilks, *Forests of Gold: Essays on the Akan and the Kingdom of Asante* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993), 335. The impact of the colonial era on the Akan courts increased patriarchal power and decreased the influence of older women and women in general. Takyiwaa Manuh, "The Asantehemaa's Court and Its Jurisdiction over Women: A Study in Legal Pluralism," *Institute of African Studies Research Review* 4, no. 2 (1988): 55; Stephan Miescher, "Becoming an *Ɔpanyin*: Elders, Gender, and Masculinities in Ghana since the Nineteenth Century," in *Africa after Gender?*, ed. Catherine M. Cole, Takyiwaa Manuh, and Stephan Miescher (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 264–65.

²⁸⁶ Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands*, 75.

²⁸⁷ Amenga-Etego, "Marriage without Sex? Same-Sex Marriages and Female Identity among the Nankani of Northern Ghana," 20.

Keeping Amenga-Etego's analysis of a woman's role in mind, I return to Cronin's claim that the function of translation was to maintain the social link between societies who were crossing greater distances due to advances in technology, such as the control of horses, guns, and books. Among societies that have a technological and trade advantage, how do women function as translators to help maintain the social link between societies? How might women be useful not only in expanding a dominant society's influence, but also in bringing some form of equalization between groups in which one has a technological and trade advantage over the other?

With both Amenga-Etego and Cronin's analysis in mind, I return to Kopytoff's analysis of a particular type of frontier society—the society that had a technological advantage in a metropole near a frontier. In those cases, one can imagine that some sector within the metropole, was disadvantaged. In pursuit of more autonomy, such groups moved to a perceived internal African frontier. Upon arrival, the new group attempts to recreate the structure of the metropole society in a new context, taking the technological advantage with them into the frontier. The frontier society expands the border and reach of the metropole and helps them expand their reach into the frontier to acquire more goods useful for trade. By 1750, the major resource for trade in the world economy was human slaves.

In the region of pre-colonial northern Ghana, some groups established themselves by migrating into frontier areas with a technological advantage of horses, guns, and writing. Sometimes those groups who had control of technology established themselves as 'royal.' Other groups around them were fused into that society at a lower level, perhaps as 'household slaves'²⁸⁸ or 'commoners' or with special offices for their head men as 'elders.' Men of the royal group marry daughters of leading men among the subordinate group.²⁸⁹ In a kinship group with a patrilineal kinship pattern their children retain royal status, but only the male children can pass on that status to their grandchildren. The daughters of royal men marry men from the subordinate groups, classified as household slaves or commoners. Eventually their children and grandchildren might become commoner men who are different from royals but

²⁸⁸ The term 'household slave' indicates that an entire group of people are subordinate to another group of people, sometimes within the same kinship group. In that case, one might be the major lineage, and the other the minor lineage. Alternatively, one kinship group is historically established as subservient to another with respect to first rights and inheritance.

²⁸⁹ In some particularly violent renditions of history the tindamba were killed off after the marriage of their daughters to the dominant group.

not wholly different. Part of the reason for this is that royal women teach their children the language and culture of their natal home. The women are the linguistic and cultural translators for their commoner children. Furthermore, in the culture of the region, a mother's brother has a cultural obligation to share materially with his nephews. Eventually, what will happen? If care is not taken, the technological advantage and knowledge advantage of the royals will be minimized. What is now left is the preservation of tradition regarding their superiority, but its technological advantage has been reduced.²⁹⁰

If this technological advantage is reduced, but royal status is not conferred, the children or grandchildren of royal daughters married to commoner men or household slaves might leave their metropolises and move towards a perceived frontier. They might also be ejected to the frontier with a demand for tribute to the metropole. However it happened, whether by ejection or choice, the commoner children or grandchildren went to the frontier in the same way their royal maternal uncles and maternal grandfathers came to their paternal grandparents with their horses, guns, sacred books, and the culture of the dominant metropole. In the new location, they replicate the structure of the metropole on the frontier. Those who were commoners at home in the metropole could effectively mimic and replace the royals on the frontier.²⁹¹ Whenever a group moved from a metropole to a frontier, they needed to incorporate women from the firstcomer societies. At a certain point in the future, the process could replicate again.

There is a clear patriarchal bias in the reconstruction I just articulated. Holding to patrilineal practices of royalty seemed to require ongoing expansion and subordination.

1.5.4 Section five summary: Affirming and critiquing the pre-colonial treatment of women
Our discussion of oral traditions as indigenous dialogue revealed that the pre-colonial era offered women platforms to express their social voice in the community using oral poetic forms. Women helped teach language, culture, and speech register from their natal home and

²⁹⁰ There were ways to maintain distinctions. Kirby indicates that "slave children of royals were called *kpongɔɔɔm* (horse attendants), a term of abuse tantamount to slave." Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufo of Northern Ghana*, 46.

²⁹¹ Kirby, 44–49. Kirby refers to commoners located in the first metropole of Mango as "Commoners" with a capital "C." Subsequent iterations of this process in frontiers like Nalori, he refers to as commoners with a lower-case c.

community to their married home and community. However, women were not accorded as significant a place as men in the hierarchy of the kinship group.

In the pre-colonial era kinship groups ‘owned’ all their members. At some point in their development, kinship groups south of the Gambaga escarpment began the practice of exchanging labor for women, moving a woman’s kinship membership from one group to another, and in the process, women helped bring houses closer together. Women were the matricentric glue connecting homes across patricentrically organized territories. Women taught language, culture, technological knowledge, and contributed to expanding zones of trade. The kinship groups of the pre-colonial era recognized that women played an important role. They recognized a woman made sacrifices by having a dual identity such that they did not inherit animals or receive farmland even though they were kinship group members. A structural accommodation was made to compensate materially for a woman’s loss. A woman kept items of private property in her *toollumm*. Society recognized her sacrifice as a cultural translator and made a compensation.

Amenga-Etego’s description of women’s experience in the entangled present highlights the lack of agency and lack of individual personhood that many women feel. In the post-colonial era people look nostalgically at the pre-colonial era “basking in the glory of ‘old shells’,”²⁹² but they often misread it through colonial lenses. As Oduyoye argued, the material basis that undergirded the pre-colonial life world has significantly shifted. This recognition demands scholars improve the lenses they offer to African communities so they can see if this or that lens helps them interpret their entangled experience of the pre-colonial era more authentically. Once society’s experiences of the pre-colonial world are reinterpreted more authentically, society can begin to affirm and critique pre-colonial practices. This is important because the post-colonial life world is still under construction. Society can affirm life-giving practices within their pre-colonial experience, so society can build upon them in a life-giving way over and against neo-colonial practices that are also struggling to bring back the pre-colonial era as viewed through colonial-era lenses.

1.6 Chapter summary of pre-colonial translation practices

Northern Ghanaian languages describe translation as a process of language turning. How was that suggestive concept of translation filled out by concrete practices in pre-colonial time? The goal of this chapter was to use a set of theoretical lenses to help identify and clarify

²⁹² Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands*, 75.

indigenous practices of translation in the pre-colonial era. Mbembe's notion of entanglement led me to expect a diversity of pre-colonial practices from which several future worlds were possible. Using a specifically selected set of theoretical tools, I attempted to temporarily disentangle a number of strands of interrelated pre-colonial translation practices so that when the times are entwined again in the present time of entanglement, scholars may have a better sense of the ways pre-colonial time interlocks with colonial and post-colonial time. As I will argue in chapters four through six, it is my contention that scholars engage in dialogue with African communities around these issues using emancipatory practices of re-translation.

In the second section I introduced the geographic and the social context of the Gambaga escarpment as the contextual locus for this thesis. I described the Gambaga escarpment, and the northern ecumene of which it is a part, as a pre-colonial African frontier. Into that frontier I described four settlement patterns and four language and translation practices using the trade, translation, and technology paradigm of social expansion to synthesize their interrelationships. I argued that the escarpment attracted diverse groups of settlers.

Frequently, groups of settlers combined in order to acquire the numbers necessary to survive in a marginally fertile environment. They used fictive relations to fuse into kinship groups. Settlers relied on heterolingual speech practices, language learning, and collective translation to communicate in multilingual contexts. A major reason this worked is because the diverse groups of settlers who came from different linguistic groups shared similar cultural and moral values. For example, Kopytoff argues settlers shared the value of firstness, and Grillo argues that settlers shared matrifocal morality. The indigenous development of horse technology may have provided the material basis for the emerging royal class consciousness, which in turn developed the ritual politics of *nam* that helped expand ritual-political alliances with many kinship-based groups across a number of local territories. The politics of *nam* paved the way for trade across territories, simultaneously calling for alliances with Muslim traders. Hausa-speaking Muslim traders provided the linguistic, religious, cultural, and writing practices that fueled long-distance trade across West Africa in the pre-colonial era. Muslim traders depended on local alliances with ritual kingdoms to protect trade and markets in local areas.

The world economic demand for slaves grew in the pre-colonial era, and the resource of human bodies were available anywhere people could be raided. Kinship-based societies were vulnerable to being raided. Some groups became suppliers of human slaves by combining the technologies of horses, guns, and military strategy. Successful metropole societies, like the

Dagbamba and the Anufɔ developed and expanded their raid and trade practices by settling further into the frontier areas where other disparate kinship groups were living and migrating. Many disparate kinship groups allied themselves with raiding societies. They were drawn into the lower levels of Dagbamba and Anufɔ kingdoms as either commoners or slaves. Many diffuse kinship groups also formed alliances of opposition and protection with one another, using their own set of strategies and the rocky environment of the escarpment for survival. This resulted in emerging language similarities for dialects of Mɔɔr (Bimoba) and Likɔɔnl (Komba) in the area around the escarpment. In the subsequent colonial-era the common use of language would contribute to emerging ethnic identities.

In the third section I described African religious practices of divination as contextually grounded practices of translation that helped communities survive the environment and the violence of the slave trade in the pre-colonial era. I described divination as mediated translation and interpretation of social-spiritual causes of individual and collective problems. The many spiritual agents active in local contexts are perceived to be the cause of individual and social problems. The office of diviner engages in a hermeneutical translation process using three poles: the diviner, the data from the diviner's symbols, and the social context of the client to interpret the spiritual cause of the problem. The spiritual-social translation process arrives at an interpretation: a diagnosis of the problem and a prescription for its solution. A client may engage with several diviners in pursuit of solving the problem he or she is facing. If the prescribed solutions do not work, the client pursues answers from broader based shrines that address broader based problems: from personal shrines, to kinship shrines, to territorial shrines. Divination serves to both enforce the social order and slowly expand the way society deals with problems. The emergence of Islam and changes in trade brought a second value system into society, and divination adapted itself to the changes society was experiencing. Thus, divination showed itself to be a pluralist religious tool that has significant intracultural and intercultural potential for helping people address and cope with the contradictions in their social value systems. Divination as a patient spiritual-social translation tool helped societies survive materially, spiritually, and socially. Divination helped them overcome the harshness of their environment, the complexity of community relations, and the violence of the slave trade in the pre-colonial era. Translation in indigenous pre-colonial time was a contextually grounded spiritual-social translation and interpretative praxis.

In the fourth section I focused on social practices of communication and translation through the lens of the study of oral tradition. I described the occasional nature of performances and

the concept of an ecology of oral poetic genres. Poetic genres depend upon one other and interact with one another as part of social performance and social dialogue. This section lays the foundation for understanding how oral poetics work in order to better understand how oral poetics were appropriated and transformed during the colonial era, as I discuss in chapter two. Furthermore, the sectoral and dialogical nature of oral tradition provides a foundation for post-colonial practices of sectoral re-translation, as I discuss in chapters four through six.

The fifth section builds on the dialogical practice of oral tradition by focusing on the role of women in pre-colonial translation. I engaged the theoretical debate regarding patricentric and matricentric social organization in the pre-colonial era. It appears that as the pre-colonial era evolved in the northern ecumene, patricentric habitation practices became the norm. Women became the mobile component of social life. Women were ‘translated’ across homes and territories. In the process, they became language and cultural translators across homes and territories. Their identities became dual. At marriage, their primary natal kinship group was transferred to their husband’s lineal kinship group. The material results of this arrangement disadvantaged women from land ownership, some forms of animal ownership, and from inheritance practices. I discussed an issue of entanglement related to women’s *toollumm*, the private property that was a structural compensation for their disadvantaged position related to their dual identity. I discussed the different ways men and women view pre-colonial practices in the entangled present time. The colonial era has colored the way pre-colonial practices are viewed in the present. This section provides a baseline for chapter five where I discuss the agency of women as translators in the paradigm of post-colonial re-translation for liberation.

Chapter two builds on the discussion of indigenous pre-colonial translation practices. I argue that colonial translation constructed pre-colonial practices to serve the interests of colonial political and economic control. Colonial translation drew a picture of itself as a more developed and improved version of the pre-colonial era. The results of colonial translation persist in the way pre-colonial world is viewed in the entangled present of neo-colonial post-colonial time.

2 Chapter 2 Colonial translation of/as invasion

2.1 Introduction

In chapter one I attempted to describe the life worlds of the pre-colonial era and the practices of ‘the process of language turning’ or ‘translation’ within pre-colonial life worlds.²⁹³ The theoretical lenses I used were intended to highlight the multiple trajectories of practice in that era. I chose lenses that helped me describe that era in a diverse manner, attempting to avoid describing the pre-colonial era as a convenient prelude or a contrast to the ‘progress’ of the colonial era.

In chapter two I transition to describing colonial era translation practices. Colonial translation translated pre-colonial realities, transforming them into something new and more useful for colonial rule. I argue colonial translation was a significant part of that larger ideological process intended to support colonial invasion and administration of the Volta Basin, including what is now called northern Ghana. The chapter begins with a discussion of the strategy and economics behind colonial invasion. After invasion, colonizers had to engage in administration, which necessitated practices of translation. The philosophy behind colonial rule has been described in two different ways, direct rule and indirect rule. Implementing direct rule required that colonial administrators work with chiefs to try to implement their governance policies through translational interaction.²⁹⁴ Colonial administrators communicated with Muslim imams in Hausa who acted as intermediaries for the Dagbamba chiefs.

The religious outlook of the Muslim translators raises the issue of the role of religion in early colonial translational interactions. Colonial administrators wanted religion to serve as a vehicle to translate the logic of colonial rule to the people. Any religious practice that fomented resistance was viewed as a threat and dealt with accordingly. As long as there was no resistance to colonial rule, administrators, translators, and chiefs focused on the work of

²⁹³ See footnote 22, above.

²⁹⁴ Following Nord, I distinguish translational action from textual translation. Drawing on Action Theory, functionalist theorists argue translators facilitate acts that seek to bring about or prevent change in the world. Christiane Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1997), 16–17,

<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=756160>.

administration, which involved a process of creating mental maps and (mis)translating concepts into one another.

With the shift to indirect rule in 1929, colonial administrators sponsored textual translations of pre-colonial genres of oral tradition. I focus on textual translations from the drum poetry called 'lunsi.' The genre of lunsi was used in performance to praise chiefly patrilineal families for their past feats of *nam*. For example, a drum poet was sponsored by a chief to praise his ancestors for the successful raids they had carried out and the victories they had won. Colonial administrators sponsored translators to translate instances of lunsi into the genre of written historiography. Specific occasional oral performances of lunsi that recalled the successful raids of an ancestor became the written history of invasion by Dagbamba chiefs of the lands in the Northern Territories. These written translations *of* invasion were attached to customary constitutions for northern kingdoms and were useful in supporting the rational substructure of colonial invasion and indirect rule by rights of conquest. Similar colonial acts of translating oral tradition resulted in 'customary' law, which provided chiefs with a useful tool to extract resources from the peasantry to support themselves and the colonial overlords. Taken together, these acts of translation supported a system of 'ranked ethnicity,' which is a kind of ethnic caste system.

Drawing on the work of other scholars, I evaluate the ideology of the pre-colonial invasion narrative. I describe the translation *of* invasion *as* a form of cultural invasion. Colonial translation was invasive because it transformed pre-colonial 'custom' from a diversity of dialogical perspectives, using diverse genres, into a singular authoritative perspective. Colonial translations were translational reductions of pre-colonial genres and sectoral perspectives. These translational reductions were repeated as historical 'facts' in government policies, courts, and schools. These translational reductions facilitated the creation of law useful in the extraction of resources from local contexts, and was backed up with colonial force by soldiers and chief's police. From this descriptive data about colonial translation practices, I develop a theory of translation as invasion, which I describe as acts of cultural translation in service to the colonial capitalist system. To a great extent, the process of translation itself was transformed by the colonial translation as invasion model. The focus of translation shifted from the process of turning language into the production of a useful translated artifact that established hierarchy. The last part of the chapter discusses a range of indigenous and neo-indigenous responses to colonial acts of translation in the colonial era. Finally, I chart those responses in terms of their level of ideological awareness of what

colonial translation and colonization more generally were doing to (neo-)indigenous bodies in the world they inhabited.

2.2 Colonial Invasion

There was a significant passage of time between the end of the legal slave trade in the British Empire (1807) and colonial invasion of the Volta Basin (1896). The changing economic factors transformed the social conditions. During this time, missionary-colonial Christianity emerged in southern Ghana, as did the corresponding practice of missionary-colonial Bible translation. I discuss these developments in chapter three. (See also sections 2.3.1 and 2.5.3 of this chapter.)

The slave trade did not end in 1807, because not all European nations outlawed it. Eventually the economic transformation of trade from a slave-based economy to a consumer goods-based economy would eventually be more profitable for Europeans. The gradual reduction of the slave-trade meant that the northern ecumene was no longer integrally connected to the world economy. The north no longer had goods the world economy needed. The north was not necessary for European economic interests, except that the north provided a buffer between competing European nations who wanted access to the profitable agricultural and raw material markets in the forest regions to the south.

Prior to actual contact with the area north of the forest regions and north of Asante kingdom, the British, German, and French colonizers had heard reports based on European interviews of Muslim traders and imams living in Kumasi of a large and powerful Muslim kingdom north of the Asante kingdom, ruled by a Muslim king.²⁹⁵ Colonial governments hoped that they could form an alliance with these Muslim kingdoms and traders to weaken the power of the Asante in central and southern Gold Coast.²⁹⁶ A French expedition carried out by L.G. Binger explored some of the areas of Dagbon in 1888. Binger believed there were large populations of Muslims in Karaga.²⁹⁷ But the research of the Fanti official George Ekem Ferguson, who traveled extensively in the north in 1892 and 1895, disabused the British of

²⁹⁵ Holger Weiss, "European Images of Islam in the Northern Hinterlands of the Gold Coast through the Early Colonial Period," *Sudanic Africa* 12 (2001): 87–94.

²⁹⁶ Holger Weiss, "Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam and Muslims in Northern Ghana, Ca. 1900-1930," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 25, no. 1 (2005): 76. Weiss, "European Images of Islam in the Northern Hinterlands of the Gold Coast through the Early Colonial Period," 101–2.

²⁹⁷ Weiss, "European Images of Islam in the Northern Hinterlands of the Gold Coast through the Early Colonial Period," 97.

ideas that powerful Muslim kingdoms were operating in the north.²⁹⁸ Several military German expeditions were carried out in the 1890s that eventually confirmed for the Germans the basic content of Ferguson's survey.²⁹⁹ Nevertheless, the kingdoms that were there could still be useful allies for governing purposes.

Great Britain invaded the Volta Basin (of which contemporary northern Ghana is a part) from the south in 1896. They did this after they had invaded Kumasi and ended the Asante hegemony in the south. Germany invaded the eastern portion of the Volta Basin in 1896. France invaded the northern areas that water the Volta Basin. The economic factors, which influenced why Great Britain, Germany, and France chose to invade and control parts of the Volta Basin, has been succinctly described by Wallerstein. As long as the British enjoyed hegemony over the world economy, as they did from 1815-1873, they were content to leave remote areas of Africa outside their governance, slowly bringing them into a peripheral, but dependent and intertwined, relationship with the world capitalist economy. However, the economic crisis of 1873 changed the rules of the game. France, Germany, and the United States were now openly challenging Britain's hegemony. France and Germany sought to "seal off" markets from Great Britain through colonization, and Britain proceeded to join in what has been called "the scramble for Africa."³⁰⁰

From the perspective of African communities, foreign administration began in 1896 in the final rush in the scramble for Africa. The Volta Basin was surrounded by Europeans, the heart of the Basin was controlled by the British, who hoisted their flag in Gambaga,³⁰¹ while the Germans encamped in Sansanne-Mango, controlling the eastern portion of the basin, with translators going between them.³⁰² Germany invaded Yendi twice in 1896 and again in 1900,

²⁹⁸ Weiss, "Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam and Muslims in Northern Ghana, Ca. 1900-1930," 76-77. Ferguson recognized the intermediary role of the Muslim imams. A similar situation existed among the Akan. However, early colonial administrators seemed to think that the Imams were more powerful than the Dagbamba chiefs. See A. E. G. Watherston, "The Northern Territories of the Gold Coast," *Journal of the Royal African Society* 7, no. 28 (1908): 349.

²⁹⁹ Weiss, "European Images of Islam in the Northern Hinterlands of the Gold Coast through the Early Colonial Period," 97-103.

³⁰⁰ Wallerstein, "The Three Stages of African Involvement in the World-Economy," 38-39.

³⁰¹ For reasons of trade aided by the presence of a Muslim community Gambaga was regarded as the capital of Mamprugu by outsiders even though in the late 17th century Na Atabia moved his chieftaincy five miles to the east in Nalerigu. Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa*, 131.

³⁰² Drucker-Brown, *Ritual Aspects of the Mamprusi Kingship*, 99.

after which they raised their flag in Yendi.³⁰³ French soldiers made their base in Ouagadougou and controlled the northern portion of the basin where water sources flowed to the south. But similar to the indigenous ‘state’ societies in the pre-colonial era, Great Britain, Germany, and France also ran into the problem of maintaining administrative material oversight over so many groups of people over such large tracts of land, land with poor infrastructure and internal instability.³⁰⁴

From the British perspective, they had gained control of their portion of the Volta Basin, what they called the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, as a defensive move to prevent their European rivals from gaining access to the trade routes from Kumasi to the north. With no plans for British immigrants to come and settle the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast and with a limitation in how much they could invest in the area, colonial administrators were not clear what to do with the Northern Territories, except that the area must be administered with as little cost as possible. The stated colonial administrative goal in the Northern Territories was to open the country for commercial trade.³⁰⁵ To do that, they had to pacify the area, mobilize labor to carry goods, and build roads.³⁰⁶ The key institution to implement those policies for Great Britain was the chief.³⁰⁷ But they also needed the help of intermediaries, Hausa-speaking Muslim imams and traders.

2.2.1 Direct rule

In the early stages of occupation and administration of the Northern Territories, colonial officials were largely ignorant of the dynamics of the north. Officials desired to communicate their policies to one head whom they hoped would have the authority to implement that policy over large numbers of people and over large swaths of land. Early on, officials

³⁰³ Weiss, “European Images of Islam in the Northern Hinterlands of the Gold Coast through the Early Colonial Period,” 97.

³⁰⁴ A.A. Iliasu, “The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937,” *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 16, no. 1 (June 1975): 1.

³⁰⁵ Iliasu, 1. Lieutenant-Colonel H.P. Northcott was concerned that competing colonial powers occupying various parts of trade routes would hamper the trade route between Hausaland, Mossi land, and the Northern Territories.

³⁰⁶ Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 33. I want to note that the colonial building of roads in the 1920s is a significant factor which transformed access to markets, economic power, and ethnicity into the latter part of the 20th century in northern Ghana, a topic I will discuss in chapter six.

³⁰⁷ Lentz, 35; Iliasu, “The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937,” 2.

discovered there were no “really big chiefs.”³⁰⁸ This would have been a disappointment to the British who had hoped, based on colonial reports, that there were powerful kingdoms in the north. But after they arrived the research of Ferguson was proven true. Ferguson’s analysis of the nature of the practice of Islam in the north also proved correct. The Muslim imams were close to the chiefs and served as “intermediaries” between rulers and visiting strangers.³⁰⁹ British officials engaged in a process of direct administration or *direct rule*, fostering and fashioning the power of chiefs in a manner that fit their preferences until a time when administration could be handed over to chiefs capable of ruling in an efficient manner for the empire.³¹⁰

Officials relied on Muslim imams as intermediaries and translators between them and the chiefs they sought to work with.³¹¹ The chief most available to the British was Nayiri Na Barega, the king of Mamprugu, whose palace was located in Nalerigu, only a few kilometers from Gambaga, the first British seat of authority in the north.³¹² British officials

³⁰⁸ “Colonial Reports-Annual , No. 586, 'Report on the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast by Col. Watherston, Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories Accounts and Papers lxviii, (1908), pp. 72 quoted in Iliasu, “The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937,” 2.

³⁰⁹ Weiss, “European Images of Islam in the Northern Hinterlands of the Gold Coast through the Early Colonial Period,” 96. Weiss cites George Ekem Ferguson, *The Papers of George Ekem Ferguson: A Fanti Official of the Government of the Gold Coast, 1890-1897; Edited with Introd. and Notes by Kwame Arhin.* (Leiden: Afrika-Studiecentrum, 1974), 110, 112.

³¹⁰ Iliasu quotes the reasons cited by Colonel Watherston regarding the necessity of direct rule. “The reasons he himself gave include ‘the absence of really big chiefs [and] the breakup of what were kingdoms to a certain extent by Samory and Babatu and the consequent independence of many small communities’, the lack of any common laws concerning land, matrimony, and so on, even among peoples speaking one language and, finally, ‘the absolute imbecility of 60 per cent of the present elected chiefs’, particularly those among the Lobi, Dagaba and Gurunsi, whom he suspected had been elected ‘because of their incapacity to make anyone obey them.’ “Colonial Reports-Annual , No. 586, 'Report on the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast by Col. Watherston, Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories Accounts and Papers lxviii, (1908), pp. 72 quoted in Iliasu, “The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937,” 2.

³¹¹ Weiss, “Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam and Muslims in Northern Ghana, Ca. 1900-1930,” 77; Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa*, 124–26.

³¹² The British were aware of several chieftaincies in the Volta Basin who were involved in trade and raiding. Nayiri, king of Mamprugu, was the senior of the chiefs by tradition was the most influential chief located in British territory. The king of Gonja, Yabonwira was located in Salaga and also under British control. Ya Na king of Dagbon was located in Yendi, which was in German territory. The king of Anufɔ, located in Sansanne

communicated with Muslim translators in Hausa. The British officials concluded that although the authority of Nayiri was undeniably limited to small portions of land in the present; however, in the past they believed, or were led to believe, that Nayiri had ruled over a much larger kingdom. The officials (mis)understood that the areas Nayiri and his warriors had raided were areas Nayiri had conquered. British officials like Captain C.H. Armitage were committed to ‘rebuilding’ Nayiri Na Barega’s kingdom.³¹³ This was part of the European and African (mis)translation and transformation of African reality.

The German strategy was similar to the British. They relied to a great extent on Hausa-speaking translators to engage with Anufɔ royals in Sansanne-Mango, and with Dagbamba chiefs in Yendi and Bimbilla.

The strategy of direct rule was employed by European minorities to maintain control over much larger indigenous populations. Direct rule imposed European social order as the standard to divide populations between those who were civilized and those deemed to be uncivilized. Direct rule had a strong interest in keeping the civilized separate from the uncivilized and primarily did so through the imposition of European law, custom, culture, and language. Under direct rule, a good chief was loyal to the colonial administration and kept law and order according to the colonizer’s standards. Nayiri had a problem implementing the intentions that British leaders had for his rule because European policies lacked the traditional checks and balances of the Mamprusi system.³¹⁴ Direct rule had implementation problems, because systems and values clashed. British officials sought to overcome the clash of value systems by ‘translating’ the logic of the colonial system to their African counterparts.

Mango, was also in territory under German control, while some subordinate Anufɔ vassal groups were in British territory. The king of the Mossi tribes was located in Ouagadougou under French control.

³¹³ Iliasu, “The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937,” 3. The British engaged in what they imagined to be a reconstruction of Nayiri’s kingdom, which they claimed had been weakened by raids in the late 19th century, when in fact, it was the European invasion which weakened their engagement in raiding. But it is not likely Nayiri ever controlled land in the way European official imagined. See also the comments of C.H. Armitage who sought to “bolster” and “rehabilitate” Nayiri’s authority. Iliasu, 6.

³¹⁴ Iliasu, “The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937,” 14.

The first clashes were around taxation. British administrators had difficulty raising tax revenue to offset the expense of administration for the Northern Territories.³¹⁵ "The British had imposed an order which removed the old sources of income that sustained local rulers, particularly warfare, cattle raiding, slave raiding, and the ivory trade."³¹⁶ Chief Commissioner Armitage notes in 1911 that the notion that northern kingdoms were centralized governments was largely imagined. The issue of taxation as a form of extraction was not present. "We are dealing with a number of tribes that, however powerful they might have been in the past, never possessed that ancient civilization or an organized system of direct taxation as based on the Koranic law."³¹⁷

This was a disappointment for British administrators and meant that colonial administration would be more difficult. They would have to provide a rationale beyond brute force for a system of taxation. A small group of European rulers could not control majority native populations using brute force. But colonial government coffers did not want to fund administration costs for all the unprofitable corners of their empire. This conundrum has been called the native question.³¹⁸ The first strategy to address the native question was direct rule.

2.2.2 Indirect rule

The second strategy, called indirect rule, to address the native question was developed by the British during the years of colonial rule. While direct rule imagined a future for African institutions that were quite similar in identity to European institutions, indirect rule sought a future for African institutions different from European institutions with traditional and

³¹⁵ Phyllis Ferguson and Ivor Wilks, "Chiefs, Constitutions and The British in Northern Ghana," in *West African Chiefs: Their Changing Status under Colonial Rule and Independence*, ed. Michael Crowder, Obaro Ikime, and University of Ife (Ile-Ife, Nigeria: University of Ife Press, 1970), 332–34.

³¹⁶ Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 89.

³¹⁷ PRAAD (Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Ghana) ADM56/1/105, Report of the Northern Territories Land Committee, Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories [CCNT] Armitage to Colonial Secretary 1911, para 90, quoted in Weiss, "Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam and Muslims in Northern Ghana, Ca. 1900-1930," 78.

³¹⁸ "Briefly put, how can a tiny and foreign minority rule over an indigenous majority? To this question there were two broad answers: direct and indirect rule." Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 16.

diverse African characteristics.³¹⁹ Direct rule pursued a civilizing mission; indirect rule was a way to maintain power and law and order.³²⁰

Indirect rule was fashioned through practice by Lord Lugard in Uganda and Northern Nigeria in the early 20th century. It is likely that British officials like Colonel Watherston in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast were aware of Lugard's strategies and shared many of Lugard's values.³²¹ The difference in the Northern Territories was the absence of "really big chiefs." When the concept of indirect rule was articulated by Lugard in a book titled *Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* published in 1922, it became the preferred strategy of new colonial officials.³²² In the early 1920s, colonial officials assigned to the Northern Territories sought to begin implementing the strategies of indirect rule more thoroughly. Several older officials who had been present in the Northern Territories since 1914, most notably Walker-Leigh, opposed the strategy as impractical for the Northern Territories, but nevertheless, upon Walker-Leigh's pensioning in 1930, and the transfer of a number of other officials, indirect rule as a strategy won the day in the Northern Territories. Eventually indirect rule was implemented across the British Empire in Africa and was eventually adopted by other European colonizers.³²³ For the new officials, foremost among them Duncan-Johnstone, indirect rule was a strategy for development characterized as a policy of "progressive traditionalism." The goal was to "graft" European "standards and methods" to the "existing stock" of African institutions in such a way that African kingdoms would become large native states with chiefs as their administrators.³²⁴ Duncan-Johnstone's description of the goal of indirect rule is not very different from the end-goal of direct rule.

³¹⁹ Mamdani, 7. Attributed to Lord Hailey these are distinguished as the doctrine of similarity and the doctrine of difference.

³²⁰ Mamdani, 50.

³²¹ Weiss, "Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam and Muslims in Northern Ghana, Ca. 1900-1930," 76.

³²² F. D Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*. (Edinburgh; London: W. Blackwood and sons, 1922), <https://archive.org/details/dualmandateinbri00luga>.

³²³ Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 82; Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 104.

³²⁴ Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 104. IN the early twentieth century horticultural language was part of the secular colonizing mission. In southern Africa in the mid-nineteenth century, the Comaroffs explore how horticultural language was used as a metaphor for colonial evangelism.

Another historical factor which contributed to the shift from direct to indirect rule was the British acquisition of significant portions of the eastern Volta Basin. During World War 1, the British and the French invaded and occupied German Togoland. After the war, the two colonial powers split the land in such a way that the British acquired territories which included eastern Dagbon, and most importantly, they acquired the towns of Yendi and Bimbilla. Ya Na, king of Dagbon, was located in Yendi. Some scholars argue Ya Na had become the most powerful northern chief in pre-colonial times.³²⁵ The partition of Togoland resulted in the British gaining Yendi for their territory. Under German rule Yendi had been cut off from many of the communities and chiefs who paid tribute to Ya Na but were located in British territory.

The partition of German Togoland had the opposite effect on the Anufɔ communities. Under German rule, the Anufɔ communities were all in one colonial territory with Sansanne Mango as the center of both Anufɔ and German rule in northern Togoland. But after the partition of German Togoland, the Anufɔ communities in British territory were cut off from their metropole in Sansanne Mango, which was now in French territory.³²⁶

“...the Christians were from a world in which cultivation and salvation were explicitly linked—and joined together, more often than not, in a tangled mesh of horticultural imagery, much of it biblical in origin...” John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*, vol. 2 (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 121. “But cultivation was not only linked to salvation. In the culture whence the missionaries came, it was closely linked to colonialism and civilization as well.” Comaroff and Comaroff, 2:122. See also Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, 1:80; Robert Delavignette, *Christianity and Colonialism* (London: Burns & Oates, 1964), 8; Paul Fussel, *The Great War and Modern Memory*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 231.

³²⁵ George Ekem Ferguson judged the Ya Na to be the most powerful “potentate” during his exploration of the northern “hinterlands” in the 1890s. *The Papers of George Ekem Ferguson*, 71. MacGaffey argues, “In both Mamprugu and Gonja, sectional chiefs exercised more effective power than their overlords, the Nayiri and the Yagbumwura respectively. Dagbon is different having had, at least since about 1715, a concentration of real power at the top, in Yendi; this concentration is attributable to the use made of Muslim scholars and experts by Na Zanjina and his immediate successors, and it did not extend to the rest of the kingdom.” *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 22–23.

³²⁶ None of the communities in British territory had independent chieftaincies, they were “owned” by royal families in Sansanne-Mango. In order to create a system of traditional hierarchy the British created 13 divisional chiefs and placed them under the Ya Na. Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufɔ of Northern Ghana*, 25.

The acquisition of Yendi resulted in two important developments. First, in Yendi the British encountered Muslim scholars, who used the technology of writing for administration.³²⁷ There is also some record of the technology of writing in Gambaga,³²⁸ but in Yendi it appears to have been more common. The Muslim scholars, sometimes called malams or imams, would be important in subsequent colonial translation. The technology of writing was also used by Christian missionaries in Yendi.

The Basel mission began Christian mission work in Yendi in 1908.³²⁹ The missionaries began linguistic research in the major languages of the area around Yendi.³³⁰ In 1916 the mission compound was burned.³³¹ The missionaries were ready to rebuild and continue their work, but in the same year the British who were now in Yendi ordered the missionaries to leave. A military escort took them out of Togoland.³³² The Basel mission was closed in the Gold Coast during World War I.³³³ Perhaps the Basel mission's interest in African languages and cultural practices had an influence on the way colonial translation would develop in Yendi in subsequent years in support of indirect rule.

A second development stemming from the British acquisition of Yendi was that Yendi was a powerful metropole for pre-colonial Dagbamba societies. Having Yendi under British rule

³²⁷ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 22–23. MacGaffey cites Ferguson, “Islamization in Dagbon,” 97.

³²⁸ Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa*, 126–27.

³²⁹ Solomon S. Sule-Saa, “Owning the Christian Faith through Mother-Tongue Scriptures: A Case Study of the Dagomba and Konkomba of Northern Ghana,” *Journal of African Christian Thought* 13, no. 2 (2010): 48.

³³⁰ Missionary Huppenbauer was already fluent in Hausa. In addition, he studied Dagbanli, Konkomba, Moba, and Gurma. Missionary Schimming studied Anufo. Huppenbauer amassed a great amount of language data: a card index of 3000 Dagbanli words, a collection of 110 Dagbamba stories, a collection of Dagbamba proverbs, an outline of Dagbanli grammar, a card index of 1800 Basaari words, 1200 Konkomba words, 1200 Moba words, and some outlines of Basaari, Konkomba and Moba grammars. Holger Weiss, “Islam, Missionaries and Residents: the Attempt of the Basel Missionary Society to Establish a Mission in Yendi (German Togo) before World War I,” in *Mission und Macht im Wandel politischer Orientierungen : europäische Missionsgesellschaften in politischen Spannungsfeldern in Afrika und Asien zwischen 1800 und 1945 / hrsg. von Ulrich van der Heyden und Holger Stoecker*. (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2005), 184.

³³¹ Weiss, 185. Weiss reports half of the compound was burned on 9 March 1916. It is unclear what happened to that language data.

³³² Weiss, 185.

³³³ Noel Smith, *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, 1835-1960: A Younger Church in a Changing Society*; (Accra; London: Ghana Universities P.; Oxford U.P., 1966), 150–54.

would become important for the emerging strategy of indirect rule. In the first part of the 20th century the British shifted the seat of colonial authority for the Northern Territories from Gambaga to Tamale, an area that spoke the Dagbanli language and practiced a similar culture to other Dagbanli speaking communities. However, in terms of chieftaincy, Tamale did not have a clear relationship to Nayiri in Nalerigu. In short, Tamale had no chief practicing the ritual politics of nam. The British officer, Major Morris, who came to Tamale in 1905 named one Nsungna, the Dakpema or ‘market elder,’ as the chief of Tamale.³³⁴ In reality the Dakpema served the tindana, who in Tamale was referred to as Bugulana. As the British became interested in establishing the policy of indirect rule across the territory in a hierarchical fashion, they began exploring a way to weaken the Dakpema. At some point, the British discovered that there appeared to have been a pre-colonial relationship between Tamale and Yendi. Yendi is located 100 kilometers to the east of Tamale, where the Ya Na resided. Acquiring Yendi gave the British a chance to implement indirect rule across a large chunk of the Northern Territories, provided they could make the Tamale Dakpema and his senior tindana the Bugulana recognize the Ya Na’s jurisdiction over Tamale. MacGaffey has researched the intriguing story of reintroducing a sub-chief to Tamale, the Gulkpe’Na. The Gulkpe’Na had been living in Yendi since the Germans invaded and was cut off from Tamale.³³⁵ After the British acquired Yendi, they attempted to facilitate the return of the Gulkpe’Na to Tamale. The Dakpemas resisted the introduction of the Gulkpe’Na into their jurisdiction as an invasion of their area.³³⁶ Ultimately, the acquisition of Yendi helped the British shift from the practice of direct rule to indirect rule. The British attempt to make Tamale fit their preference for the indirect rule of paramount chiefs continues to be a source of conflict in Tamale in the present. (See chapter 6 section 6.2.1.)

How can one summarize the strategies of direct and indirect rule? Mahmood Mamdani describes the difference between direct rule and indirect rule as two different approaches to despotism. Direct rule was an unmediated centralized despotism over the ‘uncivilized’ peasant. Indirect rule was a localized and mediated despotism where the chief served as a

³³⁴ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 135.

³³⁵ MacGaffey, 135–49.

³³⁶ MacGaffey, 29, 135–38. The British re-introduced the Gulkpe’Na to Tamale as a chief loyal to Ya Na, who according to the story, had been away from Tamale visiting Yendi when the Germans took control of Yendi.

powerful proxy whose only authority was the colonial master.³³⁷ Under indirect rule the chief is “shorn” of local accountabilities.³³⁸ All forms of power are concentrated in the chief: judicial, legislative, executive, and administrative.³³⁹ Lentz’s careful study of the record left by colonial officials in the Northern Territories bears out what Mamdani claims. Many officials wrote about chiefs who acted as tyrants of their own people accumulating excessive wealth, including Eyre-Smith³⁴⁰, Walker-Leigh,³⁴¹ and others.³⁴² Evidence from those individuals and communities under indirect rule attest to the many ways chiefs exploited the people they ruled during colonial times.

Did the policy implementation problems the British experienced under direct rule get solved more effectively by the strategy of indirect rule? To answer this question, I will turn to a discussion of translation and how the shift from translational action to translating texts helped buttress the extractive power of the British system under indirect rule.

2.3 After invasion: Using translation to secure the ends of invasion

Just prior to the turn of the twentieth century, European colonizers were in competition to secure access to African markets, resulting in ‘the scramble for Africa’. Great Britain invaded the Volta Basin in 1896 without any real plan for how to administer the vast swath of land and peoples. Without an intention to significantly settle the land as a traditional colony, they were faced with the familiar ‘native question’ of how to rule an indigenous majority with a small European minority, but now they faced the question on starker terms. How would they rule territory they acquired for defensive purposes without a significant number of European settlers, and with only minimal investment in a European center of civilization? They would work through translators and chiefs to pacify the area, mobilize labor to carry goods, build

³³⁷ Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 17.

³³⁸ Mamdani, 43.

³³⁹ Mamdani, 23.

³⁴⁰ Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 64, 289. Eyre-Smith Commission of the Northern Province 15 October 1927, Northern Regional Archives, Tamale NRG 8/2/18. “We, that is to say the District Commissioner, does not in fact guide the administration of the District, we have in this District as Chiefs nothing better than tax collectors whom we unwittingly assist in many ways to oppress their people.”

³⁴¹ Lentz, 64, 289. Chief Commissioner of Northern Territories to Commissioner of the Northern Province 24 September 1927, Northern Regional Archives, Tamale, 8/2/18.

³⁴² Lentz, 63, 289. “In the early 1920s, one colonial officer remarked, after his first tour through Lawra District, that some chiefs were living like ‘robber barons’. Lawra District, Informal Diary, 3 January 1921 National Archives of Ghana ADM 56/1/8

roads, and acquire local revenue to offset costs. The daily activities of colonial administration were to work towards these ends on the local level by engaging in translational interaction with chiefs and communities. The larger purpose was to secure ongoing access to the more lucrative cash crop economy they had been developing in the south.

2.3.1 Translational Interaction

As I mentioned in section 2.1 above, the daily interaction colonial officials initiated with local African agents can be described as “translational interaction,” as translators sought to bring about or prevent change in the world.³⁴³ The term ‘translation interaction’ encompasses all aspects of language translation that help make communication work, including more than written translation.³⁴⁴ Colonial representatives initiated actions to effect trade to accomplish their larger purposes. In the early years Hausa-speaking Muslim traders and imams were the best translators for the British administrators for linguistic and philosophical reasons. Translators helped with the implementation of judgments, the negotiations of boundary lines, and the implementation of taxation. Translational interaction occurred between British and African agents under direct and indirect rule.³⁴⁵

2.3.1.1 Muslim translators as useful philosophical intermediaries

The British administrators settled in Gambaga, a few kilometers west of Nalerigu, where Nayiri had his palace. Levtzion reports that in 1741-1742 Na Atabia had moved the palace from Gambaga to Nalerigu after repelling an attack from the Gurma who were located to the east. During Atabia’s reign Muslim traders settled in Gambaga. Gambaga became a town open to strangers, and the market had grown. These changes likely made living in the town unsuitable for a chief.³⁴⁶ The tindana-chief of Gambaga, the Gambarana, was left in charge of

³⁴³ Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, 16.

³⁴⁴ Nord, 17.

³⁴⁵ Lentz’s indicates that after World War 1 during the 1920s, newly appointed colonial representatives were required to take an examination in native languages. Lentz further indicates that Duncan-Johnstone, Eyre-Smith and Armstrong spoke Hausa, while Amherst spoke Dagbanli. H.A. Blair could communicate in Dagbanli without an interpreter. Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 73, 291.

³⁴⁶ Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa*, 129.

the town along with the Muslim traders.³⁴⁷ It was the descendants of Muslim traders the British administrators encountered in 1896.

The British were impressed with the imam³⁴⁸ of Gambaga, in no small part because of his linguistic abilities in Hausa. Apparently, he also looked the part of a patriarchal leader. Chief Commission Watherston wrote in 1908, “The best in organisation at the present day is the Mamprusi country, ruled nominally by a King who lives at a small town near Gambaga, but in reality by the Lamam of Gambaga, a patriarchal-looking Mohammedan.”³⁴⁹

Chief Commissioner Armitage, the successor of Watherston, also claimed the imam was the most influential leader, indicating that the Nayiri preferred not to interact with the British visitors because of ‘juju’ or religious prohibitions.³⁵⁰ In the first years of the 20th century, the British administrators established a “pragmatic alliance” with the Muslim community.³⁵¹ The Hausa language which Muslim traders and imams spoke was spoken all the way from Northern Nigeria across the region. The ‘reach’ of Hausa across geography and across myriads of language differences was a major factor in these early years for the pragmatic alliance between Muslim traders and colonial administrators. The British administrators relied on and trusted those with whom they could communicate.³⁵² Weiss reports that this reliance on Hausa as a medium of exchange between Hausa-speaking Muslims living in Dagbon and Hausa-speaking British officials continued into the 1930s. The Muslim translators were important in the collection of a tribute tax.³⁵³ However, as the shift to

³⁴⁷ “Gambarana is the tengdana (Earth-priest) of Gambaga.” Muslims challenge Gambarana's claim to own the land because they see him to be a pagan. Levtzion, 129–30. I am using the spelling tindana, but tengdana is another dialectal option.

³⁴⁸ In northern Ghana, ‘imam’ is often pronounced and written as ‘limam’.

³⁴⁹ Watherston, “The Northern Territories of the Gold Coast,” 349.

³⁵⁰ PRAAD ADM 56/1/124, Tour of Inspection by Chief Commissioner Armitage, letter dated Tamale, July 1911, para 7, cited in Weiss, “Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam and Muslims in Northern Ghana, Ca. 1900-1930,” 91.

³⁵¹ Weiss, 77.

³⁵² Watherston, “The Northern Territories of the Gold Coast,” 351.

³⁵³ In the 1930s, the use of local languages was not practical for in depth exercises like the collection of tribute taxes. Hausa-speaking malams were chosen to help with collecting tribute taxes because of their ability to write and communicate. Weiss, “Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam and Muslims in Northern Ghana, Ca. 1900-1930,” 81.

indirect rule continued, and as more young people could write in English, the reliance on Hausa speakers and Muslim scribes did not continue.³⁵⁴

From the perspective of linguistic and cultural translation, Muslim traders and imams, through their pragmatic use of Hausa, and their ‘philosophical’ outlook were the most useful translators from the perspective of the colonizers. The British administrators appreciated the patriarchal outlook of Muslim translators and their universalist perspective. For the British, the patriarchal outlook of Muslim translators involved Islam’s notion of submission to male elders which translated into a ‘proper’ respect for authority within a community. The universalist tendencies of Islam meant translators recognized higher authorities across African contexts and communities. For the British, the patriarchal outlook of Muslim translators combined with their more universal recognition of submission to power and their occasionally useful scribal skills, resulted in translators who recognized British authority and helped the British respect and negotiate the local chain of command. It is not hard to recognize the seeds of indirect rule in this description.³⁵⁵

Linguistically, it would take quite some time for British officials to shift toward the use of languages other than Hausa, like Dagbanli and Dagara. Culturally, the British, like the German and the French, were cautious of allowing the unifying power of language and religion to gain traction against colonial forces. They were cautious of the Hausa language and Islamic religion for the same reasons they appreciated them. It will show that colonial powers used force to quell opposition to make sure they retained control over those who were helping them sustain colonial over-rule.

³⁵⁴ Weiss argues that contrary to early Christian missionary criticisms, there was no British policy regarding Muslims. The perception of a ‘pro-Muslim’ disposition was contextually applied and pragmatic. In fact, the early pragmatic alliance in the Northern Territories eventually shifted to one of indifference. The implementation of indirect rule contributed to a weakening of the relationship between British administrators and Muslim malams. The lack of a clear policy towards Muslims resulted in Muslims not attending colonial schools and thus keeping Muslims out of colonial administrative positions. Nevertheless, Islamicization continued and the British failed to deal with it effectively. Weiss, “Islam, Missionaries and Residents: the Attempt of the Basel Missionary Society to Establish a Mission in Yendi (German Togo) before World War I,” 74, 82–85, 87–88.

³⁵⁵ The patriarchal and universalist assumptions of Islam are similar to the patriarchal and universalist assumptions of Pietist Christianity brought into Ghana through the Basel mission’s practice of missionary-colonial Bible translation. See chapter 3 section 3.2.2, specifically footnote 513, below.

2.3.1.2 Religion must translate the rationale for colonial over-rule

In the early years of German occupation in the north, the German administration also established a German-Muslim alliance for colonial over-rule. This was a strategic alliance based on a Realpolitik and did not differ significantly from the British or French strategies.³⁵⁶ For the Germans, Islam brought a written language, a written law, and a code of ethics that colonizers felt could unify northern peoples in an organized manner under colonial rule. Hausa was the language of colonial interaction. Initially, Christian missionary work was banned from the north by both Germans and British, because it was felt Islam was more suitable for Africans. Experience had taught them that Christian missionaries and Christian converts were difficult to govern.³⁵⁷

However, it turned out the unifying power which Islam could potentially provide could also turn in an anti-colonial direction. In 1904 and 1905 when Muslim itinerant preachers moved across northern areas, the German, French, and British colonial governments became concerned. In northern Nigeria and in northern Cameroon, Mahdist itinerant preachers contributed to uprisings, which made the German government convinced that "Islam could emerge as an 'anti-colonial force' if not checked."³⁵⁸ The itinerant preachers in Dagbon and Nanuɓ were jailed and "unschlädlich gemacht (had been taken care of.)"³⁵⁹ French officials executed ten marabout leaders in 1906. British administrators forced the itinerant preachers to leave the British-controlled areas. Colonial governments viewed these itinerant preachers as 'alien' Muslims who came from outside the colonial area.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁶ Weiss, "European Images of Islam in the Northern Hinterlands of the Gold Coast through the Early Colonial Period," 101.

³⁵⁷ Weiss, "Islam, Missionaries and Residents: the Attempt of the Basel Missionary Society to Establish a Mission in Yendi (German Togo) before World War I," 173. See also Andrew E. Barnes, "'Evangelization Where It Is Not Wanted': Colonial Administrators and Missionaries in Northern Nigeria during the First Third of the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 25, no. 4 (1995): 412–41. Barnes argues that British administrators had much antipathy for southern Nigerian converts to Christianity and the Southern Nigerian missionaries.

³⁵⁸ Weiss, "Islam, Missionaries and Residents: the Attempt of the Basel Missionary Society to Establish a Mission in Yendi (German Togo) before World War I," 178.

³⁵⁹ Weiss, 79, 93, note 92. PRAAD ADM 56/1/432 AR Northern Territories, (NT) 1908, paragraph 46.

³⁶⁰ Weiss, "Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam and Muslims in Northern Ghana, Ca. 1900-1930," 80.

After the potential of anti-colonial uprisings had been averted, colonial governments continued to work with Muslim translators as intermediaries. Nevertheless, the British and the German administrators became less certain Islam was a positive force. They began to invite Christian missionaries into the northern areas. The French Catholic White Fathers reached an agreement with the British to work in Navrongo in 1906.³⁶¹ Chief Commissioner Watherston also invited the Basel mission, already operating around Accra, to open a trade station in the British area of Tamale in 1909. The Basel mission was not convinced that trade opportunities were viable in Tamale at that time, and thus decided to work in German Togoland at the invitation of the German government in Yendi.³⁶² The Wesleyan mission was invited to begin work in Tamale. They arrived in 1913, but relations were very strained with the British Commissioner and they left in 1915. The White Fathers were the only Christian religious missionaries in the Northern Territories until the Assemblies of God were invited in 1931.³⁶³ There were many problems between the French Catholics and the British during the first decade of their work there, but these eventually resolved for reasons I will soon discuss.

For the British and other European colonizers, religious practice was useful in so far as it ‘translated’ the philosophical rationale for the people to submit and serve the colonial governing interests. Colonizers often felt that local African religious practice did not necessarily coalesce well with British notions of governance and ethics. It was viewed as unwieldy and wild because it cultivated local loyalties that did not reflect colonial values. In most cases, African religion was simply viewed as backward and treated as inconsequential. However, when British authorities perceived the power of local shrines as threats, the shrines were attacked. In 1912 Chief Commissioner Armitage ordered a detachment of soldiers to destroy an important shrine, which Armitage saw as a source of opposition to the British in

³⁶¹ Benedict Der, “Church-State Relations in Northern Ghana, 1906-1940,” *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 15, no. 1 (1974): 41–46; Weiss, “Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam and Muslims in Northern Ghana, Ca. 1900-1930,” 95.

³⁶² Weiss, “Islam, Missionaries and Residents: the Attempt of the Basel Missionary Society to Establish a Mission in Yendi (German Togo) before World War I,” 179–80.

³⁶³ Paul Frimpong Manso, “Theological Education of Assemblies of God Ghana,” *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 33, no. 2 (2015): 162–75.

the North-East province of the Northern Territories.³⁶⁴ Similarly, in the North-West province, a district commissioner ordered the destruction of sacred groves at Lawra and Birifo.³⁶⁵

In the early years of colonization, African Islam was viewed positively by the British authorities because it offered written law, ethics, and a patriarchal and universal philosophical outlook that appeared to mediate well between local and British authority. Moreover, the language of Hausa spoken by many Muslims had already reached most locations in the north. But, as stated above, Islam could also foment resistance. The British sought to undercut the potential Islam had to unite people under the higher than colonial rule of Allah.

Even though Christianity would have been the obvious choice to translate European ideals to African people, the colonial government's experience in other parts of the Gold Coast confirmed that Christian mission work, like Islam, and like traditional African religion, could create anti-colonial resistance. British colonizers were threatened by the potential of any religious practice that could make people equal to the colonizers and therefore, Christianity could only be allowed as long as it was constrained and controlled. In the Northern Territories the British made sure that Christian religious authorities showed regular signs of their obeisance. The White Fathers, initially invited into the Northern Territories in 1906, presented problems because they were Catholic and French. British administrators wanted the missionaries in the Northern Territories to be British subjects, not French subjects because the British feared loyalty to the French might threaten their position. Eventually the White Fathers recruited French Canadian Fathers into their order and assigned them to the mission in the Northern Territories because they were British subjects.³⁶⁶ This struggle between the White Fathers and the British government regarding their colonial loyalties may have served colonial interests to motivate the missionaries to prove they were not fomenting anti-colonial resistance.

³⁶⁴ Public Record Office, London 96/523, Armitage to Ag. Col. Sec. 4 Dec., 1912. Cited in Der, "Church-State Relations in Northern Ghana, 1906-1940," 56, 61. Even though the shrine was reportedly destroyed, the shrine Tongo must have been rebuilt. It remains famous in the 21st century.

³⁶⁵ National Archives of Ghana, ADM 61/5/12, Lawra-Tumu District Diary, entries for 6 February and 6 April 1937. Cited in Der, 56, 61.

³⁶⁶ Der, 44.

2.3.1.3 Creating mental maps, (mis)translating concepts

As long as colonial authority was secured, colonial officials with the help of translators could go about the work of trying to figure out how to govern. Compared to the relatively small cultural differences between African communities and African settlers in the pre-colonial era, as discussed in chapter one, the cultural distance between colonial officials and the northern Ghanaian culture was immense. The conceptual basis of late 19th and early 20th century British modernist was vastly different from the pre-colonial life world of the region. Colonial officials sought to comprehend and control African realities. And Africans sought to cope with, manage, deflect, and exploit the realities of colonial rule for their own interests. As stated above, the colonizers looked upon Islamic traders and imams as useful translators between colonial philosophies and intentions with the rather distant cultural starting point of most African kinship-based societies and value systems. The Islamic estate-based value system, with its patriarchal and universalist outlook, had already taken hold in African culture and made more ‘sense’ to the British than the kinship-based value system.³⁶⁷ The occasional use of writing made Muslim scribes useful to the British.

As part of their effort to comprehend the area, colonial authorities made maps of the area which delineated the boundaries of the Northern Territories.³⁶⁸ As part of that process, authorities created mental maps of the social area based on their perceptions of ‘traditional boundaries.’³⁶⁹ Space was delineated as belonging to certain tribes. A mental map of space indicates which land belongs to which ethnic group.³⁷⁰ Lentz described the processes by which this mental map of the Northern Territories was shaped. British officials relied upon George Ekem Ferguson and Ferguson’s interactions with Muslim scholars. Ferguson wrote

³⁶⁷ Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufo of Northern Ghana*, 81–93. See the discussion in chapter one, section 1.3.5.2.

³⁶⁸ Watherston, “The Northern Territories of the Gold Coast,” 344–47.

³⁶⁹ Watherston, 345. “The Northern Boundary is an arbitrary line as near the 11th parallel as possible, diverging only sufficiently to allow the villages and their farms to be wholly either English or French, and at the eastern end a diversion was made to allow all the Mamprusi country, as it was then known, to remain English. Unfortunately, our knowledge of the country at the time the treaty was made was limited, and certain conditions were laid down, based on semi-accurate information, which resulted in a good many Mamprusi towns falling to France in one case and to Germany in the other.”

³⁷⁰ Ethnic based maps are continued today in maps like the Ethnologue. As useful as they may be for general location of spoken languages, the maps project language on to space. David Eberhard et al., eds., *Ethnologue. Languages of Africa and Europe*, Twenty-second edition (Dallas, Texas: SIL International Publications, 2019).

down his descriptions of the northern territories, which helped create mental maps for the British. Ferguson made an analytical distinction between two kinds of indigenous societies. Ferguson discerned and described a difference between “countries with organised government,” such as Wa, Dagomba, Gonja, Mamprusi, and wild tribes, “naked living in independent family communities.”³⁷¹ Ferguson’s distinction between “barbarous tribes” and “organised governments” would later be referred to as ‘stateless’ and ‘state’ societies. This distinction continued to be applied throughout the colonial era.³⁷²

The European concept of a proper African ‘tribe’ at the turn of the twentieth century was that each tribe was a clearly bounded entity. A person was either this tribe or that. Each tribe had clearly demarcated boundaries. Each tribe must be hierarchically organized with a singular chief or king at the top. There were nested hierarchies, which allowed for one tribe to rule over another. Since this theory did not fit the realities on the ground very well, over time the British administrators sought to try to make the data fit the theory.

Some pre-colonial societies had networks of hierarchy embedded into their more basic kinship system, such as the Dagbamba system of the politics of nam, practiced most clearly in the metropolises of Mamprugu, Dagbon, Nanuŋ and Gonjaland. Colonial administrators referred to social organizations like these as ‘state’ societies or ‘chiefly’ societies.

The kinship societies who prior to the late colonial era were not incorporated into the politics of nam have been described as ‘stateless’, ‘acephalous’, ‘headless’, or ‘chiefless’. These are functional terms to an extent, but they are also inaccurate at best and pejorative at worst. Ifi Amadiume has suggested using the term “anti-state” societies to indicate that they intentionally organized in a more egalitarian fashion.³⁷³ Laura Grillo suggests “dual-sexed collectively governed societies.”³⁷⁴ In chapter one, using Kopytoff’s theory of the African frontier, I described the agricultural kinship-based society as the most common on the African frontier. These are the decentralized groups. Some kinship-based societies kept

³⁷¹ Lentz, “Ethnicity in Ghana : A Comparative Perspective,” 9; Ferguson, *The Papers of George Ekem Ferguson*, 99, 109, 117. Lentz argued that Ferguson described links between ‘tribes’ and ‘states.’ British officials more or less collapsed these links and perceived ‘tribes’ and ‘states’ as distinct and isolated tribes.

³⁷² Weiss, “Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam and Muslims in Northern Ghana, Ca. 1900-1930,” 77.

³⁷³ Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (London: Zed Books, 1987), 24–26, [http://hdl handle net/2027/heh.04120](http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heh.04120).

³⁷⁴ Grillo, *An Intimate Rebuke Female Genital Power in Ritual and Politics in West Africa*, 64.

expanding into the frontier using a metropole-settlement pattern, where they replicated their metropole on the periphery. Some of those societies found it advantageous to retain formal and hierarchical alliances between them, such as through the politics of nam. Normally this involved trade alliances and control of particular technologies such as the horse and the gun. ‘State’ societies were kinship-based societies who used the politics of nam to embed related kinship groups into a system of hierarchy based on loyalty to the paramount Na. There is a necessary link between a royal skin and its locality which brings localities and the kinship societies living in those localities into a hierarchical association.

While the ‘state’ societies were closer to the European ideal, according to MacGaffey, in the pre-colonial era even the ‘states’ such as Gonja, Dagbon, and Mamprugu were not very state-like. They conquered people rather than lands, and they did not have the technological capacity to institute administration practices over the lands they conquered.³⁷⁵ While the so-called state societies sort of fit the European model, the decentralized societies such as Lobi, Grunshi, Isale, Dagarti, Kusasi, Konkomba, and Bimoba did not fit the European model at all. Kopytoff refers to these societies as “ethnically ambiguous marginal societies.”³⁷⁶ Such societies are “apt to annoy the administration for whom the tribal model—with its essential unity, clear body of customary law, and unambiguous legitimacies—is better suited to the task of maintaining public tranquility.”³⁷⁷

Kopytoff has described an alternative ethnographic map that may fit the pre-colonial data better:

...instead of being a patchwork of classic tribes, it was through the centuries more like a shimmering beadwork of repetitive patterns—hamlets, little and large chiefdoms, kingdoms and empires—each of which was in constant structural motion as it changed its shape from one pattern to another.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁵ “These kingdoms came into existence (probably) as the leaders of multiple raiding parties, attracted by mineral deposits and the vulnerability of trade networks, formed alliances among themselves... to protect themselves and their territories from one another.” MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 22.

³⁷⁶ Kopytoff, “The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture,” 5.

³⁷⁷ Kopytoff, 5.

³⁷⁸ Kopytoff, 77.

African translators, chiefs, and headmen interpreted the colonial translations with their own interpretations.³⁷⁹ A colonial official's use of the word tribe could be translated into African languages with an African word meaning kinship group. African translation participants engaged in (mis)translation with colonial authorities motivated by their own local interests. The mutual misrepresentations occurring in colonial encounters of translation could benefit the local interests of an African communicator by extending a kinship group's, a lineage's, or a particular house's influence and power within the colonial system. In other words, local agents could gain power on the local level through the mistranslation and assertion of the colonial concept of tribe over the local concept of kinship group.

2.3.1.4 Developing the colonial public transcript

Translators could help facilitate understanding, but they could also facilitate a measure of mutual misunderstanding as each side communicated something with enough ambiguity for its own interests to remain in play. Both sides were generally content, wittingly or unwittingly, with their mutual misunderstandings. Lentz writes, "So, while African informants translated the British concept of 'tribe' into kinship terms, conversely the British extrapolated tribal histories from local patriclan narratives. In doing so, British colonial officers and the new chiefs were working hand-in-hand."³⁸⁰

The tacit and mutual misrepresentation that characterizes colonial translational interaction has been theorized by James Scott's taxonomy of political language between dominant and subordinate social groups.³⁸¹ Scott writes, "It is frequently in the interest of both parties to

³⁷⁹ "From the start the intellectual colonisation of the North-West by the British was not a one-sided hegemonic imposition of a new discursive order, but a process of communication marked by many (interest-led) misunderstandings and mutual manipulations." Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 72.

³⁸⁰ Lentz, 90.

³⁸¹ *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). On one end of Scott's taxonomy is what Scott calls "the public transcript." Scott has observed that the typical dialogical interaction between dominant and subordinate groups outwardly favor the dominant group. Scott writes, "The public transcript is a shorthand way of describing the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate... The public transcript where it is not positively misleading, is unlikely to tell the whole story about power relations. It is frequently in the interest of both parties to tacitly conspire in misrepresentation" (2). He continues, "The theatrical imperatives that normally prevail in situations of domination produce a public transcript in close conformity with how the dominant group would wish to have

tacitly conspire in misrepresentation."³⁸² The mutual misrepresentation is what Scott calls 'the public transcript.' The public transcript is normal (mis)communication between elites and subordinates that assumes and reinforces elite dominance.

With the help of Lentz and Nugent whose careful work describes how concepts like 'tribe' and 'state' were negotiated in northern Ghana, we can see how colonial official and local translators were negotiating a public transcript between them. It was being negotiated through mutual (mis)translations.

This is not to suggest that translation participants were consciously aware of the mistranslations they were negotiating between them. John and Jean Comaroff theorize that there is a continuum between ideological awareness and unawareness. In between these two is the crucial space of "partial recognition" and "inchoate awareness."³⁸³ From that awareness emerges forms of "experimental practice."³⁸⁴ I will discuss (neo-)indigenous levels of awareness of what was happening in colonial translation below in section 2.5.

The mutual misrepresentations which translation participants arrived at would be asserted repeatedly and eventually the participants settled into an uneasy understanding. Over time these mutual mistranslations and transformations of African realities became legitimized hegemony, a part of the assumption of the public transcript, "deeply inscribed in everyday routine, custom, and convention."³⁸⁵

The Comaroffs make a useful distinction between hegemony and ideology. They define ideology as an active assertion of power.

things appear" (4). On the other end of the taxonomy is dialogue that subordinates' practice in their own environments, without the influence of the dominating group. Scott calls this "the hidden transcript." Scott writes, "I shall use the term hidden transcript to characterize discourse that takes place "offstage" beyond direct observation by powerholders. The hidden transcript is thus derivative in the sense that it consists of those offstage speeches, gestures and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript" (4-5). In between these two poles is what Scott calls the language of "infrapolitics" (19).

³⁸² Scott, 2.

³⁸³ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, 1:29.

³⁸⁴ Comaroff and Comaroff, 1:31.

³⁸⁵ Comaroff and Comaroff, 1:25.

Hegemony, we suggest, exists in reciprocal interdependence with ideology; it is that part of a dominant worldview which has been naturalized and, having hidden itself in orthodoxy, no more appears as ideology at all. Inversely, the ideologies of the subordinate may give expression to discordant but hitherto voiceless experience of contradictions that a prevailing hegemony can no longer conceal.³⁸⁶

Hegemony is never total. The traces of underlying African realities remain and threaten to unmake hegemony.³⁸⁷ Occasionally, Africans would contradict the colonial hegemony, questioning colonial mistranslations of African realities, sometimes in violent ways,³⁸⁸ sometimes in ways that annoyed or frustrated European intentions.³⁸⁹

In general, Europeans would engage in translational interaction to attempt to comprehend and control African realities on their terms. African interlocutors engaged in translational interaction, trying to understand, deflect, and resist the new realities the Europeans were asserting on their context. Most African translation participants were seeking to extend the interests of the African chiefs, headmen, or territorial shrine owners³⁹⁰ to whom they were loyal. Each side was hoping to construct a relationship that would be profitable moving forward, given their situation. But where would this profit come from?

2.3.1.5 Translators understanding and misunderstandings

The British intentions for the Northern Territories were to pacify the area, mobilize labor to carry goods, build roads, and acquire local revenue to offset costs. There is evidence in the

³⁸⁶ 1:25.

³⁸⁷ Comaroff and Comaroff, 1:25, 27.

³⁸⁸ Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 92–96.

³⁸⁹ A good example of this is the Konkomba propensity to engage in “feuds.” These were fierce kinship fights over fishing rights, farming rights, or marriage. The British tried to use Dagbamba chiefs to control feuding, but could not. They were forced to respond themselves. Each interaction the British pursued brought them deeper into the daily lives of rural Konkomba communities. The British were drawn into local squabbles. See Talton, 57–62.

³⁹⁰ MacGaffey explains A shrine does not have a fully formed personality, a god independent of place. A fixed shrine within a local community is in charge of a tindana. A tindana is the owner of a tiŋa. A tiŋa is the terrain occupied by a human community as its place of residence and source of livelihood. A tindana is to perform sacrifices at shrines located within his domain which will have a principal shrine with a number of subsidiaries. MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 79–80.

early years of administration that African leaders were able to frustrate British intentions through their own misunderstandings, mistranslations, and misrepresentations.

A.A. Iliasu cites Colonel Watherston, the Chief Official of the Northern Territories in 1908, regarding some of the frustrations of early colonial administration. Iliasu explains that Watherston was frustrated by “the lack of any common laws concerning land, matrimony, and so on, even among peoples speaking one language.”³⁹¹ Watherston noted, “the absolute imbecility of 60 per cent of the present elected chiefs.”³⁹² He was frustrated particularly by those among the Lobi, Dagaba and Gurunsi, whom he suspected had been elected “because of their incapacity to make anyone obey them.”³⁹³

After a decade of British rule, Watherston was aware how African communities could deflect British intentions.³⁹⁴ Translators could help facilitate such a situation. Chiefs appreciated translators who were working with them to maneuver things in their favor. British officials appreciated those translators who understood European and local outlooks on issues and could mediate between them.³⁹⁵ But the situation was fraught with ambiguity, and frustration could occur because mutual understanding was really a set of mutual manipulations containing contradictions.

³⁹¹ Iliasu, “The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937,” 2.

³⁹² Colonial Reports-Annual , No. 586, 'Report on the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast by Col. Watherston, Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories Accounts and Papers lxviii, (1908), pp. 72 quoted in Iliasu, 2.

³⁹³ Colonial Reports-Annual , No. 586, 'Report on the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast by Col. Watherston, Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories Accounts and Papers lxviii, (1908), pp. 72 quoted in Iliasu, 2.

³⁹⁴ “These patterns disguising ideological insubordination are somewhat analogous to the patterns by which, in my experience, peasants and slaves have disguised their efforts to thwart material appropriation of their labor, their production and their property; for example poaching, foot-dragging, pilfering, dissimulation, flight.” Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, xiii.

³⁹⁵ In colonial North-West province of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast J.A. Karbo was a translator who worked with many a colonial official, even those who received his services to do research opposed to each other. Karbo eventually became the Lawra-Naa. He was appreciated by British officials for his “progressive” ideas and for his “authority.” He was able to carry out proposals because he mediated between the British and local sides of things. Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 128. Karbo’s success suggests to me he was a master at manipulating tacit misrepresentation.

One can also imagine quite a bit of misunderstanding due to language and cultural difference. In this era translational interaction could range from achieving some level of understanding, engaging in genuine miscommunication, intentional manipulation of miscommunication, to communicating with tacit resistance.³⁹⁶

2.3.1.6 Problems in the implementation of direct rule: an unstable public transcript

I have argued that translational interaction under what Scott calls the public transcript involved tacit misrepresentation of colonial officials and translators working with local chiefs with each side trying to find a profitable arrangement in an emerging and fraught situation. For both sides to profit, expense would have to be borne by some other group. Under direct rule, during the performance or application of power, without a savvy set of translators, it often became too clear that an African chief and a colonial official were not in agreement. This potentially weakened both the official's and the chief's positions over would-be subordinates. In the North-West province of the Gold Coast, critically minded colonial officials like Eyre-Smith were tempted to try and solve chieftaincy disputes, only to discover a bottomless set of interest-led manipulations.³⁹⁷ Commenting on the situation in Yendi and Dagbon, which was then the Southern province of the Northern Territories, Commissioner A.W. Cardinall wrote in 1928, "In reality; the administration is a direct one; the chiefs are practically powerless; they have neither revenue nor authority; they have tended to become more serjeant-majors, through whom the administration can address the rank and file."³⁹⁸ It is clear that Cardinall wants to 'empower' local chiefs for revenue collection, and that he favors the strategy of indirect rule.

It is important to recall that the sources of revenue for pre-colonial kingdoms had been taken away by British law: "particularly warfare, cattle raiding, slave raiding, and the ivory

³⁹⁶ Tacit resistance includes "gestures that silently and sullenly contest the form of existing hegemony." Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, 1:31.

³⁹⁷ "When his investigations into the abuses of power alleged against the chiefs of Tizaa, Tugu and Jirapa merely ended in a thicket of interest-led misinformation on the part of the chiefs and their interpreters, he began to wonder who was actually controlling whom." Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 64.

³⁹⁸ Phyllis Ferguson and Ivor Wilks, "Chiefs, Constitutions and The British in Northern Ghana," in *West African Chiefs: Their Changing Status under Colonial Rule and Independence*, ed. Michael Crowder, Obaro Ikime, and University of Ife (Ile-Ife, Nigeria: University of Ife Press, 1970), 332.

trade.”³⁹⁹ What indirect rule added to policy implementation was a layer of government between the colonial government and the masses of Africans. In between were the chiefs. Indirect rule created a limited number of chiefs for colonial authorities to interact with who were given powers to produce their own revenue, a portion of which would go to colonial administration. Indirect rule was conceived as a better way to maintain a united front between colonial officials and chiefs in front of the general populace for the purpose of extracting resources from the general populace in order to make the cost of administration less acute for the British and profitable for the chiefs. Under indirect rule, colonial officials had to maintain the public appearance of supporting a chief.⁴⁰⁰ To make this effective, indirect rule was constructed as a reinstatement of pre-colonial authorities, but now incorporated as instruments of the European state with extractive powers.⁴⁰¹ A chief was understood to be the royal inheritor of a pre-colonial kingdom. To help construct this scenario, acts of translation/transformation, especially written translation, would prove useful.

2.3.2 Written translations of customary constitutions and customary law in support of indirect rule

I have been discussing translational interaction in a broad sense, including all aspects of translation involved in the communicative action facilitating colonial governance. This section focuses on how colonial actors used written translations of oral tradition. Written translation is conceptualized as a specific aspect of translational interaction that became an especially useful strategy in support of indirect rule.

Colonial acts of written translation were facilitated by key actors. From the colonial side, the key actor was district commissioner H.A. Blair, who became known as *daybonbia*, ‘a son of Dagbon,’ for his knowledge of the Dagbanli language and culture. From the African side, the chiefs of so-called state societies had the most to gain, Ya Na of Dagbon, Yabonwira of Gonja, Nayiri of Mamprugu, and Bimbilla Na of Nanuḡ respectively. A key translator who

³⁹⁹ Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 89.

⁴⁰⁰ Mamdani claims, “An unwritten norm of indirect rule was that the lower authority must never be short circuited. To entertain any complaints behind the chief’s back was to humiliate him. To so weaken a subordinate officer and compromise his prestige would be to endanger patiently accumulated gains in years of administrative labor. Therefore, nothing must be done that will bring disrespect to authority.” Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 54. Lentz’s careful work causes me to nuance Mamdani’s claim. Colonial officials did seek to influence chiefs at opportune times, but they had to be careful to keep up public appearances.

⁴⁰¹ Ferguson and Wilks, “Chiefs, Constitutions and The British in Northern Ghana,” 337.

helped Blair was Malam Halidu, "a very cultured Hausa."⁴⁰² Blair's intention was to establish 'customary states' as instruments of the colonial government. Blair used translation to communicate his intention and to justify it as a logical continuation of past practices.

Blair⁴⁰³ convened a meeting of Gonja chiefs in May 1930 and a second meeting with Dagomba chiefs in November of the same year. Through these meetings, Blair, chiefs, and translators began the process of translating and codifying in writing in English "the traditional constitutional forms and procedures of the two states," gaining a "consensus on the nature of the chiefly hierarchies," which, under indirect rule, would provide the link between the commoners and the British administration.⁴⁰⁴ The official report produced by the British Administration called the meeting held with Dagomba chiefs, "the Constitutional Congress of Dagomba chiefs."

Blair also wrote "A History of Dagomba" attaching it to that report. Blair's 'history' is an important translation of Dagbamba drum poetry, a genre known as lumsi, which in the process of translating he transformed into historiography. Another translation of a similar drum chant was collected, translated, and published by E.F. Tamakloe, an Ewe from the south who wrote in German.⁴⁰⁵ A third translation was collected by colonial official Duncan-Johnstone and appended to Blair's report on the Constitutional Congress of Dagomba chiefs.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰² MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 25.

⁴⁰³ In 1936 Blair became the commissioner of the Lawra-Tumu district of the North-West province of the Northern Territories. Der describes the relationship between Blair, chiefs, and the Catholic mission as very cordial. Blair introduced paid labor into the Native Administration. He eased tensions between chiefs and Christians who refused to do communal labor on Sundays. He built chapels and supported mission efforts. Der, "Church-State Relations in Northern Ghana, 1906-1940," 57.

⁴⁰⁴ Ferguson and Wilks, "Chiefs, Constitutions and The British in Northern Ghana," 337.

⁴⁰⁵ Tamakloe was an Ewe southerner who had learned Dagbanli and wrote in German. He worked with Namo Na, chief drummer in Yendi in the 1920s. He absorbed European thinking and that clearly factored into his translations. MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 25. Is it possible that Tamakloe was trained by the Bremen mission and formerly involved in mission or translation?

⁴⁰⁶ Duncan-Johnstone was described as a practical man by Lentz. His ethnographic reconstruction of history was "speculative" more inspired by antiquity and the history of Great Britain than data from northern Ghana. *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 90-92, 95, 130.

The British colonial government acted as a translation ‘commissioner,’ calling for acts of written translation that were intended to change things in society.⁴⁰⁷ The British convened constitutional meetings of chiefs and produced translated products from these meetings. They held constitutional meetings in the North-West province of the Northern Territories as well. It is worth highlighting in the North-West province that tindamba⁴⁰⁸ ‘territorial shrine owners’ were not invited or refused to come to the constitutional meetings.⁴⁰⁹

Further meetings were held to begin the process of establishing and systematizing ‘customary law’ to be used by ‘Native Authorities.’ These subsequent meetings involved translating certain genres of oral tradition into written form in English for the purpose of making enforceable judgements. Lentz describes how this process of translating and codifying native law took place in the North-West province of the Northern Territories. In the Lawra District divisional chiefs and their advisors were convened regularly to discuss issues of revenue collection, hierarchies of chieftaincy, marriage custom, inheritance, and land rights. “The results of these discussions were recorded in English by the district commissioner and his native clerk, and then, following oral translation back into Dagara, were signed by the divisional chiefs.”⁴¹⁰ There are two acts of translation described by Lentz. First, the source of the written text were the discussions that took place in the presence of the clerk and the district commissioner.⁴¹¹ These discussions presumably occurred in Dagara and needed to be translated and summarized in some way in the clerk’s head before being written down in

⁴⁰⁷ Christiane Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1997), 20. There can be a difference between an “initiator” and a “commissioner.” The commissioner is the one who formally calls for translation and has the material power to influence the production of translation.

⁴⁰⁸ In Dagbanli the singular is tindana and the plural is tindamba. In Dmampulli the singular is tindana and the plural is tindandima.

⁴⁰⁹ In the North-West province, during meetings of the Lawra confederacy, District Commissioner Amherst indicated that the “earth priests” refused to participate in the “chief’s discussions” even though they were offered some money to attend. Amherst believed the earth priests were jealous of the chiefs. “Handing Over Report,” Lawra-Tumu District, 7 Nov 1938; “Lawra-Tumu Annual Report,” 1941-42; Lawra-Tumu Informal Diary 23 July 1944, cited in Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 130.

⁴¹⁰ Lentz, 130.

⁴¹¹ These discussions were not necessarily actual instantiations of oral tradition, though it is possible such “breakthroughs into performance” may have occurred, but more likely they were demonstrations of oral tradition in a sort of laboratory-like environment. See Dell H. Hymes, *“In Vain I Tried to Tell You”: Essays in Native American ethno-poetics*, Studies in Native American Literature 1 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 139.

English. Second, there was an act of oral translation back into Dagara before the document was signed by the chiefs.⁴¹²

The result of transforming oral tradition into customary law created what Mamdani called a useful ‘whip’ for chiefs over their subjects.⁴¹³ Placing customary law in the hands of chiefs shorn of popular and traditional restraints⁴¹⁴ solved a major problem for the British—how to extract taxes. Under direct rule British officials were failing to raise sufficient tax revenue in the Northern Territories.⁴¹⁵ A major reason for this was that the British made some forms of pre-colonial extraction illegal.

In the pre-colonial era some of the societies used horses, guns, and warfare strategies to extract wealth from African homes and communities through raiding and forced tribute. Under indirect rule the inheritors of those societies were formed into customary states, referred to as Native Authorities. Native Authorities were being called upon to raise income for themselves and the British administration. But since warfare, cattle raiding, slave raiding, and the ivory trade had been outlawed and could not be used as a method of coercion, Native Authorities needed an effective and legal tool for extraction. Customary law wielded by Native Authorities proved to be that useful legal tool for the extraction of local resources into government coffers and into the private coffers of chiefs.

The creation of Native Authorities appeared to be a return to pre-colonial realities, only now incorporated as an organ of the state.⁴¹⁶ In reality, the reconstitution of Native Authorities

⁴¹² Sakai describes the translational shift that takes place here as the “schema of configuration.” This transition moves from heterolingual address to homolingual address in the image of two nation states in dialogue. Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity*, 15.

⁴¹³ “There was nothing voluntary about custom...colonial custom was enforced with a whip, by a constellation of customary authorities—and, if necessary, with the barrel of a gun, by the forces of the centralized state.” Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 50–51. This author has heard a number of anecdotes of how tradition was used in court to extract exorbitant fines. Personal communication, Yajim Amadu. Personal communication, Dame Boari. Personal communication James Wajak. Personal communication, Samson Bilafanim.

⁴¹⁴ Since chiefs embodied tradition, tradition was no longer a check on a chief, and since the popular opinion of a community could not remove a chief, and since colonial commissioners publicly supported their chiefs, indirect rule liberated chiefs from all institutional constraint. Mamdani, 43, 48.

⁴¹⁵ Ferguson and Wilks, “Chiefs, Constitutions and The British in Northern Ghana,” 332–34.

⁴¹⁶ The reconstituted traditional authorities, with their tribunals, courts of appeals, and treasuries, were formally established as instruments of local government by virtue of a series of enactments of 1932: The Native

was uncustomary. All moments of power: judicial, legislative, executive, and administrative, were concentrated in one person, the chief, whose despotic regime of extra-economic coercion “breathed life into a whole range of compulsions: forced labor, forced crops, forced sales, forced contributions, and forced removals.”⁴¹⁷ Customary law provided the new source of income that both the British officials and the chiefs wanted. Customary law provided chiefs with access to court fees and the power to engage in “extra-economic and extralegal” extractions.⁴¹⁸

British officers only occasionally were called upon to enforce customary law. Force was now constantly applied by chiefs, especially through the chief’s police, in such a way that the laws of British citizenry did not apply. Peasants who worked the land became increasingly ‘containerized’ as ‘tribal’ or ‘ethnic groups’, in such a way that rights of individuals were placed in opposition to the ‘custom’ of groups. This was the “genius of British colonialism in Africa”⁴¹⁹—a decentralized despotism that divided the world between citizens and subjects, “between those who labor on the land and those who do not.”⁴²⁰ In other words, in most cases British law did not apply to Africans under Native Authorities. They did not have recourse to the rights of British citizens. Instead, as Mahmood Mamdani indicates, they were subjects.

2.3.3 Review of this chapter’s argument so far

In the first section of this chapter I outlined the chapter’s overall argument regarding the history of colonial-era translation characterized by the act of invasion and the translational actions that supported the relationships established by colonial invasion in service of ongoing colonial rule. The second section recounted the historical invasion of the Volta Basin in 1896.

Authority (Northern Territories) Ordinance, the Native Tribunals ordinance, and the Native treasuries ordinance. The chiefs, divisional chiefs, and councilors became salaried officials of the Native Authorities. Ferguson and Wilks, 339.

⁴¹⁷ Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 23. The author has heard numerous testimonies of forced labor on Nayiri’s farms as late as the 1970s.

⁴¹⁸ Mamdani, 122. See chapter six section 6.1.2.

⁴¹⁹ "To be civilized "not as individuals but as communities" to be subject to a process that one-sidedly opposed the community to the individual, and thereby encapsulated the individual in a set of relations defined and enforced by the state as communal and customary, indeed summed up "the opportunity and the genius" of British colonialism in Africa." Mamdani, 51.

⁴²⁰ “What we have before us is a bifurcated world, no longer simply racially organized, but a world in which the dividing line between those human and the rest less human is a line between those who labor on the land and those who do not." Mamdani, 61.

The British invaded what became the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast as a defensive move to protect the resources of the southern forest region of the Gold Coast from French and German interests. With the gradual end of the slave trade, the Northern Territories no longer had natural resources profitable to the world economy. The British sought to rule the Northern Territories with significant economic resources from those territories, rather than dipping into the profits from other areas. They sought to rule the natives with a small minority of administrators, using only occasional force, because the consistent application of force was a financial drain. The first strategy they used was characterized as direct rule. Direct rule imposed European standards on African society. The British struggled to extract taxes under direct rule because the former means of resource extraction, the slave trade and raiding, had been eliminated under British law. The second strategy of colonial rule was called indirect rule. Indirect rule separated African societies into local kingdoms where paramount chiefs asserted their own law understood as under the overall container of international British law.

The third section of the chapter explored how translational action supported colonial rule initially under direct rule. Religion played a significant role in translation, as Muslim imams and traders were identified as useful African intermediaries with whom British administrators could communicate. Muslim traders spoke Hausa, which had a wide reach across the northern ecumene.⁴²¹ The ‘philosophical’ outlook of Muslim translators appealed to the British because of their expectation and preference for patriarchal authority in local contexts and their more universal respect for submission to power across contexts. The writing ability of Muslim scribes was also useful. But Islam was also a threat because it had the potential to universalize resistance against British rule. Similarly, African religions and Christianity were useful to the British as long as they submitted to and helped legitimize colonial authority to the masses. The day to day work of colonial administration involved communication and translational action. British and African translators (mis)translated their concepts into one another. This reduced conflict on some level, but kept competing intentions in play. I described this theoretically using James Scott’s notion of the public transcript. The ambiguities involved in (mis)translating concepts made for an unstable public transcript. Eventually the British transitioned to indirect rule as a way of offering local chiefs real power

⁴²¹ For a discussion of the pre-colonial development of Hausa as a language of trade and translation see chapter one section 1.2.3.4.

on their local levels. Written translation was called upon in a new way to establish the constitutions of neo-indigenous ‘Native Authorities.’ Written translation also helped facilitate the official establishment of ‘customary law.’ Customary law applied only inside the boundaries of neo-traditional kingdoms. Written translation helped establish customary law as a useful tool of extracting resources from the populace in a way that the populace had limited recourse to appeal to human rights enshrined in British law.

In the next section I explore the heart of this chapter’s argument. Written translation of pre-colonial invasion narratives supported the underlying logic for customary constitutions and customary law justifying the local right of royals to rule over commoners by rights of conquest. By logical extension, the British also enjoyed these rights.

2.4 Colonial translation of/as invasion

In the fourth section of this chapter I build on how written translation served the intention of colonization by describing in greater detail how colonial authorities commissioned written translations in order to establish pre-colonial traditions which recounted raids as official histories of local invasion and conquest. I evaluate the ideology of the translated invasion narratives. Then I describe the translation *of* invasion *as* cultural invasion. I conclude the section with a theory of translation as invasion.

Under indirect rule, written translation was used to transform a genre of oral tradition useful on certain occasions into a founding invasion myth applicable to all people subordinate to the Na and the ritual politics of nam. In section 2.3.2 above, I mentioned the three written translations of a genre of drum poetry called lumsi by E.F. Tamakloe, District Commissioner Blair, and Chief Commissioner Duncan-Johnstone. On certain occasions specific instantiations of lumsi drum chants were translated and written down in English and German through ethnographic encounters.⁴²² The encounters took place in 1928, at the time indirect rule was being implemented more thoroughly in the Northern Territories. The three written texts were amalgamated into one narrative, and have become the received tradition which is

⁴²² MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 49. MacGaffey recounts what his ethnographic encounters were like with drummers and other persons who had knowledge of the tradition, including youth and elders. He describes how the tradition is remembered by different members of the group, what happens when there are difficulties in memory, and how the ancestors are consulted. He describes the process how the tradition is shaped in a way that is comfortable for the here and now.

recounted as popular history in Dagbon to this day.⁴²³ It is commonly understood that the invasion narratives recount the time when Na Nyagse, son of Na Sitobu, the founder of Dagbon, conquered the area that became Dagbon by killing the tindamba, the territorial shrine owners, and replacing them with his own relatives as chiefs. In short, what I just recounted is the ‘historical’ content of the invasion narrative.

2.4.1 An evaluation of the ideology of the invasion myth as history

Wyatt MacGaffey has provided a critical evaluation of the drum chant texts in terms of the ideological functions of the chants as history,⁴²⁴ by providing a close reading of the sources of the drum chant texts,⁴²⁵ and by talking to tindamba, who despite the claims of some of the texts, still exist in Dagbon.⁴²⁶

2.4.1.1 Understanding lunsu as drum chant poetry

To understand MacGaffey’s re-reading of history it is important to understand the tradition of drum chanting on its own terms. Lunsu is a genre of drum chant poetry performed by official drummers who chant praise to a benefactor, normally a chief, as they drum. The drummer-poet’s job is to praise the benefactor who has commissioned him on that day, recounting the heroic deeds of the benefactor’s ancestors in the poetic form of drum chant. The drummers occupy a specialized segment in society.⁴²⁷ In their repertoire, they chant the story of the feats of Na Gbewa, who is also referred to as Na Bawa, and his sons recounting their military

⁴²³ MacGaffey, 27. MacGaffey indicates the sources of the received tradition are the three texts, amalgamated together and supplemented with background information obtained from early 20th century anthropology.

⁴²⁴ Prior to colonial invasion and administration, drum chants were used to incite chiefs in battle, and to praise them for their feats of nam or politics. Ideologically, drum chants function to praise the current dynasty and its chiefs. When drum chants become the starting point for history, drum chants silence commoner voices, and the voices of those who the chant describes as conquered. MacGaffey, 38, 68. Furthermore, the alleged primordial slaughter of tindamba is effectively an assertion of exclusive political control of the representatives of the authority of Yendi, the capital of Dagbon. MacGaffey, 23–24.

⁴²⁵ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 37–68.

⁴²⁶ MacGaffey, 27, 75.

⁴²⁷ Iliasu, “The Origins of the Mossi-Dagomba States,” 96–97. Iliasu argues that the kingdom of Dagbon developed the machinery of official drummers in a way Mamprugu did not. Iliasu goes on to explore the differences in oral tradition between these two Dagbamba kingdoms. Iliasu, 98–101.

victories in near and far off places and times.⁴²⁸ As MacGaffey's research indicates, a drummer's performance is constrained by the situation,⁴²⁹ or what scholars of oral tradition and folklore call the performance event.⁴³⁰

Speaking theoretically, the concrete circumstances of the performance event in which a particular poetic genre is expressed are linked with the poetic form being circulated in performance. In other words, the event is an integral part of how the cultural form makes meaning. The word event indicates that both the time and the space when and where a cultural form is performed are an integral part of meaning making. Subsequent performances of a story or another poetic form refer to past instantiations of the 'same' story, but the new performance event always changes, however minutely, the way meaning is communicated. Material changes in time and space in the circulation of a cultural form recalibrate the meaning making process. Larger changes in meaning making occur when technologies and epistemologies shift.⁴³¹ MacGaffey's research is interested in the ideological functions of

⁴²⁸ Iliasu argues that Bawa is a misspelling of Gbewa introduced by colonial anthropologists. Iliasu, "The Origins of the Mossi-Dagomba States," 101.

⁴²⁹ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 68.

⁴³⁰ Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs, "Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 1990, 59–88; Richard Bauman, "Performance," in *Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainments: A Communications-Centered Handbook*, ed. Richard Bauman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 41–49; Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*, 79–94, 130–33.

⁴³¹ Drawing on the work of Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Starr, Charles Briggs describes the way moving a cultural form (like oral poetry or a written text) involves two contradictory processes—linking and delinking to material 'stuff' and particular practices in time and space. "First, particular practices, epistemologies, and technologies must be employed in order to enable objects, cultural forms, and other entities to inhabit particular sites. At each location through which they circulate, texts, objects, narratives, and the like get connected indexically to features of these assemblages at the same time that they performatively reshape them, albeit generally in minute ways. Bowker and Star suggest that in order to move on to other sites, however, dimensions of the complex indexical histories generated at each site must be erased. Some actors, interests, languages, conflicts, technologies, and the like must disappear; of the stuff that circulates, some features become fissures and others part of the background, some get referentially coded while others are lodged in non-referential features. Reception, of course, further complicates this process, as some people who get interpellated down the line know enough of the indexical histories to infer elements that have been erased while others are unable to decode even foregrounded elements." Charles L. Briggs, "Contested Mobilities: On the Politics and Ethnopoetics of Circulation," *Journal of Folklore Research* 50, no. 1 (2013): 287.

lunsi as oral performance and the ideological shifts that occurred when lunsi were written down through colonial translation.

Before lunsi was transformed into written media through colonial translation, MacGaffey argues that lunsi had several useful ideological functions. Lunsi were used to incite chiefs in battle, by praising a chief's ancestors for their feats of nam, or 'politics.' During funerals or festivals, lunsi functioned to praise the current dynasty and its chiefs. The specific performances of lunsi that describe the Dagbamba foundational myth, have the ideological effect of setting the royal family apart and legitimating their right to migrate from one royal title to another in hopes of advancing to that of Ya Na, the highest title in Dagbon. The myth helps explain why chiefs are the mobile element of the population, perpetual strangers in Dagbon. Furthermore, the alleged primordial slaughter of tindamba is effectively an assertion of exclusive political control of the representatives of the authority of Yendi, the capital of Dagbon.⁴³² It should be noted that one of the three written versions, Blair's version, does not mention the slaughter of tindamba.⁴³³ It is not only the tindamba who are silenced through the translation of the invasion narrative but also all commoners and all those who were 'conquered'—as portrayed from the perspective of the dominant version of the translated narrative.⁴³⁴

2.4.1.2 Translating genre from oral poetry into written historiography

During the advent of indirect rule, certain instantiations of lunsi⁴³⁵ tradition were translated and "literated" in a process Sheldon Pollock calls "vernacularization."⁴³⁶ Linguistically, lunsi were translated from Dagbanli into German or English. Semiotically, the medium was also

⁴³² MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 23–24. My own research indicates that Konkomba people, the many and diverse clans of Kpukpamba or Birkpukpam, referred to Yendi as Yaann.

⁴³³ MacGaffey, 25.

⁴³⁴ MacGaffey, 19, 38.

⁴³⁵ Lunga is singular; lunsi is plural.

⁴³⁶ "In vernacularization local languages are first admitted to literacy (what I sometimes call literization), then accommodated to "literature" as defined by preexisting cosmopolitan models (litarization), and thereby unified and homogenized; eventually they come to be deployed in new projects of territorialization and, in some cases, ethnicization." Sheldon Pollock, "India in the Vernacular Millennium: Literary Culture and Polity, 1000-1500," *Daedalus* 127, no. 3 (1998): 41.

transformed or “entextualized”⁴³⁷ from oral performance into written texts.⁴³⁸ The shift of technology and epistemological practice from the oral performance of a cultural form to the written circulation of a cultural form drastically changed the ways lunyi made meaning. Written media stripped away the performative situation linked to the specifics of time and space and made a particular instantiation of lungu appear more enduring in its particular details than otherwise would be the case. The written genre transformed lunyi from functioning as praise poetry, understood according to the ‘rules’ of its genre, into written historiography, understood according to the ideology of written textual history.⁴³⁹ The texts were framed as foundational myths by virtue of their attachment to the colonial report of ‘the Constitutional Congress of Dagomba Chiefs.’ The texts served as reference points for colonial governments and they were read as history in colonial and post-colonial schools.⁴⁴⁰

Translation scholar André Lefevere shows how the genre of a translated text greatly influences the ideological impact a text can have on its audience. A translator, which Lefevere refers to as a re-writer or an author, may have an ideological position that is embedded in a text. But it is the genre of the text that is likely to allow the ideological concept embedded in the text greater or lesser influence on the popular audience.⁴⁴¹ By

⁴³⁷ Entextualization is “the process of rendering a given instance of discourse as text, detachable from its local context.” Greg Urban, “Entextualization, Replication, and Power,” in *Natural Histories of Discourse*, ed. Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 21.

⁴³⁸ “In significant part this is also a task of translation: both intersemiotic translation - that is, rendering oral discourse in written form - and often interlingual translation as well....it is also a problem of decontextualization and recontextualization: how to lift the oral text from its “traditional” oral context and recontextualize it in a printed work.” Richard Bauman and Charles L Briggs, *Voices of Modernity Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality* (Cambridge, England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 16, <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=217915>.

⁴³⁹ A popular phrase one hears in Ghana, is “Book don’t lie.” That statement affirms the ideology of text being asserted in a way that “deflects skepticism.” MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 24. For a summary of the ideology of text see Morgan Gray, “Ideology of the Text in Pathways Project,” The Pathways Project, July 13, 2011, http://www.pathwaysproject.org/pathways/show/Ideology_of_the_Text; John Miles Foley, *Oral Tradition and the Internet: Pathways of the Mind* (University of Illinois, 2012), 117–24.

⁴⁴⁰ When texts begin to enter a literary tradition, Pollock refers to it as ‘literarization’ Pollock, “India in the Vernacular Millennium: Literary Culture and Polity, 1000-1500,” 41.

⁴⁴¹ André Lefevere, “Composing the Other,” in *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, ed. Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, Translation Studies (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), 75–94. Lefevere

changing the genre from orally performed lunyi to written historiography, the assertions of power implicit in the narrative appear more substantial, less perspectival. The presence and obvious influence of the benefactor who hired the drummer on the content of the narrative is suppressed. The situational demands upon the performer's rendition of the tradition on that occasion are suppressed. The interests of the colonial commissioner who called for 'the Dagomba Constitutional Congress' and who published the written translations are suppressed. The colonial commissioner of the translations wishes to appear to be a neutral party since the events recounted in the written text happened hundreds of years before colonial presence. The shift of genre from lunyi to written historiography helps explain why the invasion model has become so influential, taking hold in the popular northern Ghanaian mindset from the time of colonization through independence to the present.⁴⁴² However, the hegemony of the written invasion narrative is not total. Subversive memories articulated from different perspectives persist in social bodies and sometimes those perspectives are articulated in oral performances.

2.4.1.3 Translating history from a chief's perspective

Translation of oral genre into a written text helped privilege and strengthen the chiefly perspective on Dagbamba invasion and conquest. In pre-colonial time, the performance of lunyi drum poetry was employed when chiefs and their armies went into battle. Lunyi was also performed as drum chant for chiefly patrilineal groups during funerals and festivals. In colonial time, through translation lunyi was transformed into a more general historical

compares how three different Dutch texts construct the other. The first is Batavia and constructs India in decidedly pro-Dutch fashion, the other neo-classical in form but anti-Dutch, the third is a first-person narrative about experiences of the negative side of Dutch trade. Lefevere concludes if an author wants to expose the devices, corruption, and folly of Dutch colonization, perhaps the genre of first-person narrative is the best.⁴⁴² Within modernism there was an entire movement of writing down collections of oral traditional texts, cataloguing them, and publishing them for ideological reasons. For a comprehensive analysis of this tradition see Bauman and Briggs, *Voices of Modernity Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality*. The Basel mission was deeply influenced by one the major theorists in the folklore tradition, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803). The first Basel mission Bible translators Johannes Christaller and Johan Zimmermann both drew on Herder's notion of Volk and followed his practice of collecting oral folktales. See Heinz Hauser-Renner, "'Obstinate' Pastor and Pioneer Historian: The Impact of Basel Mission Ideology on the Thought of Carl Christian Reindorf," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 33, no. 2 (April 2009): 67-69. That is why I surmise the Basel mission's presence in Yendi may have had an impact on E.F. Tamakloe's version of the invasion narrative.

memory, asserted as valid and applicable for all sectors of society. In effect, translation promoted one occasional point of view of past events as the standard point of departure for all relevant political memory in northern Ghana. This perspectival act of translation was an ideological assertion, the results of which were repeated again and again as the basis for customary law.

For the royal gates who could claim ‘royal’ perspective, customary law became a locus of conflict. MacGaffey indicates that issues that would have been solved through mortal conflict in the past resorted to a reified oral tradition to engage in conflictual politics in the present. The only way to resolve the conflict was if one group could assert their perspective on custom and enforce it over the other. Among competing gates to chieftaincy, such decisive clarity has proved unobtainable.⁴⁴³ Thus, as I note in chapter six, violent flare-ups and armed conflict are a part of the late 20th and early 21st century experience in northern Ghana.

For the general populace the chief’s perspective on history was asserted again and again as an ‘objective’ viewpoint for establishing policy and law for society. However, other genre of oral tradition continued to be performed in popular oral tradition from the perspective of other sectors of society. The performance of these genres perpetuated other perspectives and memories of indigenous pre-colonial time and other perspectives on history.

2.4.1.4 Talking to tindamba

The strongest critique of the invasion model of history in Dagbon is astoundingly simple. Scholars have long recognized that tindamba still exist in Dagbon, because they are involved in the coronation processes of Ya Na. Nevertheless, their existence has not encouraged scholars to find out their perspective on the invasion narrative. MacGaffey spoke with tindamba who exist today in several locations inside Dagbon. As MacGaffey describes his ethnographic encounters, it becomes apparent that according to the tindamba, their offices were never snuffed out. Na Nyagse never came to many of their communities. How is that Na Nyagse killed all of these tindamba and replaced them with chiefs when so many of their

⁴⁴³ MacGaffey points to the fact that the dispute between Andanis and Abudus *which* began in the 1880s and which would have been resolved through violence, remains unresolved. *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 50. The point is not to promote contemporary violent conflict resolution, but rather to suggest that oral tradition needs critical assessment, not looked at as a panacea which unproblematically connects to pristine pre-colonial records.

offices are still being perpetuated in the present? Why did important scholars not recognize this in Dagbon?⁴⁴⁴

2.4.2 Colonial translations of invasion as invasion

After independence, the same invasion stories translated and promoted by colonizers were taken at face value in the post-colonial era by scholars of history and anthropology.

MacGaffey questions the invasion model on historiographic and anthropological grounds. Historically, he argues that while there were invaders and aborigines, it is more likely that there were bands of settlers who migrated over time. Furthermore, from an anthropological perspective, it is clearly not the case that tindamba in Dagbon were slaughtered, since so many persist in the present. The perspectives of living tindamba do not corroborate lumsi chanted in Yendi.

So why have these invasion narratives been so dominant in scholarship and in popular conceptions? MacGaffey suggests that invasion and conquest stories are tantalizing because they give the impression of creating history by inserting a sharp breaking point in time. He comments that invasion stories served three ideological functions; each function was useful in a different context. Invasion stories serve “as charters for states, as legitimation for colonial rule, and as certification for the indigenous political capacity of independent Ghanaians.”⁴⁴⁵

In the rest of this section I argue that that colonial translation was fundamental to the success of the three ideological reasons MacGaffey articulated. Translation was an important part of the substructure which helped the invasion narrative become part of the unquestioned hegemony in politics, scholarship, and popular perceptions.

2.4.2.1 Invasion narratives as post-colonial / neo-colonial hegemony

The relationship between hegemony and ideology as described by the Comaroffs helps to make clear the reason for the acceptance of invasion narratives in the post-colonial era. For most Ghanaians invasion narratives have entered into the realm of hegemony. Invasion

⁴⁴⁴ An important exception is Ibrahim Mahama, who revised the invasion story in 2004. Mahama claims that the original conquerors took over land and spiritual control but later gave back the spiritual function to "certain fetish priests" whom they appointed from the original priestly families. Mahama recognizes the existence of the tindamba but excludes them from control of the land. MacGaffey, 28–29; Ibrahim Mahama, *History and Traditions of Dagbon* (Tamale, Ghana: GILLBT, 2004).

⁴⁴⁵ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 19.

narratives became unquestioned 'history'. The Comaroffs, drawing on Foucault, suggest that for ideology to enter hegemony, it must be enforced over time, inscribed in daily routine and custom.⁴⁴⁶

How did invasion move from ideological assertion to unexamined generally accepted hegemony? I will focus on the role colonial translation played in strengthening the move from ideology into hegemony in support of the previously articulated three ideological functions of the invasion narrative.

The first ideological function of the invasion narrative was that it provided a useful charter for customary African states, such as Dagbon or Mamprugu. The act of translating lunyi into written historiography helped establish the charter for a customary state because written translation suppressed several ideological assertions that would have been apparent in oral performance. (See section 2.4.1.2 above.) The addenda which Commissioner Blair titled "A history of Dagomba," which was attached to 'the Customary Constitution of Dagomba Chiefs' in 1930, gave an impression that the British officials and the Dagbamba chiefs were working together to restore pre-colonial structures. But the acts of translation underlying their action had significantly altered the pre-colonial structures in a number of ways, not the least of which was strengthening the office of the chief to the point of eliminating the office of tindana.

The subsequent acts of translation associated with the creation of customary law provided a legal tool that could be applied in customary court. Customary law was applied in chief's courts over and over again. Customary law was a useful 'whip' for extracting resources from common people. Once this whip was successfully applied again and again, it appeared to be true to the masses. The fines people paid due to customary law turned the ideological assertions of colonial translation into a functional reality.

Translation, and especially written translation, makes it appear that one is perceiving something in an unmediated fashion. The occasional nature of translation as an act is suppressed, hiding important aspects of power. The discipline of 'translation studies' has increasingly brought to scholarly awareness that translation involves ideological activity. Translation is not a neutral act.

⁴⁴⁶ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, 1:25.

MacGaffey claims that the second ideological function of invasion narratives served to justify colonial rule. This is a subtle argument. MacGaffey is asserting that colonial rulers felt that the narratives that described Dagbamba chiefs as invaders and conquerors of other African ‘tribes’ justified their own invasion, conquest, and administration of the Volta Basin.⁴⁴⁷

Translation may help accomplish ideologically effective work for positions other than what they are directly describing. The subtlety of MacGaffey’s claim corresponds with Lefevre’s assertion that the genre of translation is the most significant factor in determining ideological effectiveness. Genre and ideology seem to work on a level below overt consciousness.

Perhaps this helps explain why they are so ideologically effective.

The third reason scholars did not challenge the invasion narrative was a result of the social location of scholars after independence. Scholars were in urban centers rather in rural locations. In urban centers, Africans were struggling against colonization as direct rule rather than indirect rule, and they often misread the rural dynamics of colonization. Direct rule painted Africans in racial terms in a manner that relegated them as inferior and subordinate, as objects and not actors. For African scholars and European scholars of Africa, located in universities which were situated close to urban areas, the urban face of colonial despotism was the most salient. For Africans in population centers, rural pre-colonial invasion narratives were ideologically useful. The narratives depicted Africans as powerful agents, as conquerors, as those who acted in powerful ways. These resources could be drawn on for inspiration against colonial powers who treated Africans as objects. The decentralized despotic face of colonial rule for the peasantry in rural locations was not in focus. Scholars missed this distinction partly because their social locations prevented them from discerning the rural face of despotism, which implicated rural elites in its processes. Perhaps urban activists downplayed or missed this analysis as well.

To return to Mbembe’s language of entanglement, a theme from chapter one which has not featured as much in chapter two, African bodies are entangled. As scholars and as activists, African bodies are entangled with the systems of colonialism, even as they struggle to free themselves from it. I revisit the notion of embodied entanglement and its relation to translation in chapter 4. What is important here is that for a number of reasons the infrastructure of indirect rule was left intact, even after independence.

⁴⁴⁷ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 19; Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 99–100.

The critique offered here also relates to Ifi Amadiume's critique of Eurocentric scholarship offered in chapter one. Amadiume criticized male European scholars of Africa who did so much work analyzing African culture but missed the way patriarchy and masculine imperial invasion inserted itself into their scholarly descriptions of pre-colonial history and African ritual practices.⁴⁴⁸

2.4.2.2 Invasion narratives support the colonial capitalist mode of production

Because of its relation to the theme of colonial invasion, I will focus on MacGaffey's second ideological function of pre-colonial invasion narratives. Any attempt to justify colonial invasion of African contexts was questioned during the quest for and achievement of political independence. But liberation from invasion was only achieved on a political level. The translations of pre-colonial invasion narratives as historiography remained after independence and the ideological work they did faded into the realm of hegemony. The invasion narratives were largely unchallenged among the educated northern populations. The implied link between Western capitalists and African elites, which the invasion narrative helped to justify, remained after independence. Bernard Magubane writes, "...the British and the French were eager to hand their power to elites who would keep the African world safe for capitalism, above all for their own capitalism."⁴⁴⁹ Magubane clarifies that the relationship between agents in the post-colony and their former colonial heads was not an equal relationship. "Elites in Africa after colonialism were not owners of the means of production, they were rather class agents or allies of the foreign bourgeoisie."⁴⁵⁰

Colonial capitalism was based on the actual invasion of African (and other world) contexts as a strategic and temporary political move useful for establishing a system that supports the extraction of resources from African contexts to enrich Western bank accounts and economies. Translational and cultural actions were chosen to support the ends of invasion. The ends of invasion were a working system of extraction of resources so that business owners can acquire large profits accumulated from the sale of goods that they produce from the resources they extract from all over the world.

Translation played an important role in this process. The translation of the narrative of invasion established a justification for colonial rule in the cultural psyche of the population.

⁴⁴⁸ Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 29–51.

⁴⁴⁹ Magubane, "The Evolution of Class Structure in Africa," 186.

⁴⁵⁰ Magubane, 190.

This was done by making a number of implicit associations between more recent colonial assertive actions with past actions carried out by chiefly African ancestors. The colonial translation of invasion made indigenous invasion and conquest appear to be a historical fact rooted in ‘objective’ pre-colonial narrative.⁴⁵¹ This made the contemporary colonial conquest appear similar to actions taken in the past led by royal chiefs performing ‘feats of nam’. Furthermore, invasion and conquest established the right to rule and to legally tax and engage in natural resource extraction. The translation of invasion implied European representatives and African chiefs were the rightful inheritors of benefits established through conquests. Accordingly, the invasion narrative implicitly argues that both groups have inherited the right to extract wealth because of the military superiority of their ancestors, or their government. The translation of invasion implicitly justified maintaining the current system where ruling classes extract and retain the profits with only minimal investment back into the communities. Communities lost the rights to the natural resources because they were invaded and conquered. Chiefs and royal classes retain some rights as inheritors of the benefits of so-called pre-colonial invasions and conquests, keeping in mind Magubane’s assessment, those rights are mainly as allies of the foreign business class.

In the next subsection I articulate the relationship between culture and economy, and between European invader and African royalty in theoretical terms emerging from the northern Ghanaian context.

2.4.3 Articulating a theory of translation as invasion

A theory of translation as invasion which emerges from the data of colonial translation practice in the northern Ghanaian context would include:

1. Purporting to neutrally translate/transmit the perspective of an elite sector of society as the universally relevant perspective for interpreting what is legal, right, true, just, and presenting that perspective to everyone else in society as the true starting point of history, legality, etc.
2. Translating ancient invasions and conquests as ‘charter texts’ that establish a psychological and quasi-historical justification for present relations of domination and

⁴⁵¹ The translation process correlates ideological assertions which are obvious assertions of power with historic assertions of power presented as hegemony. The historic assertions are ideological assertions of power just as the implicit present assertions are ideological assertions of power, but the historic assertions are presented as if they are generally accepted historical fact.

extraction between foreign business interests and local elites in service to the colonial capitalist mode of production.

3. Semiotic transformations that reduce the diversity of genres and communal voices in dialogue into the most useful genre and media format for persuasively communicating imperial ideology.

The theory of translation as invasion proposed here suggests that acts of textual translation provided an important hegemonic substructure that the colonizers used to justify the ends of invasion. The scramble for Africa was initially about sealing off access to markets from European competitors for British trade interests. The ends of invasion were to establish a system that would provide cheap access to African resources for European capitalist markets. Translation helped achieve this system in the colonial period in at least two ways.

First, the translation of the invasion myth into historiography provided an appeal to historical precedent. Current elites, both British and Dagbamba, had the right to extract wealth in the present because of conquest in the past. British armies had conquered those who had already engaged in their own pre-colonial acts of conquering. Colonial administrators could be assured that their acts of serving British economic powers were necessary and good. The invasion myth reassured Dagbamba royalty to continue practicing their earned right to extract resources from the descendants of those whom their ancestors had extracted resources in the past. The colonial administrators could demand some amount of what was extracted to offset the costs of administering a region that was not as economically profitable.⁴⁵² This rationale assumed the translational perspective of the dominant groups, both the British and the chiefly elites.

Second, the translation of oral tradition from the perspective of royals into customary law was a major reduction of oral tradition. Only one genre was selected. Only one perspective was allowed, a novel genre of codified written documents useful for legal extraction. The popular perception was that “book don’t lie.” If that was questioned by anyone, the book and its controlling interpretation was backed up by chief’s police and further backed up by colonial military might.

⁴⁵² Colonial accounting sought to make each region balance its own books despite the fact that the northern territories were invaded, not for their economic value, but to protect lucrative southern markets.

These forms of translation were part of the hegemonic substructure of colonial assertion. As customary law was enforced again and again, it became easier for colonial authorities and their allies to assume these assertions as valid in relation to their subordinates. Over time colonizers and their allies would have less need to offer justification for extraction. The agentive assertion of rights for extraction were increasingly a given, hidden in law, custom, and precedent.⁴⁵³

2.4.4 Summary of section four

Section four continues the argument of the chapter regarding the way colonial translation supported the ends of political invasion. Section four focuses on how written acts of translation helped the British administrators transition from direct to indirect rule. Written translations transformed a genre of oral tradition called *lunsi* constrained by the rules of its genre and the nature of performance events embedded again and again in time and space into written historiography. These written translations appeared timeless, applicable to all sectors of society. The written translations also appeared to be acontextual. They made the influence of space and circumstance less obvious on the performance of a poetic form. The written translations raised the perspective of the royal class above all others in the society as the starting point for establishing historical legitimacy. Three written translations of specific instantiations of drum chants performed in Yendi around 1928 were attached to the colonial report of “the Constitutional Congress of Dagomba Chiefs” published in 1930. These instantiations of *lunsi* described pre-colonial raids in the flowery language of praise poetry. As written translations attached to the charter of the Dagbamba customary ‘state,’ the rhetoric in praise of pre-colonial raids were reframed as pre-colonial invasions of the Northern Territory and the complete conquest of the many disparate kinship groups and commoner societies that inhabited the land. The written translations of the invasion myth were amalgamated in the popular consciousness and supported the legitimacy of the overrule of Dagbamba chiefs, and by extension, the overrule of British authority. The analysis in section four bridges into the post-colonial neo-colonial era when it describes why these invasion narratives were perpetuated even after Ghanaian independence. From the colonial practice of translation in the context of northern Ghana, a theory of translation as invasion was

⁴⁵³ Some may protest at this point, arguing I have deemphasized what was offered in return for this transaction. Perhaps that is because at least at this point in history, from the perspective of the peasants, it was not clear what the British and their Dagbamba overlords were offering in return for their extractive services. Did the people need roads? Did they need market stalls built? Were they asking for schools?

articulated as a strategy that supports the establishment and ongoing justification for the colonial capitalist mode of production. The next section of this chapter explores the range of neo-indigenous responses to the colonial translation of invasion as cultural invasion.

2.5 (Neo-)indigenous responses to colonial acts of translation in the colonial era

The colonial acts of translation that occurred in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast generated a variety of indigenous and neo-indigenous responses. African translators, like their colonial counterparts, engaged in (mis)representing, whether consciously or unconsciously, the other's articulations. (See section 2.3.1.5 above.) I will focus on two types of responses to colonial (mis)translations. One response was the rejection of colonial starting points. The responses of ethnically ambiguous groups who did not cooperate with colonial assertions of power were characterized as 'uncivilized', 'naked', and 'wild.' They did not accept the colonial acts of translation as having any merit, offering any compelling justification, or having any legitimacy. The second set of responses involved working within the colonial value system. Responses were articulated in discourse understood by the dominant system. The dominant perspective would see these as intelligible responses. These responses include forms of accommodation or cultural translation of the dominant system into the subordinate system.

In chapter one I discussed the estate-based value system and the kinship-based value system as described by Kirby. (See chapter 1, section 1.3.5.2.) Below, I describe how elders who had no tradition of chieftaincy became chiefs in the estate-based value system that had become entangled with colonial politics. Students also engaged the colonial version of the estate-based value system by enrolling in schools in the 1940s and 50s, qualifying themselves for offices outside the indigenous pre-colonial social system. Both of these responses expressed themselves within the dominant value system.

To help us understand the range of indigenous responses to colonial acts of translation I return to the Comaroffs' analysis of ideology and hegemony as two points on a continuum between an overt assertion of power and a hidden assertion of power. As I briefly alluded to in section 2.3.1.4 above, promising to return to this point in more detail, the Comaroffs theorize a range of indigenous awareness regarding colonial assertions. Between the conscious and the unconscious "is the most critical domain...for the analysis of colonialism and resistance," that is "the realm of partial recognition, inchoate awareness, of ambiguous

perception, and sometimes, of creative tension.”⁴⁵⁴ Resistance to colonial assertions of power can range from articulate acts of resistance to silent tacit refusal. In between articulate and tacit expressions of resistance and refusal lies the area of partial “recognition.” “Out of that recognition, and the creative tensions to which it may lead, arises forms of *experimental practice* that are at once techniques of empowerment and the signs of collective representation.”⁴⁵⁵

The colonial assertions, which indigenous groups were responding to, were undergirded by acts of translation, which over time began to function at the level of the hegemonic. The few historical responses highlighted below are indigenous attempts to get a handle on what was happening to them, which fall variously on the spectrum of awareness as described by the Comaroffs.

Cindi Katz draws on the Comaroffs and James Scott, mentioned above, and offers some additional language that describes a range of activities within the larger category of resistance. Katz prefers to save the category of resistance for those practices that “draw on and produce a critical consciousness to confront and redress historically and geographically specific conditions of oppression and exploitation.”⁴⁵⁶ Resistance for Katz works at the conscious level. It is overt, collective, and strategic.⁴⁵⁷ A level below resistance is what Katz calls ‘reworking.’⁴⁵⁸ Projects of reworking recognize collective problems, but rather than attempting to undo or question hegemonic relations, projects of reworking “attempt to recalibrate power relations and/or redistribute resources.”⁴⁵⁹ Katz continues,

⁴⁵⁴ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, 1:29.

⁴⁵⁵ Comaroff and Comaroff, 1:31. (Emphasis original.) “Through such reactions, “native peoples” seek to plumb the depths of the colonizing process. They search for coherence—and, sometimes, the *deus ex machina*—that lies behind its visible face. For the recently colonized, or those who feel the vibrations of the imperial presence just over the horizon, generally believe there is something invisible, something profound happening to them—and that their future may well depend on gaining control over its magic.” Comaroff and Comaroff, 1:31–32.

⁴⁵⁶ Cindi Katz, *Growing up Global: Economic Restructuring and Children’s Everyday Lives* (Minneapolis; London; University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 252.

⁴⁵⁷ Katz, 251–57.

⁴⁵⁸ Cindi Katz, “On the Grounds of Globalization: A Topography for Feminist Political Engagement,” *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society* 26, no. 4 (Summer 2001): 1223–24; Katz, *Growing up Global*, 247–51.

⁴⁵⁹ Katz, *Growing up Global*, 247.

This is not to say that those engaged in the politics of reworking accept or support the hegemony of the ruling classes and dominant social groups, but that in undertaking such politics, their interests are not so much in challenging hegemonic power as in attempting to undermine its inequities on the very grounds on which they are cast. There are two interconnected aspects to material social practices of reworking: one is associated with redirecting and in some cases reconstituting available resources, and the other is associated with people retooling themselves as political subjects and social actors.⁴⁶⁰

At the most basic level communities who are being oppressed must struggle to survive. Survival itself is an achievement and viewed in that light, survival is resistance. Katz prefers to call individual acts that foster collective survival by reinforcing local knowledge and community values ‘practices of resilience.’⁴⁶¹ Resilience includes “everyday acts of neighboring—the mutual relations of care giving, the sights on the future that help both young and old keep hope, stay alive, and even thrive...”⁴⁶² Acts of resilience are often used against the people that employ them. They are often contradictory, and in some ways reinforce the oppressive system. Nevertheless, resilience is often a necessary step that can lead to collective remaking and oppositional resistance.

Katz argues that oppositional practices of resistance operate at what the Comaroffs call the conscious level. Katz’s practices of remaking may lie in the Comaroffs’ realm of ‘partial recognition’ and may be understood as ‘experimental practice’ that can lead to resistance. There is a collective nature to remaking that borders on resistance.⁴⁶³ I would argue that practices of resilience also operate in the realm of partial recognition. Practices of resilience may lack the collective and systemic approach of remaking and the oppositional character of resistance, still, they are important for survival and reinforcing individual and community dignity.

⁴⁶⁰ Katz, 247.

⁴⁶¹ Katz, “On the Grounds of Globalization: A Topography for Feminist Political Engagement,” 1225; Katz, *Growing up Global*, 244–46.

⁴⁶² Katz, *Growing up Global*, 246.

⁴⁶³ Katz, 251.

2.5.1 'Resisting' colonial translations

Under colonial rule, both direct and indirect rule, the British sought to work through Dagbamba nanima 'chiefs' rather than engage directly with commoners or the 'heads' of ethnically ambiguous societies. Some of these ambiguous groups were classified by Dagbamba as Kpunjkaamba, which has been anglicized as Konkomba. Konkomba and other ethnically ambiguous societies did not recognize Dagbamba or British authority over their life practices as anything other than assertions of power.

A good example of the conflict between Konkomba practices and colonial practices was described in chapter one regarding feuding. Kinship groups sometimes engaged in long protracted 'feuds' over disputes regarding hunting rights, fishing rights, and marriage arrangements. Rather than ignore such feuding, colonial officials tried to stop feuding.⁴⁶⁴ The interventions only brought the British deeper into Konkomba realities despite the British intention to work through Dagbamba chiefs. The interventions were largely unsuccessful. "Considered broadly, Konkomba feuds allowed Konkomba to maintain relative autonomy from the British and their Dagbamba neighbors because it was a social and political variable that the colonial administration lacked the means to contend with."⁴⁶⁵

Despite the strategies that the British used to curtail it, feuding was a powerful response to colonial and customary imposition. The dynamics began to shift a little with the advent of indirect rule. As early as 1918, the Dagbamba chiefs were given the authority by the British to collect Konkomba weapons. This fundamentally changed their relationship.⁴⁶⁶ When customary law was created, the fines of customary law issued upon so many Konkomba households and communities contributed to mobilizing resistance to customary authority.⁴⁶⁷

On occasion violent conflict would flare up in which Konkomba refused to be exploited by Dagbamba chiefs.⁴⁶⁸ Other forms of disguised insubordination included non-compliance,

⁴⁶⁴ In January 1918 Armitage pursued three tactics to make feuding more difficult 1. Increasing police presence in Konkomba villages. 2. Banning displays of bows and arrows. 3. Restricting Konkomba mobility on British French border. Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 59.

⁴⁶⁵ Talton, 62.

⁴⁶⁶ Talton, 60.

⁴⁶⁷ "Despite the ineffectiveness of colonial courts for resolving Konkomba conflicts, they produced records that provide a window into Konkomba society during the colonial period." Talton, 67.

⁴⁶⁸ Talton, 92–96; Tait, *The Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, 9–10.

foot-dragging, pilfering, dissimulation, feigned ignorance, and fleeing.⁴⁶⁹ In addition to internal feuding, and the occasional violent response directed at Dagbamba overlords, these other forms of misdirection also made extraction more difficult, but did not rise to the level of direct conflict. These tacit refusals of colonial imposition were often quite effective at frustrating colonial authorities. At that time, neither the British nor the Dagbamba chiefs wanted to engage in direct warfare with the rural peasantry.

2.5.2 A response of translating yourself into a recognizable form

Another response to colonial imposition is to translate oneself linguistically and culturally into a form the dominant system recognizes. Cronin refers to this as auto-translation or self-translation.⁴⁷⁰ In the colonial era, a number of kinship groups decided to auto-translate some of the offices and values of what Kirby calls the estate-based system into their own cultural practice. Tait indicates that some Konkomba became sub-chiefs, most of whom had little power. In the town of Kpaliba, one Konkomba elder was enskinned by the Ya Na and moved out from underneath the Demon Na to be directly under Ya Na in the hierarchy of chieftaincy. Benjamin Talton's research indicated that the man's name was Djar.⁴⁷¹ Tait recounted that the Kpaliba Na "lived to some extent like a Dagomba."⁴⁷² He dressed like a chief, kept a horse and wore the medicines prepared by malams for Dagbamba chiefs.⁴⁷³ Talton recounted that Konkomba elders in the area of Kpaliba agreed to support Djar. They engaged the office of chieftaincy to try to work within the system rather than against it.⁴⁷⁴ Djar remained influential into the 1970s but failed to achieve a broad coalition and become a force for change.⁴⁷⁵ This form of auto-translation appears to be an attempt to gain some control over a system that was oppressive. It has been a strategy that has continued into the twenty-first century. In the Comaroffs' language this would qualify as experimental practice. And in Katz's language, this may qualify as a collective remaking of the oppressive colonial system of chieftaincy. Remaking chieftaincy into something Konkomba had access to, they

⁴⁶⁹ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, xiii.

⁴⁷⁰ "In auto-translation speakers of a language translate themselves into the language of the other." Michael Cronin, *Across the Lines: Travel, Language, Translation* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2000), 147.

⁴⁷¹ Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 98.

⁴⁷² Tait, *The Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, 11.

⁴⁷³ Tait, 11.

⁴⁷⁴ Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 98.

⁴⁷⁵ Talton, 100.

could redirect resources to their communities, and it might offer a potential to “retool” themselves into “political and social actors”⁴⁷⁶ as their economic landscape was changing.

2.5.3 Translating the self through the educational value system

Another form of retooling oneself into an actor in the colonial era was achieved as individuals from marginalized groups attended colonial, missionary, and Islamic schools. Going to school was another form of auto-translation.

In the colonial era some boy students from the Northern Territories started to attend colonial school. The first colonial school opened in 1908, but remained small. The Catholic White Fathers were the first Christian missionaries who were allowed to start a mission in the Northern Territories. They arrived from Ouagadougou in Navrongo in 1906 on the condition they open a school. The British were wary of the missionaries because they were French nationals working in British territory, in close proximity to French controlled territory. Eager to comply with British conditions, the French missionaries opened the first school in the Northern Territories in 1907.⁴⁷⁷ Colonial reports also contain records of Muslim schools in the north.⁴⁷⁸ As the colonial era progressed, the colonial reports eventually failed to mention Muslim education, suggesting the colonial policy moved towards one of indifference to Muslim education and Islam in general.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁶ Katz, *Growing up Global*, 247. See also 250-251.

⁴⁷⁷ Der, “Church-State Relations in Northern Ghana, 1906-1940,” 41.

⁴⁷⁸ Weiss offers extensive notes of colonial reports in the Northern Territories beginning in 1911 with numbers of Quranic schools and the names of specific communities. Weiss, “Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam and Muslims in Northern Ghana, Ca. 1900-1930,” n. 94. It may be that early colonial intentions were to enroll Muslim students in government schools upon their completion of Quranic school. R. Bagulo Bening, *A History of Education in Northern Ghana, 1907-1976* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1990), 7. Quoted in Weiss, “Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam and Muslims in Northern Ghana, Ca. 1900-1930,” n. 93.

⁴⁷⁹ “The main reason for the failure to report any more on Muslim education is the lack of governmental interest. This was due to several factors. Muslim education could not be controlled by the colonial administration mainly due to the fact that the colonial state was not able to control the Muslim scholars and teachers. Of equal importance was the fact that the colonial state had no use for pupils who had received Muslim education. With the diminishing interest in the Muslim population of the North, the matter of Muslim education was no longer felt to be a matter for the colonial government to bother about. However, none of the above reasons were articulated. Instead, the reason for governmental disinterest in Muslim education was said to be due to the

The colonial education system demanded auto-translation or self-translation on linguistic and cultural levels.⁴⁸⁰ And while the policy of the White Fathers was to teach in local languages, the missionary system also required forms of auto-translation, and not only due to pressures from the colonial government. Similarly, Kirby's analysis suggests that Muslim education included students engaging in auto-translation as they incorporated the estate-based value system. (See chapter one section 1.3.5.2.)

Education systems reflect language and cultural hierarchies. In colonial schools, English was dominant, but there was official space to practice African languages. At the Yendi Primary school there were tribal meetings, ethnic-based civic organizations. At 2 PM on Fridays, students of the various communities conducted activities or study sessions in their local languages. This is where distinct ethnic identities as a factor in political organizing came into greater focus.⁴⁸¹ Lentz offers an analysis of the way language hierarchies worked in the missionary education system in the North-West province.⁴⁸² A similar dynamic took place in the North-East and Southern Provinces of the Northern Territories; particular versions of African languages were lifted up above others. The missionary practice was in essence a version of the language hierarchies of indirect rule, where one indigenous language or speech variety is lifted above the others, while English stands at the top of the hierarchy. The post-colonial government implemented a similar practice, naming twelve languages in Ghana as official languages.⁴⁸³

general lack of interest among the population towards Muslim education." Weiss, "Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam and Muslims in Northern Ghana, Ca. 1900-1930," 82.

⁴⁸⁰ Deborah Shadd has discussed the dynamics of linguistic translation for First Nations students in Canadian education. Shadd cites the politically established hierarchy of languages in Canada. Then Shadd claims, "the degree of self-translation required of speakers increases proportionally to the distance in status of their language from English as one descends the hierarchical linguistic ladder." Shadd, "On Language, Education and Identity: Minority Language Education Within the Canadian Context," 191. A very similar observation would be applicable in the colonial Ghanaian system with its own system of ranked ethnicity.

⁴⁸¹ Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 114.

⁴⁸² Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 2.

⁴⁸³ Sebastian K. Bemile, "The Promotion of Ghanaian Languages and Its Impact on National Unity: The Dagara Language Case," in *Ethnicity in Ghana: The Limits of Invention*, ed. Carola Lentz and Paul Nugent (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 204–25.

The missionary-colonial system established what Donald Horowitz called a ranked ethnic system.⁴⁸⁴ Ranked systems make one group a higher caste than the others. Horowitz argues ranked systems are generally achieved by conquest.⁴⁸⁵ If a conquest did not happen or is not acknowledged, then there is likely to be no cultural or historical basis for asserting the ranked hierarchy of one tribe over another. Thus, based on Horowitz's logic, there was a need to provide the invasion narrative as historical evidence of conquest as part of the justification for the charter for the native 'state.' (See section 2.4 above.)

Drawing on MacGaffey's analysis, summarized in section 2.4.2 above, the colonial written translation of the invasion myth transformed indigenous raiding and pre-colonial conquests of particular kinship groups in particular areas into a myth of complete conquest of all lands and kinship groups. The Dagbamba were characterized as invaders and conquerors, establishing the basis for a ranked ethnic system. Ranked ethnic systems assert language hierarchies. Colonial linguistic hierarchies reflected the ethnic hierarchy of indirect rule such that the language of Dagbanli (Dagbani), was ranked over Likpakpaanl (Konkomba), Mɔɔr (Bimoba), and so many northern languages. The British stood at the top of the ranked ethno-hierarchy by rights of conquest, and their language, English, was above all African languages.⁴⁸⁶

The oppression of the ranked ethno-linguistic hierarchy was felt differently in cosmopolitan and rural contexts. Cosmopolitan activists, living under the direct rule, struggled to overcome the imperialism of English by mastering English and asserting their rights under British law. Under indirect rule, rural community organizers and activists sought to change the ranked hierarchy in their local context in slightly different ways.

In the 1950s several Yendi school graduates, living in the Northern Territories under the oppression of the ranked ethnic system, formed the Konkomba Improvement Association.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁴ Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley, CA; London: University of California Press, 1985), 22.

⁴⁸⁵ Horowitz, 29.

⁴⁸⁶ Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 101–2. During the speech at the colonial inauguration of the Konkomba subdistrict on February 18, 1947, Chief commissioner of the Yendi district A.W. Davis declared it was time for Konkomba to rule themselves. But he defended the government's past treatment of Konkomba on the flimsy excuse that the Konkomba language was so different than the Dagbanli language. The solution to the Konkomba's ethnic subordination was not to change the policy of indirect rule, but rather for Konkomba to learn English!

⁴⁸⁷ Talton, 121.

Their goals included ending Konkomba feuds, changing infant betrothal practices, and promoting Western education. These rural activists from the bottom of the ranked ethno-linguistic system also used auto-translation to respond to the ranked system established by colonial translation. Educated graduates sought to convince the elders of their home kinship groups and other related kinship groups to stop feuding. Apparently, they believed that feuding as a form of tacit resistance would not be an effective strategy for community development. In order to stop feuding, which was significantly connected to disputes related to a kinship group's ownership of women, the practice of infant betrothal needed to stop. The educated leaders believed that embracing education and integrating the skills and value systems it taught would help Konkomba have more agency in the future. The activists wanted the kinship groups to organize into a united Konkomba ethnicity⁴⁸⁸ so they could achieve greater political autonomy equal to Dagbamba within the ranked ethnic system, such that ethnicities would become unranked. Economic organization would eventually become a part of this movement as well. From the dominant perspective of the ruling classes, this form of resistance was more articulate than the tacit rejection of indirect rule. It also attempted to transcend the boundaries of indirect rule by moving past the limitations of the customary container for Konkomba by translating oneself in the image of a British citizen.

2.5.4 Two competing forms of auto-translation under colonization

In this subsection I offer a historical example from the colonial era that combines the two forms of auto-translation I explored in the previous two subsections, chieftaincy and education. The two indigenous 'responses' to colonial translation involved two forms of auto-translation that competed with each other for power under the overarching colonial system. These two responses were different pathways to limited forms of power under colonization that were pitted against one another.

Under indirect rule, chieftaincy was projected to African society as a pre-colonial institution that had been incorporated into the colonial state. But the British were not antiquarians. They were willing to adjust the system of chieftaincy if it was to their political and economic

⁴⁸⁸ "Konkomba ethnicity, therefore, was a product of Ghana's political modernization and development. Yet tradition remained the primary means through which local societies were pushed to the margins of local politics, and it served as the means through which they challenged their marginalization." Talton, 127.

advantage.⁴⁸⁹ The British began to experiment with introducing new skins into the politics of nam; they were also experimenting with implementing a system of popular voting for chiefs.

Colonial education was a new component of the estate-based value system, providing new offices of influence that did not depend on the pre-colonial rule of the firstcomer and traditional hierarchies. Predictably, the British administrators liked to work with chiefs who had educated people around them. They established systems of voting for chiefs, a practice that violated their overall policy of indirect rule. The British were willing to introduce contradictions into their system. They were willing to violate the principle of indirect rule if it was to their political or economic advantage. These contradictions in the system resulted in factions, vying for power and exploiting different sides of the contradiction. These contradictions continue to have ramifications and reverberations in the post-colonial era.

Drucker-Brown recounts the history of a conflict in the town of Bimbagu involving a Bimoba⁴⁹⁰ kinship group and a Komba⁴⁹¹ kinship group. From a pre-colonial perspective, the issues regarding the introduction of chieftaincy into Bimbagu appear to be about hierarchy between a Komba kinship group who were ‘firstcomers’ to the territorial shrine area compared to the Bimoba kinship group who came later. As argued in chapter one section 1.2.2.1, these agriculturally based kinship groups were similarly organized in the pre-colonial era; they often relied upon the rule of the firstcomer. Under colonization, latecomer groups, like the Bimobas located in Bimbagu, engaged in auto-translation through colonial education, gaining skills that were useful for colonial administration. Some of the firstcomer kinship groups, like the Komba located in Bimbagu, found auto-translation, similar to that done by Djar mentioned above, to be more preferable than auto-translation through colonial education. The British were looking for ways to work with subchiefs in market towns who had colonial education. Meanwhile, Nayiri was also experimenting with the chieftaincy

⁴⁸⁹ MacGaffey reports that even in Dagbon in the 1940s the British introduced novel changes into the selection of the Ya Na. Rather than using divination and elders, the Ya Na was selected by the vote of the Selection Committee. MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 60–61.

⁴⁹⁰ As I indicated in chapter one Bimoba is an anglicized word referring to Moba kinship groups who speak varieties of Mɔɔr. In the literature one sees B’Moba and BiMoba. Specifically, the Moba kinship group referred to here is Tamuj.

⁴⁹¹ Komba is a term which refers to the Bikɔɔm family of clans who are a subsection of the Bikpukpam or Konkomba macro-ethnic designation. The specific kinship group referred to here is the Binaaŋmiim.

system, by enskinning sub-chiefs in market towns who were not paternally related to a royal lineage. These two systems of colonial rule were in competition.

The specifics of the situation are as follows. In 1947, the British wanted to collect a cow tax. To help facilitate the implementation of the cow tax, they held elections for sub-chiefs from kinship-based societies in towns that had markets. They wanted the towns to elect their own sub-chiefs, including the possibility of a town with multiple ethnic groups having more than one sub-chief. Bimbagu had a strong market. The British plan resulted in a situation where the latecomer kinship group, the Bimoba, elected a chief the British perceived to be on an equal footing to the firstcomer kinship group's sub-chief, the Komba. The Bimoba lived in the part of Bimbagu where the market was located. The Komba lived further away from the market center. The Nayiri, the Mamprusi king, chose to engage in creating novel skins by enskinning a chief from the Komba kinship group. Since the British did not respect the rule of the firstcomer, from their perspective an elected Bimoba subchief was on equal footing with a Komba chief enskinned by Nayiri who relied on the rule of the firstcomer. The Kombas from Bimbagu went to Yunyoo to protest. The Komba kinship group could not endure an elected chief in the market who would not submit to the firstcomers' kinship group.⁴⁹²

These two kinship groups, historically related to each other, engaged in a feud, as kinship societies had done since the pre-colonial era. This conflict would emerge again in the post-colonial era. I will return to this conflict in chapter six. The point I wish to emphasize here is the way the two forms of auto-translation, chieftaincy and education, led to an internal struggle for power, neither of which challenged colonial overrule. Katz argues that many forms of resilience and remaking involve “contradictory outcomes.”⁴⁹³ This example illustrates the need for an oppositional politics that operates beyond the playing field established by colonial categories and rules.

2.5.5 Acts of conjuring as ‘experimental practice’

The last category of indigenous response to colonial translation was through acts of ‘conjuring,’ related to the practice of African spiritual-material worldviews. One could argue that acts of conjuring underlie all of the responses described above. Africans consult shrines

⁴⁹² Drucker-Brown, “Local Wars in Northern Ghana,” 97–99.

⁴⁹³ Katz, *Growing up Global*, 250–51.

as an attempt to solve problems and for guidance.⁴⁹⁴ Rather than viewing this as unproductive, the Comaroffs' analysis suggests that conjuring comes from the liminal space of partial recognition, where people engage in "experimental practice" to try find some "coherence" to their colonial experience, to attempt to gain some control of what is happening to them.⁴⁹⁵ As the historical record referenced above in section 2.3.1.4 shows, the experimental practice of conjuring related to shrines was occasionally seen as a threat to colonial rule. Thus, conjuring was a potential resource for resistance to colonial rule. Conjuring was also an attempt to gain some control over what is happening. To use Katz's language, conjuring fosters resilience. And colonial authorities recognized in certain situations its potential to serve as an inspirational source for oppositional resistance.

2.5.6 Interpreting neo-indigenous responses to colonial acts using a theory of translation as invasion

The emerging theory of translation as invasion suggests that translation provided much of the hegemonic substructure which the colonizers used to justify the ends of invasion. The question I ask is, where do indigenous responses to colonial ideology/hegemony fall on the spectrum of awareness? Which responses are tacit refusal, which are articulate responses that expose and contest the justification of colonial practices of extraction, and which hover somewhere in between these two in the area of 'experimental practice'?

The colonial translation of invasion resulted in a system that supported colonial and elite neo-indigenous extraction. A key to supporting extraction was a system of ranked ethnicity. For those kinship-based groups at the bottom of the hierarchy, one method to challenge the ranked hierarchy was to refuse to play by the colonial rules. Many kinship groups continued to feud amongst themselves and continued to practice infant betrothal based on their pre-colonial kinship-based value system, which was one of the sources of feuding. Such activity responds to the logic of invasion by refusing it, usually in non-violent ways, but occasionally in violent ways. Both non-violent strategies of dissimulation and violent responses make it more difficult for colonizers to extract resources. To the extent colonizers are not desperate for resources in an area, both violent and non-violent actions may be effective. However, when colonizers decide that a context must be subdued to protect the system of extraction,

⁴⁹⁴ Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufɔ of Northern Ghana*.

⁴⁹⁵ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, 1:31.

indigenous responses of violence risk brutal colonial enforcement. The colonial government's use of force threatens to undo hegemony, exposing its brutal basis. However, colonizers feel justified in using brute force in such situations,⁴⁹⁶ and the cost of such violence and its outcome for successful overthrow of colonizers must be considered. Violent outbreaks are often tacit refusals of colonial authority, sometimes expressed at the symbolic level. Does this kind of response include a clear articulation of broader goals?

Another indigenous response to the assertion of ranked ethnicity justified by colonial translation was to begin to auto-translate oneself and one's group into the estate-based value system by beginning to practice chieftaincy according to the terms of indirect rule. Lower level chieftaincies were not able to generate any larger coalition outside of one's kinship territory. This observation is consistent with Katz's observations about the limitations of practices of resistance and remaking chieftaincy. To counter the local acts of remaking chieftaincy, the British were willing to violate the pretense of indirect rule if they found it was in their economic interest to do so. However, such moves were dangerous, because the British risked exposing the contradictions of colonial rule too openly. Comparing this local response to our theory of translation of invasion, this response attempts to expand who can be a divisional chief beyond 'ethnic' lines. While this response does expand who is eligible to be a divisional chief, it does not challenge the premise that chiefly perspectives are the ideal starting point for law and social policy, or that chiefs have a right to extract from their base. And there is some question about whether a few acts of inclusion in limited areas would be able to change the overall logic of the ranked ethnic system.

A third response was to embrace particular Western values learned from the missionary-colonial educational value system and share them with their kinship groups in order to get themselves and their communities out of systemic exploitation. The colonial education system functioned more along the lines of direct rule, teaching a modernist universal value system. The missionary education system minimally engaged in local language work. Nevertheless, local language study sessions became a predecessor of ethnic-based organizing against indirect rule and the ranked ethnic system.

⁴⁹⁶ There are usually individuals or groups in the society who are willing to play by the colonial rules. Colonizers portray those who cooperate as reasonable, and those who do not as unreasonable dissidents. The reasonable ones may or may not get shares of the profit. Local collaborators get shares of the profit and are empowered to extract more resources from the stubborn groups who refused to play by the legalized rules.

Under the logic of indirect rule, those students coming from subordinate ethnic groups preferred to embrace the values of the English colonial system that were above the customary system. In so doing they might be able to reduce their exploitation. The activists of the Konkomba Improvement Association sought to help themselves and their communities gain more control of their economic prospects and political space by going above the traditional customary system. They were activists working for social change.

Paulo Freire argues that these revolutionary actors often unreflectively employ the same tools of colonial education as the colonizers.⁴⁹⁷ Educated activists may see themselves as ‘opening the eyes’ of the African masses with the values of Western education, rather than engaging in reciprocal dialogue for social transformation. In relation to the invasion myth this has an obvious weakness. Given that the invasion myth was taught in school as the foundation for northern society, how could educated elites find a way to respond to that myth without engaging the epistemological perspectives of their home kinship groups? Could they challenge colonial capitalist system of extraction from within Western epistemologies alone?

The fourth response that has been under theorized in the literature is the response of Muslim education. As discussed in section 2.3.1.1 above, aspects of the Muslim value system were initially appealing to the colonial area administrators. The early colonial reports indicate significant local interest in Muslim schools. But as the philosophy of indirect rule became the order of the day, Muslim education gradually became ignored by colonial administrations. However, this did not stop the process of Islamicization. Some sectors of society saw a need for it. The lack of attention the colonial government gave to it separated Muslims from the developing colonial system. However, there were some exceptions to this separation in the bilingual ‘modern’ Muslim schools of the Ahmadiyya mission, which started on the Ghanaian coasts in the nineteenth century.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁷ Freire calls this the banking model of education. Education is conceived as an act of depositing. Teachers replace self-expression with a ‘deposit.’ Students are the empty vessels which need to be filled. As depositories of knowledge, they are expected to be passive receivers, who capitalize on the deposit they receive by memorizing and repeating. Knowledge is a gift bestowed by the knowledgeable upon those considered to know nothing. Paulo Freire, *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power, and Liberation* (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin & Garvey, 1985), 21, 100; Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, A Continuum Book (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 58.

⁴⁹⁸ David E. Skinner, “Conversion to Islam and the Promotion of ‘Modern’ Islamic Schools in Ghana,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 43 (2013): 426–50.

The last response I will consider is consulting shrines as a response to problems caused by colonial assertions of power. This is an important response because it takes place between the conscious and the unconscious poles of awareness. It is a response of ‘resistance’ available to the masses that lies between tacit refusal and clear articulation of resistance. Katz would probably characterize divination and conjuring as a response of resilience.

Chapter one argued that divination was a form of spiritual-social translation. By divining the causes of their social problems, both diviners and those who consult diviners are trying to gain control over what is happening to them and their society, by conjuring and drawing on their partial awareness. When compared with our theory of translation as invasion, this response does not appear to imitate invasive practices, but it is also not clear whether such ‘experimental practice’ has the capacity to link consciousnesses together, to help society see beyond the confines of exploitation in their context to the larger vision of colonial extraction across contexts, and beyond that to see the larger vision of a society built on lives of mutual dignity and inclusion rather than invasion and exploitation. According to Katz’s taxonomy, this response would not qualify as resistance to colonial overrule, but it could be analyzed as evidence of communities building internal resilience as part of a larger process of working toward resistance.⁴⁹⁹

2.5.7 Summary of section five

Section five of this chapter describes a variety of indigenous responses to the ideological assertions implicit in cultural invasion. Focusing specifically on translation, the chapter focuses on indigenous translational responses to the ideology implicit in colonial translation *as* invasion. Indigenous responses to translation *as* invasion were theorized in two ways. First, drawing on the Comaroffs, indigenous responses were placed on a pole from overt resistance to silent refusal. In between the two poles is the realm of partial awareness where experimental practice occurs. Indigenous groups creatively experiment with how to respond to translation *as* invasion. Second, drawing on the Katz, overt indigenous resistance was distinguished from experimental practices that rework colonial ideologies from inside the assumptions of the system that colonial translation supports. Katz characterizes a third form of indigenous response as resilience. Operating from within partial awareness of the nature of cultural invasion, indigenous responses manifest resilience when groups respond by

⁴⁹⁹ Katz, *Growing up Global*, 243–57.

managing as best as they can within the rules of the system, albeit in ways that often reinforce the oppressive assumptions that reinforce the ends of invasion.

Section five's subsections explored a variety of indigenous responses. Feuding was described as a relatively effective group response in the early decades of colonization as 'Konkomba' ethnic groups refused to operate according to colonial assumptions and expectations. A second set of responses involved ethnically ambiguous groups partially 'translating' themselves into the dominant system of ethnic chieftaincy. Similarly, children of ethnically ambiguous groups engaged in cultural 'auto-translation' by attending missionary, colonial, and Islamic schools and learning the ideologies established by colonial invasion. In the context of the Gambaga escarpment these two sets of indigenous responses were pitted against each other as unranked groups vied for power within the contradictory system of indirect colonial rule. Another indigenous response to the invasion of indigenous cultural systems was to respond with practices of conjuring or divination. Divination was explored as a form of pre-colonial indigenous translation in chapter one section 1.3. Divination or conjuring is an experimental practice that fostered resilience and occasionally was a resource to inspire oppositional resistance. Finally, the last subsection revisits each of the indigenous responses to translation as invasion charting them using the ideological analytical language offered by the Comaroffs and Katz.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief overview of colonial invasion of the Volta Basin, including what is now known as northern Ghana. I offered a theoretical description of the two faces of colonial rule, direct rule and indirect rule. Under direct rule, colonial administrators engaged in translational action with Muslim imams as translators and intermediaries as they sought to communicate with Dagbamba nanima 'chiefs' using the Hausa language. The religion of Islam was useful for colonial officials as long as it helped to translate the rationale that underpinned the 'logic' of colonial rule. Religion—whether Islam, Christianity, or African religions—also had the tendency to foment anti-colonial resistance, and so colonial officials controlled radical religious tendencies with force. But once tendencies to resist were controlled, translational interaction was necessary to help colonial officials and local chiefs work out their alliance for governing the peasantry. Translational interaction included the process of comprehending space and making maps that clarified boundaries that were inherently ambiguous in the pre-colonial era. I argued that translation was often mistranslation, because the cultural distance between colonizers and Africans was so far, and

because the mutual manipulations that occurred were better left implicit such that each side negotiated misunderstandings in a way that kept their interests in play. I offered some theoretical language to help analyze the way (mis)translation occurred, including Scott's description of the public transcript and the Comaroffs' dialectical poles of hegemony and ideology.

As the colonial era progressed there was a shift toward the philosophy of indirect rule. This shift also involved the translation of texts to establish 'customary constitutions' and 'customary law.' I focused on the colonial translation of lumsi 'drum-chant-poetry,' which were semiotically translated from oral performance into the written genre of historiography. This translation was a reduction of one genre of oral tradition extracted from its performative context. Written media appeared to disconnect lumsi from the limitations of temporal and contextual performance. The genre of translated and written lumsi was asserted as normative history for all people inside the colonially defined territory of Dagbon. Moreover, The act of translating this genre privileged the perspective and priority of royal patriline as the basis of establishing history and law. The privileging of the perspective of chiefly patriline in the translation of customary law gave colonial authorities and chiefs a means of extracting resources from the peasantry through taxation and legal fines. The transformation of oral genre into a written history was particularly useful in developing an underlying rationale that justified both colonial invasion and the right of chiefs to rule in the minds of citizens.

Over time, the assertion of this 'historical narrative' of invasion in government policies, courts, and schools made the invasion narrative appear to be fact and thus it became useful in convincing many people of the underlying 'rights of conquest' and the logical basis for ranked ethnicity. Ranked ethnicity meant that Dagbamba communities under paramount kings and divisional chiefs were judged superior to the ethnically marginal communities like the Konkomba, Bimoba, Grunshi, Lobi, Isale, Dagarti, Kusasi, and others kinship groups that did not 'eat' the politics of nam—at least until innovations in sub-chieftaincy occurred in colonial era. The colonial translation of the invasion narrative persisted in the minds of many people into the post-colonial era.

This historical analysis of translation in the colonial era that I summarized led me to distill it into a theory of translation as invasion, described succinctly in section 2.4.3 above. The last section of this chapter describes the range of indigenous and neo-indigenous responses to colonial translation. I also attempted to chart (neo-)indigenous awareness of resistance, using

the Comaroffs' poles of recognition, partial recognition, and unrecognition. In addition, I described Katz's taxonomy of community responses to oppression: resilience, reworking, and resistance. I applied the Comaroffs' poles of recognition and Katz's taxonomy of resistance to a series of historical responses to colonial translation by 'unranked' kinship groups around the Gambaga escarpment.

In chapters one and two I described pre-colonial translation practices and colonial translation practices. In chapter one I highlighted anthropological and folkloric approaches to translation that describe translation practices as processes for language turning. In chapter two I highlighted the political use of translation as invasion such that translation became focused on the production of a final product useful for establishing political and economic domination. In the next chapter I turn to address the central focus of this thesis, the theological uses of translation as practiced in three phases of Christianity. I explore the missionary-colonial phase of Christianity and their use of translation in a colonial frame, followed by the African independent phase of Christianity and their use of translation in a post-colonial frame, followed by the neo-Pentecostal phase of Christianity and their use of translation in a neo-colonial frame. The overall argument is that these eras of time, and their associated religious and translational practices, are entangled in the African present.

3 Chapter 3 Entangled Ghanaian Christianities and post-colonial approaches to translation

In chapter two I introduced a theory of translation as invasion developed from the history and practice of colonial translation in northern Ghana. The focus was on political uses of translation and the way translation served the shifting strategies of colonial administration from direct to indirect rule. As indirect rule was being formalized, colonial authorities authorized the translation of the invasion myth from the lumsi genre of drum praise poetry into historiography. On the heels of that act of translation, colonizers worked with representatives of chiefs to translate their perspective on Dagbamba tradition into customary law in a way that made their perspective on tradition into an enforceable law, useful for legal extraction. From the perspective of decentralized kinship societies customary law was an imposition. From these two acts of translation I extrapolated a more general theory of translation as invasion. I also charted a range of (neo-)indigenous responses to theory of translation as invasion. The first response was oppositional in the form of tacit refusal of responding to colonial translation on their terms. The second and third responses involved auto-translation or self-translation into forms and discourses recognizable to the colonial system. One act of auto-translation involved partially remaking chieftaincy to accommodate unranked ethnic groups. Another act of auto-translation involved engaging in colonial education as a form of retooling people into social actors within the colonial system. I also explored the experimental practice of divination and conjuring as a form of communities fostering internal resources of resilience.

In this chapter I move from the political entanglements of translation to the theological entanglements of translation practice, bringing into focus the central concern on this thesis, the theological dimensions of the translation-as-invasion paradigm. I am going to explore colonial, post-colonial, and neo-colonial entanglements in relation to the development of Christianity in Ghana. Each of these three phases of Christianity has a different relationship to the Bible and to translation. I argue that all three of these Christian translation practices are entangled in post-colonial neo-colonial time in northern Ghana. I conclude by asking what significance the entanglement of Christianities in the present has for post-colonial practices of ‘African translation theology.’

3.1 Introduction

The development of Christian practice in Ghana involves at least three phases. I highlight these three phases, skipping over other potentially relevant historical developments, because of the way these three phases are linked to (Bible) translation. I am particularly interested in the way the phases of Christianity use the Bible to prophetically affirm life in African community. My focus is Ghana, but occasionally I will borrow useful analysis from other parts of the continent and world.

The first phase of Christian practice focuses on translation of the Bible in 19th century Africa. My focus will be in areas of present-day southern Ghana. In the 19th century, part of the motivation to translate included the desire to subjugate African religions and cultures to ‘biblical’ teaching. Translation was a tool that was intended to communicate biblical teaching in African languages, but translation was circumscribed by a missionary-colonial expression of Christianity.

The second phase of Christian practice focuses on the response by Africans to Bible translation and the accompanying hermeneutic of control in missionary-colonial Christianity. Some Africans left missionary-colonial churches due to the hypocritical practices of ‘civilized’ missionary-cultural Christianity. Taking their Bibles with them, Africans walked away from the mammon of missionary churches forming African Independent Churches (AICs). Africans used their Bibles as part of a Christian practice of social healing and dignity. Other Africans stayed in the missionary churches. Some of those who stayed subversively made similar moves toward a more holistic and integrated practice of Christianity in relation to African culture within those churches.

The third phase of Christian practice involves the rise of the ‘new churches’ beginning in 1979, which espouse a prosperity gospel in the age of neo-liberalism. In the 21st century these new churches continue to outpace Protestant, Catholic, and AICs in terms of growth. They have shifted the religious, cultural, theological, and political ground of African contexts such that the Bible is popularly interpreted as God’s promise of miraculous access to prosperity for people who have faith in God’s promise and follow God’s plan. Wealthy preachers offer themselves as models for emulation and promise to pave the way for others to follow them, if only people give money and let that preacher unblock obstacles in their lives which prevent God from blessing them economically.

These three phases of Christianity are entangled in the African present as interpenetrating versions of Christianity. Each of these versions of Christianity continues to negotiate a certain relationship to political and economic forces. Simultaneously, each of these versions circumscribes and controls the meaning of the Bible in a manner that supports its political, economic, and religious vision. I wonder how and whether Bible translation and ‘African translation theology’ can be practiced in a manner that is life-giving, hopeful, and post-colonial for Africans seeking a better life in very difficult social, economic, and political circumstances.

3.2 First phase: Missionary Bible translation, missionary-colonial Christianity, the gospel, and African receptions

In the nineteenth century, as part of the European expansion from trade ports into the African interior, and in response to a European evangelical revival, missionaries engaged with African cultures, and began to practice Bible translation in multiple locales across the continent.⁵⁰⁰ Aloo Mojola has called this the “second wave” of Bible translation in Africa.⁵⁰¹

3.2.1 Missionary Bible translations

In Ghana, formerly the Gold Coast, the first translations of biblical texts began when Africans, such as Jacobus Capitein (1717-1747)⁵⁰² and Christian Protten (1715-1769),⁵⁰³ both

⁵⁰⁰ Aloo Osotsi Mojola, “Bible Translation in Africa,” in *A History of Bible Translation*, ed. Philip A. Noss, History of Bible Translation 1 (Rome: Edizioni de storia e letteratura, 2007), 141, 146–56. For Southern Africa see West, *The Stolen Bible*. For Ghana, as part of West Africa, see John David Kwamena Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana): The Historical, Linguistic, and Theological Settings of the Gã, Twi, Mfantse, and Ewe Bibles*, History of Bible Translation 2 (Rome; United Kingdom: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura; St. Jerome Publishing, 2011).

⁵⁰¹ Aloo Osotsi Mojola, “Bible Translation in Africa - a Brief Historical Overview,” *Journal of African Christian Thought* 15, no. 2 (2012): 5; Mojola, “Bible Translation in Africa,” 143–45. The first phase of translation in Africa includes the ancient translations. The ancient Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek occurred in Alexandria Egypt 200-300 BCE. The Coptic translations began in the late 2nd century CE. Ethiopia and Nubia had relations with Jerusalem before the advent of Christianity. The Ge’ez translation in Ethiopia occurred in the fifth century.

⁵⁰² M.A. Kwamena-Poh, “Capitein, J.E.J.,” in *Dictionary of African Biography*, ed. L. H. Ofofu-Appiah, Encyclopaedia Africana (New York: Reference Publications, 1977), 224; Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana)*, 7–16.

⁵⁰³ Noel Smith, “Protten, C.J.,” in *Dictionary of African Biography*, ed. L. H. Ofofu-Appiah, Encyclopaedia Africana (New York: Reference Publications, 1977), 34–35; Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana)*, 19.

of whom had been linguistically and theologically trained in Europe, returned to Ghana to work as chaplains and educators in slave forts. These men translated catechetical materials including some Bible texts to the biracial children of African women and European traders and soldiers. They also taught select children of chiefs. A third evangelist, Phillip Quaake (1741-1816), was ordained Anglican in England in 1765. He returned to Ghana as “Missionary Catechist and School Master to the Negroes,” at the Cape Coast castle from 1765-1815. Quaake served as chaplain to the soldiers and traders in the castle. He also taught both English and Mathematics mainly to the children of soldiers teaching them the skills necessary to become clerks.⁵⁰⁴

In Ghana, the first African language biblical books, the Gospels of Matthew and John, were translated and published in Gã, by A.W. Hanson, in 1843. Hanson was a Gã speaking clergyman who was trained in the USA and sent back to Ghana by the Church Missionary Society.⁵⁰⁵ Around this time, European missionaries started arriving in Ghana. The next period of translating involved European missionaries working closely with indigenous translators. Johannes Zimmermann arrived in 1850. Encouraged by Hanson’s work, Zimmermann’s translation efforts were aided by a group of translators including Thomas Quartey, and Jakob Nikoi.⁵⁰⁶ The New Testament was completed in 1859 and the full Bible in 1866.

The first phase of Christian practice involves the translated Bible with the practice of missionary-colonial Christianity embodying and circumscribing the translated Bible. To illustrate, I will highlight something of the broader missionary program of which translation played a part.

3.2.2 Pietist missionary Christianity circumscribing missionary-colonial translation

The Basel mission, founded in 1815, was a fourth wave Pietist movement, quite late in the history of Pietism which began in Europe in the seventeenth century. The Basel mission was initially invited by the Danish government to work in Ghana in 1828. The Basel mission sought to create and sustain a Pietist Christian expression in Africa in response to the ravages

⁵⁰⁴ Grace Bansa, “Quaake, P.,” in *Dictionary of African Biography*, ed. L. H. Ofosu-Appiah, Encyclopaedia Africana (New York: Reference Publications, 1977); Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana)*, 22.

⁵⁰⁵ Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana)*, 25–29.

⁵⁰⁶ Ekem, 32–40.

of the slave trade and economic exploitation that followed the trade.⁵⁰⁷ The mission sought to reconstruct African society in a three-fold approach. First, they would preach the gospel in the vernacular like Luther and Calvin did. Second, they believed in education, built on biblical education in the vernacular language. Third, they taught modern husbandry and craft skills in order to create the material basis for organized and self-sufficient Christian villages, or "Salems."⁵⁰⁸ These craft skills were still being practiced in the Württemberg area of Germany, but they were dying out across Europe due to the industrial revolution.

Missionary translator Johannes Zimmerman was a German Lutheran Pietist sent by the Basel mission to the Gold Coast as a missionary. Zimmerman idealized rural Africa and the rural ethos of his native region of Württemberg Germany. Zimmerman sought to share his own German rural Pietist background with Africans, including replicating much of his home village of Gerlingen as he established Christian "Salems" in Ghana.⁵⁰⁹ Zimmerman found that rural Africans in many ways were more biblical than most Europeans. Drawing from a letter Zimmerman wrote in 1852 to the central Basel Mission Committee, Jon Miller summarizes Zimmermann's sentiments:

African communities in their unspoiled forms, by which he meant their pre-slave trade and precolonial state, were superior in many ways to contemporary European culture, he said, because they had not experienced the philosophical corruption of the Enlightenment, the corrosive radical ferment that came out of the French Revolution, or the socially destructive effects of the Industrial Revolution that was eroding the

⁵⁰⁷ I note that European Christian mission thought of itself as protecting European 'others' (Africans) from the more brutal aspects of European economic exploitation. Nevertheless, Christian trade was a significant part of the Basel mission's expression of Christian community. They founded a trade company in 1859. Boahen, *Ghana*, 83–85. Did the missionaries wonder how a Christian practice of trade could survive alongside exploitative trade practices? Could European-Christian trade reform exploitative trade, or would Christian trade in Africa eventually be manipulated by its exploitative European big brother?

⁵⁰⁸ Jon Miller, *Missionary Zeal and Institutional Control: Organizational Contradictions in the Basel Mission on the Gold Coast, 1828-1917*, Studies in the History of Christian Missions (Grand Rapids, Mich. : London: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. ; Routledge Curzon, 2003), 15–16. See also the earlier version of Miller's work, Jon Miller, *The Social Control of Religious Zeal: A Study of Organizational Contradictions*, The Arnold and Caroline Rose Monograph Series of the American Sociological Association (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

⁵⁰⁹ Paul Jenkins, "Villagers as Missionaries: Wurtemberg Pietism as a 19th Century Missionary Movement," *Practical Anthropology* 8, no. 4 (1980): 427; Sundkler and Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, 209–11.

Lutheran agrarian ideal in Europe.... , many families preserved a clear and stable patriarchal [i.e., biblical] form, suggesting the presence of a strong Old Testament influence.⁵¹⁰

Zimmerman worried that the invasive aspects of the European industrial economy (which the slave trade had been a significant part)⁵¹¹ would ‘spoil’ agrarian African cultures in a similar way that he perceived it to be ‘spoiling’ his agrarian ideals at home in Europe. To combat this possibility, the Basel missionaries offered European religious Pietist discipline and community to African individuals who were willing to *externally* submit to the rigors of Pietistic religious practice, including its strong notions of separation from mainstream culture. The Basel mission sought to combat corrosive European economic influences on Africa rural communities by offering Pietist religious practice as a cultural stabilizer. For example, Miller indicates that Zimmerman preferred “a clear and stable patriarchal [i.e. biblical] form.”⁵¹² The patriarchy that the European Pietists offered was not the same as African forms of patriarchy. Nevertheless, Zimmerman puts his finger on an important alliance between European and African patriarchal practices, the reverberations of which continue to this day. But the Basel missionaries do not reflect on how Pietist practices imitate invasive and imperialist economic practices in the theological and religious realm.⁵¹³

⁵¹⁰ Miller, *Missionary Zeal and Institutional Control*, 144. Miller notes that Zimmerman’s observation “led him to join in the speculation that West Africans had ties to ancient Christian communities in Ethiopia.”

⁵¹¹ The slave trade was outlawed by Great Britain in 1807, however, in an effort to avoid a loss of revenue by Europeans and Africans alike the trade continued through other European forts, taking a long time to stop. L. H. Ofofu-Appiah, ed., *Dictionary of African Biography*, Ethiopia-Ghana, vol. 1, Encyclopaedia Africana (New York: Reference Publications, 1977), 174; Sundkler and Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, 97–98. Eighty years later, Gottlob Adolf Krause settled in Salaga, in present-day Northern Ghana. Krause demonstrated that there was a hidden slave trade from Salaga to Togo, encouraged by the German government. Weiss, “European Images of Islam in the Northern Hinterlands of the Gold Coast through the Early Colonial Period,” 98–99.

⁵¹² Miller, *Missionary Zeal and Institutional Control*, 144.

⁵¹³ "The story of colonial settlements and imperial control is a story of one basic alliance: the patriarchal one. Disparaged forms of patriarchal cultures find enough elements in common for mutual agreement. Languages and religions are banished, and societal orders and political configuration are demonised by new central powers, but women's oppression continues to give focus, a sense of solidarity and reciprocity between conquerors and conquered. There is a sense of tradition and ontological continuation. Without this, the unquestionable Western subject, Grand Narratives would be effectively deconstructed, called to subpoena. These two elements are the main surpluses of the preservation of the order of life as we know it." Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 15–16.

From the perspective of the Pietist missionaries, biblical teaching was being combined with a partner from ‘the created order’—patriarchal and cultural practices in the African context. The missionaries offered the translated Bible encompassed by Pietist biblical teaching articulated in local languages, both Gã and Twi. For the missionaries, the theological superiority of the biblical revelation over African cultural life was taken for granted. However, missionaries discerned real value in African languages and cultures. There was some openness on the part of the Pietist missionaries to learn from African cultures. Zimmermann wrote to the Basel Mission’s Central Committee that he was healed from a serious illness by a native practitioner after European medicine failed to restore his health.⁵¹⁴

The Basel mission missionary activity was based on the linguistic and cultural philosophy of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), who developed the notion of Volk.⁵¹⁵ This notion of German romanticism suggests all societies have a national identity that is unique to them. Volk is based on a common history, culture, and language. All societies are essentially equal on this basis and should cultivate and preserve their own traditions. The evidence of Herder’s influence on Johannes Christaller, David Asante, and others is evident in their published documents in Twi: the translated Bible, a dictionary, a grammar, and a collection of Twi proverbs.⁵¹⁶

However, there is an important caveat. For the Basel mission the concept of Volk is subordinated to the Christian gospel. The Basel mission established a missiological practice

⁵¹⁴ Miller, *Missionary Zeal and Institutional Control*, 144–45.

⁵¹⁵ Hauser-Renner, “‘Obstinate’ Pastor and Pioneer Historian: The Impact of Basel Mission Ideology on the Thought of Carl Christian Reindorf,” 67.

⁵¹⁶ For the list of publications see Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana)*, 66–67. These vernacular publications are examples of what Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs call “hybridized” language. Bauman and Briggs argue that the vernacular texts produced by the followers of Herder, including the brothers Grimm, Henry Schoolcraft, and Franz Boas, all attempt to transmit “primordial oral texts.” However, in the process oral texts are decontextualized and recontextualized. The process of decontextualizing and recontextualizing are tied to modernist practices which embed and naturalize social inequality. Bauman and Briggs, *Voices of Modernity Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality*, 312–13. For the problem of textualizing oral events in written Bible translation see Annie Joubert, “Defining and Working in an Oral Culture: Between Oral and Written Transmission-The Problems of Textualising Performance Events,” 2004; James A. Maxey, *From Orality to Orality: A New Paradigm for Contextual Translation of the Bible*, *Biblical Performance Criticism* 2 (Eugene, Or: Cascade Books, 2009), 85–103.

that treated African culture as a “preparation for the gospel” before that became an articulated hermeneutical approach.⁵¹⁷

David Bosch points out that as the 19th century progressed the idea of Volk as nationalism became wedded to the Old Testament concept of a chosen people. The nationalism of Volk became linked to Christian mission in a way that is important for this thesis on translation as invasion. Bosch writes:

The result was that, at one point or another in recent history, virtually every white nation regarded itself as being chosen for a particular destiny and as having a unique charisma: the Germans, the French, the Russians, the British, the Americans, the Afrikaners, the Dutch. It was only to be expected that nationalistic spirit would, in due time, be absorbed into the missionary ideology, and Christians of a specific nation would develop the conviction that they had a special role to play in the advancement of the kingdom of God through the missionary enterprise.⁵¹⁸

Pietist missionaries embedded their notions of ethnic nationalism into missionary-colonial translation practice. However, the next section will argue that the intentions built into missionary translation were not necessarily what attracted Africans to the translated Christian message.

3.2.3 African religio-cultural receptions of the gospel

It is crucially important to emphasize that African converts were not necessarily drawn to the aspects of Christianity which the Pietist missionaries thought they were emphasizing. What counted as ‘the gospel’ from the missionary perspective was quite different than what attracted slaves and former slaves to ‘the gospel.’ And what attracted slave converts is likely quite different than what attracted converts from African merchant families⁵¹⁹ and royal

⁵¹⁷ John S Mbiti, “Christianity and Traditional Religions in Africa,” *International Review of Mission* 59, no. 236 (October 1970): 432–34. For a contemporary hermeneutical perspective on the comparative approach to African culture and the Bible see Eric Anum, “Comparative Readings of the Bible in Africa,” in *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends*, ed. Gerald O. West and Musa W. Dube (Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 2000), 468.

⁵¹⁸ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991), 299.

⁵¹⁹ Two important merchant family converts are Karl Quist and Carl Christian Reindorf. Sundkler and Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, 208–9. Reindorf was a Gã who worked with Johannes Zimmermann and in later

families.⁵²⁰ Concepts like the ‘the gospel’ which are communicated in Bible translation stand as a kind of middle ground, a place of transaction,⁵²¹ between European cultural-biblical teachings and African cultural-biblical receptions. What counts as ‘the gospel’ is not understood in the same way. Lamin Sanneh makes this point articulately.

The gospel is capable of transcending the cultural inhibitions of the translator and taking fresh root in fresh soil, a piece of transplanting that will challenge the presuppositions of the translator. This is a critical position, which Christians reached by being plunged willy-nilly into the world of translation. Any sensitive translator will be awakened to the realization that a certain judgment is being reserved for the originating culture. New paradigms and vastly different presuppositions will rise to replace privileged ideas and the certainties they enshrined. That can be unsettling in the extreme, and only a supremely saintly missionary would not invoke economic or political sanctions where this was possible to try to compensate for the loss of power entailed in this intercultural shift.

Yet, however, strongly one might wish to resist the consequences of translation, little can be done to stop the repercussions from spreading. When one translates, it is like pulling the trigger of a loaded gun: the translator cannot recall the hurtling bullet.

years with Johann Christaller. Reindorf’s *History of the Gold Coast and Asante* originally published in 1895 extended Christaller’s vision of African knowledge built on African language and culture in dialogue with European Christianity. Thomas Bearth, “J.G. Christaller. A Holistic View of Language and Culture-and C.C. Reindorf’s History,” in *The Recovery of the West African Past: African Pastors and African History in the Nineteenth Century : C.C. Reindorf & Samuel Johnson : Papers from an International Seminar Held in Basel, Switzerland, 25-28th October 1995 to Celebrate the Centenary of the Publication of C.C. Reindorf’s History of the Gold Coast and Asante*, ed. Paul Jenkins (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1998), 88, https://books.google.com/books?id=zjD5z4Qan6sC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ViewAPI#v=onepage&q&f=false.

⁵²⁰ David Asante came from a royal family. Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana)*, 56. For a discussion on Asante see, Sonia Abun-Nasr, *Afrikaner Und Missionar. Die Lebensgeschichte von David Asante* (Basel: P. Schlettwein Publishing, 2003).

⁵²¹ Gerald O. West, “On the Eve of an African Biblical Studies: Trajectories and Trends,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99 (November 1997): 99. West uses transaction in order to show the mutual impact of the Bible on Africa, and Africa on the Bible, emphasizing the economic and legal connotations of the term.

Translation thus activates a process that will supersede the original intention of the translator.⁵²²

Translation can be conceptualized as a kind of middle space that is sometimes transactional and sometimes transformational. Sanneh's quote emphasizes the religio-cultural transformational potential of translation.

3.2.4 Socio-political and socio-economic dimensions of African receptions of the missionary message

As a complement to Sanneh's religio-cultural emphasis, Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed provide a socio-political and socio-economic analysis of European conquests and African contexts. I see these analyses as complementary rather than competing.⁵²³ Sundkler and Steed observe there were "hundreds of European conquests of Africa, not one."⁵²⁴ When the British outlawed slavery in 1807, they

rendered illegal as much as nine-tenths of European trade with the coast of West Africa. A huge economic vacuum was thus created and the British hoped that it might be filled by the encouragement of the cultivation of exportable commodities such as white rice, indigo, cotton, coffee and palm oil.⁵²⁵

⁵²² Lamin O. Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, American Society of Missiology Series, no. 13 (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1989), 53.

⁵²³ I believe these analyses could be brought into closer historical dialogue. For example, the relationship of the Basel mission's initial foray into translation corresponds chronologically to the Danish sale of the slave fort at Christiansburg. The history of the poll-tax and the poll-tax rebellion followed. The Basel mission and its translation strategy were certainly embroiled in these political and economic events. Ofosu-Appiah, *Dictionary of African Biography*, 1:176; John Parker, "Mankraloi, Merchants and Mulattos-Carl Reindorf and the Politics of 'Race' in Early Colonial Accra," in *The Recovery of the West African Past: African Pastors and African History in the Nineteenth Century: C.C. Reindorf & Samuel Johnson: Papers from an International Seminar Held in Basel, Switzerland, 25-28th October 1995 to Celebrate the Centenary of the Publication of C.C. Reindorf's History of the Gold Coast and Asante*, ed. Paul Jenkins (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1998), 39,

https://books.google.com/books?id=zjD5z4Qan6sC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ViewAPI#v=onepage&q&f=false.

⁵²⁴ Sundkler and Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, 97.

⁵²⁵ A. Adu Boahen, "Politics in Ghana, 1800-1874," in *History of West Africa*, ed. J. F. Ade. Ajayi, Michael Crowder, and J. F. Ade Ajayi, vol. 2 ([London]: Longman, 1974), 179.

The economic transition the British initiated took quite some time to complete. But ultimately the shift to cash crops would be more profitable than the slave trade.⁵²⁶ The shift to an economy based on the production and export of agricultural goods provided opportunity for both masters and slaves. In some West African contexts, almost two-thirds of the population were slaves. Some slaves worked for their masters. During the economic transition, many slaves were able to buy land and freedom. It was the slaves in peasant settlements, not the British, who fueled the economic revolution.⁵²⁷ This became a model across African contexts. The economic revolution led by slaves and former slaves paved the way for the evangelization of the masses. It was the egalitarian message of the gospel which resonated with the African slave experience.⁵²⁸ The paternalistic attitudes of the missionaries contradicted the egalitarian message which motivated the conversion of the masses.

One example which illustrates missionary contradictions surfaced during the Basel mission's internal conflict regarding the issue of owning slaves in the 1860s. While the central Basel mission did not support the owning of slaves, their hierarchical approach to enforcing their egalitarian teaching contradicted the egalitarian spirit of their abolitionist position.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁶ The slave trade served as the cutting edge of the peripheralization of Africa in the period of 1750-1900, but it was also incompatible with it, because the production of slaves is less profitable than cash-crop production, forcing slaves to be continually drawn from outside the world economy." Wallerstein, "The Three Stages of African Involvement in the World-Economy," 34.

⁵²⁷ Sundkler and Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, 98.

⁵²⁸ Sundkler and Steed, 98.

⁵²⁹ Peter Haenger explains that the question about slave ownership was posed by missionaries in dialogue with African catechists. The missionary council used a Pentateuchal law arguing that within 6 years a slave should be set free. The catechists responded they could do this with their personal slaves but not family slaves. The *missioninspektor* Josenhans "mandated that every slave-holder asking for baptism must declare his slaves free and liberate them in fact. Already baptized slave-holder must do the same." Peter Haenger, "Reindorf and the Basel Mission in the 1860s-a Young Man Stands up to Mission Pressure," in *The Recovery of the West African Past: African Pastors and African History in the Nineteenth Century: C.C. Reindorf & Samuel Johnson: Papers from an International Seminar Held in Basel, Switzerland, 25-28th October 1995 to Celebrate the Centenary of the Publication of C.C. Reindorf's History of the Gold Coast and Asante*, ed. Paul Jenkins (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1998), 19-20, https://books.google.com/books?id=zjD5z4Qan6sC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ViewAPI#v=onepage&q&f=false.

Scholars of what Tinyiko Maluleke has called ‘African translation theology’⁵³⁰ have shown that the Bible in the language of Africans became a resource which strengthened African cultural perceptions of the gospel and awakened Africans to the theological and social discontinuities in the missionary-colonial paradigm.⁵³¹ Kalu observes that Africans “responded to missionary structures in three ways: some individuals and communities accepted them with *loyalty*, others *voiced* their dissent, and some took measures to *exit* from them.”⁵³² The clearest contrast lies in those Africans who, armed with their Bibles, walked out of missionary-led churches and ‘Salems’ to found their own African Christian communities.⁵³³ Sanneh argues that by choosing to use African languages as a communicative vehicle, Bible translation essentially affirmed African religion and culture.⁵³⁴

⁵³⁰ Tinyiko S. Maluleke, “Half a Century of African Christian Theologies: Elements of the Emerging Agenda for the Twenty-First Century,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99 (1999): 19–20. For a summary of African translation theology see West, *The Stolen Bible*, 238–43. Translation theology emphasizes the agency of Africans. West distills two important dimensions of this emphasis. “The first dimension is the revitalization of indigenous religion and culture. This occurs when the technical process of translation pushes indigenous respondents to reexamine their culture in order to assist the translators with appropriate language with which to translate biblical texts. This re-turn to local culture, a culture that has often been told by missionaries and other ‘civilising’ forces that it is inadequate at best and demonic at worst, revitalises the culture, as local respondents in the translation process reclaim aspects of their culture in order to provide a language for translation that is true to both the biblical text and their culture... The second dimension is the potential for the receptor people to now add their own voices to the voices of many other communities that have interpreted the Bible before them. If God really does speak the vernacular, then what is it that God is saying as understood by this new community?” West, 242. West continues, “We could go further, paying attention not only to the questions Africans bring to the Bible but also to what Africans do with the vernacular Bible.” West, 243.

⁵³¹ Ogbu U. Kalu, “Introduction: The Shape and Flow of African Church Historiography,” in *African Christianity: An African Story*, ed. Ogbu U. Kalu, Perspectives on Christianity. Series 5, v. 3 (Pretoria: Dept. of Church History, University of Pretoria, 2005), 7.

⁵³² Ogbu U. Kalu, “Ethiopianism in African Christianity,” in *African Christianity: An African Story*, ed. Ogbu U. Kalu, Perspectives on Christianity. Series 5, v. 3 (Pretoria: Dept. of Church History, University of Pretoria, 2005), 231.

⁵³³ African leaders in the missionary-led churches also challenged missionary hegemony. One such leader in the Basel mission was Carl Christian Reindorf. Reindorf joined the mission, not as a slave, but as a member of a wealthy trading family. Bearth, “J.G. Christaller. A Holistic View of Language and Culture-and C.C. Reindorf’s History”; Haenger, “Reindorf and the Basel Mission in the 1860s-a Young Man Stands up to Mission Pressure”; Parker, “Mankraloi, Merchants and Mulattos-Carl Reindorf and the Politics of ‘Race’ in Early Colonial Accra.”

⁵³⁴ “I see translation as a fundamental concession to the vernacular, and an inevitable weakening of the forces of uniformity and centralization.” Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 53.

The translated Bible served as a hinge⁵³⁵ which the AIC's received from missionary-colonial Christianity and which Africans used to swing Christian practice away from operating within a missionary-colonial life world to operating within an African religio-cultural life world.

African translation theology is not the same as a theology of translation. I explore African translation theology in detail in chapter four section 4.1.

3.3 Second Phase: AICs integrate the Bible and Christianity into holistic life-affirming African religio-cultural practices

The second phase of Christian practice with the translated Bible is best exemplified by the African Independent Churches (AICs). AICs emerged and developed all over the African continent independently from each other as Africans, inspired by what they perceived in their translated Bibles, felt compelled to walk away from missionary controlled churches. I share examples of AICs from different parts of the continent, focusing on how they appropriated the translated Bible using their own African religio-cultural instincts. AICs demonstrate what Bediako calls the African primal imagination,⁵³⁶ which encompasses how the Bible means and how it is to be used in African community.

3.3.1 Leaving missionary-colonial Christianity and taking their Bibles with them

Some Africans encouraged by the religio-cultural valorization which translation affirmed, and the dignity which they knew to be true in their bodily and communal experience, rejected the discriminatory missionary practices which they experienced in the missionary-led churches. In Southern Africa, Isaiah Shembe (1867?-1935) formed Ibandla LamaNazaretha, 'the Church of Nazaretha,' on independently owned land with a structure and practice free from the controls of missionary-colonial Christianity.⁵³⁷ In Kenya the Akurinu churches formed in 1927 as a chosen people of God distinct from the missionary churches.⁵³⁸ In West Africa the Prophet William Wadé Harris left a position in the Episcopal church when he was

⁵³⁵ I borrowed the concept of the hinge from Richard Rudowske. "The Three Plus One Hinges of Bible Translation" (Unpublished document, February 27, 2019).

⁵³⁶ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of Non-Western Religion*, Studies in World Christianity (Edinburgh; Maryknoll, N.Y: Edinburgh University Press; Orbis Books, 1995), 91–108. The chapter is titled: "The Primal Imagination and the Opportunity for a New Theological Idiom."

⁵³⁷ West, *The Stolen Bible*, 244–317.

⁵³⁸ Nahashon W. Ndung'u, "The Role of the Bible in the Rise of African Instituted Churches: The Case of the Akurinu Churches in Kenya," in *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends*, ed. Gerald O. West and Musa W. Dube (Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 2000), 241.

called by the angel Gabriel to go on a preaching journey across Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, and Ghana.⁵³⁹ Harris did not intend to start churches,⁵⁴⁰ but eventually the Harrist churches formed themselves based on Harris' teachings. Africans in many parts of the continent left missionary churches and founded their own African Independent Churches (AICs).

The Bible played an important role in inspiring the social practice of these movements. Nahashon Ndung'u indicates that the Bible played an important role in the founding of the Akurinu churches.⁵⁴¹ Founders of the Akurinu churches such as Joseph Ng'ang'a and John Mung'ara spent years studying the Bible before becoming "the first preachers and evangelists among the Akurinu."⁵⁴² Once in their own physical spaces Africans freely employed their own 'primal imaginations' and combined that imagination with the world of the Bible. In West Africa, Harris read the Bible, knew its contents, carried the Bible, and used it symbolically, liturgically, and sacramentally.⁵⁴³ The Bible's narrative and material powers were part of the ecology of Harris's primal worldview.

Naturally, Africans used the Bible in harmony with broader life-affirming practices which they knew from within their African traditions. Sometimes this meant reworking or defusing harmful trajectories in the Bible or harmful uses of the Bible as practiced in missionary-colonial Christianity. Sometimes this meant using the Bible for political liberation. Ndung'u puts it this way: "The way missionaries had interpreted the Bible to the Africans left a lot to be desired. So the Akurinu were to provide the correct version."⁵⁴⁴ Important texts for the

⁵³⁹ David A. Shank and Jocelyn Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, Studies of Religion in Africa 10 (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1994).

⁵⁴⁰ The Harris movement watered three churches, Wesleyan, Roman Catholic, and Harrist churches. After Harris other African prophets emerged who did not make a total break with traditional symbols in the way Harris did. Ake-ism was a threat to Methodism around Dabou. In the 1930s Bebe (Bégbé) Grah was followed by his successor "Papa Nouveau". In the 1940s came Mary Lalou and the Déïma movement. Shank and Murray, 18.

⁵⁴¹ Ndung'u, "The Role of the Bible in the Rise of African Instituted Churches: The Case of the Akurinu Churches in Kenya," 236, 239–40.

⁵⁴² Ndung'u, 240.

⁵⁴³ Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 155.

⁵⁴⁴ Ndung'u, "The Role of the Bible in the Rise of African Instituted Churches: The Case of the Akurinu Churches in Kenya," 241. Other biblical practices included keeping versions of the Levitical laws, wearing white robes and turbans, raising hands in worship. Sometimes, they emulate biblical experiences, such as receiving of a spirit mediated ten commandments given to their elders on Mount Kenya. Ndung'u, 241. The material Bible is carried from the elders' shoulders suspended in bags in rituals of baptism, marriage, ordination,

Akurinu were Joel 1:1-8, Ezekiel 33 and 37, Hebrews 33.⁵⁴⁵ “The locust invasion foretold by Joel was compared to the colonial invasion of Gikuyuland, to which Ezekiel and Jeremiah bring a message of hope and restoration.”⁵⁴⁶ The Akurinu did not engage in armed conflict for independence but “they believe that it was through their prayers that the country was liberated from the colonialists.”⁵⁴⁷

In Southern Africa, the Bible was a crucial tool which Isaiah Shembe used to build an alternative and independent African community in the midst of the cultural upheaval caused by industrial capitalism in the early 20th century. The Bible was available during Shembe’s lifetime in two of Shembe’s vernaculars: SeSotho and isiZulu. Shembe probably used the old isiZulu version.⁵⁴⁸ Gerald West has explored the ways Shembe referred to the Bible in the records of his teaching. Shembe often alluded to a text or set of texts rather than citing them.⁵⁴⁹ After a survey of Shembe’s biblical hermeneutics, West comments upon Shembe’s “detailed and comprehensive knowledge of Scripture.”⁵⁵⁰ Exploring the ways Shembe referred to and reflected upon the Bible is only possible because of the written records of Shembe’s parables, sermons, and teachings which literate members of his community wrote down in family notebooks.⁵⁵¹ These notebooks were sources for the official church archivist,

and burial. Women prophets can place the Bible on the head of sick people who need healing. The Bible can scare away evil powers and sicknesses. Ndung’u, 243–44.

⁵⁴⁵ It may be that Hebrews 33 should read Jeremiah 33.

⁵⁴⁶ Ndung’u, “The Role of the Bible in the Rise of African Instituted Churches: The Case of the Akurinu Churches in Kenya,” 242.

⁵⁴⁷ Ndung’u, 242.

⁵⁴⁸ West, *The Stolen Bible*, 268–69.

⁵⁴⁹ West, 269.

⁵⁵⁰ West, 296.

⁵⁵¹ West, 267, 269. See also Elizabeth. Gunner, *The Man of Heaven and the Beautiful Ones of God = Umuntu Wasezulwini Nabantu Abahle Bakankulunkulu : Writings from Ibandla LamaNazaretha, a South African Church*, Studies of Religion in Africa, 0169-9814 ; 24 (Leiden ; Brill, 2002), 15–16, 41, http://bvbr.bib-bvb.de:8991/F?func=service&doc_library=BVB01&local_base=BVB01&doc_number=009705760&line_number=0001&func_code=DB_RECORDS&service_type=MEDIA.

Petros Dhlomo.⁵⁵² West refers to Shembe’s biblical hermeneutics as the re-written Bible.⁵⁵³ West also describes Shembe as ‘reconstituting’⁵⁵⁴ the Bible and ‘re-membering’⁵⁵⁵ the Bible.

3.3.2 Shembe’s stolen Bible

Joel Cabrita has reflected extensively on the writing practices of Shembe and the church he founded, Ibandla LamaNazaretha. Cabrita argues that the most important aspect of Shembe’s churches’ writing was not the act of writing itself or the written products, but the community of people which the acts of writing generated.⁵⁵⁶ Shembe himself taught this in a parable to his congregation.⁵⁵⁷ West agrees with Cabrita’s assessment, but also argues it is important to observe Shembe’s acts of re-writing.⁵⁵⁸ It is the Bible Shembe chooses to re-write, which he and his community re-write in order to generate a dynamic living community of people with a clear counter-colonial religio-cultural social project.⁵⁵⁹ Shembe approached writing in a similar fashion as he approached missionary-colonial Christianity. Shembe understood the potential and the limitations of missionary-colonial Christianity just as he understood the technology of writing’s limitations and potentials. Shembe was careful to keep away from

⁵⁵² West, *The Stolen Bible*, 250–52, 298–99.

⁵⁵³ West, 267–98.

⁵⁵⁴ West, 267.

⁵⁵⁵ West, 283, 302.

⁵⁵⁶ Joel Cabrita, “Texts, Authority, and Community in the South African ‘Ibandla LamaNazaretha’ (Church of the Nazaretha), 1910-1976,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 40, no. 1 (2010): 60. See also West, *The Stolen Bible*, 250.

⁵⁵⁷ The parable Cabrita reflects upon comes from material recorded by Petros Dhlomo, the archivist of the Nazaretha church from the 1940s until his death in the 1990s.

⁵⁵⁸ I use the hyphen here to signal the tensive struggle within post-colonial re-writing. I use it in a similar way I use the hyphen to signal the tensive struggle in post-colonial activities. See footnotes 42, above and 685, below.

⁵⁵⁹ “Within an unstable context constituted by sustained transactions between tradition Nguni culture, European colonialism, missionary Christianity, and an emerging industrial capitalism—over whose political and economic dimensions Shembe and his followers exercised little control—Isaiah Shembe constructed and attempted to control the religio-cultural dimension and in so doing tried to reassert some sense of religio-cultural and political-economic integrity (and so identity). Put different, he was forced to “create his own world and inhabit it.”” West, *The Stolen Bible*, 249. Citing Absalom. Vilakazi, Bongani. Mthethwa, and Mthembeni. Mpanza, *Shembe : The Revitalization of African Society* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1986), 10; Carol Ann. Muller, *Rituals of Fertility and the Sacrifice of Desire: Nazarite Women’s Performance in South Africa*, Chicago Studies in Ethnomusicology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), xvii–xix, <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/toc/uchi052/99017548.html>.

missionary-colonial Christianity and to exercise writing “outside the ambit of the new African elite.”⁵⁶⁰

West writes, “Shembe saturated this social project in the Bible, having seized it from the missionary colonial agents who brought it, recounting in another parable how this was accomplished.”⁵⁶¹ To illustrate Shembe’s method of appropriation, West recounts an illustrative parable which Shembe taught. “The Parable of the Liberating Bible” was written down by church archivist Petros Dhlomo.⁵⁶² I recount this parable in full because it illustrates Shembe’s hermeneutics in a poignant manner.

Dhlomo wrote Shembe’s parable as follows:

1.1 The man of God, Shembe, came to the home of Ndlovu the headman of Zibula at Lenge, in the year 1933, and there he said these words in his sermon in the evensong: [Shembe began, saying] “In olden times there were two mighty nations who were fighting over a certain issue. In their war the one conquered the other one and took all their cattle away. They took even their children captive by putting them in the school of the victorious nation among them also three sons of the same mother. They were given some work to do in the morning before they went to school. They had to sweep the houses of their teachers and the house of the Pope.

1.2 All of the children made good progress in school and passed their examinations well. They were trained as bishops. In the house of the Pope there was a Bible which was kept under lock by him and only read by himself. On a certain day he [the Pope] had to go for a few weeks to another place and he forgot to lock the Bible up at home. When the boys were sweeping his home, they found the Bible unlocked. When they began to read it, they discovered that their nation which had been demolished so badly by the war could never be restored unless they would get a book like this one and they considered what to do.

1.3 When they came back from school they bought a copybook and copied the whole Bible. When they had finished their work, they returned the Bible to its place.

⁵⁶⁰ Gunner, *The Man of Heaven and the Beautiful Ones of God = Umuntu Wasezulwini Nabantu Abahle Bakankulunkulu : Writings from Ibandla LamaNazaretha, a South African Church*, 27.

⁵⁶¹ West, *The Stolen Bible*, 252.

⁵⁶² West, 252–60.

Thereafter the Pope came back and saw that he had forgot to lock his Bible in. He called the boys who worked in his house and asked them whether they had opened this book. They denied it and said that they did not see that it had not been locked up. Then he forgot about it. The boys considered how they could bring this book to their parents at home.

1.4 At another day, they went and asked permission to visit their parents at home. They were permitted to go, and they were given a time by which they must be back. When they came home, they did not stay there, rather they went from home to home and preached about this book, until their time of leave was over, and policemen were sent to look for these boys. Then they left this book there and returned to school.

1.5 After their return, they had to answer questions. They were asked, 'Do you believe that Thixo [God] can only be found in the Roman Catholic Church?' It was expected that all of them should say so. But the oldest boy did not. Rather he said: 'I believe Thixo can be found in all beings on earth.' They were greatly startled by these words and they told him to move to the side. Then they called the second boy. He also said the same words: 'Thixo is in all things on earth.' Then they called the third one and he said the same words.

1.6 Then they admonished the boys and said: 'You see, what you have said is deeply contradicting this doctrine, in which you have been instructed; this our teaching in which you have been brought up you should follow together with the others. But should you desert from this doctrine in which you have been educated you will be burned by fire. Now go and sleep and consider this matter well.'

1.7 On the following day they were called again. When they asked the first boy he repeated what he had said on the previous day. They brought him outside and showed him the fire. He sang the hymn: 'Our Father in Heaven look at me with your love and do not look (at my sins) with which I have come, and which make me ashamed. I was born with them and I do not hide one of them.' So he went into the flames and was burned. When the second one was questioned, he repeated the same words which he had said on the previous day. They showed the fire also to him and said: 'Enter there where your brother went in and follow him.' The second boy shouted: 'Holy, holy, holy!' And he ran quickly into the flames and was burned.

1.8 When the third one came in to be questioned his mother appeared and said: ‘Oh my child what is wrong that all of you should die on the same day? Would it be so very wrong to say that Thixo belongs to the Roman Catholics, so that your life may be spared and that I may retain you on earth?’ The youngest son saw the point and followed the advice of his mother. He said, ‘I believe that Thixo is found in the Roman Catholic Church only.’

1.9 Then the Pope said that they should bring a book where he should write these words down and make an affidavit. This he did. When he slept in the night his spirit was taken up and brought to the joyful place of the selected ones. He heard wonderful singing from a certain place and when he looked up he saw a large crowd of people who were clad in white gowns, on the other side of the river. When he looked intensely he saw there his two brothers with whom he had been together and who were burned by the fire.

1.10 He wanted to go to them. But a voice said: ‘You cannot go to your brothers. Because they died for the promise while you did not die for it.’ Then this boy wept bitterly until the morning dawned and even when he had risen he did not cease weeping. He went to the Pope and said to him: ‘I was wrong when I said that Thixo is found in the Roman Catholic Church only and when I wrote that affidavit. Rather Thixo is there in all things on earth.’

1.11 The Pope said: ‘I do not know what I should say, because this comes from your heart. What do you say?’ He replied: ‘It would be better that the Pope would cut off my hand by which I wrote.’ The Pope said, ‘No, I cannot do that. I do not have the authority to do so even with your permission.’ Then this boy went to the place where the fire was burning on the previous day and where his brothers had died. He stirred it up again with his hand, and when the fire was burning he burned himself to death.

1.12 But the lord said, ‘This does not help you either because it has not been done by others to you. You did it by yourself. You separated from your brothers when they died, and you chose for yourself to live.’

1.13 “The lord of Ekuphakameni [Shembe] said: ‘The death of the young man did not help him in any way. He did not go to the place where his brothers were because he did not die for the promise. Now I speak no longer of these people. Rather I speak today to you people of Ekuphakameni. You have been told that a young man of

Ekuphakameni should never write a letter to maiden of Ekuphakameni and a maiden of Ekuphakameni is not allowed to write to a young man of Ekuphakameni. I ask you: what kind of a Bible do you write? Because you will suffer very much on the Last Day. And when you will then come to me and say: ‘Our father, I wish to enter the Kingdom.’ Then I shall be unable to do anything because you have broken the law of which you were told not to break it.”⁵⁶³

West has provided commentary which helps elucidate Shembe’s parable. I highlight a few details from West’s commentary which are relevant for this thesis on colonial translation as invasion. Shembe begins his parable by “re-membering” the South African story of conquest. The victorious nation stole the people’s cattle and “en-schooled” their children.⁵⁶⁴ The three boys then become the central characters in the story. Commenting on paragraph two, West points out that the boys had access to books that allowed them to rise to the level of bishops, but the Bible is the one special book which only the Pope could read. The boys then read the Pope’s protected book in the Pope’s house without his knowledge.

West notes that paragraphs three and four are the parable’s climax.⁵⁶⁵ In paragraph four, Shembe shows his concern for the rebuilding of African community in another form: as a post-conquest, post-colonial, post-missionary African community. The partially educated children bring the Bible to their parents, “for it is these African elders who have the historical and local African resources necessary for restoring the community—together with the Bible.”⁵⁶⁶ The children use the skills they learned in colonial school to write the Bible. But they also resist the educational system by bringing the copied stolen Bible to their parents. West points out, stealing the Bible is a response to the cattle being stolen. In their home community, the children preach the oral word as well as leaving the written word behind. The children evade the missionary-colonial surveillance system for a time because surveillance and control are never total.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶³ Irving. Hexham and Gerhardus Cornelis. Oosthuizen, *The Story of Isaiah Shembe*, vol. 1, Sacred History and Traditions of the Amanazareth; v. 1-3 (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1996), 225–28, <http://hdl.library.upenn.edu/1017.12/366295>.

⁵⁶⁴ West, *The Stolen Bible*, 252.

⁵⁶⁵ West, 253.

⁵⁶⁶ West, 254.

⁵⁶⁷ West, 254.

But eventually the children are forced to return to school. Back in school, the boys are drilled with traditional catechetical questions. However, the boys have now read the Bible for themselves, which enables them to reject the catechetical instruction because “the Bible confirms their African experience that God can indeed be found ‘in all beings on earth.’”⁵⁶⁸ West notes, “Ironically, the deconstruction of the instruction is the ‘faithful’ response—being faithful to the Bible—but the missionary-colonial instructors are unable to recognize this.”⁵⁶⁹ Even the threat of hell-fire does not dissuade the boys from their conviction. Then the boys are subjected to earthly fire to represent the eternal fire of hell. The first two boys “stand with the Bible over and against missionary-colonial Christianity.”⁵⁷⁰ The first boy sings a hymn from the Nazaretha church tradition, and the second cites Revelation 4:8, as each goes into the fire in turn and loses his life.⁵⁷¹ The boys’ mother then intervenes, and the focus of the parable shifts to the third son. The third son pragmatically chooses to agree with the Roman Catholic Church’s teaching in order to save his life, as requested by his bereaved mother. But the Pope cannily argues the boy must write his words down “and make an affidavit.”⁵⁷² The boy does so. The third boy dreamt that night and “his spirit was taken up and brought to the joyful place of the elected ones.”⁵⁷³ The boy sees his brothers there but cannot go to them. West argues Shembe has reconfigured Jesus’s parable in Luke 16:19-31, also drawing on Revelation 7:9-17. Finally, in paragraph 12 the third boy is addressed by “the lord.” West argues this is a reference to God. “God speaks directly to the third son, excluding him from among those who have been persecuted for their faith by the empire, whether the Roman empire of the book of Revelation or the Dutch and British empires of Shembe’s South Africa.”⁵⁷⁴

In the final sermonic paragraph where Shembe’s voice speaks directly again, West observes that the re-written Bible has changed. Once it has been stolen, copied, and shared with the community its message has changed. The Bible no longer contains missionary ‘instruction’ but now contains “the law.” The law is central to Shembe’s teaching.

⁵⁶⁸ West, 255.

⁵⁶⁹ West, 255.

⁵⁷⁰ West, 257.

⁵⁷¹ West, 256–57.

⁵⁷² Hexham and Oosthuizen, *The Story of Isaiah Shembe*, 1:227.

⁵⁷³ Hexham and Oosthuizen, 1:227.

⁵⁷⁴ West, *The Stolen Bible*, 259.

The primary focus of Shembe's law is on the relations between men and women.⁵⁷⁵ Shembe was deeply concerned about young women and orphans in the early stages of industrial capitalism in the KwaZulu-Natal area. The needs of young women and orphans motivated Shembe to obtain land, which he did. He called the land Ekuphakameni. Ekuphakameni became the headquarters of Shembe's new community. Shembe combined his knowledge of the mission Bible, his respect for Nguni traditional ways, with his knowledge of commodity capitalism. In so doing Shembe "constituted a new and hybrid regime of religious truth...in competition with ideologies of the state and the Christian mission."⁵⁷⁶

West argues that the biblical hermeneutics of Shembe were crucial for establishing the community's religio-cultural practice with political-economic integrity.⁵⁷⁷ West distills three moves in Shembe's hermeneutics which the parable illustrates in a succinct way. The first is to recognize the power of the Bible. Stealing the Bible stealthily is the second move. The third move is engagement and participation with the major characters of the Bible. In the content of his teachings, Shembe especially participates with Moses and Paul. However, participation is not a one-way street in terms of agentive influence. The Bible also takes hold of Shembe, "drawing him and his female followers into its narratives."⁵⁷⁸ West describes the biblical hermeneutical process as one of "mutual configuration."⁵⁷⁹ The stolen texts have the capacity to shape African communities, and post-colonial communities have the capacity to appropriate a range of biblical resources in their religio-cultural and political-economic reconstruction.

West's description of mutual configuration in describing biblical hermeneutics works with what anthropologist Tim Ingold describes as an "intransitive" notion of human production. When someone works with materials, not only are the materials transformed but also the laborer himself or herself is transformed by the process and experience.⁵⁸⁰ Michael Cronin argues that it is useful to think about translation as an intransitive process that changes the translator. As the translator plays with new ideas, the changed translator may in turn change

⁵⁷⁵ West, 260.

⁵⁷⁶ Muller, *Rituals of Fertility and the Sacrifice of Desire: Nazarite Women's Performance in South Africa*, 19.

⁵⁷⁷ West, *The Stolen Bible*, 249.

⁵⁷⁸ West, 267.

⁵⁷⁹ West, 317.

⁵⁸⁰ Tim Ingold, *Evolution and Social Life*, Themes in the Social Sciences (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 321.

the world.⁵⁸¹ Translating and re-translating pulls the translator into a process of multi-agentive influence. Participating with biblical narratives describes this process quite well

As noted, West describes the third move of Shembe's hermeneutics as engagement or participation. The third move corresponds with the hermeneutics of the West African prophet William Wadé Harris.⁵⁸² Before I turn to the hermeneutics of Harris, I must describe another African independent practice of using the Bible in another Southern African context, Botswana.

3.3.3 A Semoya approach to using the Bible

Musa Dube has recounted how Africans in Botswana left the missionary churches to form their own independent churches. Within their own communities, they appropriated the Bible as a tool of spiritual care and healing. Church leaders acting similarly to ngaka 'diviner-healers' used the Bible as a "divining set" useful for interpreting social-spiritual-physical life and for diagnosing and healing health problems of individuals and communities.⁵⁸³

Dube has documented the missionary intention to dominate and subjugate Setswana culture expressed through specific translational choices in which missionaries denigrated African ancestors as demonic. Dube calls this planting a colonial bomb in the translated Bible.⁵⁸⁴ However, among the AICs the bombs embedded in the colonial Bible were "defused" or rendered ineffective, not so much by a process of interpretation, but more by circumscribing the narrative and translated words of the Bible into a life-giving method of community material and spiritual problem-solving.⁵⁸⁵ Dube has described this process of life-giving interpretation for healing as practiced among Batswana women as a Semoya framework for reading the Bible.

⁵⁸¹ Cronin, *Translation in the Digital Age*, 50–51.

⁵⁸² West, *The Stolen Bible*, 260.

⁵⁸³ Musa W. Dube, "Consuming the Colonial Cultural Bomb: Translating Badimo into 'Demons' in the Setswana Bible (Matt. 8:28-34; 15:22, 10:8)," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 73 (1999): 55–56.

⁵⁸⁴ Dube, 37–52. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o also argues that "the biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against that collective defiance is the cultural bomb." *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Studies in African Literature (London: Portsmouth, N.H: J. Currey; Heinemann, 1986), 3.

⁵⁸⁵ Catholic Priest and anthropologist Jon P. Kirby has 'translated' the African religious practice of divining for a Western academic and religious audience broadly as 'problem-solving.' Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufɔ of Northern Ghana*.

Moya or “the Spirit” led Africans to leave missionary churches and their discriminatory methods of leadership. Moya is an agent of God at work among believers bringing about restoration through healing. Dube writes,

Women and men receive the Spirit which empowers them to prophesy, heal the sick, assist those searching for jobs, restore family relations, ensure a good harvest and good rains, ensure good reproduction of livestock, and dispel the ever-intruding forces of evil from people’s lives.⁵⁸⁶

A Semoya approach to using the Bible is post-colonial in the sense that it is an inclusive approach that does not mimic the discriminatory and colonizing methods of missionary churches, but rather uses the Bible in a manner that includes and heals people and communities through the Spirit. "Reading from a Semoya perspective, therefore, is an act of reading the written word for healing and hearing the word of the Spirit for empowerment."⁵⁸⁷

In addition to being post-colonial, a Semoya approach to reading the Bible is also feminist. Dube points out that women have always played a central role in these churches, even holding powerful positions and titles like “founders, bishops, archbishops, prophets, faith healers, preachers, and ministers.”⁵⁸⁸ In relation to particularly patriarchal biblical texts, women leaders of AICs are called by the Spirit, and thus they are able to operate with some independence from the written word. Dube cites an important statement by Bishop Virginia Lucas, the founder of the Glory Healing Church in Mogoditshane, Gaborone. Dube asked Bishop Lucas a question about why should she, a female, be a leader in the church, when there are biblical texts which seem to suggest otherwise. Bishop Lucas responded, “When

⁵⁸⁶ Dube Shomanah, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 40–41.

⁵⁸⁷ Musa W. Dube, “Readings of Semoya: Batswana Women’s Interpretations of Matthew 15:21-28,” *Semeia* 73 (1996): 127.

⁵⁸⁸ Dube Shomanah, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 41. Dube also cites Bengt Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and Some Swazi Zionists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976, 79-93. Sundkler admits that many AICs are very patriarchal, but in the last resort, the Spirit is the ultimate authority. In the case of the Akurinu churches of Kenya, women are excluded from leadership and from reading the Bible. However, they do practice important roles as prophetesses. Ndung’u comments, “Thus, while the Bible is used to oppress women it is at the same time used to liberate them as prophetesses in the Akurinu Churches.” Ndung’u, “The Role of the Bible in the Rise of African Instituted Churches: The Case of the Akurinu Churches in Kenya,” 246.

God spoke to me through the Spirit, God never opened the Bible to me. Instead God's Spirit told me to begin a church and heal God's people and that is what I am doing."⁵⁸⁹

Dube's description of the Semoya approach to biblical interpretation has been articulated in relation to the Southern African context. The spiritual framework of AIC Semoya interpretation is not unique to Botswana. In Ghana AICs are popularly known as "spiritual churches."⁵⁹⁰ And in Kenya, the Akurinu church also is guided by the Spirit and refer to themselves as "People of the Spirit."⁵⁹¹ Ndung'u has provided a useful summary of how the Bible is used among the Akurinu churches of Kenya. For the West African context, important historical and theological work on AICs has been done by Christian Baëta, David Shank, and Kwame Bediako among others.⁵⁹²

While there are thousands of AICs across Africa with their own histories and practices, scholars have often found it useful to highlight the first innovators.⁵⁹³ Shembe is one such innovator. In West Africa, Kwame Bediako has called William Wadé Harris "the first independent African Christian prophet."⁵⁹⁴ Not only did Harris walk out of his position in the Episcopal church, Harris moved beyond the missionary-colonial baggage which accompanied the Bible in the missionary-colonial expression of Christianity. As a biblical interpreter, Harris operated with a worldview Bediako called "the primal imagination."⁵⁹⁵ Harris

⁵⁸⁹ Dube Shomanah, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 42. For an important discussion regarding patriarchal 'texts of terror' see Gerald O. West, "Taming Texts of Terror: Reading (Against) the Gender Grain of 1 Timothy," *Scriptura* 86 (2004): 160–73.

⁵⁹⁰ Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 63.

⁵⁹¹ Ndung'u, "The Role of the Bible in the Rise of African Instituted Churches: The Case of the Akurinu Churches in Kenya," 241, 244–45. The Akurinu uphold a Trinitarian doctrine which places the Spirit in the second position.

⁵⁹² C. G Baëta, "Prophetism in Ghana." (1959); C. G Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana: A Study of Some "Spiritual" Churches* (Achimota, Ghana: Africa Christian Press, 2004), <http://books.google.com/books?id=mELYAAAAMAAJ>; Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*; Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*.

⁵⁹³ Drawing on the work of Inus Daneel, Musa Dube argues that the rise of AICs can be traced to a woman, Kimpa Vita, a Congolese Catholic Christian who protested against the Catholic church and proclaimed a culturally integrated form of Christianity before her martyrdom in 1706. Dube Shomanah, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 41; Inus Daneel, *Quest for Belonging* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1987), 46.

⁵⁹⁴ Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 91.

⁵⁹⁵ Bediako, 92.

represents a prophet who left the missionary-colonial paradigm, a prophet who is profoundly spiritual, religious, and Christian.

3.3.4 The participatory biblical hermeneutics of William Wadé Harris

West's analysis of Shembe's hermeneutics identified three important dimensions: recognizing the power of the Bible, seizing it, and participating with biblical figures. West noted that this third participatory dimension resembles the hermeneutics of Harris. Because Harris' ministry was in West Africa and touched Ghana, it is useful to describe some of the historical background of Harris' ministry before describing his participatory biblical hermeneutics.

In the early 20th century William Wadé Harris traveled from Liberia, across Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, converting up to 200,000 Africans over a 17-month period, creating a spiritual and social movement across tribal and political borders outside of colonial control.⁵⁹⁶ Harris began his journey on foot in August of 1913 and continued travelling past the outbreak of World War 1 in August 1914.

Harris was originally converted in the Methodist church. He married a woman from the Episcopal (Anglican) church and joined that church, working for it in a paid capacity for 15 years. Harris built a 'civilized' house and worked as a translator for the Liberian government among his own Glebo⁵⁹⁷ people. "The next several years were marked by conflict between indigenous and Americanized blacks. Harris's sympathies moved in favor of the Glebo people."⁵⁹⁸ In 1908 Harris participated in an insurrection against the Liberian government in favor of British rule. He was imprisoned, released, and then imprisoned again. During his second imprisonment the Liberian government with the aid of a US warship badly defeated the Glebos. During that imprisonment Harris was visited three times by the angel Gabriel. Through those encounters with the angel Gabriel, Harris became a prophet. "He turned from his revolutionary life back to the task of preaching, but now no longer as a civilized person to barbarians but as a liberated African to fellow Africans."⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁶ Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 15.

⁵⁹⁷ Another written form is Grebo.

⁵⁹⁸ David A Shank, "The Legacy of William Wadé Harris," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 10, no. 4 (October 1986): 171. Americanized blacks refers to freed slaves from the United States who started a colony of sorts on the coast of West Africa in what became The Republic of Liberia.

⁵⁹⁹ Shank, 172.

It is important to note that Harris's call to become an African prophet happened after the political defeat of the Glebo people whose claims to justice he had supported at great risk to himself. Harris had tried to work in both the religious and political realms, and at one time he hoped for a harmony between missionary-colonial religion and politics, but when both of those turned against what he saw to be the just claims of the Glebo people, it was then that the angel called him to a new kind of Christian ministry. Harris' prior revolutionary political activity had no hope for success at that time, nevertheless, he could still respond in the religious realm by leaving the subjugating and colonizing missionary-colonial Christianity and following the angel's call into a prophetic ministry.⁶⁰⁰

Shank summarizes Harris's conversion after 1910 as follows. After Harris's "personal struggle for money within the service of the Episcopalian church, and his political struggle for British supremacy over Liberian powerlessness to create justice,"⁶⁰¹ Harris entered a new stage of life. After leaving 'civilized' life, Harris returned to relying on ordinary Africans for his sustenance. He refused to wear Western clothing, instead wearing a white gown. White was a cultural and biblical symbol.⁶⁰² He carried a cross as a staff, which was again both biblically and culturally symbolic. He had a Bible that he often raised to show its power. He used a calabash to baptize converts.

Harris criticized reliance on charms and objects of power rather than God. As a result, many fetish⁶⁰³ objects of power were publicly burned, and many baptisms followed. The Ghanaian

⁶⁰⁰ Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 82–103.

⁶⁰¹ Shank and Murray, 170.

⁶⁰² Harris's vision indicated he was no longer to wear boots, trousers or collar. He was to wear a white cloth like a toga with a hole for where the head went. He put a turban on his head. From his Glebo tradition and the Bible the white emphasized his calling and status. White animals were used in peaceful sacrifices. White was the color of spirit or divinity. A white robe probably said God-man. Shank and Murray, 191–92.

⁶⁰³ In Ghana fetishes are objects of power. Fetish is often used to describe the offices of tindana, uboo, and divination practices, in general. It is often used pejoratively. The word 'fetish' was coined in mercantile space in translation along the coasts of West African when the Portuguese encountered the objects of power worn or consumed by Africans with whom they were trading. "The category of the fetish emerged in the intersection of the Christian feudal, African lineage, and merchant capitalist social relations; it was the result of the intersection of two cultures that were incomprehensible to one another; it was elaborated by Enlightenment intellectuals in Europe from the late eighteenth century into a general theory of religion; it was even used by Dutch, French, and English Protestants to describe Roman Catholic sacramental objects." Roland Boer, "Imperial Fetish: Anti-Imperial Readings of the Bible," in *Psychoanalytic Mediations between Marxist and Postcolonial Readings of*

barrister Casely Hayford reported that after baptism Harris laid a tattered Bible on your head before dismissing you as an act of confirmation.⁶⁰⁴ Harris' teachings included an emphasis on the ten commandments, including strict observance of the Sabbath. Harris taught that people should follow the colonial law, but not when it violated God's law.

Harris taught strict observance of Sunday as a sabbath. Harris is reported to have literally called down fire on ships that were being unloaded on Sunday. Given Harris's numeric influence, his strict teaching on observing Sunday as a day of rest was undesirable to colonial merchants.⁶⁰⁵ Harris was against violence, and thus his teaching was not welcomed by the French government due to the outbreak of World War 1.⁶⁰⁶ This shows that while Harris left revolutionary politics his post-revolutionary religious practices of Sabbath rest and non-violence were not a-political.

In terms of the Bible, Harris "used the Bible symbolically, liturgically, and sacramentally."⁶⁰⁷ Harris also "employed the Bible as a source for his own thought patterns."⁶⁰⁸ After combing the historical record for Harris' references and allusions to biblical texts, Shank discerned several dimensions to Harris' biblical hermeneutics beginning in his pre-prophetic days, to his calling by the angel Gabriel, in his teaching ministry, and in his various interviews where he recounted aspects of his self-understanding.⁶⁰⁹ In his pre-prophetic days Harris learned to use Scripture in the manner of the Wesleyan (Methodist) church and then the Episcopalian

the Bible, ed. Tat-siong Benny Liew and Erin Runions, Semeia Studies, Number 84 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 48. Adrian Hastings argues that the Portuguese and the African had similar worldviews and understood each other better than most Europeans or Americans understand the 16th century Portuguese or West African. Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa: 1450-1950*, 1st pbk. ed, The Oxford History of the Christian Church (Oxford: Oxford ; New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1996), 75. Charles DeBrosses took the concept of fetish and applied it to the ancient world in their practices of idolatry. Karl Marx turned DeBrosses' reading of fetishism in the ancient world and applied it to capitalism. For Marx fetishism encompasses idolatry. Boer, "Imperial Fetish: Anti-Imperial Readings of the Bible," 57.

⁶⁰⁴ Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 213. For comparison see Ndung'u, "The Role of the Bible in the Rise of African Instituted Churches: The Case of the Akurinu Churches in Kenya," 243-44.

⁶⁰⁵ Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 11, 211-12.

⁶⁰⁶ Shank and Murray, 281.

⁶⁰⁷ Shank and Murray, 155.

⁶⁰⁸ Shank and Murray, 155.

⁶⁰⁹ Shank and Murray, 154-73; 212-15.

(Anglican) church. Shank describes Harris' hermeneutics during this period of his life as exhibiting "Episcopalian orthodoxy, evangelical piety, and a belief in clear hierarchical structures."⁶¹⁰ Shank further describes Harris as employing an "analogical use of Scripture."⁶¹¹

Harris' trust in Episcopalian structures began to shift as early as 1904, when he was put under discipline for a year because of his revolutionary activities. For the next years he oscillated between the Episcopalian hierarchy and the Glebo traditional system. Then in 1910 while in prison, he was visited by the angel Gabriel. He went into a trance and because of this experience, his hermeneutical grid shifted. Harris could not return to being an evangelist and a teacher, nor could he go back to the traditional life because of his prophetic call. Harris had to re-interpret his calling.

As a prophet Harris retained his knowledge and practice of the analogical use of Scripture, but went beyond it in three ways. First, Harris used an apocalyptic key from the books of Daniel and Revelation to understand his own calling in apocalyptic time. Themes from the book of Daniel resonated in Harris' own life. Daniel was imprisoned and was writing to a people displaced by an alien culture. The book of Revelation has similar themes to Daniel, but uses explicitly Christian terms.⁶¹² Shank discerned that Harris understood he had been granted a special dispensation as the last Elijah for the coming Kingdom of Christ in West Africa until the reign of Christ could be fully established on earth.⁶¹³

Second, when Harris was called by the angel Gabriel, Harris began employing what Shank referred to as an "angelic hermeneutics of fulfillment."⁶¹⁴ On occasion Harris went into a trance-like state and the same angel who visited Daniel, Zechariah, Elisabeth, Joseph, and Mary would guide Harris in the spirit. Shank comments, "Harris was on solid biblical ground for trances and angelic visitations in the midst of persecutions, and guidance through angelic messages and healing."⁶¹⁵ However, in the missionary churches for which Harris had been an agent, such practices would not have been acceptable.

⁶¹⁰ Shank and Murray, 155.

⁶¹¹ Shank and Murray, 169, 173.

⁶¹² Shank and Murray, 156.

⁶¹³ Shank and Murray, 163.

⁶¹⁴ Shank and Murray, 167–68.

⁶¹⁵ Shank and Murray, 121.

In two different interviews⁶¹⁶ Harris described the guidance of the angel as being in the spirit. Harris refers to 1 Corinthians 14, using Paul's criterion for judging the spirit, whether being in the spirit builds up others in the church. Harris refers to the spirit in a manner that is reminiscent of Dube's Semoya hermeneutics. Harris claimed it was "the spirit of Pentecost" working in him that guided him.⁶¹⁷ It was the spirit that enabled Harris to "cross over" from the present material world to participate in the biblical world.

The third way Harris went beyond his missionary-colonial hermeneutical heritage was when Harris employed the hermeneutics of participation through the power of the spirit of Pentecost. Shank writes,

He [Harris] became a vital participant in the world of truth that the Bible constituted for him. It was not merely a matter of "belief in"; it was an African pattern of "participation in" the truth. It became a question of involvement—as with the ancestors, the living-dead—with Moses, with Elijah, with the Archangel Gabriel, and supremely with Jesus Christ.⁶¹⁸

West described Shembe as also employing a similar participatory approach. Participating in the world of the Bible suggests that prophets like Harris and Shembe were operating with a similar notion of time as described by Mbembe.⁶¹⁹ Time for these prophets was entangled in such a way that they could participate in the present with biblical agents. Shank described Harris' participation: "Harris seems to 'cross over' time and time again into an actualizing or

⁶¹⁶ David A Shank, "The Taming of the Prophet Harris," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 27, no. 1 (February 1997): 61, 80, 90. Shank describes how a young French speaking Protestant named Pierre Benoît interviewed Harris in 1926 in Harper, Liberia. Benoît was helping a Wesleyan missionary William J. Platt. Benoît filled four notebooks with shorthand notes while meeting with Harris using shorthand in French and English. Shank refers to these as (BN) – Benoît's notes. Two days later Benoît filled these notes out. Benoît partially edited his filled-out version in Abidjan. Shank refers to this report as (BR)—Benoît's report. Benoît's report was translated into English and then edited by the Wesleyan mission leader F.D. Walker for public consumption. Shank refers to Walker's version as the "tamed Harris." Walker's edition significantly excises any reference that is critical to French colonialists. The Report and the Public document excise Harris' clear teaching which does not allow for adultery, but which does allow for polygamy.

⁶¹⁷ Pierre Benoît wrote in his *Notes* "Angel Gabriel tell me: search so and so—such verses. The spirit in me is the spirit of Pentecost. Corinth 14/2 [Benoît Notes I.12] Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 168.

⁶¹⁸ Shank and Murray, 170.

⁶¹⁹ Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 14, 16–17.

fulfilling of biblical reality in his personal experience."⁶²⁰ Again Shank writes, "There is a sense in which he 'takes on' the task and role of Moses, Elijah and so on, but it does not appear to him as a self-appropriation of roles. It is the Angel Gabriel—or Christ, or Moses, or Elijah—who tells him, instructs him, commands him."⁶²¹

What was it in Harris' approach to the Bible that gave his ministry such transformational power? It was the hermeneutics of participation, guided by the angel, empowered by the spirit that gave Harris his conviction and enabled him to teach with authority, issuing laws in a manner like Shembe. In this participatory mode, Harris engaged with Biblical characters, and that enabled him to re-interpret the Bible for the present situation in West Africa, which Harris perceived as his dispensation until the full revelation of the kingdom of Christ.⁶²² Harris viewed himself as a mediating dispenser of Christ's light for his context.⁶²³

It is significant to note that in the Harrist churches preachers hold the Bible, but are forbidden from opening it—at least in public.⁶²⁴ Harris' prophetic dispensation for his West African coastal context, like Shembe's law for the Nazaretha church in South Africa's interior context, re-interpreted the content of the Bible's message, compared to the biblical interpretations and teachings of missionary-colonial Christianity.

3.4 Transition to the entangled post-colonial, neo-colonial era

Harris stands in contrast to the third phase of Christian biblical practice in Ghana, the era of the prosperity gospel. Before I discuss the third phase, and how Harris contrasts with it, an important political event which is relevant for this thesis, occurred, the political independence of Ghana. After highlighting a historical and hermeneutical connection between Harris and

⁶²⁰ Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 169.

⁶²¹ Shank and Murray, 170.

⁶²² In an interview with Harris which took place in Grand Cess, Liberia in May of 1916, Father Peter Harrington asked Prophet Harris whether he could change the doctrine of Christ. Harris's response illustrates how he perceives his own eschatological position as a prophet. Harrington reports Harris as saying, "Man don't you see? The prophets can dispense—they cannot change. When all the prophets of Christ meet we shall get heavenly light from above—from God the Mysterious—and like the prophets in the Old Law we may grant certain dispensations until the reign of Christ is fully established on earth." Shank and Murray, 163.

⁶²³ Tim Hartman juxtaposes Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako's notion of Christological revelation in African religions with Swiss theologian Karl Barth's notion of Christ as the Light of Life shining freely yet occasionally in world religions. Tim Hartman, *Theology After Colonization: Kwame Bediako, Karl Barth, and the Future of Theological Reflection* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2020), 175–76.

⁶²⁴ Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 213.

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of Ghana, I will shift to discussing the neo-colonial policy called 'structural adjustment,' initiated in the late 20th century.

3.4.1 African independence and the early post-colonial era

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of Ghana, would have been five-years old when Prophet Harris passed through Nkrumah's birthplace of Half-Assinie. As President, Nkrumah was critical of missionary-colonial Christianity, "While missionaries implored the colonial subject to lay up his 'treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt', the traders and administrators acquired his minerals and land."⁶²⁵ Nkrumah's revolutionary biblical response still inspires activists today, as he said, "Seek first the political kingdom and all else will be added to you." Harris was a political activist who became a prophet. Nkrumah was a political activist who appropriated biblical stories, often in a Messianic fashion, as a revolutionary and then as a leader of a revolutionary government.⁶²⁶

The political success of Ghana in securing, maintaining, and practicing political independence was impressive. Nevertheless, as Nkrumah and others after him well knew, political independence was not the end of the fight against invasive colonial interests. After independence the colonial strategy shifted from international control of national politics to international control of economic policies.⁶²⁷ Nkrumah's biblical appropriations for political liberation were not matched by biblical appropriations for economic liberation.

3.4.2 Neo-colonial entanglement in Ghana in the late 20th and early 21st centuries

The first independent Ghanaian government led by Nkrumah ended abruptly in 1966 through a military coup d'état. Ghana began to oscillate between civilian and military regimes.⁶²⁸

⁶²⁵ Kwame Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite* (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1963), 26.

⁶²⁶ John S. Pobee, *Religion and Politics in Ghana*, *Studia Missionalia Upsaliensia* 48 (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1991), 117–20. Nkrumah's biblical appropriations and his cult of personality put him at odds with traditional churches. While Pobee judges Nkrumah's language frivolous, he also argues, "We must be careful not to misunderstand African leaders by imputing conventional meanings to the conventional words they use." Pobee, 120.

⁶²⁷ Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*, 108. "...the newly-independent country may fall victim to the highly dangerous forces of economic imperialism, and find it has merely substituted one kind of colonialism for another."

⁶²⁸ Susan Drucker-Brown, "Communal Violence in Northern Ghana: Unaccepted War," in *War, a Cruel Necessity? The Bases of Institutionalized Violence*, ed. Robert A. Hinde and Helen Watson, *Tauris Academic Studies* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris; Distributed in the U.S.A. and Canada by St. Martin's Press, 1995), 38–39.

Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings took power by military coup in 1979 and then again in 1981. In 1992 Rawlings was elected President. Rawlings' base of support within Ghana, both as a military ruler and as an elected leader, was like Nkrumah's base. There are two dominant electoral traditions in Ghana which emerged prior to the time of independence, one led by J.B. Danquah and the United Gold Coast Convention Party, and the other was a break-away group led by Nkrumah's Convention People's Party. According to this analysis, these two support bases, one liberal and the other populist, continue to this day. Both Nkrumah and Rawlings were in the populist line.⁶²⁹

Rawlings shrewdly maneuvered into an ideological stance that was economically identical to the opposing liberal tradition. Rawlings' populist base in Ghana supported him in this move. Paul Nugent argues that since the beginning of Ghana's Fourth Republic after the 1992 election and in the run-up to the 1996 election, no significant ideological disagreement within Ghana's political parties existed regarding Ghana's stance toward international economic policies. Under the military rule of Rawlings' government in the mid-1980's until the present, Ghana has worked in concert with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in what is called the Structural Adjustment Program. Rawlings' governments, both military and elected, shifted the terms of the debate such that even those parties who descended from Nkrumah's socialist platform agreed on the necessity of promoting the private sector and the structural adjustment program.⁶³⁰

The summary of the Ghanaian context provided by Paul Gifford argues that structural adjustment policies have not worked in Ghana—even though Ghana has been trumpeted as a star of the program.⁶³¹ Ghana's underlying system of government is not based on a “rational-legal administrative framework” as in Western democracies, which utilize “hierarchies of administrative grades and functions.”⁶³² Rather, Ghana's underlying system of government is neo-patrimonialism, a system of loyalty based on real or fictive kinship ties, in which ethnic

⁶²⁹ Jay Oelbaum, “Ethnicity Adjusted? Economic Reform, Elections, and Tribalism in Ghana's Fourth Republic,” *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 42, no. 2 (July 1, 2004): 245, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1466204042000299281>.

⁶³⁰ Paul Nugent, “Living in the Past: Urban, Rural and Ethnic Themes in the 1992 and 1996 Elections in Ghana,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 37, no. 2 (1999): 292.

⁶³¹ Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 5–6.

⁶³² Gifford, 7.

clientelism continues to reinforce ruling class interests.⁶³³ Structural adjustment policies have served to strengthen neo-patrimonialism. The result, Gifford argues, is a lack of independent transparent procedures. Under structural adjustment, the building of institutions that are necessary for development has not proved possible. Accountability is lacking. Wealth is flaunted.⁶³⁴ Such is the economic and political context of twenty-first century Ghana. Increasingly, public positions are based on neo-patrimonial loyalty to the ruling political party. Most recently, the private operation of banks and radio stations has been linked to political affiliation.

3.5 Phase three: From primal theology to prosperity gospel

In this era of structural adjustment, the third phase of Christian biblical practice in Ghana emerges. The affirmation of African culture and the focus on the spirit, which was part of the second phase, has taken a 'new' turn with the emergence of a 'new' form of African Christianity.

The third phase is marked by the rise of the 'health and wealth' gospel, also called the 'prosperity gospel' and sometimes the 'faith gospel.' The faith gospel emerged in the United States in 1960s and 70s during a period of economic boom. It has been propagated by well-known evangelists such as E.W. Kenyon, A.A. Allen, Oral Roberts, T.L. Osborn, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland and John Avanzini. The faith gospel teaches God has met all the needs of human beings in the suffering and death of Christ and every Christian should now share the victory of Christ over sin, sickness, and poverty. A believer has a right to the blessings of 'health and wealth' and only needs to claim these blessings through a confession of faith. It is also called 'name it and claim it' theology. A fundraising component has developed within the prosperity movement which argues God is a rich God and those who want to share in God's wealth should give to God's servant, that is, the evangelist of the prosperity gospel.⁶³⁵

⁶³³ Gifford, 7. Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 4–6. "The African state, from birth was essentially an agency for control and extraction. There was never any merging of state and society as common expressions of shared values." Gifford, 4. Gifford's analysis, in my view, underestimates Nkrumah's attempts to transform the state.

⁶³⁴ Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 12.

⁶³⁵ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 39.

The prosperity gospel valorizes the desire for wealth, the attainment of wealth, and the display of wealth. But this is done in a theological framework that takes for granted the fundamental reality of the spiritual world, a characteristic of the primal African worldview. The pastors of prosperity churches do not look like a combination of African traditional healers and biblical prophets—whose very appearance signals their separation from the mammon of the world. Rather they look like CEOs, those incorporated into the center of the world economy.⁶³⁶

Beginning in 1979 the prosperity gospel as practiced in the ‘new’ charismatic churches entered into many African contexts. Since that time, in Ghana, the new churches have eclipsed the growth of other Christian churches.⁶³⁷ AICs have recorded the most losses, but mainline churches were also seriously affected.⁶³⁸ The political and economic realities of neo-liberalism were at that time just taking control of the world economy. As discussed above, in the mid-1980s Jerry Rawlings opened the economy of Ghana to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, giving them a relatively free hand.⁶³⁹ The prosperity gospel in many ways valorizes the economic policies of neo-liberalism in theological terms.⁶⁴⁰ Paul Gifford has shown that the influx of the prosperity gospel has been felt in many other African contexts, but not in uniform ways.⁶⁴¹ These new churches have developed into a new form of African Christianity.

3.5.1 Similar problems, different remedies, different aims

The new African Christianity recognizes the symptoms of an individual’s problems in similar ways as the AICs and African religions, while prescribing different remedies to achieve a different vision of what constitutes a ‘good’ life. The problems that supplicants express are

⁶³⁶ Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity*, 47–48.

⁶³⁷ Gifford, 23, 27.

⁶³⁸ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 62–63. Using data obtained from the Ghana Evangelism Committee who did comprehensive surveys five years apart, AICs reported losing members between 17-23 % over the 5 years. Mainline Protestant churches were holding even reporting 7% growth - well below 17% growth of population. The Catholic church, the largest church, decreased by 2%.

⁶³⁹ Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity*, 6.

⁶⁴⁰ Another theological option, which Northern Europe has opted for is a secular appropriation of political and economic policies. Religion is relegated to the realm of the private. Does this religious disconnection from the economic still work behind the scenes in some way to valorize economic policies?

⁶⁴¹ Gifford, *African Christianity*.

similar in the new churches, the AICs, and in African religious shrines,⁶⁴² but the diagnosis and remedy are different. The AICs use the Bible to diagnose and remedy individual social-spiritual problems with the aim to restore life holistically, with an emphasis on collective social healing.⁶⁴³ In the Ghanaian context, Christian Baëta observes that the goal of AICs was similar to African religions, to increase what has been called "life-force," potency, vitality, élan—a vigorous, pulsating, and prolific life.⁶⁴⁴ Both African religions and AICs have historically pursued a 'good' life in a manner that does not prioritize acquiring, consuming, and displaying the goods of consumer capitalism. The aim of the new charismatic churches, by contrast, is to guide individuals toward a healthy and wealthy life, with a strong emphasis on acquiring the goods of consumer capitalism as concomitant with achieving a healthy life. In order to "prosper the first requirement is to give to God or the nearest representative, the Man of God."⁶⁴⁵ This is an economic prescription quite different from historic African religious practices. The man of God remedies the problem by using his powerful spoken word to remove spiritual blockages that are preventing the individual from accessing the promised wealth and health.

Among the Yoruba in Nigeria, Abiola Ibilola Mbamalu indicates that the notion of *alafia* pervades the Yoruba worldview. The same term *alafia* is similarly used in northern Ghana. Mbamalu defines *alafia* as "wellbeing" and "a state of peace, prosperity and progress."⁶⁴⁶ Mbamalu argues that among the Yoruba the emphasis on financial prosperity is a foreign element which re-interprets healing in terms which imitate neo-liberal policies.⁶⁴⁷

3.5.2 Shifts in teaching emphasis in the new Christianity

Gifford has traced some shifts in emphasis in the public teaching of the new charismatic churches in Ghana from the 1980s to the early 2000s. The faith gospel was the initial emphasis and continues to be the underlying orientation of the new charismatic churches, but

⁶⁴² Musa Dube's list quoted above in footnote 586 is quite similar to the list observed by Gifford quoted below in footnote 650. Dube Shomanah, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 40–41; Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 89.

⁶⁴³ Dube Shomanah, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 192.

⁶⁴⁴ Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, 135. Cited in Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 63.

⁶⁴⁵ Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 62.

⁶⁴⁶ Abiola Ibilola Mbamalu, "The Use of 'abundant Life' in John 10:10 and Its Interpretation among Some Yoruba Prosperity Gospel Preachers" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2010), 45, WorldCat.org.

⁶⁴⁷ Mbamalu, 126.

when the health and wealth promises were not materializing due to Ghana's economic straits in the 1980s and 1990s, the emphasis shifted to deliverances from spiritual blockages were keeping individuals from accessing health and prosperity.⁶⁴⁸ Deliverance camps peaked in about 1995. Their popularity waned, running into the same problem as the faith gospel.⁶⁴⁹ The next shift was to the ministry of the prophet, the man of God. The underlying problems were the same: "husbands, children, success, wealth, jobs, promotion, visas—and there is the same understanding that their lack indicates demonic blockages."⁶⁵⁰ In the prophetic iteration, rather than querying individuals about potential causes of blockages, a man of God, a prophet, "is now able through his special anointing to identify and destroy your blockage and ensure your blessed destiny without your speaking."⁶⁵¹

These theological topics bear some similarity to the kinds of topics found in AIC teaching, but the teaching varies drastically in content. Words like health, healing, and prophet are found in both traditions. There are also similar concepts like vitality, spiritual blockages, and authority. However, the public teaching filling the topics and concepts differs widely. One could argue that these two phases of Christianity have re-written different Bibles. New Christianity has re-written its Bible to fit within neo-liberal politics and economics.

The content of the New Christianity's Bible is found in the digital and print media which every church distributes to its members. Members are encouraged to buy these media and spend their time listening and reading.

3.5.3 The use of the Bible in the new Christianity

When I argue that churches are re-writing the Bible, I am arguing that churches have drawn teaching out of the Bible that bears some relation to the content of the Bible, but that also embodies that teaching for a new context. What kind of biblical hermeneutics does the new Christianity use to re-write its Bible and arrive at its public teaching? In the new charismatic churches in Ghana, the Bible is viewed as a "repository of narratives, overwhelmingly about the miraculous."⁶⁵² The following biblical characters are listed in what appears to be their order of importance: Abraham, Joseph, Elijah and/or Elisha, David, Daniel, Joshua, Moses,

⁶⁴⁸ Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 86.

⁶⁴⁹ Gifford, 88.

⁶⁵⁰ Gifford, 89.

⁶⁵¹ Gifford, 89.

⁶⁵² Gifford, 72.

and Job.⁶⁵³ The biblical narratives illustrate God's desire and ability to intervene and prosper his followers. The Bible is no mere historical record but is addressed to the believer now. Gifford refrains from using the term fundamentalist, because the majority of elements that apply to fundamentalism in the United States lack relevance and coherence in Ghana.⁶⁵⁴ The use of the King James version is preferred to quote the text, even among preachers who preach in local languages.

Mbamalu provides a close reading of the hermeneutics of several 'neo-Pentecostal' preachers among the Yoruba in Nigeria, including Bishop David Oyedepo, founder of David Oyedepo Ministries International and the Living Faith Church Worldwide, better known as Winners' Chapel.⁶⁵⁵ Winners' Chapel is a very popular church in Ghana.⁶⁵⁶ Mbamalu argues that neo-Pentecostal preachers use biblical texts to support a teaching as long as there are correspondences of words and topics with the prosperity gospel teaching. The Bible's literary and social contexts are not considered.⁶⁵⁷ Words like 'wealth' in Deuteronomy 8:18 activate the prosperity gospel teaching. It is not necessary to interpret the verse in context. Intertextual links are made by virtue of similar wording or doctrinal association between texts.⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵³ See Hebrews 11. Gifford, 72.

⁶⁵⁴ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 42–44; 333–34.

⁶⁵⁵ Mbamalu includes analyses of the hermeneutics of Bishop Wale Oke and Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye.

⁶⁵⁶ Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 58–69.

⁶⁵⁷ Mbamalu, "The Use of 'abundant Life' in John 10:10 and Its Interpretation among Some Yoruba Prosperity Gospel Preachers," 230.

⁶⁵⁸ Bishop Oyedepo frequently cites God's covenant with Abraham in Deuteronomy 8:18, highlighting the word 'wealth' because of its link to the prosperity gospel. Oyedepo interprets Deuteronomy 8:18 intertextually using Galatians 3:14 to clarify the covenant as referring to prosperity gospel for Christians. What is important for Bishop Oyedepo are the prosperity words of the verse, which he delinks from their literary and historical contexts. Oyedepo then relinks those words to other texts intertextually and ultimately to the language of the prosperity gospel.

Foundational doctrines include the link between prosperity and God’s covenant,⁶⁵⁹ and between prosperity and the atonement.⁶⁶⁰

Mbamalu’s focus is on how neo-Pentecostal preachers among the Yoruba people of Nigeria interpret John 10:10. Mbamalu locates the Yoruba cultural context⁶⁶¹ and provides a detailed literary and socio-cultural analysis of John 10:1-18.⁶⁶² Mbamalu then compares three popular Yoruba neo-Pentecostal preachers’ readings of that text. Mbamalu argues that neo-Pentecostal preachers draw on their contextual situation of poverty and the Yoruba understanding of concepts like *alafia*, mentioned above. They also import the doctrine of the prosperity gospel to help them interpret the text in their context. Neo-Pentecostal preachers perceive that the words translated ‘abundant life’ in John 10:10 refer to life in the present world. Their interpretation provides a corrective to missionary-colonial Christianity’s “world denying” assertion that abundant life only refers to the world to come and not the present world.⁶⁶³ Mbamalu argues that neo-Pentecostal preachers do not have the tools to engage in a critical reading of the text in its ancient context.⁶⁶⁴ Accordingly, they may not realize that they are reducing the Johannine notion of “abundant life” to *only* refer to the material, missing the Johannine teaching of this life as a foretaste of the world to come. Furthermore, neo-Pentecostal preachers neglect biblical obligations to distribute wealth to the poor and to

⁶⁵⁹ Bishop Oyedepo frequently cites God’s promise to Noah in Genesis 8:21-22. Oyedepo understands the promise to be God’s part of a covenant based on Genesis 9:9-16. While these texts have been understood as God’s promise to sustain all creation, Bishop Oyedepo uses 2 Corinthians 9:6 which associates “sowing” with “giving.” This move allows Bishop Oyedepo to elevate “God’s utterance of blessing on all creation to the status of a covenant and made it the prerogative of Christians.” Mbamalu, “The Use of ‘abundant Life’ in John 10:10 and Its Interpretation among Some Yoruba Prosperity Gospel Preachers,” 232.

⁶⁶⁰ The key text for linking prosperity with the atonement is 2 Corinthians 8:9, “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (King James Version). From this verse, prosperity preachers argue that Jesus became poor so we might become rich. The primary way for believers to appropriate this in their own lives is to give financially. Mbamalu, 235.

⁶⁶¹ Mbamalu, 33–75.

⁶⁶² Mbamalu, 135–211.

⁶⁶³ Mbamalu, 270.

⁶⁶⁴ Mbamalu, 280–81. In Ghana, the critical study of the Bible is lacking in all three phases of Christianity. There is a disconnect between academic theology and Christian practice in Africa. Gifford, *African Christianity*, 333. However, there are several efforts to use vernacular hermeneutics and popular Bible study groups as pathways to deeper critical study.

advocate for a social system that cares for the poor.⁶⁶⁵ Wealth is viewed as a goal rather than a tool to benefit communal life. Neo-Pentecostal preachers draw on the American sense of individualism and wealth accumulation imported by the prosperity gospel and by the economic policies of structural adjustment rather than drawing upon a Yoruba sense of mutual sharing and community good.

As I argued earlier, Gerald West argues that Isaiah Shembe and the Nazaretha church re-wrote the Bible. West argues that Shembe, like Harris, used a hermeneutic of participation. In contrast, the new charismatic churches use a ‘doctrinal’ approach where the Bible illustrates the doctrine of prosperity. In this way, the new churches resemble hermeneutical moves made by missionary-colonial Christianity whose catechisms and doctrines came before the biblical text. For missionary-colonial Christianity and for the new Christianity, the Bible illustrates doctrine. However, the new churches also bear some similarity to the AICs because, for both the AICs and the new churches, the Bible’s teaching is presumed to address tangible social problems. The remedy the new charismatic churches offer is the one thing that everything can be boiled down to in the capitalist economy. The singular equivalent for everything else in the capitalist economy is money. It follows then that the Bible also can be reduced and re-written to authoritatively teach the principles for individual economic prosperity in a neo-liberal political economy predicated upon justifying individual wealth accumulation.

3.5.4 African culture in the new Christianity

What is the role of African culture in the new form of Christianity? The affirmation of African culture which was so powerful in the AICs takes on a different feel in Ghana’s new Christianity. While the notion of spiritual causation continues to be assumed in the practices of the new churches, traditional African culture and religion is often denigrated as ‘pagan’ or ‘fetish.’ African religion/culture is often publicly spoken of in a manner that demonizes it.⁶⁶⁶ The demonization of African religion/culture is part of the legacy of missionary-colonial Christianity, and continues to be part of the public transcript in neo-colonial forms of Christianity.

Because it is wrong to demonize African religious and cultural tradition, some argue that mainline churches have become so ashamed of their missionary-colonial heritage they are

⁶⁶⁵ Mbamalu, “The Use of ‘abundant Life’ in John 10:10 and Its Interpretation among Some Yoruba Prosperity Gospel Preachers,” 239; 289–90.

⁶⁶⁶ Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 63.

afraid to diagnose anything negative in African culture. Clearly prophets like Harris were not afraid to name what was harmful without castigating religion and culture as demonic. Gifford identifies Mensa Otabil and the International Central Gospel Church as one locus in the practice of new Christianity where ‘culture’ broadly understood is addressed. Whereas the mainline churches hesitate to criticize African culture, Otabil argues certain cultural practices hold Ghana back from development. Otabil’s remedy is education.⁶⁶⁷ It is obvious that Otabil’s analysis fits well with Gifford’s agenda. What is intriguing is the great success Otabil has had popularly in Ghana.

Ghanaians may be interested in a prophetic practice that strikes a balance in its assessment of African culture/religion. Traditional culture/religion should not be demonized, but it does not need to be treated as sacrosanct. Oduyoye refers to such an approach as “basking in the glory of ‘old shells’ retained to govern social relationships, when the material causes that gave rise to those structures are no more, or are fast fading away.”⁶⁶⁸

3.5.5 The approach to the political in the new Christianity

What about African politics in the new churches? Gifford indicates that the new Christianity spiritualizes politics. An individual’s circumstances are irrelevant. What matters is the word of God and God’s promise to do the miraculous for the individual. The faith gospel teaches its members that politics is not a Christian concern. Only ‘the Word of God’ can change societies.⁶⁶⁹ In practice the new churches separate the spiritual realm from the political. But in theory, they recognize that the spiritual and religious realm must change in order to change the political. I will address the role of religious change in social change in chapters four through six. For now, I want to focus on the new churches approach to the political arena as compared to the early prophets of the AICs and the subsequent political stance of the AICs.

The first prophets of the AICs were cautious of the political realm. For example, Harris left political activism to become a prophet. However, his participatory biblical teaching emphasized things like Sabbath-rest and non-violence, and Harris was not afraid to counter

⁶⁶⁷ Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity*, 124–25. Otabil offered a list of seven strongholds that need to be torn down to move Africa forward: inferiority complex, tribalism, cultural stagnation, idolatry and fetishism, village mentality, wrong negative leadership, apathy. Gifford, 131.

⁶⁶⁸ Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands*, 75.

⁶⁶⁹ Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity*, 166. Since the emphasis is so clearly on ‘the Word of God’, this should signal the importance of biblical hermeneutics.

colonial political powers or African cultural leaders who practiced otherwise. As time progressed, many AICs preferred to practice in spaces separate from the African political environments which they viewed as corrupted by the world. The AICs remained on the margins of society and thus could maintain such a stance.

The new churches have become so popular they are no longer on the margins of society. The new prophets look like businessmen who occupy the center of society. Accordingly, the new prophets have begun to appear in political arenas. On one occasion, perhaps motivated by a feeling of flattery more than politics, Duncan Williams, the first new charismatic preacher in Ghana, acted almost as a cheerleader for Jerry Rawlings.⁶⁷⁰ These political cameos have continued in the 21st century.

These cameos are welcomed by political leaders, because unlike prophet Harris or Shembe, the new Christianity focuses on the personal rather than the structural.⁶⁷¹ Matthews Ojo argues, “The moral scrupulousness of the charismatic was individualistic and lacked any social dimension. It reforms the person but not the whole church and society.”⁶⁷² The new churches do not “lend their voices to the burning issues of the country.”⁶⁷³ Gifford argues similarly that the new Christianity “is not concerned with a renewed order or any ‘new Jerusalem.’”⁶⁷⁴

As Gerald West has argued in relation to the South African state, the political stance of the new charismatic churches suits the African state just fine. The states will deal with the political and economic, whereas the churches can deal with the moral.⁶⁷⁵ In a roundabout fashion, African states have achieved a separation of the sacred and the secular in a way the colonial powers could not. The result is that the state is free to practice “policies of wealth extraction whether by neo-colonial trans-global multinationals or neo-patrimonial local

⁶⁷⁰ Gifford, 40.

⁶⁷¹ West, *The Stolen Bible*, 535.

⁶⁷² Matthews Akintunde Ojo, “The Growth of Campus Christianity and Charismatic Movements in Western Nigeria” (Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1986), 386. Cited in Mbamalu, “The Use of ‘abundant Life’ in John 10:10 and Its Interpretation among Some Yoruba Prosperity Gospel Preachers,” 97.

⁶⁷³ Mbamalu, “The Use of ‘abundant Life’ in John 10:10 and Its Interpretation among Some Yoruba Prosperity Gospel Preachers,” 132.

⁶⁷⁴ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 380.

⁶⁷⁵ West, *The Stolen Bible*, 512–36.

elites.”⁶⁷⁶ Neo-charismatic churches, on the other hand, are free to focus on spiritual blockages to wealth based on individual history and experience. While they do that the new churches are free to practice wealth extraction among their members.

Nkrumah argued against missionary Christianity which tells members to invest in treasures above, while colonialists invaded, robbed, and extracted from African lands. Nkrumah argued Africans should keep their eye on the material, and seek first the political.⁶⁷⁷ The focus of the new Christianity tells its members to keep their eye on the acquisition of the material, “though the spiritual remains the terrain in which they do battle for material well-being.”⁶⁷⁸ The way to achieve the material theologically is by giving to the man of God. The political, on the other hand, is not the concern of the Christian. The state, for its part, likes it this way.

The new churches do articulate theologies that ‘speak to’ neo-indigenous African material and spiritual concerns. The term neo-indigenous refers to individual Africans who seek to engage in strategies of auto-translation in relation to (neo-)colonial economic realities, referred to in chapter two section 2.5.2 and 2.5.3 above, but who remain entangled with Africa’s religious past.⁶⁷⁹ Gifford’s analysis of the new Christianity underestimates the importance of the way it has successfully entangled itself with neo-indigenous African perspectives.

⁶⁷⁶ West, 535.

⁶⁷⁷ For Nkrumah, matter is the primary reality, but not the sole reality. There is the possibility of categorical conversion between matter and space, or between mind and body. Furthermore, matter is alive with forces in tension. Nkrumah claims this is also true within African philosophy. Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, 20, 86–91, 97. Nkrumah sometimes speaks of categorical conversion *without residue* which seems to be problematic from a translation studies perspective. Nkrumah, 91. In translation studies I am thinking of Eugene Nida’s notion of equivalence.

⁶⁷⁸ West, *The Stolen Bible*, 533.

⁶⁷⁹ Making an African temporal distinction similar to Mbembe’s time of entanglement, Kwame Bediako argues Africans are connected not so much to a chronological past as to an “ontological past.” *Jesus And The Gospel In Africa: History And Experience*, Theology in Africa Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 51, <http://www.amazon.com/Jesus-And-The-Gospel-Africa/dp/1570755426>. Tim Hartman argues “By ‘ontological’ Bediako meant that the very being of an African—Christian or non-Christian—has been indelibly formed by the primal imagination of African spirituality and religion, including beliefs about ancestors.” *Theology After Colonization: Kwame Bediako, Karl Barth, and the Future of Theological Reflection*, 143.

However, the new churches also diverge from the spiritual-material dialectic that was part of pre-colonial African philosophical understandings.⁶⁸⁰ This evidenced by the fact that the new churches seem to lack a broader social voice. Whereas mainline churches historically addressed the material causes of poverty in the tradition of European secular Christianity ignoring the spiritual, the new churches address only spiritual-material causes related to individual morality and circumstance, but they rarely connect spiritual-material causation to immoral systemic and dehumanizing policies that bring spiritual-material death to African communities and individuals. Powerful African politicians and business leaders are content to have prophets diagnose the spiritual causes of poverty in the highly individualized manner of the new churches, as long as they do not diagnose political and systemic components as part of spiritual-material oppression.

3.5.6 Assessing Ghana's situation in the post-colonial neo-colonial era

What is the cause of Ghana's political, economic, and religious situation? Indeed, as Gifford's research shows, Ghana participates in a political, economic, and religious environment that is analogous to many other countries across the African continent. Anthony Balcomb argues that a developmentalist perspective places the majority of the blame for Africa's situation on African contexts because they do not emulate dominant European models of development. Whereas a dependency perspective argues that Euro-American practices are to blame for Africa's problems because they extract material resources from southern contexts (such as Africa, South America, Asia, and Oceania).⁶⁸¹ Gifford appears to argue in a developmentalist mode when he argues that Africans, including Ghanaians, must rid themselves of the "enchanted worldview" in order to develop. In other words, African countries must secularize in order to achieve their desired position in the modern world economy.⁶⁸² However, Balcomb argues the primal worldview is part of the lived reality

⁶⁸⁰ "Many African societies in fact forestalled this kind of perversion. Making the visible world continuous with the invisible world reduced the dialectical contradiction between 'inside and outside'. For them heaven was not outside the world but inside it. These African societies did not accept transcendentalism, and may indeed be regarded as having attempted to synthesize the dialectical opposites 'outside' and 'inside' by making them continuous, that is, by abolishing them." Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, 12.

⁶⁸¹ Anthony Balcomb, "Counter-Modernism, the Primal Imagination and Development Theory: Shifting the Paradigm," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 157 (March 2017): 44–45.

⁶⁸² Paul Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa* (London: Hurst & Company, 2015), 154.

across the continent.⁶⁸³ Gifford also appears to argue in a dependency mode when he places a majority of the blame on Western policies rather than on African states, citing the rules of international trade controlled by Western nations.⁶⁸⁴ West's analysis indicates that African nations and churches have imitated colonial policies and practices of extraction. The political and theological causes of Africa's problems are systemic.

Church leaders are imitating practices of political elites who extract wealth from the Ghanaian environment and people promising future returns that the ordinary African will enjoy by way of economic development. Similarly, elites in the neo-liberal churches extract wealth from ordinary members in health and wealth schemes, promising future prosperity for present tithes and offerings. In both cases, the future returns are lacking for most ordinary Africans.

3.6 Entanglement of three versions of Christianity in northern Ghana

The three phases of Christianity: mainline, AICs, and new charismatic, are entangled with one another in northern Ghana. All three phases continue to be present as three versions of Christianity. The three versions interpenetrate each other. The mainline version of Christianity carries the legacy of missionary-colonial Christianity. The African Independent Churches represent a post-colonial version of Christianity. The neo-Pentecostal version of Christianity works in concert with the neo-liberal and neo-colonial interests of the African state. Neo-Pentecostalism is the most popular version of Christianity and it puts social pressure on the other versions.

What do these interpenetrating versions of Christianity do with the translated Bible and how do they (re-)translate it, (re-)interpret it, re(-)write it,⁶⁸⁵ and so attempt to circumscribe its meaning and message in the 21st century?

3.6.1 Mainline versions of Christianity in the 21st century

Missionary-colonial Christianity uses a doctrinal catechetical approach to control the Bible's meaning. In missionary-colonial Christianity the translated Bible is mainly useful to help

⁶⁸³ Balcomb, "Counter-Modernism, the Primal Imagination and Development Theory: Shifting the Paradigm," 58.

⁶⁸⁴ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 12–13.

⁶⁸⁵ I insert the hyphen when I wish to communicate the struggle for life within a human practice or an era of time, in which the occasionally exploitative constraints of the practice in its period of time also mutually configure the human agents and their communities. See footnotes 42 and 558 above, and 715, below.

people who cannot understand European languages and cultures so they can begin to understand its message and cultural disposition. The translated Bible is understood to have the same content as the doctrine of missionary-colonial Christianity.⁶⁸⁶ This missionary-colonial translation practice understands translation as a stop gap to help less ‘educated’ people understand the missionary-colonial message. This strand of Christianity is still active in northern Ghana. African theologians in the mainline and missionary churches may resist this form of colonial translation by dipping into aspects of other paradigms: either African translation theology or new charismatic biblical theology.

I discuss African translation theology in detail in chapter four section 4.1 as part of the discussion on post-colonial translation. I raise it here because of its development as a historical Christian practice in Africa in both neo-colonial and post-colonial forms.⁶⁸⁷ The post-colonial form of translation theology was developed by the AICs as a form of religious practice. They used the local language Bible and pivoted away from Eurocentric religio-cultural assumptions towards African religio-cultural assumptions, as Sanneh and Bediako argue. As Dube shows, AICs were so creative in their appropriations of the Bible that even European attempts to plant ‘colonial bombs’ in the translated Bible could be defused—even when a word like ‘demon’ was translated with the word ‘ancestors.’

The second form of translation theology originates in missionary-colonial Christianity and dips into aspects of translation theology but is not willing to let go of its catechetical-doctrinal convictions. I will refer to this as a neo-colonial version of translation theology. Recalling Shembe’s parable, the neo-colonial version of translation theology is like the third son who for pragmatic reasons confesses the church’s exclusivist doctrine despite his convictions. For neo-colonial translation theology, the content of the Gospel with a capital

⁶⁸⁶ In reality, doctrinal content is difficult to control in translation. The meticulous process of ‘checking’ is mainly related to ‘consistency’ in key term usage, spelling, word differentiation, versification, etc.

⁶⁸⁷ “And while the colonial (and neo-colonial) form of ‘translation theology’ assumes that there is a singular sacred message in the Bible, the ‘Gospel’, the post-colonial form of ‘translation theology’ requires translation of the Bible in order to discern what the message or messages of the Bible might be. And the only way we can do this is to translate the Bible. The meanings of the Bible are not yet apparent. What we have so far are the partial meanings of the Bible. The original languages have had their partial say, and so too have other translated Bible languages, but others remain, and so we must wait for a fuller understanding of what the Bible says.” Gerald O. West, “On the Impossibility Necessity of Translation” (The Nida School of Translation Studies, Misano Adriatico, Italy, 2016), 12–13.

'G' is fixed.⁶⁸⁸ Salvation is only for those individuals who confess it with the prescribed missionary content. There are Euro-American missionaries and theologians, mainly from evangelical backgrounds, who dip into translation theology, promoting a neo-colonial form of translation theology in African contexts. In American evangelical circles, doctrinal content is controlled through claims to "inerrancy"⁶⁸⁹ and fixed notions of 'the Gospel.'

The AIC practice of post-colonial translation theology was articulated in theological language by African theologians from mainline churches like Lamin Sanneh and Kwame Bediako. Post-colonial translation theology argues that voices from all cultures must make their theological contributions before the ecumenical church can make a claim to understanding the universality of the gospel.⁶⁹⁰ Post-colonial translation theologians recognize significant continuity between the missionary message and African appropriations of that message, but they argue that the African soil makes a substantive contribution to the gospel. Sanneh writes, "the God of the Bible has preceded the missionary into the receptor-culture—so the

⁶⁸⁸ John Mbiti made a distinction between Christianity and the Gospel. Christianity "results from the encounter of the Gospel with any given local society." The Gospel is "God-given, eternal and does not change." Cited in Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 117. Elsewhere, Bediako argues Mbiti's theological program was too prescriptive. Bediako writes sympathetically of Mbiti, "Under constant flogging from a critical European public impatient with Africa, because it was largely without understanding on the continent, these and other pioneers of African theology saw it as their task to construct the prescribed theology. Yet in actual African Christian life, where the faith had to live, a deep apprehension of Jesus Christ had laid the foundations for African theology that, on discovery, can be seen to be the only valid basis for a tradition of academic theology." Bediako goes on to show that Mbiti explicitly recognized this 20 years later. Kwame Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa: History and Experience*, Theology in Africa Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 16, <http://www.amazon.com/Jesus-And-The-Gospel-Africa/dp/1570755426>.

⁶⁸⁹ "Africa was informed that the interpretation of the Bible was endangered. 'Liberal' forces were supposed to discredit the trustworthiness of Holy Scriptures. *Afroscope*, the journal of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa, which was founded in 1966, reported on 'inerrancy' conferences in the United States, 'inerrancy' being a kind of "fundamental of fundamentals." Sundkler and Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, 1026.

⁶⁹⁰ Michael Cronin argues for a critical universalism, despite post-structuralism's and post-modernism's suspicion of universal notions. Cronin writes, "In the context of travel and translation, it seems necessary to distinguish between *pathological universalism* and *critical universalism*. Pathological universalism is the translation movement that would end all translation. Everybody, everywhere is translated into the dominant language and culture. The universal is the universal projection of the language and values of a hegemonic nation or class. Language and cultural difference are asperities leveled out by a global translation process of homogenisation that seeks an increasingly rapid circulation of signs and images." Cronin, *Across the Lines*, 91.

missionary needs to discover Him in the new culture.”⁶⁹¹ Gerald West describes the post-colonial version of translation theology this way: we cannot claim to know what the gospel is, until all voices have spoken.⁶⁹² Again, Sanneh writes, “Bible translation has breached the walls of missionary seclusion: if God could dispense with European languages, converts could dispense with missionary hegemony.”⁶⁹³ West contends that “what the gospel is, is always contested precisely because post-colonial ‘others’ can and do speak (back).”⁶⁹⁴ West argues that South African Black Theology is the post-colonial African theology that addresses the notion of speaking back to missionary-colonial Christianity. I explore the concepts of ‘struggle’ and ‘contestation’ which come out of South African Black Theology in relation to translation theology in chapter 4.

Despite its missionary-colonial baggage, mainline Christianity still appeals to people in rural Ghana. Motivated by their faith mainline churches practice development which address the material needs of Ghanaian society, such as clean water, better sanitation, health care, and education. Mainline churches operate with what Balcomb calls a developmentalist model. This model perpetuates Europe as the ideal for development, where European nation states and their model of economic growth are projected as the ideal for all to emulate.⁶⁹⁵ Drawing on the claims of Ernest Gellner,⁶⁹⁶ Paul Gifford models a developmentalist approach when he promotes the notion of “getting to Denmark.”⁶⁹⁷ Denmark is perceived as the ideal state other states should emulate. This developmentalist approach is not unlike the missionary-colonial model of Christianity. In Ghana the mainline version of Christianity struggles to articulate a

⁶⁹¹ Lamin O. Sanneh, “The Horizontal and the Vertical in Mission: An African Perspective,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 7, no. 4 (1983): 166.

⁶⁹² West, *The Stolen Bible*, 241.

⁶⁹³ Lamin O. Sanneh, “Translations of the Bible and the Cultural Impulse,” in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible: Volume 4, From 1750 to the Present*, ed. John Riches (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 90.

⁶⁹⁴ West, *The Stolen Bible*, 241.

⁶⁹⁵ Balcomb, “Counter-Modernism, the Primal Imagination and Development Theory: Shifting the Paradigm,” 45.

⁶⁹⁶ Ernest Gellner, “The Importance of Being Modular,” in *Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison*, ed. John A Hall (Cambridge; Oxford: Polity Press, 1995), 32–55.

⁶⁹⁷ Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa*, 154.

connection between African spirituality and the social, political, and economic realities of life.⁶⁹⁸

On the other hand, Bediako argues, scholarly analysis should not freeze the mainline in its missionary-colonial era.

The distinctions between the historical churches, of missionary origin, and the independent or African instituted churches, have since become less meaningful, as features which were once thought to be characteristic of the latter have been found to be shared also by the former.⁶⁹⁹

Bediako argued that some of the characteristics of the AICs have become characteristics of the mainline churches of missionary origin. But some of those characteristics may also be neo-charismatic in nature, so rather than collapsing the distinction between these versions of Christianity, I find it useful to distinguish between the new Christianity and the AICs. By maintaining that distinction, my analysis finds the new Christianity has interpenetrated the mainline.⁷⁰⁰

Since the 1980s the largest influence on mainline churches has become the new charismatic also known as neo-Pentecostal churches. New Christianity appears to be the Christianity that mainline members want. Members may go to mainline churches by day, but at night they attend the new church revivals. In the 21st century, the new charismatic churches appear to be interpenetrating the mainline churches.

⁶⁹⁸ Perhaps the reason for this disconnect is the historic complicity of Euro-American mainline Christianity with the extractive practices that industrialization has depended upon for its profits. The subsequent raise in standards of living benefited the middle and upper-middle classes of Euro-American settlers—these are the classes that constitute much of mainline Christianity in Europe and European settler-colonial countries. I used the word ‘complicity’ because the raise in standards of living have only been shared with the elites of African society, excluding the African middle and peasant classes.

⁶⁹⁹ Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 66. Bediako continues, “The significance of the independents, therefore, has been that they pointed the direction in which broad sections of African Christianity were moving, and so testified to the existence of some generalised trends in the African response to the Christian faith in African terms.”

⁷⁰⁰ For the statistical data of the Ghana Evangelism Committee see footnote 638 above. Gifford, *African Christianity*, 62–63. For a theological analysis see Cephas Narh Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2006).

At the same time, some of the distinctive post-colonial features from the practices of the AICs are also interpenetrating the mainline churches. Kwame Bediako founded the Akrofi Christaller Institute to engage in scholarship from a Christian perspective.⁷⁰¹ Akrofi Christaller Institute was founded in the same physical space where the Basel mission was located in Akropong Ghana.⁷⁰² The Presbyterian Church of Ghana is the mainline church that inherited the missionary-colonial legacy of the Basel mission, discussed above in the first phase of Christianity in Ghana. However, while Bediako appreciated the example of faith set by the European ancestors in the faith, and especially appreciated their decision to translate the Bible into the vernacular,⁷⁰³ nevertheless, Bediako recognized the legacy Africans received from Western theology was sorely lacking. Bediako viewed Western theology as having an impoverished relationship with European ‘primal’ religions,⁷⁰⁴ and as being “syncretistic with Western culture.”⁷⁰⁵ As such Western theology “distorts the gospel.”⁷⁰⁶ In terms of translation, Tim Hartman makes Bediako's position clear, for Bediako “translating this distorted Western gospel is not sufficient for churches in the Global South. They must go

⁷⁰¹ Sara J Fretheim, *Kwame Bediako and African Christian Scholarship: Emerging Religious Discourse in Twentieth-Century Ghana* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2018), 148–90. Fretheim argues that the Akrofi Christaller Institute was Bediako’s magnum opus. In this sense the institution is a form of post-colonial experimental practice. Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, 1 xii, 31.

⁷⁰² Fretheim, *Kwame Bediako and African Christian Scholarship*, 154–56.

⁷⁰³ For ‘African translation theology’ the translation of the Bible claimed continuity between the widespread African belief in a Creator with the God of the Bible. “In contrast to what had happened in the earlier evangelization of Europe, in Africa, the God whose name had been hallowed in indigenous languages in the pre-Christian tradition was found to be the God of the Bible, in a way neither Zeus, nor Jupiter, nor Odin could be. Onyankopon, Olorun, Ngai, Nkulunkulu are the names of the God of the Father of Jesus Christ; Zeus, Jupiter, and Odin are not.” Bediako, *Jesus And The Gospel In Africa: History And Experience*, 16–17. For an in depth discussion of translating gendered names for God see chapter five section 5.1.1.

⁷⁰⁴ Evangelization in Europe “proceeded on a basis of substitution to such an extent that the primal traditions were virtually completely wiped out.” Kwame Bediako, “The Impact of the Bible in Africa,” in *On Their Way Rejoicing: The History and Role of the Bible in Africa*, ed. Ype Schaaf (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994), 248.

⁷⁰⁵ Hartman, *Theology After Colonization: Kwame Bediako, Karl Barth, and the Future of Theological Reflection*, 140.

⁷⁰⁶ Hartman, 140.

further.”⁷⁰⁷ Africans must engage “alternative sources to shape an African Christian identity. And Bediako believed these sources already reside in the heritage of African religions.”⁷⁰⁸

At Akrofi-Christaller the African Christian practices of the AICs are welcomed as African and Christian, but they are also reflected upon in a theological manner that has a relationship to scholarly dispositions associated with the academic study of religion.⁷⁰⁹ African religions—what Bediako referred to more generally as ‘primal’ religions—are seen as a religious partner of Christianity.⁷¹⁰ Scholars studying at the Akrofi Christaller Institute come from all the three phases of Christianity, breaking down barriers between these versions of Christianity, integrating what is useful for African social life, and setting aside that which does not bring life to the individual and the community.⁷¹¹ The socio-cultural practice at Akrofi-Christaller embodies the disposition of the AICs in the way it handles culture and uses the Bible for social healing.

3.6.2 The African Independent Churches in the 21st century

The second version of Christianity, the AICs, whose first members walked away from missionary-colonial Christianity, continue their traditions in rural areas of northern and southern Ghana. Prophets in the tradition of Prophet Harris were not afraid to confront the powers that be in spiritual-material terms, whether the hypocrisy of colonial authorities or “ontocratic”⁷¹² authorities in African society. However, in order to protect themselves from abuses from missionary-colonial Christianity and the state, many AICs for strategic reasons have maintained a kind of externally quietist approach to secular authorities. In recent years

⁷⁰⁷ Hartman, 140.

⁷⁰⁸ Hartman, 140.

⁷⁰⁹ Fretheim, *Kwame Bediako and African Christian Scholarship*, 160–61.

⁷¹⁰ Fretheim, 170–72.

⁷¹¹ “He [Bediako] notes that in African indigenous knowledge systems, knowledge is not the possession of an individual ‘but is held in trust by and for the community, for the common good and for meeting community needs.’” Fretheim, 163. Citing Kwame Bediako, “A New Era in Christian History—African Christianity as Representative Christianity,” *Journal of African Christian Thought* 9, no. 1 (June 2006): 6.

⁷¹² Kwame Bediako uses the term “ontocracy” to refer to spiritual-theological-political authorities rather than authorities who wield secular power and relegate the spiritual to the individual and private domain of life. Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 182; Kwame Bediako, *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience*, Theological Reflections From The South (Yaoundé, Cameroun; Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana: Editions Clé and Regnum Africa, 2000), 106, https://www.worldcat.org/title/jesus-in-africa-the-christian-gospel-in-african-history-and-experience/oclc/475564151&referer=brief_results.

members of AICs have been attracted to the neo-charismatic churches.⁷¹³ The neo-charismatic version of the prophet has overtaken the Harris model of the prophet. The very difficult economic situation in Ghana makes the majority of churches, including AICs, eager for outside assistance and engagement. Many AIC village churches in northern Ghana have ‘international’ attached to their church signboards to signal their attitude of “extraversion.”⁷¹⁴

The Bible reading practices of the AIC’s, highlighted across the African continent in section two of this chapter, were post-colonial before ‘postcoloniality’ became a buzzword.⁷¹⁵ AICs developed Bible reading practices such as the Semoya approach before scholars had articulated what ‘translation theology’ was. In AICs the Bible was ‘consumed’ and its dangerous colonizing aspects were defused and made useful for social healing.⁷¹⁶ The Semoya approach continues to develop itself as a post-colonial and feminist theology and addresses itself to African Christians. Furthermore, the vision of the Akrofi Christaller Institute and its articulation of a post-colonial translation theology is helping the practice of

⁷¹³ The Church of Pentecost, a historically Pentecostal church which preceded the neo-charismatic influx, has extended its presence to many rural communities by building large churches, and bringing pastors from rural areas in southern and central Ghana to the north. The neo-charismatic influence has significantly influenced the traditional Pentecostal churches theology. They possess internal capacities, administrative ability, and accountability which is attractive to Ghanaians.

⁷¹⁴ "For all the talk within African church circles of localisation, inculturation, Africanisation, or indigenisation, external links have become more important than ever. Through these links the churches have become a major, if not the greatest single, source of development assistance, money, employment and opportunity in Africa. These links – bringing ideas, status, power, structures, and resources – operate for different churches in different ways, at different levels." Gifford, *African Christianity*, 308.

⁷¹⁵ Postcolonial and postcoloniality are often written without the hyphen in American postcolonial studies. I remove the hyphen when explicitly referring to theoretical language or approaches developed in those scholarly circles. See also footnotes 42 and 685, above.

⁷¹⁶ "A Semoya framework, therefore, is a mode of reading that resists discrimination and articulates a reading of healing: healing of race and gender relations; of individuals, classes, and nations. It is an interpretative practice that seeks healing of relations by understanding the interconnectedness of things and people rather than their disconnectedness—and highlighting the need to keep the relationships affirming to all the involved parties." Dube Shomanah, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 192.

‘translation theology’⁷¹⁷ developed in the AICs interpenetrate the mainline churches and the new charismatic churches.

The AICs hermeneutics can be summarized as recognizing the power of the Bible, seizing the Bible, and then participating in the world of Bible in order to re-write it for the entangled present in a manner that does not divorce the spiritual from the material realities of African life. The Bible is “a thematic reservoir that shares significant resonance” with African contexts.⁷¹⁸ The Bible is used in African Independent Christianity as tool for bringing about social healing.⁷¹⁹ It is a tool for re-building community with the biblical ancestors.⁷²⁰

3.6.3 The new charismatic churches in the 21st century

The new charismatic churches have adopted some of the interpretative dispositions of the AICs, but rather than being ‘independent’ of foreign money, and focused on diagnosing local communal problems, the new churches in Accra emphasize and show off international connections, highlighting ostentatious wealth in the manner of international business elites. Over the past twenty years, in the rural towns of (northern) Ghana, the neo-charismatic churches have also established themselves, albeit in less ostentatious ways.

Many of the churches started in Accra studied by Gifford have established outposts in the rural communities south of the Gambaga escarpment.⁷²¹ Emerging prophets occasionally come through town healing people, casting out demons, and promising to help people achieve material wealth. Like the AICs, the new churches address the concrete material concerns of Ghanaian members, whose needs are like the supplicants of shrines.⁷²² The new churches use

⁷¹⁷ Bediako referred to the fundamental theological importance of theology in mother-tongues. Sometimes his project is called ‘mother-tongue theology.’ Bediako, *Jesus And The Gospel In Africa: History And Experience*, 58. Bediako also used the term ‘grassroots theology’ to describe the way ordinary Africans do theology using their translated Bibles as the Word of God. Bediako, 8.

⁷¹⁸ West, *The Stolen Bible*, 278.

⁷¹⁹ Dube Shomanah, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 192.

⁷²⁰ West, *The Stolen Bible*, 297. Prophet Harris’ hermeneutics of participation are focused on his own prophetic participation with biblical characters. Ordinary members participate with their prophets, who in turn take that participation into their experience with biblical characters. Do some AICs have a practice that opens up the possibility for ordinary members to ‘cross over’ and participate with biblical characters?

⁷²¹ The Komba communities connection with the new churches started in earnest through northerners who went to “the south” to farm in the Brong-Ahafo region near Techiman, and the Asante region near Ejura and Afram plains.

⁷²² Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufo of Northern Ghana*.

spiritual means to address the concerns of supplicants. Then the new prophets assert that they can speak the desired material blessing into existence. Those blessings can be blocked by the individual's lack of faith or the lack of morality of an ancestor. Blockages can be removed by powerful prayer, which is carried out for a price. However, the new churches do not address the systemic blockages to a better life caused by government policies, greed, and dysfunctional institutions. The new churches address the spiritual categories of Ghanaian individuals, but from an African point of view, they unnaturally separate the spiritual from the political and economic dimensions of the community's spiritual-material reality. This is largely due to their importation of an a-political, individualist, and moralist lens from North American charismatic theology, which works in concert with the allies of neo-liberal political and economic interests in African states.

3.6.4 Ideo-theological frameworks which partially circumscribe the translated Bible

Looking at the three phases of Christianity in Ghana together in terms of their significance for translating the Bible, each phase or version of Christianity uses a different framework for understanding what the Bible is, what its message is, and how it is to be used in the present. These ideo-theological⁷²³ frameworks influence what the translated Bible means for people. Ideo-theological frameworks are explicit or tacit agreements that attempt to circumscribe and limit the meaning of the translated Bible. I use the words 'attempt' and 'limit' because ideo-theological frameworks are partial and cannot actually circumscribe the infinite potential of the text as it encounters agentive readers in new contexts.

Another way of looking at ideo-theological frameworks takes the distinction between the Bible and the ideo-theological frames communities use to appropriate the Bible a step further. Ideo-theological frameworks can help individuals and communities effectively write and re-write the Bible, harnessing the Bible's power to communicate something specific for communities. Shembe used this language when he asked his community members, "What kind of Bible do you write?" Shembe's teachings included re-translating and re-writing the Bible. Shembe's community members also participated in re-writing the Bible as they wrote down their understandings of his authoritative teachings in their notebooks, and later in their

⁷²³ Draper, "African Contextual Hermeneutics: Readers, Readings, and Their Options between Text and Context"; Gerald O. West, "Accountable African Biblical Scholarship: Post-Colonial and Tri-Polar," *Canon & Culture*, 2016, 35–66; West, "African Biblical Scholarship as Post-Colonial, Tri-Polar, and a Site-of-Struggle."

hymnal, official teachings, and catechism.⁷²⁴ Gerald West provides a useful example of what he calls Shembe's "retelling or re-membering of the Judges 11 story."⁷²⁵ Looking at ideological appropriations of the Bible in this way suggests that all churches harness the power of the Bible. Using their ideological frameworks all of them effectively re-translate and re-interpret the Bible, calibrating it in a manner commensurate with their contemporary teachings. Some churches, like Ibandla LamaNazaretha, make their re-translations and re-interpretations explicit.

Each practice of Christianity receives the Bible and uses their ideological frameworks to help them understand the Bible. Those ideological frameworks help communities write and re-write the Bible. Colonial expressions of Christianity translate and write the Bible using missionary-colonial frameworks and ideals which African communities are expected to emulate. AICs receive the translated Bible and then re-translate⁷²⁶ and re-write it, using participatory hermeneutics in an African religio-cultural frame.

Neo-colonial practices of Christianity also rewrite the Bible reasserting colonial interests through the doctrine of prosperity. But neo-colonial Christianity is entangled with neo-indigenous African spirituality. The ideological frameworks of neo-indigenous communities help them re-translate⁷²⁷ and re-write the Bible in a manner that valorizes the spiritual-material activities of prosperity-seeking pastors and individuals, while inadvertently protecting the political and economic agendas of elites who control the African nation state. Neo-colonial Bible retranslation already knows the meaning before it communicates its message of prosperity and/or eternal life.

⁷²⁴ "The Nazarite Catechism", compiled by Petros Dhlomo consists of two parts. Part one contains "Material Attributable to the Prophet Isaiah Shembe" and part two contains "Material Attributable to the 'Revived Law' of Johannes Galilee Shembe", who led the church after Isaiah Shembe's death, from 1936 until his death in 1977." West, *The Stolen Bible*, 298–99.

⁷²⁵ West offers a table that compares a detailed re-membering of Judges 11:30-40 with Shembe's version, the 1893 Ibaible eliNgcwele (Holy Bible) that Shembe would have used. And a fairly literal English back-translation to allow a comparison between Shembe's version and the translated Bible he read. West, 303–4.

⁷²⁶ I use the hyphen to signal the tensive struggle involved in the mutual configuration that takes place in emancipatory translation processes. See footnote 685.

⁷²⁷ I use the hyphen to signal there is a struggle for life in neo-indigenous re-translations, but neo-indigenous African assertions of African spirituality are largely circumscribed by theological individualism and that ends up serving elite neo-colonial interests that covertly translate and retranslate for subjugation and colonization.

Post-colonial practices of Christianity re-interpret the Bible from the perspectives of ordinary communities in the present who live on the peripheries of the world economic system. They re-translate when they participate with the biblical narratives, using their African religio-cultural worldviews. They may also choose to re-write parts of the Bible as part of the process of appropriating of the Bible. They may choose to publish their re-writings and re-translations of biblical texts as part of their religio-cultural and political-economic social project.

By way of summary, let me review the ideo-theological frameworks for translation and re-translation in a loose temporal order. The ideo-theological framework of missionary-colonial Christianity translated the Bible to communicate the church's doctrine to African communities. From the perspective of missionary-colonial Christianity, the biblical narratives illustrate the doctrine of the church, which everyone needs to understand in order to belong and to be saved. God has laid down principles in the Bible that the church has discerned, and that are to be applied by present day disciples. The Bible was translated and is intended to be interpreted in a manner that supports that doctrine and those principles. Many missionaries preferred a version of missionary-colonial translation which found some good in African traditions. These missionaries came from rural and agrarian backgrounds that were disappearing in European society due to the impacts of industrial capitalism. They sought to protect and preserve patriarchal and pre-Enlightenment practices in African life in a manner that fit within the broader influence of capitalism.

To illustrate Mbembe's notion of entanglement, I argue that missionary-colonial Christianity persists in the post-colonial neo-colonial era. After Ghanaian independence in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, missionary-colonial translation persists through the activities of evangelical missionary initiated Bible translation and missionary initiated Christianity. It also persists in a different way through the developmentalist approaches of NGOs.

The ideo-theological framework of the AICs governed the way they received the translated Bible from missionary-colonial Christianity. The frameworks of African religion and culture alerted them to the Bible's power and motivated them to take hold of the translated Bible. In order to appropriate the Bible's power, they had to get away from the missionary-colonial controls whose teachings overly circumscribed the Bible. Once in their own spaces, Africans in AICs were able to respond to the gospel they perceived in the Bible rather than the

missionary-colonial articulations of the gospel. They also began to use the Bible in ways that were intuitive within their African religious framework. They used the Bible as a ‘divining set,’ as Dube described. This action defused the translated Bible, preventing it from doing the damage written into it by missionary-colonial Christianity. The AICs’ ideo-theological framework prompted them to use the Bible positively for the social healing of African communities that had been abused by the religious, political, and economic practices of the missionary-colonial system. The purpose of using the Bible was to bring life to the community’s spiritual-social problems. As part of their problem-solving process, the prophets and prophetic communities of the AICs participated within the Bible’s life world and their own life world. They re-translated biblical texts by getting inside of them. They explored trajectories and possibilities initiated from the narrative world of the Bible in their contemporary world. Emergent patterns were discerned and put into creative practice (including laws) for the collective social healing and re-building of African communities using a moral framework. These emergent patterns were taught as laws, and in some cases, they were written down with the emergent authority of the Bible for a community seeking to live with integrity and dignity. The AICs’ ideo-theological frameworks ultimately helped them to re-translate and re-write the Bible in a manner that was life-giving for their community.

In response to the AICs’ mode of emancipatory post-colonial re-translation, missionary-colonial (re-)translation has attempted to reassert itself through evangelicalism’s Christian missionary work in Ghana and through mainline developmentalist approaches to the secular mission of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). As an example of entanglement, missionary-colonial Christianity persists in post-colonial neo-colonial time expressing itself through evangelical theology. Evangelicalism was received as dry and somewhat stale by independent Africans. In response, like some of their 19th century predecessors, some contemporary evangelical scholars teaching a doctrine formed in Europe and North America dip into African traditions in an attempt to relate to and recover patriarchal and ‘biblical’ aspects of African culture as a preparation for the evangelical gospel. African traditions are acceptable as they lead people along the pathway of progress toward missionary-colonial Christianity’s more enlightened understanding of truth.⁷²⁸ The preceding description is what I am called the neo-colonial version of ‘African translation theology’ as described in section

⁷²⁸ Eric Anum cites the Africanist Okot p’Bitek who “suggests the African religions are valuable in their own right and do not need to be compared. They are more than *praeparatio evangelica*.” Anum, “Comparative Readings of the Bible in Africa,” 469–70. See p’Bitek, *African Religions in Western Scholarship*, 80.

3.6.1 above. I will describe the post-colonial version of ‘African translation theology’ in chapter four section 4.1 below.

The developmentalist approach of Eurocentric mainline Christianity treats African traditions in a similarly colonial fashion as evangelical missionary-colonial Christianity. From the developmentalist perspective, all religions are viewed as making progress toward Eurocentric and Enlightenment notions of social progress. Within the developmentalist approach the Bible can be viewed as a kind of societal primer that illustrates how communities can progress over time toward greater and greater organization by emulating the blueprint of European societies and following the principles of the Enlightenment. From the perspective of progress toward Eurocentrically determined truth, whether the blueprint of the evangelical ‘Gospel’ or the blueprint of the Enlightenment ‘Gospel,’ missionary-colonial translation and secular developmentalist translation operate in similarly colonial ways.

The new charismatic churches have responded to missionary-colonial Christianity’s translation of the Bible and the AICs’ response of re-translating and re-writing the Bible, by focusing on individual spiritual-social problem-solving, while mimicking the world-economic system’s practice of wealth extraction in the African church. The stale doctrinal nature of missionary-colonial Christianity has been co-opted by linking itself to indigenous African religio-cultural concerns, orienting them in a way that works well with the policies of neo-liberalism at work in the African state. The new Christian churches practice a neo-colonial theology that has become entangled with neo-indigenous Christianity. In the new Christianity the Bible promises prosperity for believers as much or more than it promises eternal life, and the biblical narratives are referenced to reinforce the realization of the prosperity doctrine in each individual life. New Christianity addresses the orientation of Africans toward the spiritual causation of their social and material problems, always diagnosing the problem using an individualist and moralist frame that seeks to operate comfortably within the limitations of the neo-liberal economy. In other words, if an individual is not experiencing prosperity, the cause is diagnosed to be spiritual on the individual spiritual-material level, not on the collective spiritual-material level. Ultimately the neo-liberal economic system and the state’s complicity with that system is cordoned off and absolved from its role in spiritual-social causation of individual and collective suffering. The church supports the state as long as the state leaves the individual’s moral life in the hands of the church to address. The participatory aspect of this hermeneutic approach to retranslation

and rewriting the Bible are limited in scope and purpose to support and protect the extractive practices of church and state.

In the midst of these entangled Christianities, how can scholars and ordinary people work together to embody post-colonial practices of translation theology in 21st century Ghana? How do scholars trained in Euro-American ways of thinking avoid falling into promoting Eurocentric standards, ideals, and interests for translation practice? A key for a post-colonial practice of translation theology is to privilege the perspectives of ordinary Africans who remain on the outside of the world's economic and political systems.⁷²⁹ Post-colonial translation theology can take a cue from the practice of the early prophets of the AICs who were wary of valorizing the perspectives of elites and aspiring elites in their communities. Scholars and practitioners of post-colonial translation theology must engage the sectors of African communities that the prophets of the AICs engaged when they were first forming their 'other' than imperial African communities. Post-colonial translation theology must epistemologically privilege the bodies of ordinary Africans on the peripheries of the world economic system.

3.7 Conclusion: Towards (re-)translating for a better life in post-colonial northern Ghana

In chapter one I introduced a series of tools to uncover a diversity of translational practices in the pre-colonial life world. Using anthropological, religious, folkloric, and feminist tools, I uncovered and described several pre-colonial translation practices. Divination was a key pre-colonial translation practice, which I picked up in this chapter's discussion of AICs using the Bible as a "divining set."

In chapter two I argued that colonial translation selected certain practices and perspectives from the pre-colonial life world and transformed those practices through colonial acts of translation. The colonial translation of invasion transformed a pre-colonial performance genre of one sector of society into written historiography. In the process, over time colonial translation turned a multi-voiced perspectival discourse of many genres performed by different sectors of society into what appeared to be a timeless univocal standard history applicable across local contexts. The social perspective of princes and chiefs became the standard perspective used to write history and customary law for all social groups inside a certain customary container, while the elite British perspective ruled outside customary

⁷²⁹ I am reminded of Bediako's term referred to above as "grassroots theology."

containers. Colonial translation ultimately served the invasive and extractive interests of the world economic system.

In chapter three I have shown how enshrining a singular perspective in translation was also assumed by missionary-colonial Christianity in their doctrinal approach to translation. I also argued that the developmentalist form of secular Christianity and the evangelical form of missionary-colonialism mimic the modality of 19th century missionary-colonial translation. Neo-charismatic Christianity employs a neo-colonial approach to translation in that it mimics the purpose of missionary-colonial translation but successfully supplements it with a focus on the African spiritual world. Neo-colonial translation rewrites the Bible in a doctrinal fashion, focusing on the doctrine of prosperity, and jettisoning anything in tradition that does not fit the new order. Neo-colonial translation preserves and validates the coalition of interests that operate the controls of the world economic system in African contexts. I also argued each of these translation practices perpetuates a kind of Western influenced dichotomy of the spiritual and the material, whereas a post-colonial translation practice integrates the spiritual and material domains for the purpose of communal healing.

I argued Christianity emerged in West Africa in three phases: colonial, post-colonial, and neo-colonial. These three phases have become entangled in the present as three versions of Christianity: mainline and evangelical, AICs, and new charismatic. The new charismatic version of Christianity is currently the strongest socially and most acceptable politically as it imitates the systemic practices of neo-liberal capitalism, interpreting material problems on an individualist and moral plane. The mainline developmentalist version of Christianity is the strongest in terms of economic development. But it faces two problems. First, Gifford's research indicates that the practices of the new charismatic Christianity are more appealing to the average Ghanaian. Second, many of the mainline development projects are having a difficult time achieving their development goals, even when African constituents agree to them. The developmentalist approach does not know how to engage with African religiosity in a post-colonial fashion. The AICs practice a hermeneutic of social healing, but they struggle to articulate their prophetic practice of re-translating for social healing in the present, given the pressures of the developmentalist version of Christianity on one hand and the new Christianity on the other.

Each of these versions of Christianity circumscribes the translated Bible with its teachings. But none of them are able to fully control the potential of the Bible. The missionary version

of Christianity originally wrote its Pietist doctrines into the translated Bible using an analogical and doctrinal hermeneutic. The AICs defused what was harmful in the Bible translated by missionary-colonial Christianity by circumscribing the Bible with indigenous practices of divination for social healing. The AIC prophets seized the translated Bible and engaged in re-translating the Bible by participating with biblical characters and events in a manner that continued the life-giving trajectories of the narratives for their community in the present. The community of believers participated in the prophet's hermeneutics by putting the prophet's teachings into communal practice. Contemporary communal practice was established by harnessing the power of the Bible, using it for social healing. To varying degrees, they engaged in re-translating and re-writing it for contemporary application.

The developmentalist version of colonial Christianity in Ghana rewrites the Bible within the secular-doctrinal framework of the Enlightenment. Africans are encouraged to imitate the processes of Western nations, the principles of which are evident in developmentalist interpretations of biblical history. Similarly, the contemporary evangelical missionary-colonial version of translation dips into African culture as preparation for the full doctrinal truth of the evangelically defined and translated 'Gospel.'

The new charismatic churches have adapted the missionary-colonial approach, reducing the doctrine of the church to the teaching of prosperity. They rewrite the Bible addressing the perceived spiritual causes of people's social problems, but in a way that fits with the neo-liberal political and economic practices of the African state.

Post-colonial 'translation theology' is inspired by the AICs and as such re-writes the Bible for a more vital expression of African community, serving those groups marginalized by religious, political, and economic systems. In the post-colonial version of translation theology, the content of the Bible's gospel message remains open until voices from all sectors of society have spoken. And the spiritual and the material are held together in tension.

In chapter four, I develop an approach to post-colonial re-translation that embraces entanglement inherent within post-colonial time in the contested space of the northern Ghanaian context south of the Gambaga escarpment. I adapt an approach to re-translating and re-writing biblical texts that incorporates the critical study of the Bible as ordinary Africans from marginalized sectors of society address African problems using the holistic spiritual-social-material framework that African worldviews assume. I intend to avoid presuming a North American or European ideal for African communities to emulate as they re-translate

the Bible. I argue that post-colonial practices of translation theology must continue to embrace the holistic prophetic impulse of the AICs. Post-colonial African translation theology must seek to re-build African communities being ravaged by neo-colonial, neo-liberal practices of the African state by engaging with the many groups who are being marginalized by dominant economic and political practices and opening up space for them to inhabit the life-giving trajectories they find in biblical texts and life worlds.

The case study in chapter four explores re-translating biblical texts with people living with chronic conditions for a better life in African community. Chapter four engages in re-translating from the perspective of Africans living with disabilities as an alternative to the neo-colonial health and wealth gospel on the one hand, and the developmentalist gospel on the other. The case study in chapter five explores young women in school and vocational training as re-translators in dialogue with other sectors of society. Chapter five addresses re-translating in dialogue with African women's theologies. In chapter six I explore re-translating with groups in ethnic conflict as an alternative to serving the patrimonial interests of local and national elites.

4 Chapter 4 Translating and re-translating bodies in post-colonial northern Ghana

The first three chapters of this thesis have been historical, setting the context of present-day northern Ghana. Translation products do not present themselves in this (post-colonial neo-colonial) present in a context that is a blank slate. The contextual history offers a multiplicity of simultaneous possibilities with which contemporary (re-)translations must contend.

Chapter one offered an anthropological approach and revealed that the ‘life world’ of indigenous pre-colonial time was not (and is not) an uncontested time for African communities. Indigenous pre-colonial time was an era of many indigenous conversations with many layers and possibilities. How is that multi-layered past experienced in the present? Which layers and trajectories are emphasized in contemporary translations and re-translations? Which are downplayed in the present “time of existence and experience, the time entanglement”?⁷³⁰

Chapter two focused on the political and economic aspects of translation. It argued that colonial era translation latched onto certain trajectories within the indigenous pre-colonial life world and re-presented those trajectories in a way that prefigured and justified colonial invasion and political occupation. Colonial translation created alliances with local elites and prepared the way for ongoing neo-colonial practices of extraction after political occupation ended.

Chapter three turned to the substance of this thesis, theological translation, focusing on the history of Christianity in Ghana and the practices of translating and re-translating the Bible. The three phases of Christianity and their associated practices of translation and re-translation all seek to circumscribe *what* the Bible means and *how* the Bible means in the present. If a group engages in (re-)translating a powerful text like the Bible, whether that group recognizes it or not, that Bible translation process will be circumscribed by active interpretative traditions ready to translate and re-translate the Bible. Each of those traditions creates a relationship with spiritual-political forces which seek to construct and constrain African social life.

I am now moving into the re-constructive section of this thesis. Given the realities of the present time of entanglement, how might African communities seize the Bible, and re-make it

⁷³⁰ Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 16.

with post-colonial translation practices that are life-giving for African society, particularly for those on the margins?

In this chapter I discuss ‘experimental practices’ of post-colonial translation.⁷³¹ When Africans “consume” the translated Bible, even with the tools of post-colonial translation theology, they risk of contributing to their own subordination.⁷³² So that this risk is taken with a greater recognition of its inherent dangers, I explore translation as a site of struggle in both its sites of production and its sites of reception as discussed in African translation theology in dialogue with South African Black Theology. I take the notion of translation as a site of struggle into ‘translation studies’ using an approach called Skopos theory, emphasizing its notion of purposes that govern translation decisions. I show how Skopos theory can be reworked to make it more useful for post-colonial African contexts who have received the Bible through missionary-colonial translation. I move from a focus on purpose in translation to explore the ways translation studies scholars have described the governing ‘logics’ for communities who desire to re(-)translate texts. I settle on the post-colonial logic of liberation to govern both the purpose and the process of re-translating. Drawing on Achille Mbembe’s notion of entangled time, and Michel Foucault’s concept of heterotopic space, I recognize the limitations of a translator’s embodied entanglements, and the limits of a translator’s individual agency. Their concepts help us understand how human bodies are differently entangled with biblical narratives across eras and spaces. When groups who are marginalized in society become agents who re-translate biblical texts, they can calibrate their acts of translation to chart a pathway across entangled time and heterotopic space towards liberation. In this chapter’s case study, I explore how people living with disabilities in northern Ghana move from being ‘translated’ by traditional, developmentalist, and health and wealth theologies to being agents who re-translate Job 2:7-10, Job 3, and Job 42:7-11. Motivated by an emancipatory purpose and using an emancipatory process, people living with disabilities rework the logics of re-translation in ways which are life-giving for them. In so doing, translation’s sites of production and its sites of reception are blurred. Through Contextual Bible Study people living with disabilities experiment with crossing time and space to participate with Job in offering life-giving visions of social progress. Contextual Bible Study seeks to become a space of increasingly shared control, such that people living

⁷³¹ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, 1:xii, 31–32.

⁷³² Comaroff and Comaroff, 1:xii.

with disabilities become the agents of their own project of liberation. The chapter concludes with a reflection on how post-colonial re-translation continues the trajectory initiated by the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, who argued that their theological approach which privileges the praxis of the poor as a starting point for theology and biblical interpretation constitutes an irruption in theological discourse that powerfully responds to the oppressive neo-colonial political and economic order.

4.1 Translation theology in post-colonial dialogue

In chapter 3 I introduced translation theology in relation to its origin as praxis in African Independent Churches. Now I discuss ‘translation theology’ in dialogue with South African Black Theology as two post-colonial African theologies.

Writing in the 1990s, after the liberation of South Africa, and after the fall of the Soviet Union, Tinyiko Maluleke argued that the various branches of African theology, that is theology done by Africans in/with African churches and communities, were coming closer together. Maluleke surveyed some of the emerging theological models being practiced in Africa, highlighting “translation theology” as an innovative and far-reaching proposal within African theology with potential to carry African theology as a practice into the 21st century.⁷³³ Maluleke surveyed the proposals of Lamin Sanneh and Kwame Bediako and engaged their proposals with his concerns.⁷³⁴ In so doing, Maluleke recognized that history had driven formerly distant discourses closer together; ‘African Theology’ and ‘South African Black Theology’ are both post-colonial African theologies.⁷³⁵ Maluleke classifies translation theology as a sub-genre of African theology. In this chapter I sustain a methodological dialogue about translation using the insights of both translation theology and South African Black Theology.

⁷³³ Maluleke, “Half a Century of African Christian Theologies: Elements of the Emerging Agenda for the Twenty-First Century,” 19.

⁷³⁴ Tinyiko S. Maluleke, “Black and African Theologies in the New World Order A Time to Drink from Our Own Wells,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 96 (November 1996): 3–19.

⁷³⁵ “With the changing ideological map of the world and the sweeping changes on the African continent itself, the agendas of what has been termed “African theologies of inculturation” as opposed to “African theologies of liberation” plus South African Black theology are moving closer together.” Maluleke, “Half a Century of African Christian Theologies: Elements of the Emerging Agenda for the Twenty-First Century,” 16. For an argument for African inculturation and liberation hermeneutics as post-colonial see West, “African Biblical Scholarship as Post-Colonial, Tri-Polar, and a Site-of-Struggle,” 247.

To remind the reader of the claims of African translation theology, I return to a quote by Sanneh referenced in chapter three section 3.2.3. Sanneh argued of missionary-initiated Bible translation, “When one translates, it is like pulling the trigger of a loaded gun: the translator cannot recall the hurtling bullet. Translation thus activates a process that will supersede the original intention of the translator.”⁷³⁶

The process that translation activates for Sanneh is African religious revitalization, that is the revitalization of African religions rooted in language and embodied practices which preceded the missionary presence and proclamation of the gospel message.⁷³⁷ The original intention of the translator, which Sanneh says is superseded in translation, includes the intention of the missionaries to colonize Africans into European missionary-colonial religion.

Sanneh’s argument is based on an axiom familiar to all students of anthropology: language and culture are integrally linked. Sanneh takes this observation further, arguing language, culture, and religion are so intertwined that simply to translate a religious text using the vernacular language valorizes African religious sensibilities.⁷³⁸ “Missionary adoption of the vernacular, therefore, was tantamount to adopting indigenous cultural criteria for the message...”⁷³⁹ Kwame Bediako expanded on this link, focusing on the religious aspects that are inherently part of ‘primal’ language and culture by drawing on Harold Turner’s characteristics of ‘primal’ religions. Turner characterizes the primal worldview with six

⁷³⁶ Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 53.

⁷³⁷ “... the God whom the missionary came to serve had actually preceded him or her in the field and that to discover His true identity the missionary would have to delve deep into the local culture. It is the hidden reality of this divine presence that both validates external mission and requires translation as a sine qua non of witness. Thus the central categories of Christian theology—God, creation, Jesus Christ, and history (“the world”)—are transposed into their local equivalents, suggesting that Christianity had been adequately anticipated.” Sanneh, “The Horizontal and the Vertical in Mission,” 166.

⁷³⁸ “The problematic relation of Christianity to culture hinges on the necessity for the message to assume the specific terms of its context and the equal necessity for it to be opposed to the normative idealization that leads to particularism. Christianity is parallel to culture, but is not completely proportion to it. The religion is not culture, but it is not other than culture.” Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 53.

⁷³⁹ Sanneh, 3. Gerald West observes Sanneh’s argument has two important dimensions. First, Africans are agents who can use the translated Bible to recover primal religious practices. Second, Africans are agents who can bring their own questions to the Bible and interpret the Bible using the particularities their language, culture, and historical experience offers. West takes Sanneh’s argument further to explore how Africans use their vernacular Bibles and how, beginning with translation, Africans alter their Bibles. West, *The Stolen Bible*, 242–43.

features: a sense of kinship with nature, a sense of humanity's creaturehood, a recognition of the spiritual world of powers or beings more powerful than humanity, an understanding that humans can enter into a relationship with the benevolent spirit-world and share in its blessings including protection from evil forces, a belief in the reality of an afterlife, and a conviction that there is no sharp dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual.⁷⁴⁰ Bediako observed that African religious worldviews and biblical worldviews are both steeped in the underlying assumptions of 'primal' religions.

In other words, in post-colonial translation theology both the content of the gospel's message and the "shape" of the gospel⁷⁴¹ must be discerned by African hearers in African languages using their religio-cultural categories and their own experience of what constitutes good news. (I described how African slaves and former slaves heard the gospel using their own cultural categories in chapter three section 3.2.4 above. I also distinguished a neo-colonial version of translation theology from a post-colonial version of translation theology in section 3.6.1 above.) Both Sanneh and Bediako employ a radical hermeneutic of reception⁷⁴² that ultimately places all vernacular languages and cultures, including Greek and Hebrew languages and cultures, on substantially equal epistemological footing.⁷⁴³ All languages offer partial pictures in their articulations of what the 'gospel' is and thus African voices and bodies are crucial for articulating and discerning what the gospel is in its fullness.⁷⁴⁴

⁷⁴⁰ Bediako, *Jesus And The Gospel In Africa: History And Experience*, 87–88.

⁷⁴¹ Albert Nolan, *God in South Africa: The Challenge of the Gospel* (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1988), 14–17. Nolan argues that the content of the gospel message is contextually dependent, but the shape of the message as good news for poor and marginalized sectors of society persists across contexts.

⁷⁴² Gerald O. West, "The Bible and/as the Lynching Tree - A South African Tribute to James H. Cone," *Missionalia* 46 (2018): 236–54.

⁷⁴³ Bediako grounds his notion of translation in the incarnation and arguing, "For the Incarnation, whereby 'the fullest divine communication has reached beyond the forms of human words into the human form itself,' is also translation, thus rendering all translation of the Word of the Lord into whatever language essentially and substantially equal." Kwame Bediako, "Biblical Exegesis in the African Context - the Factor and Impact of the Translated Scriptures," *Journal of African Christian Thought* 6, no. 1 (June 2003): 17.

⁷⁴⁴ West, "On the Impossibility Necessity of Translation," 13.

For Sanneh, the missionary act of translating initiated a trajectory, that unknown to the missionaries, inevitably and inexorably undermined missionary-colonial religion.⁷⁴⁵ Sanneh writes, “the instrument that enabled local criticism [of Western presupposition] to take root and flourish was the translation machinery that mission itself had put in place.”⁷⁴⁶

While Maluleke appreciates the potential of translation theology to contribute to a larger African theological project, he is also critical of how African translation theology⁷⁴⁷ has been used by scholars to imply that translation somehow magically delinks Christianity from colonialism.⁷⁴⁸ For Maluleke, missionary translation is an ambiguous tool that must be intentionally used (and sometimes subverted) to facilitate the inculturation of Christianity and the Bible.⁷⁴⁹ Maluleke refers to inculturation of Christianity as Africanization. Africanization is a process with many possible outcomes. What kind of Africanization will translation contribute to constructing? Maluleke argues that Africanization must be “an inclusive process driven by the poorest of the poor in Africa.”⁷⁵⁰

⁷⁴⁵ A similar long-term argument which draws on Sanneh’s insight has been made by the late Steve de Gruchy. 2007 was the 150th anniversary of the Setswana Bible, initiated and translated in Kuruman by missionary-colonizer Robert Moffat. Moffat was the perfect representative of missionary-colonial Christianity, which imagined its mission as unidirectional from the center London to the periphery Kuruman. De Gruchy argues that the translation and printing of the Bible in Kuruman which Moffat participated in was the pinnacle of missionary-colonial work and at the same time translation work like Moffat’s repeated in many contexts over time turned the tide of the London Missionary Society such that 150 years later it has become a sincerely post-colonial mission society. Steve De Gruchy, “Reversing the Biblical Tide: What Kuruman Teaches London about Mission in a Post-Colonial Era,” *Acta Theologica Supplementum* 12 (2009): 49, 60.

⁷⁴⁶ Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 3.

⁷⁴⁷ African translation theology was initially articulated by Sanneh. It was theologically framed by Kwame Bediako, and it was extended into theological and historical project by Ogbu Kalu.

⁷⁴⁸ Maluleke, “Black and African Theologies in the New World Order A Time to Drink from Our Own Wells,” 9. “The very fact that we can speak of orthodoxy in Christian theology is proof that the translation logic can be arrested – for centuries at least.” Maluleke is concerned with translation theology’s hesitancy to distinguish the Bible from the word of God.

⁷⁴⁹ “While the gospel may indeed be eminently translatable, human intervention can affect the pace and quality of such translation—even arresting it into all sorts of orthodoxies.” Maluleke, “Half a Century of African Christian Theologies: Elements of the Emerging Agenda for the Twenty-First Century,” 20.

⁷⁵⁰ Tinyiko S. Maluleke, “The Africanization of Theological Education : Does Theological Education Equip You to Help Your Sister?,” in *Inculturation and Postcolonial Discourse in African Theology*, ed. Edward P. Antonio, *Society and Politics in Africa*, v. 14 (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 71. In a world where global

The difference between Maluleke's and Sanneh's perspectives can be viewed in different ways. Their differences could be viewed as different uses of translation as a metaphor for inculturation.⁷⁵¹ As referenced above, their differences could be analyzed in terms of employing a radical hermeneutic of reception as compared to a radical hermeneutic of production.⁷⁵² Jean and John Comaroff provide a third option that nuances the relationship between Christianity, modernity, and colonialism. How entangled were they? Can they be pulled apart? The Comaroffs describe the relationship between Christianity and colonialism as inherently entangled in the dialectics of modernity.⁷⁵³

In our view, it [colonialism] is always to be understood, *at once*, as economic and cultural, political and symbolic, general and particular. Indeed, colonialism was intrinsic to the rise of modernity in Europe, itself a historical movement whose universalizing ethos was indissolubly material and moral, secular and spiritual.⁷⁵⁴

From the perspective of entanglement, Maluleke is right. We cannot easily extract Christianity from colonialism. But Sanneh is also right in calling for greater nuance than boiling historical data down to the colonizer/colonized binary. My own study must take note of the dangers of reducing everything to dualistic contrasts, such as invader and invaded, a tendency which characterizes colonial discourse.⁷⁵⁵

capitalism has reached all corners of the globe, Africanization means a lot of things, not all of them are liberating for the African masses.

⁷⁵¹ "Translation in this sense is much more than a technical discipline, it is a metaphor for forms of inculturation." Gerald O. West, "Mapping African Biblical Interpretation: A Tentative Sketch," in *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends*, ed. Gerald O. West and Musa W. Dube (Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 2000), 46. The problem from Maluleke's view might be understood to be an overapplication of the metaphor, as if once translation is employed as a strategy of inculturation, all the work of inculturation necessarily follows.

⁷⁵² This analysis more aptly fits a comparison between Sanneh's translation theology hermeneutics and the hermeneutics of Itumeleng Mosala. For a comparison of Mosala's hermeneutics with James Cone's see West, "The Bible and/as the Lynching Tree - A South African Tribute to James H. Cone."

⁷⁵³ West, "African Biblical Scholarship as Post-Colonial, Tri-Polar, and a Site-of-Struggle," 245.

⁷⁵⁴ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*, 2:409.

⁷⁵⁵ "And yet, for all the tangled composition of colonial worlds, their own historical dynamics conduced to imaginative simplification, to the objectification of stark, irreducible contrasts....ruler and ruled, white and

4.1.1 Translation as a site of struggle

Both Sanneh and Maluleke recognize that translation involves a variety of agents acting with a mix of intentions at the translated Bible's sites of production and reception. If that is so, then using a term from South African Black Theology, translation is a "site of struggle."⁷⁵⁶

One of the leading theologians of South African Black Theology in what Gerald West calls the second phase⁷⁵⁷ of Black Theology was Itumeleng Mosala. Mosala argued that each transmission of the biblical text passes on some of the struggles from earlier transmissions of the text.⁷⁵⁸ Mosala's emphasis was on sites of production. The translation theology debate insists that colonizing intentions at the sites of Bible translation production can be undermined – at least in part – by the method of translation, and especially by African agents pressing the religious and cultural logic of translation theology in the sites of the translated Bible's reception.⁷⁵⁹ I argue that post-colonial translators who desire to participate in Sanneh's vision of translation theology as African cultural and religious revitalization can more effectively participate in that vision through a greater awareness of translation as a site of struggle in translation's sites of production and reception. In this way I am trying to incorporate both Sanneh's and Maluleke's concerns.

black, modernity and tradition, law and custom, European and *non*-European, capitalism and its antithesis." Comaroff and Comaroff, 2:25.

⁷⁵⁶ Itumeleng J. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1989), 185.

⁷⁵⁷ Gerald West maps South African Black Theology as developing in four phases. West, *The Stolen Bible*, 318–62. The first phase took place during the struggle against apartheid. It is characterized by a hermeneutics of trust in the God of liberation whose desire for liberation is relatively clear in the Bible. The second phase also took place toward the latter part of the apartheid era. It privileges the perspective of the Black working class and rural peasantry, and reads the Bible with a hermeneutics of suspicion. The third phase, of which Tinyiko Maluleke is a part, took place after liberation from apartheid. The perspectives of the Black peasant and working classes continue to be privileged. Culture and African religions are foregrounded in this phase. The fourth phase of Black Theology takes place in the post-colonial state. The issue of social class comes back into focus in this phase and joins African culture and African women's theologies.

⁷⁵⁸ Mosala argued that the discipline of biblical studies has long asserted that texts embody their prior sites of production in what is known as redaction criticism. Mosala added an overtly ideological dimension to redaction criticism both in the past and in the present. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa*, 32, 101.

⁷⁵⁹ Translation also embeds struggles from earlier sites of the Bible's re-production and reception, which translators and communities may or may not perceive. Briggs, "Contested Mobilities," 287.

4.1.2 Skopos theory and translation with many intentions

To help make this argument within the discipline of translation studies, I turn to Skopos theory. While Skopos theory is perhaps not the best tool for an African post-colonial approach to translation, I choose it significantly because of its growing popularity in Bible translation circles. I describe Skopos theory and Bible translation in the subsequent subsection. In this subsection I focus on Skopos theory as an approach within translation studies. Skopos theory's focus on purpose and intentional action makes it useful for me in the discussion of the entanglement of neo-colonial and post-colonial intentions and actions in post-colonial Bible translation.

Skopos theory is part of the functionalist school of translation studies, and even though many of its proponents argue in a manner that sounds "positivist and prescriptive,"⁷⁶⁰ translation studies scholar Maria Tymoczko argues that "most functionalists have moved away from strictly prescriptive approaches, valorizing the premise that *positionality* and purpose drive the strategy of translation."⁷⁶¹

Skopos theory distinguishes a variety of translation roles in a translation project, such as: initiator, text commissioner, translator, source-text producer, target-text receiver, target-text user. Skopos theory recognizes that translation participants are attempting to do something in a context.⁷⁶²

Skopos theory argues that translation participants should be overt about what they are collectively trying to do in their translation, and they should "translate, consciously and consistently in accordance with some principle."⁷⁶³ To delineate this principle, Skopos theory

⁷⁶⁰ Maria Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators* (Manchester, UK; Kinderhook, NY: St. Jerome Pub, 2007), 37.

⁷⁶¹ Tymoczko, 38. (Emphasis original) "A weakness of this branch of translation studies is that there is relatively little exploration of the ways that translators have particular frameworks or perspectives that affect perception of function and specific translation practices, notably ideological commitments that get written into the definition and execution of any translation project. It is also unfortunate that functionalists are rarely sufficiently self-reflexive about their own cultural and ideological positioning and their role in social systems as they advocate certain approaches to particular functions that translation can or should assume." Tymoczko, 38.

⁷⁶² "Translation is first and foremost *intended* to change an existing state of affairs." Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, 19.

⁷⁶³ Hans J. Vermeer, "Skopos and Commission in Translational Action," in *Readings in Translation Theory*, ed. Andrew Chesterman (Helsinki: Oy Finn Lectura Ab, 1989), 182.

argues that accompanying every translation should be a ‘translation brief’ that identifies the translation participants and gives the translator general instructions about the situation calling for translation.⁷⁶⁴ In Skopos theory, the translator is understood to be a cross-culturally astute communicator who interprets the instructions in the translation brief and presents the translation product to the end-users in a manner that meets their expectations and accomplishes the guiding purpose of the translation project.⁷⁶⁵

The post-colonial context demands that translation is recognized as a site of struggle at its sites of production and its sites of reception. In other words, translation participants are not necessarily trying to do the same thing. Skopos theory can be made to fit the contested nature of post-colonial translation. For example, a key contemporary theorist of Skopos theory, Christiane Nord, argues that various translation roles may intend different purposes for a translation.⁷⁶⁶ Nord argues that a translator must manage these competing purposes by using some form of decision making.⁷⁶⁷ Whereas Katharina Reiss uses a more top-down approach arguing that a translator will either agree to a publisher's skopos or the publisher's skopos (purpose) will replace the translator's.⁷⁶⁸ Anthony Pym, a translation studies scholar but not of the functionalist school, has offered Aristotle's notion of multiple causation to help nuance the complexity of purpose in translation.⁷⁶⁹

The literature on Skopos theory does not emphasize how to deal with multiple purposes and intentions in a translation. But I find the question of how does one ‘set the skopos’ and who writes the translation instructions to be crucially important in neo-colonial post-colonial contexts.

⁷⁶⁴ The concept of the translation brief, “implicitly compares the translator with a barrister who has received the basic information and instructions but then is free (as the responsible expert) to carry out those instructions as they see fit.” Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, 30.

⁷⁶⁵ Three rules summarize the claims of Skopos theory stated in order of importance. First the Skopos rule essentially states the purpose of a translation justify the method of translation. Second, the intratextual coherence rule states that a translation should make sense within the receiver's context. Third, a intertextual coherence rule states a translation should bear some relationship to the source text. Nord, 29–33.

⁷⁶⁶ Nord, 20.

⁷⁶⁷ Nord, 30.

⁷⁶⁸ Katharina Reiss and Hans J. Vermeer, *Towards a General Theory of Translational Action: Skopos Theory Explained*, trans. Christiane Nord and Marina Dudenhöfer (Manchester, UK: St. Jerome Publishing, 2013), 90–91.

⁷⁶⁹ Pym, *On Translator Ethics*, 89, 100.

Musa Dube and Robert Wafula have recently edited a volume arguing for a greater awareness of the dynamics of ‘postcoloniality’ in African Bible translation. Wafula argues that the major problem African Bible translation is facing has to do with privileging Eurocentric epistemological frameworks that are hierarchical, racialized, and patriarchal.⁷⁷⁰ Is not Skopos theory just one more example of using a Eurocentric epistemological framework for African translation? Why should anyone go through the effort to make Skopos theory or some other European theory work for African post-colonial contexts? Is this just one more form of theoretical invasion which is likely serving other political and economic interests?

In the next subsection, I describe why I choose to engage with Skopos theory, ‘reworking’ it to make it potentially more useful for Bible translators working in neo-colonial post-colonial contexts. I do not seek to promote Skopos theory, as I once did,⁷⁷¹ I only seek to illustrate the kinds of complexities methods of translation face that have become entangled in neo-colonial post-colonial contexts. After describing the way Skopos theory can be reworked, I describe a more thoroughly post-colonial approach to (re-)translation. In the emerging post-colonial approach to re-translation, I will continue to draw upon Skopos theory’s focus on purpose, taking purpose in an overtly emancipatory direction. I balance the focus on an emancipatory purpose with an emphasis on an emancipatory process.

4.1.3 Reworking Skopos theory for post-colonial African Bible translation?

I choose to engage with Skopos theory for three reasons. First, I recognize that Skopos theory is an approach to translation that grew out of European translation studies with European epistemologies that serve European interests. That said most approaches to translation, even those that engage in American style ‘postcolonial’ discourse are connected to contextual interests. Translation methods with links to Americo-European contexts, including Skopos

⁷⁷⁰ R.S. Wafula, “On Reading the Enculturated - Hybridized Bibles of the African Postcolony,” in *Postcoloniality, Translation, and the Bible in Africa*, ed. Musa W. Dube Shomanah and R. S. Wafula (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2017), 205–7. “Most of the problems inherent in African Bible translations have to do with the Eurocentric epistemological framework that continues to place the white male ‘expert’ at the top of the African Bible translation hierarchical structure.”

⁷⁷¹ Nathan Esala, “Skopostheorie: A Functional Approach for the Future of Bible Translation in Africa?,” *Journal of African Christian Thought* 15, no. 2 (December 2012): 26–32.

theory, must be ‘reworked,’ to use Cindi Katz’s language which I introduced in chapter two section 2.5, to make them appropriate for African contexts!⁷⁷²

For example, Skopos theory normally speaks about a singular purpose in translation. And while Skopos theory scholars recognize that many purposes are theoretically possible for translation, in any given context Skopos theory emphasizes choosing a single purpose and applying it consistently throughout the translation process. In the subsection above I have shown how scholars of Skopos theory do recognize competing purposes among translation participants. Given that African scholars such as Sanneh and Maluleke have argued that ‘contestation’ at a translation’s sites of reception and its sites of production is so important in African translation theology, I am arguing that if Skopos theory is pushed farther than it is normally pushed to overtly recognize the presence of multiple purposes among translation participants, it may offer resources African communities can use to foster dialogue about what the Bible is saying. Community dialogue about what the Bible is saying opens up the opportunity for negotiating community resilience in the face of economic isolation under policies of ‘structural adjustment.’ (I discussed structural adjustment in chapter three section 3.4.2.) Community dialogue also opens up the possibility for developing theologies that offer resilience and even resistance for African communities facing economic and political policies that bring death to the ordinary African community!

When communities engage in practices that foster forms of resilience they do so to assert their own dignity in the face of harsh dehumanizing economic and social forces. Katz points out that many practices of resilience tacitly or even explicitly reinforce the very structures that oppress communities in the first place. Resilience is one step toward resistance, but more must be done before resilience leads to reworking the inner logics of oppression. In this subsection I show movement from practices that foster resilience toward reworking practices so they might more overtly serve the needs of struggling communities.

A second reason I choose to engage with Skopos theory in this thesis is because it has been picked up by Euro-American Bible translation agencies in the twenty-first century and is

⁷⁷² Nathan Esala, “Loyalty and Liberation: Skopos Theory’s Ethic in Dialogue with Contextual Bible Study’s Commitments,” *Old Testament Essays* 29, no. 3 (2016): 434–54.

being used in African contexts.⁷⁷³ The language of Skopos theory, especially its notion of ‘the translation brief’ has been adopted by several Euro-American translation agencies. The Skopos theory framework has become familiar to African Bible Translation Consultants even if it has not filtered down much to the local level. This thesis’ interest in translation as invasion must deal with Skopos theory and other Euro-American theories of translation in terms of their appropriateness for African contexts. In section 4.1.5 below I argue that whatever framework one chooses for translation, that framework needs to be open to being reworked to include the bodies of Africans on the margins of their societies so that the theory can become useful in African contexts.⁷⁷⁴

To recall Wafula’s criticism of the Euro-American translation industry, how can Africans work toward an egalitarian, African-centric, and an African women’s approach to Bible translation? Could Skopos theory be reworked to be more useful for African communities negotiating neo-colonial post-colonial entanglement as they cultivate community resilience and rework resources to more overtly serve their communities? How can a translation brief offer an opportunity for more explicit dialogue about the identities of decision makers and the ideological commitments that govern their purposes and decision-making processes?

Jonathan Draper argues that even though intentionality is hidden at the deepest level from authors, readers, and translators, making explicit one’s ideo-theological approach, or preunderstanding, to the text is essential for an interpretation (or a translation) that is accountable to its audiences.⁷⁷⁵ Draper is speaking as a biblical scholar about biblical

⁷⁷³ Lourens de Vries, “Bible Translations: Forms and Functions,” *The Bible Translator* 52, no. 3 (2001): 306–19; Jacobus A. Naudé, “An Overview of Recent Developments in Translation Studies with Special Reference to Its Implications for Bible Translation,” *Acta Theologica* 22, no. 1 (2002): 44–69; Ernst R. Wendland, *Translating the Literature of Scripture*, Publications in Translation and Textlinguistics 1 (Dallas, TX; Winona Lake, IN: SIL International ; Distributed by Eisenbrauns, 2004); Lynell Zogbo, “Introduction: The Field Today,” in *A History of Bible Translation*, ed. Philip A. Noss (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2007), 337–50; Christo H.J. Van der Merwe, “The Bible in Afrikaans: A Direct Translation - a New Type of Church Bible: Original Research,” *HTS: Theological Studies* 68, no. 1 (2012): 1–8; Esala, “Skopostheorie: A Functional Approach for the Future of Bible Translation in Africa?”; Nathan Esala, “Implementing Skopostheorie in Bible Translation,” *The Bible Translator* 64, no. 3 (2013): 300–323.

⁷⁷⁴ I made this case in relation to Biblical Performance Criticism. Nathan Esala, “Ideology and Bible Translation: Can Biblical Performance Criticism Help?,” *The Bible Translator* 66, no. 3 (2015): 216–29.

⁷⁷⁵ Draper, “African Contextual Hermeneutics: Readers, Readings, and Their Options between Text and Context,” 13, 19.

interpretation, but his argument is equally applicable to the translation of biblical texts. A translation brief might be utilized as an opportunity for translation participants to try and be accountable to their audiences, making explicit, to the best of their ability, their own presuppositions. I come back to this point about accountability below when I discuss African tri-polar hermeneutics in section 4.1.5.1, below.

In the remainder of this subsection I offer a brief recollection on my own journey with Skopos theory as a scholar and practitioner of Bible translation in Africa. Beginning in 2012 I had a series of articles published that argued that Skopos theory might be appropriate framework for African Bible translation.⁷⁷⁶ At first I employed and wrote about Skopos theory in a way that I thought fostered community resilience, to use Katz's term. I argued that Skopos theory could help foster more open dialogue between translation actors about what a translation was trying to do in a community. I thought that kind of open dialogue would open up space for marginalized communities to express their voice and agency.⁷⁷⁷ But I was naïve regarding the complexity of what was involved in fostering agency in a community. I did not have the theoretical tools to engage the complex history and realities bequeathed by colonization. I lacked theoretical language that helped describe the power-laden dynamics of communication in entangled post-colonial neo-colonial contexts.

Gerald West's *Academy of the Poor*⁷⁷⁸ introduced me to James C. Scott's notion of public and hidden transcripts. (I referred to Scott's analysis in chapter two section 2.3.1.4 above.) Scott's analysis was illuminative for me regarding the negotiation of purpose and intention in translation.⁷⁷⁹ Scott suggests that whenever dialogue takes place between groups with different levels of power, the dialogue will normally take place in such a way that what is

⁷⁷⁶ Esala, "Skopostheorie: A Functional Approach for the Future of Bible Translation in Africa?"; Esala, "Implementing Skopostheorie in Bible Translation."

⁷⁷⁷ Nathan Esala, "Measuring the Adequacy of the Host Text Using Skopostheorie in Bible Translation: The Ethics of Operational Transparency," *The Bible Translator* 65, no. 3 (2014): 308–36, 323–24. "... the translation brief and relational loyalty are concepts translation participants can use to promote better translational, ethical, and theological dialogue between multiple partners who stand equal in their common humanity before God, but who also stand in asymmetrical power relations in the world."

⁷⁷⁸ Gerald O. West, *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

⁷⁷⁹ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 1–5. See Esala, "Ideology and Bible Translation: Can Biblical Performance Criticism Help?"

openly communicated will match the frames of reference and expectations of the dominant group. Scott refers to this discourse dynamic as “the public transcript.”⁷⁸⁰

Scott refers to the hidden transcript as the set of expectations that operate when a subordinate group practices dialogue on their own terms, with their own starting points, according to their own set of power relations, in locations which are sequestered.⁷⁸¹ “The social sites of the hidden transcript are those locations in which the unspoken riposte, stifled anger, and bitten tongues created by relations of domination find a vehement, full-throated expression”⁷⁸²

These locations are sequestered because people from dominant groups are not present, and thus full-throated expression of resistance to oppression is protected from backlash. Resistant discourse cannot be monitored and perceived as a threat.

Scott also discusses a middle level of discourse which mediates between the public and hidden transcripts. Scott calls this the language of “infrapolitics.” Scott defines infrapolitics as “a politics of disguise and anonymity that takes place in public view but is designed to have a double meaning or to shield the identity [and/or ideology] of the actors”.⁷⁸³ Scott argues that the rules of discourse employed in any given context depend upon which groups are present and which groups control the space where the discourse is taking place.

I began to use Scott’s taxonomy of power-laden discourse to begin to rework what I thought about Bible translation and I began to rework how I thought Skopos theory should work. For example, I applied Scott’s notion of the public transcript to Bible translation in northern Ghana. If several Bible agencies are considering how to go about a task like Bible translation in a marginalized rural context such as northern Ghana, the public dialogue about how to go about that task will reaffirm the position, assumptions, and epistemologies of the dominant groups. In a post-colonial neo-colonial context such as northern Ghana, the public transcript supports the interests of foreign and local elites. (See chapter two section 2.4.3.) When I applied Scott’s notion to the formation of a translation brief by translation agents sitting

⁷⁸⁰ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 2, 4.

⁷⁸¹ “First, the hidden transcript is a social product and hence a result of power relations among subordinates. Second, like folk culture, the hidden transcript has no reality as pure thought; it exists only to the extent it is practiced, articulated, enacted, and disseminated within these offstage social sites. Third, the social spaces where the hidden transcript grows are themselves an achievement of resistance; they are won and defended in the teeth of power” Scott, 119.

⁷⁸² Scott, 120.

⁷⁸³ Scott, 19.

around a table, I realized that the conversation could not be open and equal. Due to the legacy of colonization and the ongoing dynamics of power in a neo-colonial neo-liberal economy, the dialogue about the translation brief would favor the status quo of contemporary power relations.

When I apply Scott's theory to the drafting of a Bible translation, Scott's theory would suggest that by default the translators will exhibit signs of loyalty in their translation according to the expectations of the dominant group. Subversive signs in the translated text will need to be carefully shielded from the awareness of the dominant group. My presence as an 'exegetical advisor' for the most part represented dominant Euro-American interests. I could seek to change my point of view, but in order to do so, I would need to undergo some kind of ideo-theological transformation and to a lesser extent, other members of the translation team might also need to undergo a similar transformation.

When I apply Scott's notion of infrapolitics to Bible translation in light of Sanneh's work, I recognize that under missionary-colonial Christianity the vernacular language provided a shield that was difficult for missionary awareness to penetrate. Sanneh pointed out that vernacular language in Bible translation made contrastive signals. Missionaries could understand the meaning in a translated passage in a way that corresponded to their own sense of orthodoxy, whereas ordinary Africans could understand a translated passage according to their own 'primal' religious framework.⁷⁸⁴ Sometimes canny translators were aware of these contrastive signals. Sometimes the nature of language itself creates these contrastive signals even if the translator is not overtly aware of it.

As argued in chapter 3, Africans responded to these contrastive signals in different ways. Some supported missionary-colonial intentions, others dissented from those intentions, and still others exited from missionary-colonial control to form African Independent Churches.⁷⁸⁵ The latter group understood the use of the vernacular language to valorize African religious-cultural concepts.

⁷⁸⁴ Bible translation processes include something called 'translation checking' with a Translation Consultant. Does a translation check suggest translators add signals into their translation which seek to bolster the orthodox missionary-colonial view, a view that is often supported by national and local church leaders, or does the translation check suggest that translators add signals which bolster local religious frameworks which may or may not support 'orthodox' missionary-colonial viewpoints?

⁷⁸⁵ Kalu, "Ethiopianism in African Christianity," 231.

The introduction to James Scott's taxonomy of power-laden discourse initiated my desire to rework Skopos theory. This desire was further energized when I began to work with an emancipatory form of Bible reading that was developed in South Africa called Contextual Bible Study (CBS). I introduce CBS more fully in section 4.2 below. I began to work with CBS in northern Ghana with translation colleagues to see how it might help us work through some of the complexities of power-laden communication in biblical interpretation. I had an article published in 2016 describing how and why I and other translation colleagues were contextualizing CBS, a method designed in South Africa, for the northern Ghanaian context.⁷⁸⁶ In that article I began exploring how CBS reworked the power dynamics inherent in biblical interpretation and in translation. I also began to explore how CBS does not prescribe which texts a community engages. In this way the choice of which biblical texts to engage is less 'invasive' and more contextually driven. I discuss CBS as collaboration rather than invasion in section 4.2.5 below.

Later in that same year I had another article published that more fully engaged how CBS and Scott's taxonomy of power-laden discourse reworked an important concept within Skopos theory. The article was titled "Loyalty and Liberation: Skopos Theory's Ethic in Dialogue with Contextual Bible Study's Commitments." I reworked Christiane Nord's notion of loyalty which Nord applied as an ethical constraint for Skopos theory. Nord was concerned that Skopos theory, as articulated by Hans Vermeer, left itself theoretically open to any skopos, including an explicit intention to subordinate and dominate. To remedy this problem, Nord added the notion of loyalty to Skopos theory's functionalism.⁷⁸⁷ Nord argues that translators should make their loyalties to people in their audience explicit. These loyalties supersede the skopos. Loyalty is different from notions of intertextual fidelity. Nord argues, loyalty is to people, not texts.⁷⁸⁸ In the article I explained how Scott's theory helps illustrate that a translation's audience is not a single entity, but an audience or a community has many subgroups and layers. Scott's taxonomy of power-laden discourse helps translators connect

⁷⁸⁶ Nathan Esala, "Towards Contextualizing 'Contextual Bible Study' among the Bikoöm Peoples and Their Neighbors in Ghana," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 154 (2016): 106–26.

⁷⁸⁷ Nord describes her approach as "function plus loyalty." "Function refers to the factors that make a target text work in the intended way in the target situation. Loyalty refers to the interpersonal relationship between the translator, the source-text sender, the target text addressees, and the initiator." Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, 126.

⁷⁸⁸ Nord, 125.

with the various layers of their audiences. I argued that translators, translation agencies, and publishers should be loyal to groups who are marginalized in their audience. In so doing I reworked Nord's notion of loyalty using the commitments or values of Contextual Bible Study to make it more subtle and useful for a post-colonial context like northern Ghana.⁷⁸⁹

The article encourages contemporary Bible translation participants to prioritize an emancipatory purpose in their skopos and in their translation brief. Additionally, CBS offers a method that helps prioritize a translation project's emancipatory purpose(s), because the hidden transcripts of marginalized groups experience with a biblical text emerge in CBS engagements. I argued that in a community there are multiple marginalizations and CBS can help translators understand the different ways marginalizations occur in the communities they are translating with. CBS can help translators understand how contemporary experiences of marginalization affect what significant sectors of their audience perceive as liberating in a biblical text. Understanding what their audience perceives as liberating in a biblical text will change how translators translate and what signals they choose to employ in their translations.

However, in that article, I did not adequately account for the fact that standard Bible translation processes and assumptions are entangled with colonialism. Socially engaged scholars who have been working with paradigms of liberation hermeneutics much longer than I have pointed out that Bible translation agencies are not likely to be ready for this kind of explicitly emancipatory translation practice. The processes of colonial-era translation have worked their way into minutiae of the (post)modern world.⁷⁹⁰ Well-intentioned translation project participants have been conditioned by these processes, and thus, they are not able to perceive some of the implicit power-laden decisions assumed by standard processes. What is needed is not just an emancipatory purpose but also an emancipatory process that can help participants explore the partially recognized layers of ideological awareness in themselves and in other members of their communities.

⁷⁸⁹ Esala, "Loyalty and Liberation: Skopos Theory's Ethic in Dialogue with Contextual Bible Study's Commitments."

⁷⁹⁰ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*, 2:29–35.

Jean and John Comaroff refer to “the realm of partial recognition, inchoate awareness, of ambiguous perception, and sometimes, of creative tension.”⁷⁹¹ What is needed is a process that reworks the translation-as-invasion paradigm, which I introduced in chapter two and provided examples of in chapter three,⁷⁹² a process that allows for discovery of what translation participants are only partially aware of.

Translation participants work with practices of translation that are historically influenced. Not all of the practices that are part of translation are emancipatory and appropriate for African contexts. As part of the process of reworking what translation processes do ideologically, it is necessary to bring the underlying logics for translating texts into our explicit awareness. In other words, we need to understand some of the underlying logics that are built into translation’s standard operating practices before those logics can be reworked and re-translated in a more emancipatory fashion. In the preceding chapters I outlined the different historical eras of translation that are entangled in the contemporary northern Ghanaian context. In the following subsection I take a more theoretical approach that privileges the historical development of the logics of “retranslation” as expressed by Euro-American translation theorists.

Translation studies scholar Deborah Shadd provides a historical analysis of the logics for retranslating a text in the history of modern and postmodern European and American translation. Shadd highlights how the Bible is a text that continues to be translated and retranslated. What are the underlying logics that have governed translation and retranslation in the Euro-American practice of translation? Once Shadd makes explicit what the logics of

⁷⁹¹ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, 1:29.

⁷⁹² Friedrich Engels emphasized that humans distinguish themselves from animals by their “aim laid down in advance.” Friedrich Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), 34. Engels worked with a hylomorphic model of thinking, a mode of thinking that can be traced back to Aristotle. A preconceived design is imposed upon matter. Michael Cronin, “Eco-Translation: Translation and Ecology in the Age of the Anthropocene,” 2017, 45–46, /z-wcorg/, <http://www.myilibrary.com?id=985737>. Skopos theory is articulated in a similar way, privileging ends over process. In contrast, Michael Cronin writes, “The privileging of ongoing process over the final form means that we end up with a substantively different notion of what it means to produce.” Cronin, *Translation in the Digital Age*, 51.

retranslation have been, Shadd raises the question of what ‘other’ logics for re-translating biblical texts are possible?⁷⁹³

4.1.4 The logics of re(-)translation

In a 2015 paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Shadd suggested a discussion on retranslation that had been taking place for years in the discipline of translation studies could be usefully applied to Bible translation.⁷⁹⁴ Shadd picked up on an insightful comment by Sharon Dean-Cox and expanded upon Dean-Cox’s language. Dean-Cox argued:

While retranslation can certainly be understood as a reiterative act, it does not necessarily follow that the repetition is tautological. To say the same thing twice (or multiple times) would appear to be a redundant enterprise, unless it is motivated by an alternative logic.⁷⁹⁵

Shadd asked, “What are the alternative logics for retranslation?”⁷⁹⁶ And specifically, what are those logics as applied to Bible translation? Shadd argued the two dominant logics translation studies scholars have described for retranslation include the logic of progress and the logic of challenge. Shadd then proposed an additional motivating logic for retranslation, the logic of dialogue. Gerald West picked up Shadd’s notion of retranslation in the second of a series of three lectures in 2016.⁷⁹⁷ Whereas the convention of translation studies scholars is not to hyphenate ‘retranslation,’ West inserted a hyphen in the word re-translation to signal the same kind of tensive relationship between moments of entangled time, as indicated in the word ‘post-colonial.’ West observed that each of Shadd’s logics could be given a post-colonial frame, but instead of doing that, West thought it more important to propose a fourth alternative logic for re-translation emerging from post-colonial contexts, that is, the logic of liberation.⁷⁹⁸

⁷⁹³ Deborah Shadd, “Response to Carolyn J. Sharp – Translating Alterity: Conflict, Undecidability, and Complicity” (Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta, GA, 2015).

⁷⁹⁴ Shadd.

⁷⁹⁵ Sharon Deane-Cox, *Retranslation: Translation, Literature and Reinterpretation*, Bloomsbury Advances in Translation Series (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 2–3.

⁷⁹⁶ Deane-Cox, 2–3.

⁷⁹⁷ Gerald O. West, “On the Necessity of Re-Translation” (The Nida School of Translation Studies, Misano Adriatico, Italy, 2016), 12–14.

⁷⁹⁸ West, 14.

4.1.4.1 The logic of progress

Subsequently, Shadd expanded her argument in another conference paper, and included West's fourth alternative logic in her analysis.⁷⁹⁹ I draw on Shadd's description of logics of retranslation in what follows. The first logic for retranslation is related to the historical development of the logic of progress which comes from German Romantic Idealist philosophy. The notion of progress was applied to translation by von Goethe in 1819. von Goethe outlined three stages for translation. The first stage "acquaints us with the foreign country on our terms."⁸⁰⁰ In the second stage "the translator endeavours to transport himself into the foreign situation."⁸⁰¹ "The third epoch of translation is the final and highest of the three. In such periods the goal of translation is to achieve perfect identity with the original...we are led back to the source text."⁸⁰² Shadd remarks that "this tripartite formulation was characteristic of the day...This was 1819."⁸⁰³ Shadd observes that this same tripartite formulation was replicated in a 1990 special edition of the journal *Palimpsestes* by translation scholars such as Antoine Berman and Paul Bensimon. The difference in the 1990s was that the world was now governed not by German idealism but by the natural sciences and notions of testing and verification. Thus, the tripartite formulation was framed as the "retranslation hypothesis," summarized by Andrew Chesterman as follows: "Later translations tend to be closer to the source text."⁸⁰⁴ Translation studies scholars began to test the retranslation hypothesis and eventually leveled two important critiques. First, scholars questioned by what standard a translation is judged to be closer to its source.⁸⁰⁵ Secondly,

⁷⁹⁹ Deborah Shadd, "Retranslation and Revision in a Rapidly Changing World" (Bible Translation 2017, Duncanville, TX, 2017), 13–14.

⁸⁰⁰ Quoted in Lawrence Venuti, "Retranslations: The Creation of Value," *Bucknell Review* 47, no. 1 (2004): 34.

⁸⁰¹ Quoted in Venuti, 34.

⁸⁰² Quoted in Venuti, 35–36.

⁸⁰³ Shadd, "Retranslation and Revision in a Rapidly Changing World," 6.

⁸⁰⁴ Andrew Chesterman, "Hypotheses about translation universals," in *Claims, changes, and challenges in translation studies: selected contributions from the EST Congress, Copenhagen 2001*, ed. EST Congress et al. (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: J. Benjamins Pub. Co., 2004), 8, <https://benjamins.com/catalog/btl.50.02che>.

⁸⁰⁵ "What constant can reliably be used as a *tertium comparationis*—that is, as the third invariant element of a comparison, an objective reality or referent standing outside of language or text?" Shadd, "Retranslation and Revision in a Rapidly Changing World," 7.

scholars questioned the inevitability and universality of the order of progression in the retranslation hypothesis.⁸⁰⁶

A more common argument for retranslation which holds sway is the notion of an ‘aging translation’ which requires retranslation. This argument suggests that translations have a half-life due to the inevitability of language and cultural shift.⁸⁰⁷ Shadd notes that this argument has been made from “both sides of the textual relationship.”⁸⁰⁸ Scholars such as Berman and Lowe have argued that the original text remains eternally young and that translations age. Whereas, others, such as André Topia, argue it is “the original which changes whereas translations do not.”⁸⁰⁹ Shadd, noting the aging argument’s ubiquity, critiques it as a logic which motivates retranslation, arguing that the most significant critique is evident when multiple translations of the same text take place at the same time, a situation which often happens in Bible translation, especially in large language communities.⁸¹⁰

Taking the logic of progress into our discussion of African times and spaces, Mbembe’s notion of the African time of entanglement significantly alters the inevitability of the logic of progress. One era does not logically lead to the next, but eras are entangled. Each era contains multiple possibilities and multiple discourses in its life world. The discourses within each life world are different enough from each other such that eras are distinct, one from another, because of the material practices, and the spirit or *Zeitgeist* of each era. The “languages of life” from the different eras interlock with each other; they influence, alter, and maintain each other.⁸¹¹

⁸⁰⁶ Other material factors may influence what happens in particular instances of translation, such as the preferences and abilities of the translators themselves, specific constraints imposed by publishers of translations, and the more general and harder to perceive constraints of sociocultural situations.

⁸⁰⁷ Elizabeth Lowe, “Revisiting Re-Translation: Re-Creation and Historical Re-Vision,” in *A Companion to Translation Studies*, ed. Sandra Bermann and Catherine Porter (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2014), 416, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781118613504.ch31/summary>. Shadd also quotes French historiographer Charles Sorel as cited in Shadd, “Retranslation and Revision in a Rapidly Changing World,” 8; Charles Sorel, *La Bibliothèque Française* (Paris: Compagnie des libraires du Palais, 1664), 216.

⁸⁰⁸ Shadd, “Retranslation and Revision in a Rapidly Changing World,” 8.

⁸⁰⁹ As cited in Shadd, 8; André Topia, “Finnegans Wake : la traduction parasitée. Étude de trois traductions des dernières pages de Finnegans Wakes,” *Palimpsestes. Revue de traduction*, no. 4 (September 1, 1990): 46, <https://doi.org/10.4000/palimpsestes.602>.

⁸¹⁰ Shadd, “Retranslation and Revision in a Rapidly Changing World,” 8.

⁸¹¹ Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 15–16.

From a colonial-era perspective on translation, which I have characterized as translation as invasion, the logic of progress looks more like progress towards domination, progress towards achieving the ends of cultural invasion. Given my focus on developing a post-colonial practice of translation which reworks colonial practices in a more emancipatory manner, what would the logic of progress look like?

4.1.4.2 The logic of challenge

The second dominant logic for retranslation, the logic of challenge, has been described by translation scholars Anthony Pym and Lawrence Venuti.⁸¹² Rather than taking each translation as having an independent relationship with the source text, what is of interest to scholars of translation working with the logic of challenge is how translations interact with one another.⁸¹³ The focus is on how translations differentiate themselves from earlier versions. Establishing difference becomes justification for a translation's existence. Retranslation is "a purposeful act of differentiation which seeks to (re)inscribe particular cultural, religious, economic and so on values into a selected work." While a translator or translation may not necessarily be focused on establishing difference with other translations,⁸¹⁴ the institutional settings that constrain a translation affect how that translation does or does not establish "difference." A translation's response to the limitations institutional or religious norms impose become notable.⁸¹⁵ Venuti characterizes retranslation as an "inscribed interpretation of a foreign-language text." Siobhan Brownlie suggests that a

⁸¹² I want to acknowledge my dependence on Shadd's summation of this logic. Shadd, "Retranslation and Revision in a Rapidly Changing World," 9–12.

⁸¹³ Venuti, "Retranslations: The Creation of Value," 25.

⁸¹⁴ Shadd compares Pym's notion of passive translations (and active translations) which because of vast differences in time and space are not aware of an earlier version, with Vandershelden's notion of hot translations which are published at roughly the same time and thus do not have sufficient time to develop an awareness of the need to differentiate. Shadd, "Retranslation and Revision in a Rapidly Changing World," 9; Anthony Pym, *Method in Translation History* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1998); O Classe and Elizabeth Vandershelden, "Retranslation," in *Encyclopedia of Literary Translation into English* (London; Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2000).

⁸¹⁵ Venuti, "Retranslations: The Creation of Value," 26.

source text contains the possibilities for its reinterpretations, its new contexts “give birth to reinterpretation informing retranslation.”⁸¹⁶

Considering the logic of challenge in relation to the theory of translation as invasion in a post-colonial context, how would re-translation, and now I reinsert the hyphen,⁸¹⁷ resist colonial intentions to invade and control in order to extract resources? Drawing again on the language of Skopos theory, what is re-translation trying to do?

Shadd’s third logic for retranslation, a logic which had not been suggested in the translation studies literature, is the logic of dialogue.

4.1.4.3 The logic of dialogue

Shadd proposed a third logic to motivate retranslation, the logic of dialogue.

The logic of dialogue takes as its starting point that all retranslations which present alternative perspectives with regard to some given aspect of the text or some particular element within it by their very existence point toward key spaces of potential interpretive difference extant within that text, spaces which should not be easily dismissed or discounted. Without losing sight of the source text which gave rise to the subsequent versions, the logic of dialogue trains its gaze on the interaction of the various translated iterations of the text, much as the logic of challenge did, with the key difference being that these retranslations are now welcomed as partners in a dialogic endeavour to enrich the understanding of all, rather than denigrated as inferiors, as competitors or, worse, as threats. Instead of casting individual translations or translation choices in negative light, criticizing them for the particular manner in which they constrained a given alternative or excluded a given potentiality, the logic of dialogue would by contrast invite us to consider all retranslations in the textual sphere collectively, stepping back to see how together they draw an outline of

⁸¹⁶ Siobhan Brownlie, “Narrative Theory and Retranslation Theory,” *Across Languages and Cultures Across Languages and Cultures* 7, no. 2 (2006): 153. Shadd categorizes Brownlie as part of the logic of challenge, but also picks up some of Brownlie’s logic in the discussion of the logic of dialogue.

⁸¹⁷ Following Gerald West, I use the hyphen in re-translation when I want to signal the embedded relationship of entangled African time. The hyphen recognizes re-translation as a site of struggle just as the hyphen in post-colonial recognizes the pause between the exploratory time of the missionary encounter with Africa and the shift to an exploitative relationship. West, “On the Necessity of Re-Translation,” 14; West, “African Culture as Praeparatio Evangelica: The Old Testament as Preparation of the African Post-Colonial,” 193.

these spaces in which different voices, different languages and different cultural perspectives can be heard. By intentionally considering retranslation this way, according to a logic of dialogue, we find ourselves better positioned to listen attentively to what difference in translation or interpretation may tell us not only about the language, expression or ambiguity of the source text, but also about the limitations of our own understanding, our own perspective, and our own articulation.⁸¹⁸

The logic of dialogue would be careful to listen to all retranslational voices. Shadd argued that the retranslational logic of dialogue helps us learn not only about the potentialities of language in the source text that the perspectives of new contexts awaken in us, but also by attending to the logic of dialogue we can learn something about the limitations of our own articulations.⁸¹⁹

The logic of dialogue can be applied to African translation theology. The neo-colonial version of translation theology, introduced in chapter 3, indicates that when the Bible was translated into vernacular languages the content of the gospel was essentially the same as what the missionaries preached, an assertion which is not very dialogical. However, the post-colonial version of translation theology argues that each translation of the gospel articulates something about the gospel such that we need to hear from all possible languages and cultures to understand the gospel in its fullness and complexity. And while the so-called ‘original’ languages of the Bible are important, they are not definitive. African bodies must be part of discerning the content of the gospel for theology.⁸²⁰ A post-colonial practice of retranslation recognizes that ‘we’ cannot know what the gospel is until ‘all’ voices have spoken and have been heard.⁸²¹ ‘All’ includes post-colonial ‘others,’ not only recognized translators,

⁸¹⁸ Shadd, “Retranslation and Revision in a Rapidly Changing World,” 12.

⁸¹⁹ I understand Shadd’s use of “us” to broadly refer to any person who seeks to engage, and narrowly refer to translation scholars.

⁸²⁰ “In its post-colonial form, because God (and the Bible) are already present among Africans, African bodies and African realities are required for an understanding of what the Bible (and God) says. And while the so-called ‘original’ languages in which we (scholars) have the Bible are important, they are not definitive. God does not require them to be present or to speak. But God does speak through them, provided they are translated by local African vernaculars.” West, “On the Necessity of Re-Translation,” 1.

⁸²¹ “This is why the exegesis of the biblical words and texts may not be taken as completed when one has established meanings in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek; why, instead, the process needs to continue into all

theologians, or scholars. And ‘we’ especially refers to those sectors who enjoy the privilege of speaking in the public transcript in each context. By listening ‘we’ may come to understand different viewpoints and the limitations of our own viewpoint and articulation.

4.1.4.4 The logic of liberation

As I mentioned above Shadd’s initial discussion of the logics of retranslation, presented in 2015, sparked a dialogue with South African scholar of liberation hermeneutics, Gerald West. West responded to Shadd a few months later at the Nida School of Translation Studies by suggesting that the logic of dialogue is insufficient in a post-colonial context, “because of the entanglement of the of the translator of biblical texts in the missionary-colonial project...”⁸²² West is not only referring to North Americans or Europeans involved in translation. West claims, “(missionary) educated post-colonial African translation *agency* is itself implicated in the missionary-colonial project in its post-colonial forms. So, re-translation is again required, ‘in-corporating’ other African agents.”⁸²³

West proposed a fourth alternative logic for ‘re-translation’,⁸²⁴ that is the post-colonial logic of liberation. West argues that re-translation governed by a logic of liberation must also incorporate those groups in the post-colony who have been marginalized by colonizing processes as re-translators. “If other Africans, those on the margins of the neo-missionary-colonial project, are to be ‘in-corporated’ as re-translators, what processes would enable this? What forms of entanglement does post-colonial African translation of biblical texts require?”⁸²⁵

West then describes Contextual Bible Study (CBS), a community form of liberation hermeneutics which has been practiced by the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research in South Africa over a thirty-year period. CBS focuses on the disruptive detail in the biblical text and offers that detail to marginalized communities who are struggling with contemporary issues of concrete oppression. CBS constructs sacred spaces that connect entangled marginalized groups in contemporary

possible languages in which biblical faith is received, mediated, and expressed.” Bediako, *Jesus And The Gospel In Africa: History And Experience*, 79.

⁸²² West, “On the Necessity of Re-Translation,” 1.

⁸²³ West, 1.

⁸²⁴ West, 14.

⁸²⁵ Gerald O. West, “On the Necessity of Embodied Translation” (The Nida School of Translation Studies, Misano Adriatico, Italy, 2016), 1.

contexts across time and space with characters, voices, and emancipatory intentions as they are embodied in the biblical text.

In the next subsection I describe my experience of working with Contextual Bible Study, a practice that emerged in South Africa, and adapting it for northern Ghana by focusing on emancipatory issues that emerged from the local context, and by relating CBS to processes of translation. Members of the Likoonl New Testament Bible translation team participated as facilitators in CBS engagements in northern Ghana with people living with physical disabilities. I describe the specifics of those engagements in section 4.3 below. In the next subsection I reflect on how the CBS methodology reworks the positionality of translators by prioritizing the purpose and process of liberation in translation.

4.1.5 Negotiating a translator's entanglements

In the preceding subsection I described the logics of re-translation as part of the discussion of translation as a post-colonial site-of-struggle. In order to overtly resist the paradigm of translation as invasion, I am arguing for an emancipatory purpose for re-translation. In addition to prioritizing purpose, the issue of positionality is an important aspect of reworking colonial perspectives and process. As stated above, “positionality and purpose drive translation strategy.”⁸²⁶

A translator must be cautious of the temptation to think his or her translational perspective represents the entire community. Recalling the argument of chapter 2, this is precisely what happened in the colonial translation of lunsɔ drum poetry into the historiography of invasion in northern Ghana. One social perspective, that of chiefs and their patrilineal sons and grandsons, became the singular perspective for establishing a founding myth for society. Their singular perspective was also used to develop customary law. A translator in the tradition of written translation is likely to emulate this procedure, enshrining a singular translational perspective as the starting point for the whole community. What processes are possible to broaden the translation perspective to welcome and include other bodies and perspectives in the community in the translation process?

Mbembe's notion of entanglement helps understanding a translator's positionality. Mbembe argues that the African “time of existence and experience, the time entanglement” is not linear or sequential, but “an *interlocking* of presents, pasts, and futures, each age bearing,

⁸²⁶ Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*, 38.

altering, and maintaining the previous ones.”⁸²⁷ Gerald West has expanded Mbembe’s notion of entangled time to include entangled spaces and entangled human bodies across space and time.⁸²⁸ West does this by referring to a tri-polar method of hermeneutics, and Michel Foucault’s notion of heterotopic space. I will briefly explore these concepts and then connect them to the concept of entanglement applied to (re-)translators and the biblical text.

4.1.5.1 Tri-polar hermeneutics and entanglement

The tradition of the comparative method of African Biblical Hermeneutics links text and context as two poles of interpretation.⁸²⁹ What is implicit but not stated in the bi-polar method is the role of the interpreter in comparing text and context. Jonathan Draper has developed a tri-polar method of hermeneutics, arguing that there is a third pole which governs the way text and context relate to each other. The third pole is the ideo-theological orientation of the interpreter.⁸³⁰ Ideo-theological orientations, referenced in chapter three’s discussion of different versions of African Christianity, circumscribe the meaning of the Bible. Ideo-theological orientations operate in the translation and re-translation of the Bible. The ideo-theological orientations of individual interpreters are, or should be, accountable to their communities. An interpreter’s ideo-theological orientation, whether explicitly or implicitly, determines how text and context come into dialogue. Draper argues that the more explicit an

⁸²⁷ Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 16.

⁸²⁸ West, “On the Impossibility Necessity of Translation,” 1; West, “On the Necessity of Embodied Translation,” 6.

⁸²⁹ Anum, “Comparative Readings of the Bible in Africa.”

⁸³⁰ Jonathan A. Draper, “‘For the Kingdom Is inside of You and It Is Outside of You’: Contextual Exegesis in South Africa,” in *Text and Interpretation: New Approaches in the Criticism of the New Testament*, ed. P.J. Hartin and J.H. Petzer (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1991), 235–57; Draper, “African Contextual Hermeneutics: Readers, Readings, and Their Options between Text and Context.” See also Gerald West in dialogue with Draper “Interpreting ‘the Exile’ in African Biblical Scholarship: An Ideo-Theological Dilemma in Post-Colonial South Africa,” in *Exile and Suffering*, ed. Bob Becking and Dirk Human, vol. 50, Oudtestamentische Studiën (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2009), 247–67; “Exegesis Seeking Appropriation; Appropriation Seeking Exegesis: Re-Reading 2 Samuel 13:1-22 in Search of Redemptive Masculinities,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 34, no. 2 (May 2013): 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v34i2.761>.

interpreter is about one's ideo-theological approach, the greater the potential for a genuinely transformational communication.⁸³¹

There is no possibility of a neutral objective interpreter or translator. All interpretations and translations are contextual and ideo-theologically motivated. Therefore, foregrounding one's ideo-theological commitments, including one's preferred tools of interpretation, while recognizing the limitations (and opportunities) of one's embodied perspective, are all necessary for an overtly positional and purposeful (re-)translation of a biblical text.

The tri-polar hermeneutic approach is useful in describing the process of how texts and contexts relate to one another through individual bodies and their interpretative desires and choices. But (African) interpretation is communal and recognizes an individual's group affiliations and relations to broader historical trends.⁸³² Accordingly, West lays out six different ideo-theological approaches to biblical interpretation that are common in African biblical hermeneutics. All of these are post-colonial ideo-theological orientations.⁸³³ The

⁸³¹ "It is precisely the particular reader's "ideo-theological orientation" (the goals and choices she makes) which brings the text and context into dialogue and enables the production of meaning and hence transformative praxis." Failure to acknowledge one's ideo-theological orientation "leads to a breakdown of genuine dialogue between a text and a reader from the outset, because it is a pseudo communication in Habermas's terms and is likely only to confirm the reader's prior commitments and re-assure her or his pre-judices.

On the other hand, recognition by the reader of her or his ideo-theological orientation can also open the way for real possibilities of conversation – as indeed can happen in deep communication in ordinary inter-personal conversations which may be life-changing. The reader comes to the biblical text acknowledging her or his context and needs and commitments but tries to suspend them for the sake of the conversation." Draper, "African Contextual Hermeneutics: Readers, Readings, and Their Options between Text and Context," 13–14.

⁸³² In my view, sacred text interpretation should engage with and be accountable to real communities. African interpretation is consciously communal, whereas, Euro-American interpretation is often content to remain individualistic. To the extent Euro-American interpretation is collective, it is often idealistic, preferring abstract ideal readers over flesh and blood real readers.

⁸³³ Referring to the work of Roland Boer and his own prior article Gerald West writes, "Before post-colonial theory travelled from its subaltern sites of actual colonial struggle to the metropolises of Euro-America, African biblical scholarship (and related analytical discourses) were 'post-colonial'." West, "African Biblical Scholarship as Post-Colonial, Tri-Polar, and a Site-of-Struggle," 247. See also Roland Boer, "Remembering Babylon: Postcolonialism and Australian Biblical Studies," in *The Postcolonial Bible*, ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 24–48; Gerald O. West, "What Difference Does Postcolonial Biblical Criticism Make? Reflections from a (South) African Perspective," in *They Were All*

oldest forms are inculturation hermeneutics and liberation hermeneutics which began in the 1970s. African feminist hermeneutics and postcolonial hermeneutics emerged in the 1990s. African queer hermeneutics and psychological hermeneutics have emerged more recently.⁸³⁴ These ideo-theological approaches are all useful in helping discern potential ways to relate text to context. However, because African interpretation is communal, the methods alone are not enough. African interpreters need to engage with actual communities of people with real bodies in space.

4.1.5.2 Heterotopic space as entangled space

In two essays Gerald West engaged Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopic space and related that notion to the practice of Contextual Bible Study.⁸³⁵ Foucault argued, "Our epoch is one in which space takes for us the form of relations among sites."⁸³⁶ According to Foucault, a heterotopia is defined as counter-site to a utopia. A utopia is a site with no real place. It is an idealized site.⁸³⁷ But heterotopias are real places unlike all other real places. A heterotopia is a place where all the real sites in society are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.⁸³⁸

Together in One Place: Toward Minority Biblical Criticism, ed. Randall C. Bailey et al., Semeia Studies, no. 57 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 256–73.

⁸³⁴ West, "African Biblical Scholarship as Post-Colonial, Tri-Polar, and a Site-of-Struggle," 248.

⁸³⁵ Gerald O. West, "The Not so Silent Citizen: Hearing Embodied Theology in The Context of HIV and AIDS in South Africa," in *Heterotopic Citizen: New Research on Religious Work for the Disadvantaged*, ed. Trygve Wyller (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 23–42; Gerald O. West, "The Biblical Text as a Heterotopic Intercultural Site: In Search of Redemptive Masculinities (A Dialogue Within South Africa)," in *Bible and Transformation the Promise of Intercultural Bible Reading*, ed. Hans de Wit and J. W. Dyk (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 241–57.

⁸³⁶ "Of Other Spaces (1967), Heterotopias.," Michel Foucault, Info., accessed August 26, 2019, https://foucault.info/documents/heterotopia/foucault_heteroTopia.en/.

⁸³⁷ "Utopias are sites with no real place. They are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real Space of society. They present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces." "Of Other Spaces (1967), Heterotopias."

⁸³⁸ "There are also probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they

Gerald West writes:

As Michel Foucault observes, one of the features of a heterotopia is that they "are most often linked to slices of time" which "open onto what might be termed...heterochronies." (1967, 5). However, because Foucault believes, incorrectly, that time, unlike space, "was detached from the sacred in the nineteenth century (1967, 2) – again betraying his European social location – he is unable to recognize fully, that sacred heterotopias are sites that connect across sanctified time, so that for example, a Contextual Bible Study can connect HIV-positive people in their contexts to the disciples in the boat of the biblical context (whether the literary or socio-historical context).⁸³⁹

Thus, if the African time of existence is entangled, as Mbembe has argued, and if spaces are entangled, as Foucault has argued, then bodies in the heterotopic space of Contextual Bible Study, and bodies in the heterotopic biblical text are entangled in particular ways across time and space.

4.1.5.3 Entangled bodies across sacred time and space

Bodies are entangled across time and space in particular ways. Not all bodies are entangled across time and space in the same ways. Bediako argues that Africans ontologically belong to the African past.⁸⁴⁰ Their identities are entangled with Africa's primal religions. That said, the bodies of African translators are also likely to be entangled with the contemporary world-economy and missionary Christianity. In the ancient world, their bodies might be entangled with bodies who negotiated between imperial and vassal religious groups in the ancient world and in the biblical texts. By contrast, my body is entangled with the contemporary world-economic system, such that my entanglements to the bodies in the ancient world would most naturally parallel those in the ancient empires who were privileged in some way. Whereas, the bodies of marginalized sectors in the local community are less entangled in the processes of neo-liberal capitalism and the ongoing impulses of missionary-colonial Christianity than my body, or the bodies of African post-colonial translators; they might be entangled with

reflect and speak about. I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias." "Of Other Spaces (1967), Heterotopias."

⁸³⁹ West, "The Not so Silent Citizen: Hearing Embodied Theology in The Context of HIV and AIDS in South Africa," 40.

⁸⁴⁰ Bediako, *Jesus And The Gospel In Africa: History And Experience*, 51.

bodies in the ancient world that were truly marginalized. They might be connected to characters in the biblical text who were marginalized by the imperial and vassal systems.

On one hand, it is important for translators to embrace their own agency, to interpret from their own embodied and contextual point of view. This is especially true for African agents struggling with the legacy of missionary-colonial presence in Bible translation.⁸⁴¹ But, post-colonial African translations must not stop with independence from (overt) Euro-American presence, because, as Gerald West argues, African post-colonial agency itself is also entangled in the neo-colonial missionary project.⁸⁴² Post-colonial agents working toward community-driven liberation must seek to facilitate ‘power with’ rather than ‘power over’ sectoral perspectives in their community other than their own.

Those who are normally considered good candidates to be translators as part of a (Bible) translation team are often those with education qualifications in their communities. It is easy for a translator to assume that his or her position represents the entire community. Recalling the argument of chapter 2, this is precisely what the translation-as-invasion paradigm assumes. The perspective of a privileged sector of society becomes the singular point of departure for translating and interpreting history and law.

Post-colonial translation should be overt about having an emancipatory purpose and an emancipatory process.⁸⁴³ Part of that process includes sharing the process of translating with those who would never consider themselves as potential ‘applicants’ for the role of translator in formal translation projects. In emancipatory re-translation, people who are usually assumed to be part of the audience participate as agents of re-translation. To return to the

⁸⁴¹ Wafula, “On Reading the Enculturated - Hybridized Bibles of the African Postcolony,” 205–7.

⁸⁴² West, “On the Necessity of Re-Translation,” 1. “The post-colonial version, a post-colonial necessity, thus requires an-other translation. And even then we are not done, for (missionary) educated post-colonial African translation agency is itself implicated in the missionary-colonial project in its post-colonial forms. So re-translation is again required, ‘in-corporating’ other African agents.”

⁸⁴³ An emancipatory process helps avoid what Hans De Wit criticizes as “flat activism” and “superficial criticism.” “In liberation hermeneutics, praxis is the space within which the humanizing and liberating potential of biblical texts is explored. Praxis is a continuing process of searching, of transformation, of continually deciding, choosing, judging, and determining who we are and who we shall be – not as a private or an individual act but as a public and communal activity.” Hans de Wit, ““It Should Be Burned and Forgotten!” Latin American Liberation Hermeneutics through the Eyes of Another,” in *The Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation*, ed. Alejandro F. Botta and Pablo R. Andiñach, Semeia Studies 59 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 45.

discussion of Sanneh and Maluleke, as this is done, a translation's sites of production and reception are brought into closer proximity in a collaborative way.

4.2 Contextual Bible Study as emancipatory post-colonial re-translation

In the first major section of this chapter I explored West African translation theology in dialogue with South African Black Theology as two forms of post-colonial African theology, both of which are relevant to post-colonial praxis. I introduced the logics of retranslation developed in translation studies, settling on an emancipatory logic as the governing logic for re-translation in entangled post-colonial contexts. Post-colonial contexts are entangled across time and space. Therefore, an emancipatory post-colonial translation praxis requires involving bodies from all sectors of society as re-translating agents.

In this section I focus on re-translation's emancipatory purpose and emancipatory process. I bring sites of production and sites of reception into dialogue by employing the method of Contextual Bible Study (CBS) as a form of emancipatory re-translation.

CBS has been described as

a collaborative post-colonial praxis in which the already present Bible is re-read communally and critically, drawing on the local interpretive resources of particular organized communities of poor and marginalized 'ordinary readers' of the Bible and the critical interpretive resources of socially engaged biblical and theological 'trained readers', working together for systemic social and theological transformation.⁸⁴⁴

Aloo Mojola identified the need for "an interpretive and translational praxis" for the average reader of the Bible in poor and marginalized African communities.⁸⁴⁵ Mojola's statement suggests that it is important to take CBS in a translational direction. I describe CBS as a process of re-translating for community-led transformation. By dialogically re-translating a biblical text from a marginalized group's social location, and collectively 'en-acting' a biblical text for the purpose of building a better social life in their context, CBS participants participate in reworking ideo-theological interpretative pathways at the grassroots and they begin experimenting with prophetic critiques of economic, religious, cultural, and political social systems.

⁸⁴⁴ This definition was articulated by Gerald West in a workshop in January of 2019.

⁸⁴⁵ Mojola, "Bible Translation in Africa," 162.

4.2.1 Contextual Bible Study's historical development

The method of Bible reading known as Contextual Bible Study emerged in South Africa in the 1980s as part of the struggle against apartheid. Its origins come from the worker-priest movement of 1930s and 40s.⁸⁴⁶ It uses the See, Judge, Act method of community-based Bible reading for liberation.

The particularities of the CBS method emerged from engagement with poor and marginalized groups of ordinary people reading the Bible for social change at the Institute for the Study of the Bible at the University of Natal. Around the time of South Africa's liberation in 1994, the Institute for the Study of the Bible became the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The Ujamaa Centre was greatly influenced by the "Popular Reading of the Bible" developed by Centro de Estudos Bíblicos (CEBI) which was founded in Brazil in 1979.⁸⁴⁷

The post-colonial element of CBS emerged after political liberation was achieved as poor and black communities continued to be socially and economically oppressed. Over the past thirty years the Ujamaa Centre has been using CBS with specific groups struggling for a better life under the weight of South Africa's post-colonial capitalist realities. Forged in the struggle against apartheid, it has been used to address many issues of oppression in South Africa including the HIV and AIDS pandemic, gender violence in church and society, the struggle for land in rural and urban communities, and discrimination based on sexuality.

During that 30-year span the CBS method has been taken across Africa into parts of Asia, Europe, and the United States. The transplanting of the CBS method to new contexts raises significant challenges and opportunities. Practitioners of liberation hermeneutics in Brazil and South Africa prefer that each context adapt and re-create CBS in a manner appropriate for the needs and histories of its context. At the same time, seasoned practitioners have gained wisdom through their years of experience that can help eager facilitators learn dispositions to foster more thorough-going transformation.

4.2.2 CBS values or commitments

Seasoned and experienced practitioner-scholars of liberation hermeneutics have boiled down their ethos into six core values or commitments. These values indicate that CBS attempts to

⁸⁴⁶ Gerald O. West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation: Modes of Reading the Bible in the South African Context*, 2nd, rev. ed ed., The Bible and Liberation Series (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995), 188–93.

⁸⁴⁷ "History," Centro de Estudos Bíblicos, accessed February 11, 2020, <https://cebi.org.br/historia/>.

subvert the normal processes of power-laden interaction between social groups who embody social power in unequal or disparate ways.⁸⁴⁸ The values of CBS embody a different kind of engagement than typical translation, and especially the translation-as-invasion paradigm.

Initially, CBS articulated four key commitments, expressly for the South African context.⁸⁴⁹ This was subsequently expanded to five, the five “C’s” of Contextual Bible Study.⁸⁵⁰ As mentioned above, CBS has been taken to contexts across Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania, and the North America. These developments prompted the Ujamaa Centre to phrase the commitments of its method more generally, to be adapted for specific contexts.⁸⁵¹

As part of the process of documenting the approach to liberation hermeneutics in January of 2015, the Ujamaa Centre met with its sister organization, the Centro de Estudos Bíblicos (CEBI). The two organizations gathered in Bogotá, Columbia, to discuss the values or commitments that have shaped their Bible reading practices. They were able to agree on five of those ideological commitments or core values, while the Ujamaa Centre firmly argues for a sixth.⁸⁵² A commitment to these core values is a necessary starting point for those trying to

⁸⁴⁸ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. In power-laden communication, the default manner of communication is the public transcript. The hidden transcript is the kind of articulation that subordinate groups use outside of the earshot of dominant groups. Infrapolitics is a mediating form of language that takes place in public in a coded fashion so that a dominant group member might hear it as innocuous rather than critical.

⁸⁴⁹ Gerald O. West, *Contextual Bible Study* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1993), 12. “A commitment to read from the perspective of the South African context, particularly from the perspective of the poor and oppressed. A commitment to read the Bible in community with others, particularly with those contexts different from our own. A commitment to read the Bible critically. A commitment to individual and social transformation through contextual Bible study.”

⁸⁵⁰ “The five key words which correspond to the five C’s ...are interactive (Community), context of the reader (Context), context of the bible (Criticality), critical dialogue and raising awareness (Conscientisation) and transformation (Change).” Sarojini Nadar, “Beyond the ‘Ordinary Reader’ and the ‘Invisible Intellectual’: Shifting Contextual Bible Study from Liberation Discourse to Liberation Pedagogy,” *Old Testament Essays* 22, no. 2 (2009): 390–91.

⁸⁵¹ The Ujamaa Centre staff were asked by colleagues already using CBS to design a manual, which they consented to do, and which they continue to update from time to time. The Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research, “Doing Contextual Bible Study: A Resource Manual,” Resources of Ujamaa/Manual, May 2015, http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/RESOURCES_OF_UJAMAA/MANUAL_STUDIES.aspx.

⁸⁵² Gerald O. West, “Reading the Bible with the Marginalised: The Value/s of Contextual Bible Reading,” *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 1, no. 2 (2015): 235–61, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17570/stj.2015.v1n2.a11>.

recreate the transformational potential this kind of work has generated into new and different contexts. For any group coming from the background of translation, the core values are an important place to start to help reorient a translation team's purpose and process.

4.2.2.1 Community

CBS is not about individualized interpretation, but rather interpretation for the life of the community. CBS begins with a community's perspective. The process of CBS intentionally fosters community.⁸⁵³ The goal of CBS is to build redemptive communities "full of dignity, decent work, and abundant life for all."⁸⁵⁴

CBS goes about this communal approach quite differently than the communal approach in the translation-as-invasion paradigm. CBS is committed to the perspectives of "ordinary readers of the Bible."⁸⁵⁵ Ordinary readers of the Bible are people whose epistemological toolbox for reading the Bible has primarily been shaped by their lived experience within their home and religious communities. Their accountabilities are within those relationships and not to groups within the academy of biblical studies. Within that group of people, CBS is even more specific about its commitments. Because of its overall purpose of interpreting the Bible for social liberation, CBS is committed to the epistemological priority of poor and marginalized groups within a community of ordinary readers as a dialogical starting point.

The epistemological priority of poor and marginalized subverts the translation-as-invasion paradigm. Under the invasion paradigm, many social groups in communities were silenced in order to establish the dominant social perspective from which a hierarchy for local rule could be established. Under the invasion paradigm conforming to the dominant group is essential. Contrastively, CBS privileges voices that have been silenced so genuine dialogue can begin. CBS recognizes marginalized groups as dialogue partners, co-actors in addressing the social, cultural, economic, and legal problems of a community. CBS shares this dialogical commitment with the indigenous pre-colonial era. In chapter one's discussion of oral

⁸⁵³ John S. Pobee, "Bible Study in Africa: A Passover of Language," *Semeia* 73 (1996): 161–79. Pobee advocates a preferential option for the poor connected with a concern for "the wholeness of the people of God as a human community." 168.

⁸⁵⁴ West, "Reading the Bible with the Marginalised: The Value/s of Contextual Bible Reading," 238.

⁸⁵⁵ Gerald O. West, "Reading Other-Wise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading With Their Local Communities: An Introduction," in *Reading Other-Wise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with Their Local Communities*, ed. Gerald O. West, Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies, no. 62 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 1–6.

tradition, I observed that in a funeral most social sectors have an opportunity and a genre with which to make their voice heard. For CBS the dialogical starting point is the perspective of organized⁸⁵⁶ groups of poor and marginalized people in a community.

To anticipate a criticism, some will claim that CBS as emancipatory re-translation repeats the logic of invasion. The dominated become the dominant. Such a criticism does not yet perceive the methodological shift I am arguing for. The argument being made is for a return to multi-perspectival dialogue not to a reversal of monologue. Epistemological privilege is a starting point, not an ending point. It is a necessary movement, based on the current balance of power. It involves an invitation for the formerly dominant to engage in dialogue with all the human actors in their context, so they can all work together to solve their communal problems. Furthermore, the See-Judge-Act methodology, explained below, calls for a continual reassessment of context. As re-translations and social actions take place, the emancipatory logic calls for a critical reappraisal of context to reveal how and where the ‘idols of death’ have established their life-negating activities, and to see where God is bringing life to the cries of the people.⁸⁵⁷ No one social perspective is established as the eternal starting point. The See-Judge-Act method attends to the actual realities of systemic oppression and marginalization of some groups at any given point in time and grants those groups epistemological privilege as a dialogical starting point.

The approach being argued here is not simply an open dialogue of all the voices around the table speaking in public. Such an open dialogue does not consider Scott’s notion of the public transcript, in which Scott observes that the public dialogue tacitly favors the dominant voices in the room.⁸⁵⁸ Instead, in CBS the dialogue is carefully calibrated to privilege the voices that

⁸⁵⁶ Rather than speaking of poor and marginalized groups in general, CBS works with specific groups who have organized themselves over a period of time and have developed “a foregrounded subjectivity” with the capacity to speak to themselves and to others outside their group in pursuit of a better life for themselves and their communities. James R. Cochrane, *Circles of Dignity: Community Wisdom and Theological Reflection* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 88, 111; Gerald O. West, “Recovering the Biblical Story of Tamar: Training for Transformation, Doing Development,” in *For Better, for Worse: The Role of Religion in Development Cooperation*, ed. Robert Odén (Halmsted: Swedish Mission Council, 2016), 139; Crystal L. Hall, *Insights from Reading the Bible with the Poor* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019), xviii–xix, 29–30.

⁸⁵⁷ Franz J. Hinkelammert, *The Ideological Weapons of Death: A Theological Critique of Capitalism* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1986).

⁸⁵⁸ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 2–4; 18–19.

have been marginalized in the public transcript. How this privileging is facilitated will be discussed more fully below.

4.2.2.2 Criticality

The value of criticality suggests that every social group involved in CBS as emancipatory re-translation should be growing in their critical assessment of the local context and the biblical text under consideration. This especially includes analyzing the structural and systemic causes that produce the problems people are experiencing in their specific context.

For example, a local community group that is suffering under a social problem might organize itself by discussing the systemic causes of the problems facing them in their own “safe and sequestered” locations.⁸⁵⁹ Organic intellectuals among them could ask questions about the causes of suffering and poverty in their contexts. Socially-engaged biblical scholars would address questions to the ancient (con)text which arise from analogous issues the contemporary community is facing. Together the group might notice critical details in the text which highlight the trajectories of death and life at work in the ancient world and lend themselves to appropriation in the contemporary context.

In the early years of contextual Bible reading, scholars assumed a strong notion of criticality such that poor and marginalized communities were “colonized” by the dominant ideology, to the extent that they become enveloped in a “false consciousness.”⁸⁶⁰ Drawing on the analyses of James Scott, and Jean and John Comaroff, some scholars work with a thin view of hegemony, recognizing that marginalized groups are more constrained in action than they are in thought,⁸⁶¹ and that hegemony is inherently unstable and can be undone.⁸⁶² Socially-engaged biblical scholars of contextual Bible reading methodologies have come to understand that poor and marginalized communities already have their own critical capacities

⁸⁵⁹ Scott, 115, 120.

⁸⁶⁰ Gerald O. West, “Liberation Hermeneutics,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 509.

⁸⁶¹ “Other things equal, it is therefore more accurate to consider subordinate classes less constrained at the level of thought and ideology, since they can in secluded settings speak with comparative safety, and *more* constrained at the level of political action and struggle, where the daily exercise of power sharply limits the options available to them.” Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 91. (Emphasis original.)

⁸⁶² Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, 1:27.

which they bring to the interpretative experience. Socially-engaged scholars bring a different set of critical tools. Each group offers their critical capacities to the collaborative effort.

4.2.2.3 Collaboration

CBS is a collaborative project between the following social groups: poor and working-class groups, organic intellectuals, and socially-engaged biblical scholars and theologians. While the poor and working-class groups are granted epistemological privilege as discussed above under the value of community, the experience of the apartheid struggle in South Africa led theologians of Black Theology⁸⁶³ and Contextual Theology⁸⁶⁴ to articulate that each of these groups has a unique contribution to make to the collective ‘struggle’ for liberation. Within biblical studies the approach of ‘reading with’ ordinary readers was developed out of this recognition.⁸⁶⁵ Rather than merging each of these groups into one, which will tend to favor the dominant group, and which mimics the translation-as-invasion paradigm, the value of collaboration suggests clarifying differences in social locations in order to work towards solidarity.⁸⁶⁶ Jill Arnot describes the nature of such dialogue as “a genuinely dialectical interaction between two vigilantly foregrounded subject-positions.”⁸⁶⁷

Scholars need to be very careful not to be patronizing agents who speak for marginalized groups, those who Gayatri Spivak has called the subaltern.⁸⁶⁸ They must be avoid a naive and romantic listening to. The scholar cannot become transparent (see through), and marginalized

⁸⁶³ Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa*.

⁸⁶⁴ Nolan, *God in South Africa*.

⁸⁶⁵ Gerald O. West and Musa W. Dube, “An Introduction: How We Have Come to ‘Read With,’” ed. Gerald O. West, Musa W. Dube, and Phyllis A. Bird, *Semeia*, no. 73 (1996): 1–16. Reading with/ speaking with - comes out of feminism’s critique of the notion of universal experience and subjectivity. Selves and communities are always in the process of being constructed and negotiated. Jill Arnot, “French Feminism in a South African Frame?: Gayatri Spivak and the Problem of ‘representation’ in South African Feminism.,” *Pretexs* 3 (1991): 125; West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 49.

⁸⁶⁶ Beverley G. Haddad, “The South African Women’s Theological Project: Practices of Solidarity and Degrees of Separation in the Context of the HIV Epidemic,” *Religion & Theology* 20, no. 1–2 (2013): 2–18, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15743012-12341248>.

⁸⁶⁷ Arnot, “French Feminism in a South African Frame?: Gayatri Spivak and the Problem of ‘representation’ in South African Feminism.,” 127.

⁸⁶⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1988), 271–313. In response to Spivak’s question, drawing on James Scott, West argues, “The subaltern do speak in gesture, facial expression, performance, gesture and ritual.” West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 49.

groups cannot become caricatures for scholarly representation. Scholars must foreground their positionality and the positionality of their discourse partners at all times.⁸⁶⁹

It is crucially important for the socially-engaged biblical and translation scholars to recognize that they can learn something from ordinary people in the community groups. That is why, as I will explain below, that the CBS engagement begins and ends with the community, such that whatever resources are offered from critical scholarship in the study are offered as potential resources but not as one-way communication. The community groups have the final say of what they find useful.

4.2.2.4 Change

Community groups in Africa desire transformation of their contexts. The realities of poverty and suffering in African contexts are too great to ignore. African communities demand that biblical scholars make their work relevant to them. The scholar who lives in the world cannot very successfully insulate himself or herself from the realities of the African contexts.

However, it is not always clear how to make one's work relevant in a way that brings genuine social change to the community. CBS offers a method for scholars to make their academic work relevant to community problems. The scholars, intellectuals, and community members work together for change. CBS processes are not interested in translating literature to make it available. CBS is not committed to the text, or its availability, but to change. Through CBS, systemic change is led by those communities, groups, and individuals most affected by harmful social, economic, political, and theological practices.⁸⁷⁰

The dominant theology for many churches in Africa and around the world is preoccupied with moral transformation, but they put much less emphasis on the causes of social injustice. CBS is interested in social change and social justice. That is why it engages in acts of re-translation. The process of addressing social change and social justice is assisted by the re-translation of biblical texts, and individual transformation also occurs.

⁸⁶⁹ West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 49.

⁸⁷⁰ Using James Scott's theory of hidden transcripts, marginalized groups practice their hidden transcripts of dignity in their own sequestered locations. When such hidden transcripts are articulated in public there is a potential to connect marginalized people who recognize their own experience in someone else's. This has the potential to connect them to what Scott calls a "single power grid." This grid is a resource for change. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 223–24. For a full discussion of CBS's theory of change see West, "Recovering the Biblical Story of Tamar: Training for Transformation, Doing Development."

Through the processes of CBS, biblical scholars and translators are returned to the life of community. The resources they offer the community are calibrated to bring life to the community. This makes the scholar and translator valuable. The arcane work scholars do in relation to the ancient world and ancient texts is oriented to serve the real struggles of a community. When a scholar becomes useful to a struggling community, sometimes the scholar undergoes a transformation. The scholar's loyalties shift in service of marginalized groups in their community.

When organic intellectuals, translators, and community groups engage in re-translation for social action, this activates potential for social change. This activation process brings hope to people in contexts that often feel hopeless. As change begins to occur, one remembers what it is like to be human and to do the work of one's vocation as part of a human community struggling to survive and live with dignity.

4.2.2.5 Context

The fifth value is context. Contexts have many layers or dimensions: economic, political, social, cultural, and religious. These layers of context formatively shape people, society, and the Bible. This is also true about the ancient world. While both the Ujamaa Centre and CEBI have emphasized the economic layer of oppression as the fundamental reality of the poor, they also recognize the intersections of people's lived reality in terms of class, race, gender, HIV status, disability, sexuality, etc.⁸⁷¹ Contexts have multiple layers and intersections of marginalization.

It is the commitment to context that makes using the Bible so important. Because the Bible is already present in the contexts where CBS takes place, the Bible is already at work, often doing damage. That is why CBS engages in re-translations of the already-present Bible to help communities being victimized by oppressive systems hear a word of life from God instead of words of death. CBS is a process committed to struggle on the side of the God of life against the idols of death.

4.2.2.6 Contestation

CBS as re-translation emphasizes contestation in the theological and ideological realms. Society itself is engaged in struggle in terms of the theological and ideological formations of our world. South African Black Theology which was born in the struggle against apartheid

⁸⁷¹ West, "Reading the Bible with the Marginalised: The Value/s of Contextual Bible Reading," 241.

has long recognized that similar kinds of theological and ideological struggles taking place in our present contexts also took place in Bible times. The Bible itself is filled with struggle as different theological and ideological groups in the ancient world competed for dominance.⁸⁷²

Just as the dominant theology of the apartheid government did not speak a word of life, neither do all theological perspectives in the biblical text. CBS recognizes that theological frames are built on ‘bits’ of the Bible, and that all theological frames are partially built on the Bible. In this way, the Bible speaks with different voices into our present contexts. The goal of CBS is to struggle with the Bible, to re-translate it, and thus wrestle a word of life from it which has bearing on a present social struggle.

4.2.3 CBS movements

The values of CBS provide a framework to understand what CBS practitioners have designed it to do. The hermeneutical movements of CBS describe how CBS works out these values in a community Bible-reading experience.

CBS is intended to be a collaborative re-interpretation and re-translation of a biblical text on the side of marginalized groups who are experiencing social pain related to the problem or issue being discussed. CBS consists of a series of strategically organized questions that guide a marginalized group, already engaged in social struggle, to study a biblical text by going through a process of community-based liberation hermeneutics. The overall framework of CBS follows the See-Judge-Act movement of liberation theology. The See-Judge-Act movement “begins with social analysis of a context of struggle (See) and then moves into a similar systemic analysis of the Bible which brings texts and contexts into dialogue (Judge), and then moves into community controlled action (Act).”⁸⁷³ The action creates a new situation which calls for an assessment of the previous action, and a reassessment of the social context of ongoing struggle (See). Thus, the process is iterative and dynamic.⁸⁷⁴

⁸⁷² Itumeleng J. Mosala, “The Use of the Bible in Black Theology,” in *The Unquestionable Right to Be Free: Black Theology from South Africa*, ed. Itumeleng J. Mosala and Buti Tlhagale (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1986), 175–99; Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa*; T. Mofokeng, “Black Christians, the Bible and Liberation,” *Journal of Black Theology* 2 (1988): 34–42; Maluleke, “Black and African Theologies in the New World Order A Time to Drink from Our Own Wells.”

⁸⁷³ West, “Liberation Hermeneutics,” 513.

⁸⁷⁴ Because the context changes as a result of the action of the study, the process is not repetitive in a static fashion, but iterative in a dynamic fashion, more like the coils of a spring than an unending circle.

The study process is supported by two sub-movements within the larger See-Judge-Act framework. The two sub-movements describe different aspects of the interpretative process.

4.2.3.1 The sub-movement of community consciousness

The first sub-movement relates to the ideo-theological perspectives in the community. This sub-movement begins with what is called ‘community consciousness’ and normally asks a question that evokes the community’s collective memory about the biblical text in focus for the study. The responses indicate how this text has already been appropriated into the community’s knowledge, indicating some of the ideo-theological orientations in the community. It is important to begin in this way to recognize that the Bible is already present in the community, and that people already have been doing some ideo-theological processing. It is important to observe that communities are typically more critical of their context than they are critical of the Bible.⁸⁷⁵ That being said, careful attention to the actual biblical hermeneutics that ordinary African interpreters use in preaching or daily rhetoric reveal much more playfulness and creativity than their theological statements often indicate.⁸⁷⁶

The next phase is the ‘critical consciousness’ phase, corresponding to the Judge phase of the overall framework. The questions facilitate participants re-reading the text several times, bringing the detail of the text to the attention of the group. During this critical consciousness phase an offer of information from the discipline of critical biblical studies is made to the community. The questions invite the community to consider the detail of the (con)text. This enables them to draw lines of continuity and discontinuity in relation to their present circumstances that serve as the theme of the study. The critical consciousness questions encourage participants to begin to judge their reality based on a theology of life, a prophetic theological perspective that suggests God’s judgment is on the side of the poor and marginalized. Then the participants move back into ‘community consciousness,’ where they appropriate what they have learned, bringing the critical knowledge they explored into their overall awareness. In this second ‘community consciousness’ phase, they appropriate the text for themselves by drawing lines of connection from the ancient (con)text to their present reality. These lines of connection connect communities across (entangled) time and across

⁸⁷⁵ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 42–44, 333. Gifford describes African Christianity approaches the Bible uncritically, but he rejects the word fundamentalist because its political connotations in North America do not apply at all in the same way in Africa.

⁸⁷⁶ Maluleke, “Half a Century of African Christian Theologies: Elements of the Emerging Agenda for the Twenty-First Century,” 14–15.

(heterotopic) space. The act of appropriating the text prepares them to consider what action they should take in the final ‘Act’ phase of the study. The actions taken will further cement the knowledge they have appropriated into their community’s collective consciousness.

4.2.3.2 The sub-movement within biblical studies

The second sub-movement within the See-Judge-Act framework is related to the disciplines within biblical studies. This sub-movement occurs within the ‘Judge’ phase of the overall movement, and as part of the offer of information which occurs in the ‘critical consciousness’ phase of the community’s awareness. As participants move through the CBS questions of this sub-movement, they also move through a range of approaches within biblical studies: thematic, literary, and socio-historical. The thematic issue is the ‘burning social issue’ or problem in front of the text that serves to connect contexts and focuses the participants purpose for studying the Bible, identifying the point of departure in their own contextual reality, moving into a reconsideration of that thematic issue in light of the ancient (con)text, and then returning back to their own context, potentially changed by the encounter and ready to appropriate the text for action. The literary approach within biblical studies usually receives the lion’s share of questions within CBS. This is because literary analysis provides an egalitarian starting point, which sets interpreters and scholars on relatively equal ground. One does not need to be an expert in the Bible or its history to use the analytical skills of literary analysis. Another optional move within CBS is to consider the world which produced the ancient text, the world behind the text, through questions which encourage participants to use socio-historical or socio-cultural analyses. These forms of analysis usually require a facilitator to share expert knowledge relevant to the text and the thematic issue. Quite often, the literary analysis brings socio-historic questions to the forefront. For instance, in studying the temple narrative in Mark 11-13, participants may inquire what the temple was like in the first century, and how its structure was related to the ancient economy of Israel.

In their journey through the various critical approaches to the biblical text, participants look for “lines of connection”⁸⁷⁷ between the critical readings of the Bible, whether thematic, literary, or socio-historic, with their own contextual situations. As participants construct lines of connection, one may notice a “fusion” of hermeneutical horizons.⁸⁷⁸ As the study moves

⁸⁷⁷ Norman K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 225.

⁸⁷⁸ Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Continuum Book (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).

toward its conclusion, participants move into the “Act” phase as they return to in-front-of-the-text questions which help them appropriate what they learned for contemporary action related to the study’s theme.

CBS begins and ends with the community’s experience and perspective, and in between it helps participants carefully and slowly interpret the detail of a biblical text. In this process, CBS avoids cultural invasion. CBS methodology does not seek to dominate or subjugate a community as objects to be manipulated by expert knowledge. Rather, CBS treats participants as actors who already have the capacity to change their world. They have valuable theological knowledge and important local accountabilities. At the same time, CBS also avoids the danger of cultural isolation, which would treat communities like ghettos or enclaves that must be separated from knowledge of the outside world. CBS facilitates an invitational mode of critical knowledge appropriation, which affirms local knowledge, and offers further critical resources from the disciplines of biblical studies, which the group can consider and choose to integrate with their pre-existing knowledge structures. A community group is offered time to consider the critical resources implicit in the questions, dialogue about those resources, relate those resources to their previous knowledges, and then choose if and how to integrate those perspectives into their existing knowledge structures. All this provides a basis for choosing appropriate action. Knowledge is never neutral. It is always meant to be used. CBS makes this explicit. Knowledge is meant for action to interpret and change a community’s lived reality.

4.2.4 CBS questions and facilitation

CBS offers participants a constructed set of questions that guide them along a hermeneutical journey into a biblical (con)text with the participants’ social issue as a point of focus. Usually the participants are those who are being marginalized or discriminated against in relation to the social issue being discussed. The hermeneutical journey the participants experience was described by the CBS movements above. The questions are written on sheets of paper or projected onto a screen. One question is asked at a time. Normally, participants break up into small affinity groups based on gender, age, ethnicity, kinship group, or any important marker of group affinity. Participants are encouraged to discuss each question in the privacy of their affinity groups. One member of each group is asked to summarize what their small group said for the entire group. Not everything shared in private will be shared in public. This gives individuals some group protection. Individuals will not be singled out, embarrassed, or criticized. Each group spokesperson’s response will be written on paper for everyone to see.

If there are good writers in each group, scribes may write the group's responses on paper and spokespersons will present those responses to the larger group. In other cases, the facilitators will do the work of transcribing the responses of the entire group.

The skills of facilitating are crucial for CBS.⁸⁷⁹ Good group facilitation skills include making sure the space is affirming and that groups are not being dominated by one or two individuals. CBS is meant to read and interpret the Bible on the side of those who are marginalized or hurt by the social problem being discussed. The CBS experience is meant to be inclusive and affirming for marginalized groups and individuals. It is intended to be a sacred space of healing. Unfortunately, many religious spaces are not inclusive and healing spaces, blaming marginalized groups as the cause of their own marginalization. The standard expectation for poor and marginalized groups studying the Bible is that the dialogue about the Bible, the public transcript,⁸⁸⁰ will be against them. The theological public transcript implicitly favors theological perspectives which favor dominant groups and implicitly or explicitly blame poor and marginalized groups for their situation.⁸⁸¹ That is why CBS must be facilitated to be safe and sacred space on the side of marginalized groups, so they can practice their hidden transcripts of dignity together and then consider how they might engage in transformational social action.

CBS recalibrates the normal communication patterns which take place when marginalized communities dialogue with representatives of dominant groups. This is accomplished by working with marginalized groups within marginalized communities and openly improving the dialogical position of marginalized groups within those marginalized communities during the safe and sacred time of the CBS encounter.⁸⁸² The experience of reconfiguring normal patterns of communication can be healing for facilitators and participants alike.⁸⁸³

⁸⁷⁹ Gerald O. West, "Artful Facilitation and Creating a Safe Interpretive Site: An Analysis of Aspects of a Bible Study," in *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible*, ed. Hans de Wit (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2004), 211–37.

⁸⁸⁰ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 2–5, 18–19.

⁸⁸¹ Bob Ekblad, *Reading the Bible with the Damned*, 1st ed (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

⁸⁸² Esala, "Towards Contextualizing 'Contextual Bible Study,'" 111.

⁸⁸³ Esala, 125.

4.2.5 CBS as collaboration not invasion

In this section I introduced Contextual Bible Study as a post-colonial emancipatory form of re-translation. I introduced CBS as a post-colonial alternative to the colonial translation-as-invasion paradigm. I want to return to the question of how CBS avoids invasive tendencies in its methodology. In section 4.1.3 above, I mentioned an article I wrote arguing for the usefulness of Contextual Bible Study as a method in Ghana, even though it was developed in South Africa. I asked:

How can CBS, which was developed in South Africa and which seeks to affirm expressions of local liberation through a process of community Bible interpretation, be re-contextualized in a different postcolonial context without operating in neocolonial modes?⁸⁸⁴

The motivation for that question is linked to my identity as a North American who has been involved in Bible translation. And while I intend to move beyond colonial ideo-theological orientations, my body has been and continues to be entangled with neo-colonialism in both political and religious spheres. This ambiguity motivates me to look for pathways which are not invasive, but also which are not isolationist.⁸⁸⁵

I argue that as a methodology CBS avoids being invasive and neo-colonial by grounding itself in local praxis and by affirming local epistemologies.⁸⁸⁶ The overt intention of CBS is to serve specific groups engaged in specific struggles for liberation. And while there is a temptation for scholars, leaders, and intellectuals to be directive in emancipatory projects, CBS works towards an emancipatory process as well as an emancipatory purpose. The process is collaborative. As described above, CBS does make an offer of information from the discipline of critical biblical studies for marginalized groups to consider. CBS makes ideo-theological suggestions, but this is done after affirming local knowledge which preceded the CBS engagement. Additionally, the question and answer structures of CBS limits the power of the facilitators and the scholars to the careful articulation of questions. The question and answer format of CBS encourages dialogue among participants. The facilitation practices

⁸⁸⁴ Esala, 106.

⁸⁸⁵ Cultural and political isolation is a strategy the minority world employs in relation to poverty and instability in the majority world. Even though the minority world bears some historic and contemporary responsibility for the situation of the majority world.

⁸⁸⁶ Esala, "Towards Contextualizing 'Contextual Bible Study,'" 108.

of CBS gently welcome the articulation of different perspectives among group members. Marginalized groups are not monolithic, and they must engage in internal dialogue as they consider how to appropriate new information and how to act for change in the world.

The See-Judge-Act movement recognizes that marginalized groups are the proper agents of their own liberation. The role of the socially engaged scholar is to recognize a marginalized group's agency and to facilitate a process of practicing their internal hidden transcripts as they consider overtly emancipatory perspectives on biblical texts. The process is a collaborative effort towards social change that recognizes the epistemological priority of local marginalized groups.

4.3 People living with disabilities as re-translators of Job

In the previous section I introduced CBS as a post-colonial emancipatory form of re-translation that avoids the pitfall of the colonial translation-as-invasion paradigm without falling into isolationism. In this section I move into this chapter's case study in which people living with disabilities experiment with the processes of re-translating Job using the CBS method as a guide.

People living with disabilities present a challenge to the faith and prosperity gospel tradition discussed in chapter 3, because if God wants all followers to be healed and successful, how does one explain those who are not being healed? How are their bodies being 'translated' by the health and wealth gospel?

The mainline Christian churches and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), often affiliated with mainline Christianity, offer an alternative to the health and wealth gospel, which Anthony Balcomb has described as developmentalist.⁸⁸⁷ A developmentalist perspective assumes African countries should imitate Western countries on their pathway to development. Again, people living with disabilities in African contexts provide a challenge to the paternalist presuppositions of the developmentalist paradigm. African traditions have understood disabilities in relation to spiritual forces. If people living with disabilities in African contexts are to be the agents of their own liberation, their religio-cultural lived reality cannot be ignored.⁸⁸⁸

⁸⁸⁷ Balcomb, "Counter-Modernism, the Primal Imagination and Development Theory: Shifting the Paradigm," 44-45.

⁸⁸⁸ Balcomb, 58.

This case study describes how people living with physical disabilities in two communities in northern Ghana are experimenting with CBS as re-translation. People living with disabilities use their embodied perspectives to re-translate the biblical laments of Job as an embryonic expression of liberation.

4.3.1 The process of engaging people living with disabilities with CBS

In order to describe how this case study came about, I need to tell a bit of my own story. I lived in northern Ghana in the area south of the Gambaga escarpment for ten years engaged in the work of local language development in the Likɔɔnl language. I worked with a local organization called KOLIBITRAP, the Komba Literacy and Bible Translation Project. KOLIBITRAP took responsibility for developing literacy materials, facilitating literacy classes, and engaging in Bible translation. As part of the New Testament translation process, my colleague David Federwitz and I introduced translators to the inculturation hermeneutics of Lamin Sanneh and Kwame Bediako. After the completion of the New Testament I began exploring Contextual Bible Study's more overt emancipatory processes with my translation colleagues as a method to teach an emancipatory approach to African Biblical Hermeneutics. Learning about CBS has reworked, reoriented, and recalibrated the process of interpreting and translating biblical texts. My first forays into CBS were with colleagues James Adongo, Samson Bilafanim, and Elijah Matibin. These colleagues had already worked in Likɔɔnl literacy and in Bible translation.

We began to consider what kinds of organized groups and social issues were in the local communities. Samson Bilafanim immediately suggested working with people living with physical disabilities. Bilafanim himself had injured a leg in his youth and walked with a limp. As well as being a translator and a Lutheran pastor, Bilafanim was the secretary for the people living with disabilities in the town of Gbintiri and he volunteered with an NGO that helped people with disabilities get surgeries, prosthetics, wheelchairs, and job training. As part of the process of considering what text might be suggestive for people living with disabilities, Bilafanim suggested the question posed to Job in chapter 2, "Why do you not curse God and die?" From Bilafanim's initial desire for that question, we developed two CBS engagements inspired by studies developed by the Ujamaa Centre in South Africa.⁸⁸⁹ In the first study we explored Job 2:7-8, Job 3, and Job 42:7-8. In the second study we explored Job

⁸⁸⁹ The Ujamaa Centre developed the studies with Job working with people living with HIV. We adapted these studies for people living with physical disabilities.

42:7-11.⁸⁹⁰ Participants in these studies were people living with disabilities whose religious identities included Christians, Muslims, and Africanists.

In what follows I describe how CBS reconfigured our process of translating by prioritizing the logic of liberation. (See section 4.1.4.4 above.) Through CBS, people living with disabilities experienced the agentive process of re-translating a biblical text in a life-giving way. (See section 4.1.5 above.) The emancipatory grain of the CBS questions urged participants to consider detail in the biblical text which subverts the dominant theological explanation of disabilities that sees disabilities to be a result of an individual's sin or the sin of family members. The process of CBS encourages participants to re-interpret and to re-translate the text of Job from their own point of view. In what follows I highlight the movements of CBS, focusing on the way the movements of CBS engage the logics of re-translation. I will review each of the logics introduced by Shadd in reverse order, beginning with the priority of the logic of liberation. By prioritizing the logic of liberation using the CBS process, the logics of dialogue, challenge, and progress are 'reworked' from their orientation under the translation-as-invasion paradigm.

4.3.2 Liberation as the governing logic of CBS as re-translation

From the perspective of the CBS facilitators, we learned the CBS process by doing it together. We learned about the CBS values or commitments, and this changed the way we approached translating the Bible. We learned that CBS was designed to bring life to people who have been marginalized. Therefore, we sought ways to emphasize that emancipatory intention with people living with disabilities in our communities. As facilitators we collaborated amongst ourselves as we developed a CBS for the local context as part of the emancipatory logic⁸⁹¹ of the method.

An emancipatory tone for our engagement was set when James Adongo told a traditional story.⁸⁹² Before opening the Bible, Adongo told a story about a farmer who hated his horse. The people living with disabilities were allegorically represented by the farmer's horse. At the end of the story, the people were urged to be like the horse, "to shake themselves so that people do not bury you." The responses of shouting, clapping, and cheering made it clear that the people living with disabilities were intrigued and engaged by this opening story.

⁸⁹⁰ These studies were facilitated between May 2015 and August 2016 in two different towns.

⁸⁹¹ The emancipatory logic covers purpose and process and is related to the liberating arts.

⁸⁹² Esala, "Towards Contextualizing 'Contextual Bible Study,'" 107, 126.

Adongo was signaling to the disabilities group that today we were going to be doing a different kind of Bible study. We were going to be doing Bible study in a way that was intended to help people “shake themselves.” We would be offering them tools and resources they could use for their own liberation, since so many people wanted to bury them.

Evidently, the story and Adongo’s admonition to shake themselves to avoid being prematurely buried resonated with the group living with disabilities. I would argue that beginning with a story made the space more playful and egalitarian, since storytelling is a genre that everyone of that culture practices. It also affirmed local knowledge and epistemologies. The emancipatory energy generated by the story seemed to motivate the group participants to explore the critical detail from the Bible passages we offered to them as potentially worth integrating into their lives. The story may be why the groups responded to the questions with such vulnerability.⁸⁹³ The emancipatory purpose of our engagement was reinforced at the end of the study, as groups considered how to get their versions of Job 3 into their churches, mosques, and homes.

4.3.3 The emancipatory grain of the critical questions

The critical study questions of CBS are intended to offer an array of critical tools from the discipline of biblical studies to a community that is already engaged in its own struggle for liberation. The critical questions are structured in the manner discussed above. The questions respect the prior experience of the host⁸⁹⁴ community with the biblical text, offer critical detail about that text from biblical studies, and then respect the host’s community’s decision about what to do with the offer of critical information. The questions we used were as follows:

Retell the basic outline of the introduction of Job

Read Job 2:7-9

- 1) How does Job/Ayoub’s wife statement sound to persons living with disabilities?
- 2) If you were to respond to Job/Ayoub’s wife, what would you say?

⁸⁹³ Esala, 120–21.

⁸⁹⁴ James A. Maxey, “Hostile Hosts and Unruly Guests: Bible Translation as Hospitality and Counterinsurgency” (Bible Translation 2013, Dallas, TX, 2013), 1–13, <https://map.bloomfire.com/posts/692586-hostile-hosts-and-unruly-guests-bible-translation-as-hospitality-and-counterins>.

Read Job 2:10-13

Read Job chapter 3 fully.

- 3) What is Job trying to say in this text? (What did you hear?)
- 4) What does Job 3 say to people living with disabilities?
- 5) What would be your own version of Job 3?

Read Job 42:7-8

- 6) What is God's view of how Job has spoken in chapter 3?
- 7) How can you share your version of Job 3 with your local church or community?

Utilizing both the participants embodied experience with the real world of their context, and some of the resources of biblical studies, the ideological grain of the questions invites the participants to consider a narrative about Job that sounds different from the narrative the dominant theology would suggest. First, their lived experience is treated as a valid theological starting point. The narrative indicates Job's lived experience was a valid starting point, and so it must be for them as well. Second, question 6 indicates that God approved of Job's expression of pain in contrast to God's judgment of Job's friends' speeches. The question suggests that God is also on the side of people living with disabilities and their expressions of pain.

4.3.4 Dialogically re-translating Job 2:7-10 and Job 3 from many perspectives

The emancipatory grain of the CBS questions was not viewed in the same way by all the participants. The CBS questions invite dialogue as small groups answer the questions in different ways. In this section, I explore the way CBS utilizes the post-colonial logic of dialogue as it encourages participants to re-translate the narrative of Job in a manner that is relevant for their own life situations.

After telling the story of the farmer who hated his horse, a facilitator summarized what happened to Job in chapter one. We discovered that few participants were familiar with Job's story.⁸⁹⁵ Then a facilitator asked participants to read Job 2:7-9 in two of their local

⁸⁹⁵ The 'remembered Bible' in this case was not as useful as we hoped it might be. So the read Bible became an offer of new information. Janet Lees, "Enabling the Body," in *This Abled Body: Rethinking Disabilities in*

translations. The public readings were followed by the question, “How does Ayoub’s/Job’s wife’s question sound to people living with disabilities?” Note that Job’s response to the question was not read until after these questions were asked.

The first question of this CBS is unconventional. The first question of CBS usually tries to get a sense of participants initial understanding of the whole text. Our first question focused participants on the critical question asked by Job’s wife in the narrative. We chose this text as I recounted above because Bilafanim, one of the facilitators who himself was connected to the disabilities group, was drawn to the question of Job’s wife. We knew this question was likely to be relevant to the lived experiences of people living with disabilities and felt it would strategically engage them in the relevance of this text for their lives.

To answer the question the study participants split themselves up into small groups based on gender and age. Participants grouped with people of the same gender who were nearest to them in age. There were groups older women, older men, younger women, and younger men. Small group responses were articulated mostly in Likɔɔnl, a significant language used in many communities south of the Gambaga escarpment. But some participants spoke in the dominant language of the region, ɔmampulli. Others spoke in Kusaal or Mɔɔr, two other local languages. Responses were translated into English, the ‘official’ language of Ghana, and written on large sheets of paper so everyone could see the responses.⁸⁹⁶

The written responses of the different small groups reveal the way people living with disabilities integrated the logic of dialogue into the process of re-translation. The answers that groups articulated reflect an inner dialogism. Not all the answers agree with one another. Many of them pull at different tensions in the narrative.

- It will pain you a lot.
- It will be better to end your life.
- We agree with the woman.

Biblical Studies, ed. Hector Avalos, Sarah J. Melcher, and Jeremy Schipper, *Semeia Studies*, no. 55 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), 170–71. Lees cites West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 96.

⁸⁹⁶ Esala, “Towards Contextualizing ‘Contextual Bible Study,’” 117–18. I believe that CBS lends itself to reconstructing the practice of “ethnicity.” Physical disabilities might be an appropriate issue with which to cross differently constructed “ethnic” spaces. The easy movement between languages is reminiscent of chapter one’s discussion of indigenous pre-colonial language practices.

- Don't kill yourself if God doesn't kill you.
- If you kill yourself, you don't have life after death.
- Once you are alive, you rely on God, not on human beings.
- Killing yourself will affect your children.
- A child living with disabilities once said, the sickness is from God, so why end your own life? It is the will of God that I am what I am.
- The woman should have advised Job to seek treatment and not to die.
- The woman thought Job's life was useless.

It turns out many people living with disabilities have been asked a question like Job 2:7-8. Their life experience reveals that there is not one way to understand Job's wife's question. Job's initial response in verse 10 suggests that Job's wife was wrong to ask this question. "Shall we receive good from God but not bad?" But the CBS questions insert a pause between verses 9 and 10 to allow people living with disabilities to listen to Job's wife's question before hearing Job's response. Their responses indicate that they understood that Job's wife's question sounds different depending on how one understands the positioning of Job's wife in relation to Job's situation. Was Job's wife only articulating what Job himself was thinking and feeling? Was Job's wife legitimately sympathizing with Job? Was she positionally on Job's side, and inviting Job to take his case directly to God? Or was Job's wife negatively disposed to Job? Did she want him to die because he had become burdensome to her?⁸⁹⁷

From the very first question of this study people living with disabilities engaged in a participatory hermeneutic, similar to the Prophet Harris as discussed in chapter three. Even though they would not view themselves as prophets; nevertheless, in their own way they entered the story and participated with Job's wife and Job. The groups of people living with disabilities heard the question in light of their human experience, using their capacity to listen

⁸⁹⁷ Sarojini Nadar, "'Barak God and Die!' Women, HIV, and a Theology of Suffering," in *Grant Me Justice! HIV/AIDS & Gender Readings of the Bible*, ed. Musa W. Dube and Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro (Cluster Publications, 2004), 60–79. Nadar would prefer a translation that remains ambiguous between blessing and cursing. Nadar observes that Job's wife's question ends up becoming the theme for the rest of the book.

and understand nuance in human communication. Their dialogue is crucial to understanding the narrative potential of Job's wife's question.

By separating out Job's direct response in 2:10-13 from the question, the format of this CBS opened up space to consider dialogical possibility. Job 3 might be understood as Job's second response to Job's wife's question. Perhaps Job's second response recognizes that Job's wife's question can come from a position empathetic to Job's situation.

Prior to question 3, the facilitators invited the participants to read Job 3 in two local languages. While Job 3 was being read, one could hear a pin drop. People were listening intently. There was silence after it was read, and we observed a pause before inviting people to respond to the next question.

Question three asked, "What is Job trying to say in this text?" Some of the answers were:

- Because of suffering.
- Job was right to have said so because God had failed to help Job.
- Because of the pain, but Job was still having his faith.
- Maybe the devil came to Job.

These initial responses reveal a dialogism between groups who are part of the same sector of society, but may have different perspectives based on age, gender, and individual experience. Some groups focused on different ways of understanding what Job was saying. Other groups shifted the focus to their own experience. The process of re-translating governed by an emancipatory logic takes the embodied reality of people in an analogous situation to Job as a key interpretative starting point to understanding Job's situation. Job's lament helps them understand their own situation and engage in their own laments.⁸⁹⁸

Re-translating governed by an emancipatory logic is open to dialogue, rather than promoting a single point of view or interpretation. In this way, CBS as a practice of re-translation reworks the lack of perspectival dialogism in colonial translation. In the translation-as-

⁸⁹⁸ Job's former social position, described in Job 29, indicates he was used to a higher social position than most of the study participants. CBS allows participants to recognize similarities and honor differences between their own experience and the experience of biblical characters. See June Dickie, "African Youth Engage With Psalms of Lament to Find Their Own Voice of Lament," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 160 (March 2018): 4–20.

invasion paradigm, the perspective of chiefs and princes was enshrined as the starting point for understanding history. In post-colonial re-translation for liberation, the dominant social group in the community is not granted the representative interpretational and translational perspective. A dialogical form of re-translation welcomes many possibilities into a marginalized group's inner dialogue. Intra-sectoral dialogue may lead to a more cohesive collective understanding. After groups articulate their collective understanding to other sectors of society, it may provide a starting point for a larger inter-sectoral social dialogue.

4.3.5 Responding to/reworking the logic of challenge by re-translating for liberation

In this section I have been describing re-translation in a post-colonial context using Contextual Bible Study as a method which walks people living with disabilities through the process of re-translating for liberation. Translating for liberation is an alternative to translating according to the logic of invasion, a logic that has been embedded in translation since the colonial era. The logic of liberation includes an emancipatory purpose and an emancipatory process. Within CBS's emancipatory process, I am exploring how the other alternative logics for re-translation can be reworked in a post-colonial fashion. I have just explored how the logic of dialogue is an important part of the post-colonial re-translation process. Now I turn to the logic of challenge.

The word challenge presents a problem for post-colonial re-translation. Translation as invasion embodies the notion of challenge, invasion, and conquest. How can the logic of challenge be appropriately responded to in a post-colonial fashion?

In CBS, facilitators collaborate with marginalized groups to secure spaces that often do not openly welcome them to speak their hidden transcripts of dignity. In the spaces of churches and schools, CBS flips the script and claims that during this time, in this place, the perspectives of marginalized groups are welcomed. God is on the side of marginalized groups and God desires such groups to experience a better life. This is the first response to the 'challenge' that dominant theologies press upon people living with disabilities. The emancipatory logic of CBS responds by arguing that dominant theologies must be reworked in favor of people living with disabilities.

How do the dominant theologies work in relation to people living with disabilities?

One strain of the dominant theology operates in the new charismatic churches introduced in chapter three. The new churches specialize in individualist solutions to spiritual problems. They usually address people living with disabilities as victims of witchcraft, but they cannot

heal them of their chronic condition. They may resort to blaming an individual's lack of faith, or they may identify individuals in their family or ancestry who caused the disability.

The dominant theology operating in the mainline churches and NGO's is characterized by the developmentalist approach. Western media outlets operate in a similar way. This ideology dismisses witchcraft concerns as unreal, the result of an "enchanted worldview" that must be changed for Africa to develop.⁸⁹⁹ The developmentalist approach is not likely to work if it does not address the systemic causes of witchcraft, with which Eurocentric development agencies are themselves entangled.⁹⁰⁰

To fully respond to the colonial logic of challenge in a post-colonial manner, it is important that people living with disabilities consider the causes of disability from inside their own religio-cultural worldview. They do not need to accept the terms of translation that colonial translation has set for them. In other words, 'witchcraft' is an English term that has been infused with Eurocentric baggage by missionary-colonial Christianity and the Enlightenment. The new churches do not bypass this baggage, because they largely accept the term witchcraft offered to them by missionary-colonial translation.

Re-translating 'witchcraft' theologically would require engaging the terms for witchcraft in the local languages. For example, I have been told the term *kusɔɔg* in the Likɔɔnl (or Komba) language, often translated 'witchcraft,' is something every person has. It can be used positively and negatively. However, only some people are *usɔɔn* 'a witch.' Grillo's more in depth research in Côté d'Ivoire confirms that not everyone is *agn* 'a witch' in the Adioukrou language. Furthermore, the power behind 'witchcraft' is ambiguous. It is a singular power that can be used positively and negatively.⁹⁰¹ Grillo finds that "the problem is that the

⁸⁹⁹ Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa*, 154.

⁹⁰⁰ Gifford quotes Hugh Trevor Roper talking about the end of witchcraft in Europe. "In the mid seventeenth century this was done. Then the Medieval synthesis, which Reformation and Counter-Reformation had artificially prolonged, was at last broken...Thereafter society might persecute its dissidents as Huguenots or as Jews. It might discover a new stereotype, the 'Jacobin', the 'Red'. But the stereotype of the witch was gone." H. R. Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze of the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 122. Quoted in Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa*, 158.

⁹⁰¹ Grillo, *An Intimate Rebuke Female Genital Power in Ritual and Politics in West Africa*, 36–38; J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Witchcraft Accusations and Christianity in Africa," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 39, no. 1 (2015): 23.

Western construct itself is so heavily weighted by the moral judgement that witchcraft is singularly negative.”⁹⁰²

J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu claims that popular conceptions in Ghana connect witchcraft to disabilities.

Very wealthy people therefore easily come under suspicion of having gained their wealth through blood rituals. When such people have deformities or when any of their close relatives are deformed or disabled in any way, the deformity may be explained in terms of their having visited a shrine, where they exchanged their own or someone else’s normal body for material wealth.⁹⁰³

Experienced practitioners of CBS have often found that it is more effective to address a fraught and potentially dangerous discussion indirectly. The narrative of Job offers just such an indirect approach to discussing the causes of disability. Re-translating governed by an emancipatory logic argues any such discussion must include marginalized groups dialogically reworking the logic of challenge for themselves. Their bodies understand the kind of damage that dominant theologies do. Not only do they deal with the disability, they also deal with a dominant theology that marginalizes them, operating through their kinship groups and their religious communities—African, Muslim, and Christian.

As “pain-bearers”⁹⁰⁴ in their communities, people living with disabilities may be well-positioned to navigate through the pain and trauma in their context, toward addressing the source of that pain, and healing that pain from the inside out, in a manner that other social locations cannot.

But how can people living with disabilities respond to the structures that cause them pain in manner that has the potential to heal rather than in a manner that activates more trauma for

⁹⁰² Grillo, *An Intimate Rebuke Female Genital Power in Ritual and Politics in West Africa*, 39.

⁹⁰³ Asamoah-Gyadu, “Witchcraft Accusations and Christianity in Africa,” 24.

⁹⁰⁴ Drawing on Walter Brueggemann’s notion of the embrace of pain, June Dickie writes, ““Pain-bearers” is a general term including those who bear physical or emotional pain, and those caught in situations of political, social, and economic distress.” Dickie, “African Youth Engage With Psalms of Lament to Find Their Own Voice of Lament,” 7.

them and for their community?⁹⁰⁵ How can they begin to address the entanglement between domination, theologies, and the Bible in a manner that can find a way through the multiple wounds and traumas the northern Ghanaian context has experienced and continues to experience?⁹⁰⁶

The simple act of people living with disabilities reading Job 3 together injected a holy energy into the group.⁹⁰⁷ Job's discourse, though it is in the Bible, makes dominant church theologies uncomfortable. The dominant theology of the church (and mosque) tells us that someone in Job's situation cannot talk like Job does. How can someone even consider cursing God? How can someone curse the day they were born? Nevertheless, the groups living with disabilities understood Job's dark rhetoric. Some agreed with Job's wife. Some agreed with Job. Others did not. Some of the facilitators were pastors, and they remarked that they were surprised to see Job 3 and Job 42:7-8 in the Bible. The reading practices of the church, including church lectionaries have hidden these texts. When people living with disabilities read Job 3 and Job 42:7-8, they expose the non-neutrality of church lectionaries,⁹⁰⁸ and call forth subversive memories in the book of Job that powerfully respond to the challenge of dominant church theologies.

Question 5 asks, "What is your version of Job 3?" Here are some of their re-translations of Job's rhetoric for their own situations.

⁹⁰⁵ Pobe, "Bible Study in Africa: A Passover of Language," 168–69. Pobe avers that "authentic praise and authentic theology begin in the matrix of pain." And he makes a link between lament and worship, and the preservation of lament in the Biblical documents. For a somewhat similar analysis of the Priestly contribution to and stewardship of the Psalms see J. David Pleins, *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible: A Theological Introduction*, 1st ed (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 429.

⁹⁰⁶ Philippe Denis refers to damage done by many layers of colonization and suffering in South Africa as "multiple wounds." Philippe Denis, "Storytelling and Healing," in *A Journey towards Healing: Stories of People with Multiple Woundedness in KwaZulu-Natal* (Dorpspruit: Cluster, 2012), 5. After a safe environment has been secured, Denis argues for "two key processes...the elaboration of the painful experience and its validation through empathic listening." Denis, 11–12.

⁹⁰⁷ "The Biblical text sanctifies both time and space, enabling faithful readers of the Bible to connect across both, finding and foraging lines of connection between their own sociocultural sites and sacred "textual" sites within and behind the biblical text." West, "The Biblical Text as a Heterotopic Intercultural Site: In Search of Redemptive Masculinities (A Dialogue Within South Africa)," 254.

⁹⁰⁸ Lectionaries focus on Job 2, and Job 38, texts which are used to justify God.

“The suffering we are undergoing should not get to any other one, but we alone, so that when we die, other healthy people can bury us well. We don’t attribute our cases to anyone, but God, and He knows why.” (older women’s group)

We pray and hope that God will turn things around, so we look unto him. We do not have another power to look unto.” (mature women’s group)

“We leave our suffering unto God who created us and the sickness.” (mature women’s group)

“We will not do anything that will deny us God’s kingdom because there no one will experience suffering.” (mature women’s group)

“God knows the plan he has for us. We do not know why we face these problems. We hope we shall overcome these problems.” (youngest women’s group)

“We will encourage our friends to give all to God because God know all things. It is God who gives and takes, also no condition is always the same, time changes as well as condition. It is God who created us, and he knows what is good for us. If it is good, we thank him. If it is bad, we still thank him because he knows what is the best for us.” (youngest men’s group)

“I will ask my friends to keep me in prayers because it is God who has made me. I am not the first person that this has ever happened to because it has happened to people before me. It is Satan’s desire that sickness should come to me, but I know that God is more powerful. I will tell my friends that God has made me.” (elder men’s group)

“We should fear God in every situation we find ourselves. It was a test and God still tests people today. Trust in God. We should pray always and hope that God will answer our prayers.” (mature men’s group)

“What we have comes from God. Pray always. Look up to God. Wait to be called by God, do not try to kill yourself.” (mature men’s group)

“God you are the power, you are driving your things without asking anybody. So, this problem has already done to a lot of people, but we do not forget about God so try and help me with this problem. We thank God that you know the reason why you are giving me this problem. If anything is happening to your life you have to give back to God.” (young men’s group)

“God created us this way. Let’s live and see what happens.” (older men’s group)

Most of the versions of Job 3 were quite short. The harshest most painful words spoken by the participants were not voiced in their own versions of Job 3 but were expressed most sharply in the recapitulations of Job 3 explored in question 3. For them, Job says things which may be helpful, but he speaks more harshly than they prefer to speak in the still-developing safe space of CBS.⁹⁰⁹

In question 5, their versions of Job 3 focused on God as the origin of their suffering, as an ultimate reason that they should continue to live, and as a reason that other people should value their lives. The speakers recognize that their situations are very difficult and should not be wished on anyone else, but they also recognize that they are part of a historic and present community. They desire that the problems they are facing should end or be relieved.

Ultimately, when they die, they desire a good burial,⁹¹⁰ to be recognized and ‘re-membered’ as part of the community.⁹¹¹

Considering God as the ultimate cause of disability responds to debilitating assertions of shame in culture, kinship group, and religious communities.⁹¹² When it comes to disabilities, proud families from proud kinship groups, thinking from their own able-bodied points of

⁹⁰⁹ Madipoane Masenya (ngwana’ Mphahlele), “Her Appropriation of Job’s Lament? Her-Lament of Job 3, From an African Story-Telling Perspective,” in *Postcolonial Perspectives in African Biblical Interpretations*, ed. Musa W. Dube Shomanah, Andrew Mūtūa Mbuvi, and Dora R. Mbuwayesango, Society of Biblical Literature Global Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship, no. 13 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 283–97. Masenya argues that Job speaks more harshly to his mother than is necessary.

⁹¹⁰ A good death, burial, and funeral is part of achieving the life goal of becoming an ancestor. In Komba-Anufɔ tradition, sometimes a ‘bad’ destiny and a ‘bad death’ are the worst outcomes possible for an individual life. A bad destiny can be changed in a number of ways. Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufɔ of Northern Ghana*, 210–12.

⁹¹¹ I used the term ‘re-membered’ in chapter three section 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 above, following Gerald West’s description of Isaiah Shembe’s use of communal memory and his reordering of the biblical text. I use it here to describe the way people living with disabilities desire to be reincorporated as full ‘members’ of their community.

⁹¹² “The twelve named maled disciples are usually presented as a robust gang of young adults, called away from earning their various livings. What impairments did they live with? Fishing was a dangerous occupation then and now. How many fingers did Peter have? Living in an occupied territory was a dangerous business then and now. How many scars did Andrew have? Leaving your job was stressful then and now. How much stress did Matthew or Thomas have? If these people were living with impairments then the church does not present them that way.” Lees, “Enabling the Body,” 162.

view, wonder how someone like them could have produced someone with a physical disability. They are no worse than others who produced able-bodied children. Indeed, many kinship groups intentionally hide people living with disabilities to prevent people from seeing their collective shame. People with disabilities might lower the esteem of a family line or a kinship group in the estimation of others.

But people living with disabilities must think and theologize from their own perspectives, from the realities inside their own bodies. Some conclude God is the ultimate cause of disabilities, not the lack of human righteousness, or the malevolent intervention of humans and spiritual powers. The conclusion of one group indicated that if God is the cause, then God must mean it for good. Others indicate that Job is right to blame God, because God had not done what was right for Job. A mediating possibility is that Satan's evil activity came between God's good intention and Job's experience of suffering.⁹¹³ It is important for this kind of dialogue to be attended to, especially by Christian churches, mosques, pastors, and imams, who desire what is good, right, and healing for their members.

A key theme in many of the versions of Job 3 as articulated by groups of people living with disabilities was that they did not attribute their suffering to another human being. This redirected the focus from other people who may have contributed to disabilities through 'witchcraft' or cursing—to God.⁹¹⁴ Dominant theologies often assume that disabilities are caused by other able-bodied people in the family with better fortune, who exhibit ambition, or who have uncommon creativity or skill. But remarkably the people living with disabilities did not express retaliation.

⁹¹³ "Among the Biblical symbols is Satan as a personification of evil. Around this symbol can be gathered diverse understandings of evil, which enable it to exert a powerful, dominant influence... We must therefore examine the ways in which these symbols have altered African concepts of evil, and in particular the ways in which they have enabled two different perspective of evil to meet and to enrich each other." Richard Gray, *Black Christians and White Missionaries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 104.

⁹¹⁴ Kirby recounts a similar non-retributive action in an encounter with a man who may have had witchcraft problems in his house, but refused to accuse anyone, attributing his misfortunes to God, and indicating there was nothing he could do about his misfortune. Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufɔ of Northern Ghana*, 91. Attributing the issue to God, may also suggest there is a larger system of witchcraft at work, on the regional or even state level. Jon P. Kirby, "Toward a Christian Response to Witchcraft in Northern Ghana," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 39, no. 1 (2015): 20–21.

Here are some responses to question four, which asks, “What does Job 3 say to people *living* with disabilities?”

- Suffering is not only one person.
- I was somebody, but now I am not.
- If you lose hope, still take your time, and do not lose hope.
- Give your house people patience.

The response of one of the young men’s groups was to “Give your house people patience.” I believe this response was directed at able-bodied young men who, in their eagerness and ambition to achieve higher levels of social status and in their frustration at the lack of opportunity the northern Ghanaian context offers them, find it easy to pin any lack of success or any misfortune on vulnerable people, especially vulnerable women in their homes. This perspective is especially important for those young men active in churches practicing the health and wealth gospel. At the same time, this response offers the same grace to young men who have their own set of struggles which are causing them real frustration. If we all give our house people patience, then we will not resort to scapegoating them and begin to find ways to help them address the systemic causes of their frustrations. The response could also have been directed at older men present in the group, who had only recently been disabled. These older men may have been tempted to blame vulnerable others as the cause of their disability, when all bodies are in the inevitable process of becoming disabled.

These responses to the logic of challenge are post-colonial. They do not re-translate by imitating the logic of the translation-as-invasion paradigm in which subgroups ascend to the top of the social hierarchy while pressing others down. Overall, these re-translations affirm life from the bottom of the hierarchy to the top.

4.3.6 Articulating a post-colonial vision of social progress with Job

Questions 4, 5, and 6 explored aspects of how people living with disabilities might re-translate for the purpose of struggling to have a better life in the communities where they live, and in the bodies that they inhabit. Their responses rework the logic of social progress.

Group responses revealed a profound grief in people living with disabilities. They would not wish what they are experiencing on any other person. They expressed a desire for relief from their condition. They reiterated that they do not blame anyone for their condition. They do

not want this suffering to be passed on to others. They want harmonious relationships with their larger community, not one of mistrust. The older women's group expressed the desire that they be buried well, as members of the community.

Consider the older women's group response to question 5, what is your version of Job 3?

Their response reworks the colonial logics of challenge and progress.

“The suffering we are undergoing should not get to any other one, but we alone, so that when we die, other healthy people can bury us well. We don't attribute our cases to anyone, but God, and He knows why.” (older women's group)

A key theme in many of the versions of Job 3 as articulated by groups of people living with disabilities was that they did not attribute their suffering to another human being. Compared to the 'challenge' of dominant theologies which blame individuals, this response redirects the focus from other people who may have contributed to disabilities to God. But the response refuses to explore God's reasoning.

The older women's group version of Job 3 reiterated the traditional story told at the beginning of the study about the farmer who hated his horse, but their version changes the narrative of that story. The narrative as told at the beginning of the CBS by an able-bodied facilitator suggested that some able-bodied people wanted to bury people living with disabilities prematurely out of hatred. The older women's narrative refuses to address other people's motives. And their narrative does not eschew being buried. As Job said, burial would be an end to suffering. What they desire from other people is a good burial. They desired to be buried by kin members and friends at the appropriate time in the appropriate burial of a kin member who would like to become an ancestor and bless his or her bodily and spiritual relatives as part of living in God's kin-dom. If religious communities, as extended families, would bury these women well, it would be transformational.

The older women's re-translation moves from reworking the logic of challenge to reworking the logic of progress. They express a vision of social 'progress' that people living with disabilities desire to achieve in their communities. The social vision is expressed in terms of the contemporary context. Job's narrative weaves in and out of the visions of the groups, as well as an adjusted narrative of the farmer and the horse.

4.3.7 Re-translating for concrete action

Question 7 moves the participants toward the final phase of the See-Judge-Act process. “How can you share your version of Job 3 with your church, mosque, and community? (Be creative.)”

Some of the responses included:

- “We will tell friends, and both churches and mosque about Job’s test.”
- “Job had many temptations, even his wife asked him to end his life.”
- “We will ask for permissions to share in churches and mosques.”

The responses were more measured in this question than in the previous question. In their own versions of Job 3, the participants focused on their own experiences more than on Job’s experience. Yet in response to the action question, written immediately above, when participants were thinking how to craft their articulations for church, mosque, and community, they focused more on telling about Job’s experiences. It could be that one of the most strategic things they can do is to tell their religious communities about Job, knowing that the distance between themselves and Job has been bridged.⁹¹⁵

4.3.8 Entanglements of re-translators living with disabilities

How do participants bridge the time and space between themselves and the characters of Job and Job’s wife? I return to the notions of entangled heterotopias, introduced in section 4.1.5.2 above.

⁹¹⁵ The language in the Bible offers poor and marginalized groups an additional language of infrapolitics, a coded or metaphoric form of speech, which offers them a measure of protection. James Scott argues, “Infrapolitics is, to be sure, real politics. In many respects it is conducted in more earnest, for higher stakes, and against greater odds than political life in liberal democracies.” Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 200.

If the safe and sacred space cultivated in CBS becomes a heterotopic space, which is not a given in any context,⁹¹⁶ then such a space is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place, several sites that are in themselves incompatible.⁹¹⁷

If the African time of being is entangled, as Mbembe argues, and if slices of time are also entangled in space, what Foucault calls heterochronies and heterotopies, then both time and space can be bridged in particular ways inside the space and time of CBS. It appears that people living with disabilities were able to bridge the time and space between themselves and Job such that they understand themselves as participating with Job.⁹¹⁸ This would not be possible for the facilitators in the same way. The facilitators are entangled differently—perhaps with Job’s friends or Job’s wife. If people living with disabilities in communities in northern Ghana can articulate a vision in which they speak across time and space in a manner such that they are entangled with Job, and if it is possible for others in the community to hear this discourse and understand it, there is a potential for social transformation.

4.3.9 Participating with Job in response to prosperity gospel in church, mosque, and community

CBS participants experimented with participating with biblical characters in the biblical narrative across time and space. There is evidence of that in some of the articulations expressed above, where narrative and historical distance is bridged. But perhaps the best

⁹¹⁶ “There is nothing self-evident about CBS. South Africa is moving into a post(political) liberation epoch, the terrain upon which CBS is constructed has changed. The new poor are not the same as the organized poor of the social movements of the 1970s and 1980s, even “the Bible” has a less stable identity. “We—and this ‘we’ is itself a shifting signification (Nadar 2012)—must work differently in order to construct Contextual Bible Study as a heterotopic site.” West, “The Biblical Text as a Heterotopic Intercultural Site: In Search of Redemptive Masculinities (A Dialogue Within South Africa),” 243.

⁹¹⁷ The juxtaposition of incompatible sites includes the way CBS reworks hierarchical liturgical sites, such as in a church building, to be more egalitarian. Furthermore, the biblical text and its various contexts of production and reception can be brought together during CBS. West, 244.

⁹¹⁸ Drawing on an important aspect of William Wadé Harris’s hermeneutics which David Shank characterized as “participation”, Kwame Bediako argued, that Harris’s hermeneutics were not “a question of what Moses saw, or what Elijah did, or the words or works of Jesus as reported in the Bible”; it was more “a question of involvement—as with the ancestors, the living dead—with Moses, with Elijah, with the Archangel Gabriel, and supremely with Jesus Christ.” Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 104; Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the ‘Black Elijah’ of West Africa*, 170.

example of participating with Job was articulated in a follow-up study we did with people living with disabilities.

This follow-up study took place several months after the initial study. It focused more on the dialogue between Job's lament theology and the dominant theology of Job's friends. It engaged the popular health and wealth gospel, that gained popularity in the megachurches of Ghana⁹¹⁹ and spread to rural communities like Gbintiri. This study was adapted from one of the Ujamaa Centre's study with people living with HIV and took the following shape:

Review memories from the last study

1. What is the book of Job about? (What do you remember from our last study?)

Read Job 42:7

2. In what ways has Job spoken rightly about God and in what ways have the friends spoken wrongly?

Read what Job's friend says in Job 4:8

Read what God says about Job in Job 1:1 and Job 1:8

Read Job 42:7-8

3. Why do you think God deals with the friends publicly requiring them to perform public and communal acts?

Read Job 16:7

Read Job 29:1-11

4. Why do people withdraw from those they think God is punishing?
5. Does this happen in the church or mosque?

Read Job 42:9-11

6. How and in what ways is Job restored to the community?
7. What resources does Job 42 provide in making the church / mosque a better place for people living with disabilities?
8. What will you do to use these resources in your church / mosque?

⁹¹⁹ Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*.

The responses to these questions by people living with disabilities revealed that the dominant theology in religious communities is that God is punishing people living with disabilities. From the dominant perspective their bodily condition is essentially a sign of their spiritual lack. Moreover, people with physical disabilities are isolated from their larger community because people are afraid somehow that they will be ‘infected’ or ‘dirtied’ by contact with them.

I am intrigued by the responses to question five because they suggest aspects of entanglement across time and space. Question five asked, “How was Job restored to the community?”

Group responses included the following:

- People received him back and they say this our Job, our Father, our brother, our sister, our Job is back. And they gave him gifts.
- Visiting him and greeting him.
- They gave him gifts.
- They gathered and ate together, mingled together and sat with him.

The first group’s re-translation provided the kind of language that reflects an entanglement between CBS participants and Job. There is a participation between the participants and Job, a fusion of hermeneutical horizons. Most importantly, the language expresses a vision of social progress that is life-giving not only for people living with disabilities but for all the Jobs of the world, and not only those who were once powerful men in their communities.⁹²⁰ The people living with disabilities may not be claiming the office of prophet, like William Harris or Isaiah Shembe, but they are re-translating and re-interpreting like the prophets did by crossing time and space to participate with biblical characters.

4.3.10 CBS as an ‘offer’

The values of CBS indicate that people living with disabilities must be the agents of their own liberation. CBS avoids the twin colonial strategies of invasion and isolation. These case studies avoid isolating rural communities in northern Ghana by engaging with people living with disabilities in the market towns of Gbintiri and Nasuan. These communities are already

⁹²⁰ Elsa Tamez, “A Letter to Job,” in *New Eyes for Reading: Biblical and Theological Reflections by Women from the Third World*, ed. J. S. Pobee and Bärbel von Wartenberg-Potter (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1986), 50–52.

dealing with the dominant theologies of the health and wealth gospel and the developmentalist gospel, both of which operate significantly within the translation-as-invasion paradigm. Accordingly, these case studies could risk falling into the colonial trap of cultural invasion.

Sithembiso Zwane, the director of the Ujamaa Centre at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, offers some language that helps explain the different ways CBS structures space with marginalized groups. Zwane has mapped out a continuum of the different ways space is constructed in relation to marginalized groups engaged in ‘development’ from invited spaces to invigorated spaces to invented spaces.⁹²¹ Zwane’s continuum maps nicely onto Katz’s continuum of interpretative resilience, reworking, and resistance discussed in chapter two section 2.5. Drawing on Andrea Cornwall’s language⁹²² Zwane argues ‘invited’ spaces are spaces that engage poor and marginalized communities in an entrenched dehumanizing political and economic system. “Invited spaces, characterized by exclusion or at best supervised participation, deprive the community of the ability to participate in development processes.”⁹²³ ‘Invigorated’ spaces are locations where community groups are partially in control, whereas ‘invented’ spaces are locations where local community groups are substantially in control. Invigorated spaces contend with invited spaces and they can lead to invented spaces.

Using Zwane’s language I would argue that the people living with disabilities referred to in this section experienced the space and time of these CBS’s as moving from an invited space to an invigorated space. For example, reading Job 3 together injected a sacred energy into the room. Many of the comments were candid and open. As a constructed and collaborative space operating in communities CBS seeks to construct invigorated spaces where community groups are partially in control of the discourse. Hopefully the invigorated spaces encourage marginalized groups to draw upon CBS resources in their own ‘invented’ spaces.

⁹²¹ Gerald O. West and Sithembiso Zwane, “Re-Reading 1 Kings 21:1-16 between Community-Based Activism and University-Based Pedagogy,” *Journal for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies*, forthcoming.

⁹²² Andrea Cornwall, “Introduction: New Democratic Spaces? The Politics and Dynamics of Institutionalised Participation,” *IDS Bulletin* 35, no. 2 (2004): 1, 6.

⁹²³ West and Zwane, “Re-Reading 1 Kings 21:1-16 between Community-Based Activism and University-Based Pedagogy.”

These CBS experiences were a start, an experiential ‘offer’ for the groups living with disabilities in these northern Ghanaian communities. Facilitators need to be content to offer the emancipatory potential of CBS, and then to wait for an invitation from organized groups who want to use CBS as part of their praxis for achieving a better, more dignified life in their religio-cultural and socio-political contexts. In this way, CBS will function as invigorated/invented space rather than invited/invigorated space in the local contexts where CBS takes place.

In the concluding section of this chapter, I want to argue that CBS as a form of post-colonial re-translation for liberation can function as an invented space in the realm of theological and political discourse. But rather than using the language of invented space, I will draw upon the language of irruption.

4.4 Conclusion: re-translation as ‘irruption’⁹²⁴ into missionary-colonial and neo-colonial translation practice

Post-colonial translation theology, introduced in section 4.1 above, argues that the church cannot know what the gospel is in full, until all vernacular-speaking voices (and sign systems) have spoken.⁹²⁵ The missionary-colonial project of the 19th century did not recognize that the logic of translation ‘in-corporated’ African languages and cultures into the articulation of the gospel.⁹²⁶ Post-colonial translation theology argues that prior versions of the Bible in other languages have had their opportunity to speak, and now it is time to hear from other communities and languages so collectively we, as communities of faith, can discern what the gospel is. Even the original languages cannot contain all the meaning of the Bible; thus, translation and re-translation are required.

About a century later, the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) articulated a related theological position to the Euro-American theological world. EATWOT argued that the dire situation in ‘third world’ countries required embracing a theological method that privileges the praxis of the poor in communities and churches. In the third

⁹²⁴ Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, Virginia Fabella, and Sergio Torres, eds., *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge to Theology: Papers from the Fifth International Conference of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, August 17-29, 1981, New Delhi, India* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983).

⁹²⁵ West, *The Stolen Bible*, 241–43.

⁹²⁶ West, “On the Necessity of Embodied Translation,” 1.

EATWOT conference Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres described EATWOT's theological method as producing an "emergent gospel."⁹²⁷ Fabella and Torres' language of an "emergent gospel" is similar to the language of Sanneh, Bediako, and others as articulated in post-colonial African translation theology.⁹²⁸

Post-colonial African translation theology in dialogue with South African Black Theology, as discussed in section 4.1 above, offers an opportunity to combine the focus on facets of the gospel articulated by vernacular language communities with the emerging gospel articulated by EATWOT.

EATWOT articulated its contribution as a change in theological method. Sergio Torres writes, "EATWOT has helped to develop a different method for theological discourse. We emphasize the role of the praxis of the poor as the starting point for reflection on the Christian faith. We read the Bible from the underside of history."⁹²⁹

Similarly, Contextual Bible Study (CBS) offers a method of post-colonial re-translation for liberation that embraces a similar epistemological privileging of poor and marginalized groups. CBS combines the religio-cultural emphases of post-colonial translation theology with the political, race, and class emphasis of South African Black theology, and the gendered perspective of African women's theology, in a paradigm of liberation hermeneutics that re-reads and re-translates the Bible from the perspective of poor and marginalized communities whose lived reality is on the underside of power in the present moment. In the

⁹²⁷ Sergio Torres and Virginia Fabella, eds., *The Emergent Gospel: Theology from the Underside of History: Papers from the Ecumenical Dialogue of Third World Theologians, Dar Es Salaam, August 5-12, 1976* (Ecumenical Dialogue of Third World Theologians, Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1978).

⁹²⁸ Gillian Mary Bediako, Benhardt Y. Quarshie, and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, eds., *Seeing New Facets of the Diamond: Christianity as a Universal Faith - Essays in Honour of Kwame Bediako*, Theological Reflections From The South (Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana: Regnum Africa, 2014), <http://wipfandstock.com/seeing-new-facets-of-the-diamond.html>.

⁹²⁹ Sergio Torres, "The Irruption of the Third World: A Challenge to Theology," in *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge to Theology: Papers from the Fifth International Conference of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, August 17-29, 1981, New Delhi, India*, ed. Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, Virginia Fabella, and Sergio Torres (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983), 12.

process, marginalized groups in the present forge connections with communities from the underside of history embodied in the biblical text across time and space.⁹³⁰

In EATWOT's fifth conference, the theologians began describing their meetings and methods as participating in a larger movement they characterized as an "irruption" that "begins a new stage in human history that is evincing the resistance to, and decline of, the dominance of North Atlantic countries and of Western Civilization."⁹³¹

The form of ideo-theological re-translation described in this chapter contributes to the irruption in theological method that EATWOT was describing. It also has the potential to contribute to the irruption in the political and economic order that EATWOT was describing.⁹³² As marginalized groups take control of the processes of post-colonial re-translation applied iteratively as a process of ongoing action and reflection, they have the potential to disrupt and resist the status quo supported by the translation-as-invasion paradigm described in chapter two. I will discuss this claim further in chapter five section 5.2.3 as I discuss CBS's theory of change. Essentially, CBS's theory of change argues that an irruption in theological and religious practice is necessary for social change to occur.⁹³³ What this means on the ground in northern Ghana, is that as marginalized groups apply CBS's

⁹³⁰ In dialogue with Itumeleng Mosala's and Robert Coote's redactional critical approach to reading biblical prophetic texts, Gerald West has argued that James Scott's notion of infrapolitics offers resources to recognize the presence of poor and marginalized people's voices in the redacted layers of prophetic material in the Old Testament. "The voices of the exploited classes are a real presence, even in redaction. Ideological analysis along the lines of Scott's is required to enable us to recognise this real presence." Gerald O. West, "Redaction Criticism as a Resource for the Bible as 'A Site of Struggle,'" *Old Testament Essays* 30 (2017): 535. West goes on to argue that the presence of poor and marginalized groups is necessary in biblical redaction criticism. "So redactional critical work, if it is ideologically astute, on the final form of biblical books requires other classes besides the middle-class biblical scholar. Struggle-trained-eyes are necessary. But the tools they will take up with their ideologically attuned middle-class biblical scholar compatriots are the product of an ideologically attentive literary and redactional criticism." West, 542. Collaboratively engaging in re-translating offers an accessible way to conceive of this task.

⁹³¹ Virginia Fabella, "Preface," in *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge to Theology: Papers from the Fifth International Conference of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, August 17-29, 1981, New Delhi, India*, ed. Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, Virginia Fabella, and Sergio Torres (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983), xii.

⁹³² For a detailed description of the irruption see EATWOT V's final statement. Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, Fabella, and Torres, *Irruption of the Third World*, 195.

⁹³³ West, "Recovering the Biblical Story of Tamar: Training for Transformation, Doing Development," 142.

method of theologically re-translating biblical texts from the perspective of poor and marginalized groups, they have the potential to irrupt and disrupt the alliance between the neo-colonial neo-indigenous health and wealth gospel and the neo-liberal elites who control the wealth generated by extraction in the Ghanaian economy.

To pick up the flow of the larger argument, the reader should recall that chapter three argued that the missionaries of the colonial gospel and the prophets of the prosperity neo-colonial neo-indigenous gospel have articulated and modeled what they think “life more abundantly” looks like in Ghana and in the world.⁹³⁴ For missionary-colonial theology, the ordinary person is to wait for enjoyment in heaven. For neo-colonial neo-indigenous theology, the ordinary person is to trust the word of powerful prophets to destroy spiritual blockages that keep them from prosperity. In both cases the theological status quo supports the social and economic status quo established by colonial invasion and supported by the translation-as-invasion paradigm.

Chapter four has argued that an irruption in the method of theological re-translation of biblical texts is necessary in order to articulate what “life more abundantly” looks like for marginalized communities and marginalized groups within those communities. When this ‘irruption’ in theological and translational method is iteratively applied in marginalized African contexts where marginalized groups act as agents largely in control of their own projects of liberation, then the people’s re-translations and theological articulations have potential to make a prophetic contribution to social change.⁹³⁵

⁹³⁴ Mbamalu, “The Use of ‘abundant Life’ in John 10:10 and Its Interpretation among Some Yoruba Prosperity Gospel Preachers.”

⁹³⁵ I am alluding to language in the South African *Kairos Document* that makes a distinction between ‘people’s theology’ and ‘prophetic theology,’ arguing that ordinary Christians articulate a people’s theology and that professional theologians should be in dialogue with them to collaboratively produce prophetic theology. “The method that was used to produce the Kairos Document shows that theology is not the preserve of professional theologians, ministers and priests. Ordinary Christians can participate in theological reflection and should be encouraged to do so. When this people’s theology is proclaimed to others to challenge and inspire them, it takes on the character of a prophetic theology Kairos, *The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church: A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa*, Revised 2nd Edition (Braamfontein: Skotaville, 1986), 34–35, https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=2ahUKEwj2-d70yebkAhXbURUIHS7XBPcQFjABegQIBRAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fujamaa.ukzn.ac.za%2FLibraries%2Fmanuals%2FThe_Kairos_Documents.sflb.ashx&usg=AOvVaw2L9PSoLHLGvXIBfvs8mHxi.

Chapter five will continue to engage the prosperity gospel as it relates to African's women's theologies. Within EATWOT African women's theologies were characterized as "the irruption within the irruption" by Ghanaian theologian Mercy Amba Oduyoye.⁹³⁶ Chapter five will explore post-colonial re-translations articulated by marginalized groups of African women as part of a theological response to Ghana's neo-patrimonial system operating writ large in the African state, and writ small in rural northern Ghana.

⁹³⁶ Oduyoye, "Reflections from a Third World Woman's Perspective: Women's Experience and Liberation Theologies," 247.

5 Chapter 5 We are (re-)translating wo/men

In the last chapter I discussed the way African bodies are 'being translated' by their communities, especially focusing on their religious communities. All religious communities, African, Christian, and Muslim are living with disabilities. No group or person is exempt, not even the new churches, some of whom claim to be able to heal any and all diseases. Even the powerful prophets will one day be disabled.

The most influential religious translator of bodies in present day Ghana, and perhaps across sub-Saharan Africa, is the new charismatic Christianity which preaches a health and wealth gospel. This gospel is a virulent combination of the American gospel of wealth, making peace with African spirituality, but separating from the economic and political. The result is an unholy alliance between the new gospel and the neo-liberal African elites allied with neo-colonial interests.

Another historic and powerful religious 'translator' of African bodies is the Eurocentric developmentalist paradigm which suggests the enchanted worldview must be eliminated before genuine progress can be made. They argue African bodies need to embrace the secular paradigm before Africa can join the 'modern' world.

In contrast to these approaches, I argued that African bodies need to become active re-translators of biblical texts through the 'entangled' space and time of CBS. I argued for an emancipatory purpose and an emancipatory process to govern the logic of re-translating. An emancipatory purpose and process enables re-translators to begin to rework the logics that colonial assertions have made on their bodies and in their communities in a manner that allows for exploration and discovery. The emancipatory translation process brings translation's traditional sites of reception and production into a reciprocal and open ideological dialogue, allowing for a process of communal exploration. The re-translations of people living with disabilities have prophetic potential to cause a transformational irruption in the status quo in both secular and religious spheres of their world and beyond.

In this chapter I will continue the discussion of agency and its ideo-theological orientation in post-colonial translation by discussing African women as post-colonial re-translators. I begin with a discussion on gender in pre-colonial African cultures, moving into the influence of missionary-colonial Bible translation, asking how the translated Bible has reworked African theologies and influenced gender practices. Then I discuss Contextual Bible Study as activist re-translation. The case study will explore young women as re-translators of Ruth in dialogue

with African women's theologies, and the challenge of neo-liberal forms of women's agency in a neo-liberal Christian theological frame, known as the prosperity gospel. How do young African women engage in re-translating for a better life governed by a logic of liberation in the era of neo-liberal Christianity's complicity with oppressive economic and patriarchal structures?

5.1 Pre-colonial African gendered theologies, Bible translation, and post-colonial African women's theologies

Ifi Amadiume argues that most African societies have "matriarchal roots."⁹³⁷ Even societies in northern Ghana, which have often been analyzed as 'patriarchal' by colonial anthropologists, have been significantly misread. Amadiume takes up Meyer Fortes' analysis of the Tallensi kinship groups of northern Ghana. The Tallensi culture is just west of the Gambaga escarpment. The Tallensi culture is similar to the Bikɔm and the Moba cultures discussed in chapter two. In the pre-colonial era the Tallensi, like the Bikɔm and Moba, were a decentralized kinship-based society who were incorporated mainly as commoners into the Mamprusi Dagbamba politics of nam.⁹³⁸

Amadiume engages the anthropological data Fortes collected about the Tallensi culture. Amadiume argues that Fortes observes and documents some of the facts regarding matriarchal kinship relations, but Fortes misunderstands their significance.⁹³⁹ Amadiume writes:

The basic presence of the matricentric unit and its matriarchal principle in African social structures, I argue, means that even male-focused ancestor worship, although separate in its binary opposition to patriarchy, is not monolithically masculine, that is, consisting solely of male symbols and masculine principles and values.⁹⁴⁰

Amadiume continues:

If we exclude mother-focused ideas/philosophy, we miss the dialectic of gender, and consequently fail to understand the system of checks and balances in these societies.

⁹³⁷ Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 29–51.

⁹³⁸ Drucker-Brown, *Ritual Aspects of the Mamprusi Kingship*, 9, 35–36, 71, 94.

⁹³⁹ The soog kinship phenomenon refers to kinship through uterine descent. Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 32–35.

⁹⁴⁰ Amadiume, 36.

Ancestor worship cannot be understood outside the religious and philosophical system as a whole. The structure of father is not autonomous as that of mother.⁹⁴¹

While pre-colonial African cultures may not have been egalitarian, matriarchy was an autonomous system of organization that coexisted alongside patriarchy. Amadiume makes this case in her native Igboland in Nigeria, but also shows its remnants among groups like the Tallensi in northern Ghana. The autonomous space of matriarchy was damaged by colonial rule.⁹⁴² Amadiume is critical of Eurocentric analysis which is preoccupied with colonial rule such that it fails to recognize patriarchy and masculine imperialism.⁹⁴³ Amadiume argues that the discussion on pre-colonial myth as history must be re-opened. The violent invasion of patriarchal cultural practices upon matriarchal cultural practices, co-opting and subordinating matriarchal practices, corresponds to pre-colonial invasions and cultural conquests.⁹⁴⁴ The value systems of matriarchy have been subjugated in African ritual by patriarchal value systems.⁹⁴⁵ Therefore, scholars need to add a gendered analysis in the historical interpretation of contemporary ritual practice.

⁹⁴¹ Amadiume, 37.

⁹⁴² Ivor Wilks explored the way women in the pre-colonial Asante kingdom went through gendered stages. Her case study of Akyawaa Yikwan confirms that postmenopausal women could become “ritual men” and become elders, occupying chiefly offices. Wilks, *Forests of Gold: Essays on the Akan and the Kingdom of Asante*, 329–57. However, colonial rule led to a masculinization of the Asante public realm. After the advent of indirect rule, female elders and their courts were not recognized. Jean Allman and Victoria Tashjian, “*I Will Not Eat Stone: A Women’s History of Colonial Asante* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 2000), 24–25. See also Miescher, “Becoming an Opanyin: Elders, Gender, and Masculinities in Ghana since the Nineteenth Century,” 253–69, 264. “Yet in the course of the twentieth century, women’s status has decreased. Social structures and local institutions that once guaranteed senior Akan women access to decision-making processes and resources have lost their relevance. Mission churches, which originated as patriarchal institutions, marginalized and subordinated women, leaving limited spaces for female leadership.”

⁹⁴³ Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 48.

⁹⁴⁴ Amadiume, 46.

⁹⁴⁵ “Euro-patrifocal methodology imposed on African Studies can only result in suppressed and fragmented information in the data which suggest a missing matriarchal system. Rather than simply treating social competition and conflict as occurring only between generations and between men and women, a gender analysis that makes visible the paradigmatic gender oppositions enables us also to see competition and conflict between structural value systems in which the different generations and women and men all share and participate.” Amadiume, 51–52.

5.1.1 Translating the gendered names of African deities

Since anthropologists have missed the presence of subordinated matrilineal cultural systems in their cultural analyses, it follows that translation practices which are influenced by anthropology might have made similar omissions. What impact might the patricentric biases buried in missionary-colonial Bible translation have had on indigenous religio-cultural systems?

Sanneh describes missionary translation in the nineteenth century as a practice of linguistic communication that was theologically driven, which had religious, social, and cultural implications. For Sanneh, the starting point was with God, “God was not so disdainful of Africans as to be incommunicable in their languages.”⁹⁴⁶ God was not a foreign concept in Africa but preceded the missionary in the local culture. Sanneh points out in several places that theologically, the Judeo-Christian view of God was far too narrow for Africans.⁹⁴⁷ The Judeo-Christian God was capricious and judgmental and gendered as male. African notions of God, though diverse, were inclusive. Sanneh claims that Africans using the vernacular naturally understood God on their own terms. For Sanneh, the crucial move that missionary-colonial practice made was to use African names for God in their translations.⁹⁴⁸ Given the cultural denigration that had already taken place because of colonization, the choice of local divine names opened the possibility of revitalizing African religions. I referred to Bediako’s similar argument in chapter three section 3.6.1 above.

What would a gender critical analysis of Sanneh’s argument as applied to Bible translation suggest? Musa Dube writes, “A number of studies have been carried out to highlight how the translation of the biblical text into African languages was also the translation of gender-inclusive spiritual and social spheres into androcentric structures.”⁹⁴⁹ Among others, Dube cites Aloo Mojola’s work among the Iraqw of Tanzania.

In a subsequent article Mojola, a long-time translation consultant with the United Bible Societies, offers a series of contemporary Bible translation examples regarding gender and

⁹⁴⁶ Sanneh, “The Horizontal and the Vertical in Mission,” 166.

⁹⁴⁷ Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 160; 170–72.

⁹⁴⁸ Sanneh, 170–72, 196; Lamin O. Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 10.

⁹⁴⁹ Musa W. Dube, “Gender and the Bible in African Christianity,” in *Anthology of African Christianity*, ed. Isabel Apawo Phiri et al., Regnum Studies in Global Christianity (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: Cluster Publications, 2016), 151.

translating local deity names. One of the first issues of translation is what name to use for divinity—a foreign name, or a local name. Either way, the name will be ‘Christianized’ by the larger narrative of the Bible. Still, the choice is important, especially given Sanneh’s argument that translation revitalizes African religious sensibilities. Mojola was invited to be part of the translation work among the Iraqw people of northern Tanzania. The Iraqw case example is important because they understood the divine being as female, namely, Mother Looa.

The God that the Iraqw people have known across time, the God who appears in their folktales and myths, in their daily talk and conversations, in their traditional and cultural prayers, in their imaginations and thought systems and world views. They have for ages understood the creator of the universe to be Mother Looa. She is the provider and sustainer, the protector and loving mother of all humanity. She is the one to whom everyone runs or calls when they are in trouble. She represents all that is good, pure, beautiful and true. Evil and calamity, suffering and pain are however attributed to *Neetlanqw*, the male principle. Neetlanqw, interestingly represents chaos, destruction and evil. He is the very antithesis of Mother Looa, the female principle. The Iraqw language refers to Mother Looa using a female pronoun and to Neetlanqw using a masculine pronoun.⁹⁵⁰

The translation team, the majority of whom were female, and most of the language speakers used Mother Looa for the divine name. The early translations made that choice. However, a minority group of theologians was able to overrule the translators and the majority opinion. They argued for the use of the name of God in the dominant Kiswahili lingua franca, that is, Mungu. Technically, Mungu is neither male nor female but gendered as human, at least in its grammatical form. However, Mungu “was interpreted through the Judeo-Christian masculine lens and understood ontologically and not simply grammatically.”⁹⁵¹ In this way, not only was the Iraqw indigenous position ‘invaded’ by the dominant lingua franca, so also was a matriarchal concept invaded by a patriarchal concept. This then becomes entextualized through the act of translation and publication. And while the Indigenous concept will continue to hover, there is no doubt that a powerful gendered and ideological shift took place.

⁹⁵⁰ Aloo O. Mojola, “Bible Translation and Gender, Challenges and Opportunities – with Specific Reference to Sub-Saharan Africa,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 39, no. 1 (August 13, 2018): 4, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v39i1.1820>.

⁹⁵¹ Mojola, 5.

Mojola offers a related example taken from the Kihehe Bible Translation project in southern Tanzania. Among the Kihehe, the name for God is Inguluve. Mojola explains that in African Bantu languages there are no gendered pronouns like he or she in English. Bantu languages have ‘semantic’ classes. In Kihehe, Inguluve falls into the classification of things, not people. However, the translators made an interesting decision. Rather than using Inguluve (God as belonging to the class of non-human beings) in the Kihehe Bible, they inscribed the name of God to be Nguluve (God as belonging to the class of humans.)⁹⁵² In the translation, God is now understood to be personal rather than non-personal.

Mojola offers two other examples where the name of a feminine deity in the local religion was a potential choice for God’s name, but because of the translators’ Judeo-Christian lens they felt compelled to make a change. Rather than using a borrowed word for God, in the ongoing Kenyan Ateso Bible project, “the translation team has with much difficulty transformed Nakasuban (a feminine God) into Lokasuban (a masculine God), with the accompanying use of male pronouns present in the language.”⁹⁵³ In other words, the translation team changed the grammatical category of the commonly used name for God from feminine to masculine. They coined a new word. Other translation projects in related languages have made similar choices.

Mojola describes the default position for translators in relation to divine names in East Africa. The default ideo-theological⁹⁵⁴ position of translators is that the Christian God is male. Most translators prefer God should be inscribed in a manner that identifies God as male using male pronouns. In the Bantu languages, which have no gender but only class, the preference is to place God into the semantic class of persons. The languages that have gendered pronouns have major challenges as described above.

Even though the Bible is replete with feminine metaphors or figures for the divine, and in particular for the biblical God, it is the masculine metaphors that are preferred and given prominence. God is clearly not a woman or female, yet an impression is

⁹⁵² Mojola, 5.

⁹⁵³ Mojola, 5.

⁹⁵⁴ The term ‘ideo-theological’ is not Mojola’s term but applies well here.

given by translators and exegetes that God is masculine or in the image of the male human being.⁹⁵⁵

Mojola argues that a shift is made from viewing this language as metaphor to asserting that the male imagery has ontological status, that it communicates something of an objective reality about God.⁹⁵⁶ Citing Susan Ackerman's assessment of the Hebrew Bible as mainly a man's text,⁹⁵⁷ Mojola affirms that the biblical language and worldview are generally androcentric. The Bible, taken as a whole, gives the impression that the male is the privileged representative of all human beings. Mojola's linguistic evidence suggests African languages are not like this. Furthermore, according to Mercy Amba Oduyoye, neither are African theologies androcentric. Oduyoye argues that in African religious thought:

Attributes said to be feminine and others said to be masculine are all applied to God. While there is specifically male and specifically female imagery of the Source Being to be found in Africa, under the influence of Christianity and Islam a patriarchal God has been enthroned, in whose name women who pray to God as 'God our mother' are victimized.⁹⁵⁸

Mojola goes on to ask what can be done about the invisibility and silencing of women in translations?⁹⁵⁹ What can be done to address patriarchy as the elephant in the room?⁹⁶⁰

⁹⁵⁵ Mojola, "Bible Translation and Gender, Challenges and Opportunities – with Specific Reference to Sub-Saharan Africa," 5.

⁹⁵⁶ Mojola, 5.

⁹⁵⁷ Susan Ackerman, "Women in Ancient Israel and the Hebrew Bible" (Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies, Caroline Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations, 2016), 1. Quoted in Mojola, "Bible Translation and Gender, Challenges and Opportunities – with Specific Reference to Sub-Saharan Africa," 6.

⁹⁵⁸ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology*, Introductions in Feminist Theology 6 (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2001), 43.

⁹⁵⁹ "We take it so much for granted, it is the norm! Should we continue to be complicit in perpetuating this injustice?" Mojola, "Bible Translation and Gender, Challenges and Opportunities – with Specific Reference to Sub-Saharan Africa," 6.

⁹⁶⁰ Mojola cites Allan G. Johnson's extensive definitions of patriarchy. In sum, "society is patriarchal to the degree that it promotes male privilege by being *male dominated*, *male identified*, and *male centered*. It is also organized around an obsession with control and involves as one of its key aspects the oppression of women." Allan G. Johnson, *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*, Rev. and updated ed (Philadelphia,

Mojola argues that these translations decisions contribute to contemporary practices of patriarchy that are harmful for women and society.⁹⁶¹ Mojola asks, how can we get to a post-patriarchal world for the benefit of women, men, creatures, and the earth itself?⁹⁶²

To address the issue, I will begin with the importance of attending to women's theological discourse in Africa. Then I will discuss directions suggested by feminist translation studies.

5.1.2 African women's theologies: The irruption within the irruption

African women's theologies and their interpretative approaches to the Bible are the third ideo-theological approach to emerge within the historical development of post-colonial African theologies.⁹⁶³ In chapter four I mentioned the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) and the way they characterized their challenge to theology as the irruption of the third world.⁹⁶⁴ During the fifth EATWOT conference held in New Delhi in 1981, Mercy Amba Oduyoye describes African women's theologies emerging as "the irruption within the irruption."⁹⁶⁵

Oduyoye writes of the irruption, "The outburst came not because women were being treated as mere spectators at the meeting, but because the language of the meeting ignored our presence and therefore alienated some of the women present."⁹⁶⁶ Women urged that greater

PA: Temple University Press, 2005), 5. Quoted in Mojola, "Bible Translation and Gender, Challenges and Opportunities – with Specific Reference to Sub-Saharan Africa," 7.

⁹⁶¹ Julie Chinwe Ababa's research in Nigeria indicates that the cultural practice of patriarchy has deleterious consequences for women and society. Julie Chinwe Ababa, "Inequality and Discrimination in Nigeria, Tradition and Religion as Negative Factors Affecting Gender" (The Federation of International Human Rights Museums, 2012). Referenced in Mojola, "Bible Translation and Gender, Challenges and Opportunities – with Specific Reference to Sub-Saharan Africa," 8.

⁹⁶² Paula M. Cooley, William R. Eakin, and Jay B. McDaniel, eds., *After Patriarchy: Feminist Transformations of the World Religions*, Faith Meets Faith (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991), xii. Referenced in Mojola, "Bible Translation and Gender, Challenges and Opportunities – with Specific Reference to Sub-Saharan Africa," 8.

⁹⁶³ West, "African Biblical Scholarship as Post-Colonial, Tri-Polar, and a Site-of-Struggle," 251.

⁹⁶⁴ Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, Fabella, and Torres, *Irruption of the Third World*.

⁹⁶⁵ Oduyoye, "Reflections from a Third World Woman's Perspective: Women's Experience and Liberation Theologies."

⁹⁶⁶ Oduyoye, 248.

care should be taken in the theological use of language about God and before God. Oduyoye writes:

It was the irruption within the irruption, trumpeting the existence of some other hurts, spotlighting women's marginalization from the theological enterprise and indeed from decision making in the churches.

EATWOT had come face to face with the fact that the community of women and men, even in the church and among “liberation theologians,” is not as liberating as it could be.⁹⁶⁷

In Africa that initial Third World irruption within the irruption resulted in the founding of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (hereafter the Circle) by Oduyoye in 1989.⁹⁶⁸ The Circle was organized because women were realizing that religious traditions were being used to legitimize the exclusion and disempowerment of women. To counteract this, the Circle organized branches in many contexts of Africa to encourage each other and engage in theological discourse and writing. Dube indicates that the Circle is organized in regional and national chapters. In 2016 Dube reported it had “a continent-wide membership of about five hundred women who have produced at least a hundred books.”⁹⁶⁹ Beverley Haddad includes the historical development and ongoing influence of the Circle in her overview of South African women’s theological project, noting that African women’s theologies have critiqued culture and patriarchy. The Circle has been at the forefront of confronting the HIV crisis.⁹⁷⁰ Haddad also registers concerns regarding the Circle’s preference to engage gender injustice without linking those critiques to a wider socio-political analysis and the hesitancy to engage in theoretical discourse outside the African continent.⁹⁷¹

⁹⁶⁷ Oduyoye, 247.

⁹⁶⁸ Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Rachel Angogo Kanyoro, eds., *Talitha, Qumi!: Convocation of African Women Theologians: Papers*. (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1990).

⁹⁶⁹ Dube, “Gender and the Bible in African Christianity,” 147.

⁹⁷⁰ Haddad, “The South African Women’s Theological Project: Practices of Solidarity and Degrees of Separation in the Context of the HIV Epidemic,” 50–56.

⁹⁷¹ Haddad, 57–58. Haddad notes that Dube has made similar observations. See Musa W. Dube, “HIV and AIDS Research and Writing in the Circle of African Women Theologians 2002-2006,” in *Compassionate Circles: African Women Theologians Facing HIV*, ed. Ezra Chitando and Nontando M Hadebe (Geneva: WCC, 2009), 173–236.

5.2 Activist translation and CBS

In chapter four I explored Contextual Bible Study (CBS) as re-translation with an emancipatory purpose and process. Within translation studies I highlighted Skopos theory and its understanding of translation as an intentional act to change things in the world. I highlighted how Skopos theory's concern for the positionality of translation participants could be reworked for post-colonial contexts. I explored the logics of retranslation used in Euro-American translation studies, and argued that in a post-colonial context, CBS could be used in Skopos theory terms to press an emancipatory purpose. Additionally, CBS employs an emancipatory process where groups who have been overlooked by colonizing processes can be incorporated into the community dialogue by becoming re-translators. Not only does CBS resist colonial logics, it also reworks those logics for a better life from the perspective of the marginalized communities who become agents of translation.

In order to deepen the analysis of CBS as post-colonial re-translation, I will discuss CBS in relation to what translation studies scholars call activist approaches to translation or committed approaches to translation.

Tymoczko discusses activist approaches to translation as approaches that emphasize agency.⁹⁷² She highlights two metaphors that are used to describe activist translation. The first is resistance. Tymoczko indicates the metaphor was popularized in European languages for activities that opposed fascist governments in World War 2. Tymoczko finds the metaphor lacking because it characterizes agency and activism as reactive rather than proactive.⁹⁷³ Tymoczko also claims that there is no single antagonist in today's world, but rather there is colonialism, neo-liberalism, capitalism, the United States, patriarchy, oppression of sexual minorities, and more. Tymoczko calls for specifically naming precisely which faces of oppression one is resisting.⁹⁷⁴ It might also be important to group these adversaries together, as she does. It is also worth recognizing that resisting multiple oppressions can be exhausting. Resisting is not as compelling as constructing something worth fighting for. In terms of translation strategy, Tymoczko emphasizes it is a mistake to label one style of translating⁹⁷⁵

⁹⁷² Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*, 209–16.

⁹⁷³ Tymoczko, 210.

⁹⁷⁴ Tymoczko, 211.

⁹⁷⁵ One immediately thinks of those that imply a foreignizing approach to translation is always more resistive than a domesticating approach regardless of language hierarchies. Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, Translation Studies (London; New York: Routledge, 1995).

as resistive apart from a specific context of struggle in relation to a specific set of oppressions.

The second metaphor Tymoczko explores for activist translation is engagement.⁹⁷⁶ Other terms include “commitment, participation, mutual pledges and promises, making guarantees, assuming obligations, exposing oneself to risk, entering into conflict, becoming interlocked or enmeshed, and action undertaken by more than one person.”⁹⁷⁷ What Tymoczko calls engaged approaches have also been described as committed approaches to translation.⁹⁷⁸ Tymoczko suggests the metaphor of engagement is more useful than resistance as a foundation for activist translation because it involves taking initiative.⁹⁷⁹ But Tymoczko cautions that engaged activism should be conceived differently than *littérature engagée* as promoted by Jean Paul Sarte and others. Tymoczko worries that literature aimed at changing the attitudes of a small group of avant-garde elites is short sighted, given that many of said elites in the twentieth century were purged in multiple contexts. Paramount should be the question of the effectiveness of literature at achieving social change. How do translations act in the world as speech acts to “rouse, inspire, witness, mobilize, and incite rebellion.”⁹⁸⁰ Moreover, as the metaphor suggests, historically activist translators who have been successful in post-colonial contexts have often joined with others for joint actions and coordinated programs. A group of activist translators might agree to a set of goals and values. Tymoczko also notes that activist translators use multiple strategies to respond to differing ideological and cultural contexts.⁹⁸¹ Activist translators subordinate the text to ideology, as colonizing translators do.⁹⁸²

Mona Baker discusses groups of translators who have banded together in order to promote cultural narratives that expose or subvert the dominant cultural narratives which "conceal

⁹⁷⁶ “The term derives from words meaning ‘to be under a pledge’ from the Old French *gage*, ‘pledge’.”

Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*, 212.

⁹⁷⁷ Tymoczko, 212.

⁹⁷⁸ Siobhan Brownlie, “Descriptive vs Committed Approaches,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha, 2nd ed (London; New York: Routledge, 2009), 77–81.

⁹⁷⁹ Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*, 212.

⁹⁸⁰ Tymoczko, 213.

⁹⁸¹ Tymoczko, 215.

⁹⁸² Tymoczko, 216. Tymoczko notes that translators whose primary commitment is to the texts themselves often find the radical subordination of text to ideology problematic.

patterns of domination and submission."⁹⁸³ Baker argues that if scholars wish to make assertions about what activist translation actually looks like they would need to make a systematic analysis of the kinds of decisions such activist groups actually make.⁹⁸⁴ Again, the specific issues one is resisting and the specific contextual factors are relevant.

5.2.1 Feminist approaches to Bible translation

An influential form of activist translation is feminist translation. Sherry Simon's analysis of the Bible being translated in a feminist frame suggests there is not one set of translation decisions that can be called 'feminist.' First wave feminism, characterized by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, judged the translated English Bible according to the Enlightenment paradigm and accordingly judged the English Bible to be sexist. Second wave feminists, like Phyllis Trible, took a different approach to depatriarchalize specific biblical texts.⁹⁸⁵ Third wave feminists have returned to understanding the Bible as being intrinsically patriarchal. This is creating some new translational options. Some scholars argue for translations that will restore hidden women's voices. Others call for an opposite tack. Translators should amplify the patriarchal voices that one finds in the Bible so that hearers become more aware of its implicit androcentrism.⁹⁸⁶ Simon notes that feminists have been wary of embarking on full-scale

⁹⁸³ Mona Baker, "Translation and Activism: Emerging Patterns of Narrative Community," in *Translation, Resistance, Activism*, ed. Maria Tymoczko (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 30. Drawing on Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm Baker discusses the activist translation group Babels www.babels.org and contrasts their approach to Translators Without Borders.

⁹⁸⁴ Baker, 34–35. "What types of texts do members of such activist communities select for translation? Do they embellish certain narratives in order to give voice to those whose voices are suppressed and marginalized a better chance of being heard? Do they frame narratives with which they disagree strongly, such as the Project of the New American Century, in specific ways in order to undermine and expose their underlying assumptions? Do they omit or add material within the body of the text, or do they rely on paratexts to guide the readers interpretation of each narrative? Do the interpreters reveal their own narrative location through such factors as tone of voice, pitch, or loudness?"

⁹⁸⁵ Gerald West's analysis of Trible's work indicates that Trible sees "a depatriarchalising principle at work in the Bible itself....The depatriarchalising principle works through themes that implicitly disavow sexism, and through careful exegesis of passages concerned with female and male." West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 152. Trible distinguishes between translating themes in the biblical text and making new appropriations of biblical texts along feminist lines.

⁹⁸⁶ Simon notes Joanna Dewey as one arguing for translating women's hidden voices and Hutaff, Schaberg, Phyllis Bird, and Clarice J. Martin arguing for amping up the negative ideology in the text. Sherry Simon,

Bible translations because of the intense questioning that is going on in the present.⁹⁸⁷ On the other hand, Simon notes the publication of *An Inclusive Lectionary: Years A, B, and C* and a variety of perspectives on it.⁹⁸⁸ The ideo-theological commitment to women's equality and the gender-critical lenses that translators employ socio-historically, literarily, or semiotically have potential for particular translation decisions in particular contexts.⁹⁸⁹

5.2.2 CBS as activist re-translation

CBS as post-colonial re-translation with an emancipatory logic has a relationship to activist translation. Like activist translation, CBS emphasizes the agency of the translator. The difference inserted by CBS as post-colonial re-translation with a logic of liberation is that activist post-colonial translators are themselves implicated in the systems of oppression in the translation-as-invasion paradigm, which includes theories of knowledge as disseminated in systems of missionary-secular-colonial education. To engage groups who are less implicated in the colonial system, translators must become facilitators who work with groups in communities that have been disenfranchised by systems of oppression. For activist translation to be transformational in a way that does not become what de Wit labels a "flat activism,"⁹⁹⁰ those groups, those bodies, those 'others,' must become re-translators.

5.2.3 CBS and its theory of change

In chapter four's discussion of the values of CBS, the value of change indicated that CBS is not interested in reading (or translating) the Bible for its own sake. Rather CBS is committed to changing systems that marginalize people. CBS re-translates biblical texts using a different logic, an emancipatory logic that contributes to systemic change. CBS is like activist

Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 125.

⁹⁸⁷ Simon, 121.

⁹⁸⁸ Simon, 125. I note also this women's commentary series, Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, eds., *Women's Bible Commentary*, Expanded ed (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998).

⁹⁸⁹ Gerald West's analysis of the feminist hermeneutic approaches of Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Rosemary Radford Ruether suggests they are both interested in recovering women's presence in patriarchal texts. Schüssler Fiorenza prefers to use a socio-historical approach, what West characterizes as behind-the-text, whereas Ruether prefers literary analysis on-the-text. These approaches are complementary and not competitive. West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 117.

⁹⁹⁰ de Wit, "'It Should Be Burned and Forgotten!'" Latin American Liberation Hermeneutics through the Eyes of Another," 45.

translation in this regard. However, CBS changes the role of the activist translator. CBS practitioners assign a less central role to the activist translator in its theory of change.⁹⁹¹

Accordingly, CBS argues that systemic change must be led by those communities, groups, and individuals most affected by harmful social, economic, political, and theological systems. Those groups are essential agents of the change. Using CBS as a form of activist translation requires marginalized groups to be involved as agents who re-translate biblical texts themselves. The role of the activist translator, while still important, becomes more facilitatory.⁹⁹²

The foundational tenet of CBS's theory of change is the epistemological privilege of poor and marginalized communities, discussed in chapter four section 4.2.2.1 above. The bodily presence of the poor is necessary for genuine transformation. CBS prefers to work with 'organized' groups who have developed a shared language regarding their oppression and who have secured spaces where they can express that language. Resources that the poor possess include their knowledge of religion and the Bible, assets the poor can deploy in their projects of social transformation.⁹⁹³

The discussion of African Independent Churches in chapter three illustrates how translated Bibles in African languages have been a particularly useful resource for African communities struggling with missionary-colonial religion. The translated Bible helped them reinvigorate their own religio-cultural intuitions and frameworks for religious and political life.⁹⁹⁴ Africans accomplished this most effectively when they 'exited' missionary-controlled

⁹⁹¹ CBS works with thin conceptions of hegemony. West, "Liberation Hermeneutics," 508; Gerald O. West, "Locating 'Contextual Bible Study' within Biblical Liberation Hermeneutics and Intercultural Biblical Hermeneutics," *HTS Theologese Studies / Theological Studies* 70, no. 1 (February 20, 2014): 4, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2641>.

⁹⁹² Haddad identifies three contributions the activist-intellectual makes to communities of struggle. She can help secure safe space by her presence. She contributes "a range of critical resources for engaging the Biblical tradition and which challenge traditional understandings of oppression." And she is a "boundary-crosser." Beverley G. Haddad, "African Women's Theologies of Survival: Intersecting Faith, Feminisms, and Development" (Thesis Dissertation, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2000), 382; West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 111.

⁹⁹³ West, "Recovering the Biblical Story of Tamar: Training for Transformation, Doing Development," 136–37.

⁹⁹⁴ Sanneh highlights that Christianity's practice of translation relativizes source cultures and languages and destigmatizes host cultures and languages. "This action to destigmatize complemented the other action to relativize." Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 1.

churches⁹⁹⁵ to inhabit and control their own spaces where they could use the Bible and participate in its narratives governed by their goal of using the Bible for social healing.⁹⁹⁶

James Scott's notion of the hidden transcript helps explain why Africans gaining control of their own space is so important. Scott argues that poor and marginalized groups desire to form their own spaces separate from public venues where they can speak using their own modes of speech, their hidden transcripts, that negate the public transcript of domination.⁹⁹⁷ Scott's analysis privileges space, and recognizes the importance of the social control of space. From that point of view, the question is not whether or not the subaltern can speak, as Gayatri Spivak famously posed it,⁹⁹⁸ the question is *where* can the subaltern speak?⁹⁹⁹ West states, "*How* the subaltern speaks depends almost entirely on local 'sectoral' control of space."¹⁰⁰⁰

According to Michael Cronin, "translation brings control to the fore in a way that is not confined to any period of history."¹⁰⁰¹ Despite translation generally being part of an expanding imperial or national culture, Cronin avers, "there is no intrinsic reason why translation should not be of benefit to minority languages."¹⁰⁰² But for that possibility to be realized, speakers and translators from minority language communities must control not only what and when texts are translated, but also "*how* texts might be translated in and out of their languages."¹⁰⁰³ Drawing on Scott's distinction between public and hidden transcripts, I am arguing how texts are translated will depend upon which sector of a minority language society controls the space where translation takes place.

⁹⁹⁵ Kalu, "Ethiopianism in African Christianity," 231.

⁹⁹⁶ Dube Shomanah, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 192.

⁹⁹⁷ "This work of negation, as I call it, can take quite simple or quite elaborate forms. An example of an elaborate negation is the reworking by slaves of Christian doctrine to answer their own experiences and desires." Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 108.

⁹⁹⁸ Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

⁹⁹⁹ West, "The Not so Silent Citizen: Hearing Embodied Theology in The Context of HIV and AIDS in South Africa," 23; West, "The Biblical Text as a Heterotopic Intercultural Site: In Search of Redemptive Masculinities (A Dialogue Within South Africa)," 241.

¹⁰⁰⁰ West, "Recovering the Biblical Story of Tamar: Training for Transformation, Doing Development," 137.

¹⁰⁰¹ Cronin, *Translation in the Digital Age*, 20.

¹⁰⁰² Michael Cronin, *Translation and Globalization* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 167.

¹⁰⁰³ Cronin, *Translation and Globalization*, 167.

Scott argues, "The social sites of the hidden transcript are those locations in which the unspoken riposte, stifled anger, and bitten tongues created by relations of domination find a vehement, full-throated expression."¹⁰⁰⁴ These locations are private locations, not public locations, and thus the full-throated expression is protected from the blowback of force which dominant sectors of society may employ to protect their power.

What this means for Scott is that poor and marginalized groups are

less constrained at the level of thought and ideology, since they can in secluded settings speak with comparative safety and more constrained at the level of political action and struggle, where the daily exercise of power sharply limits the options available to them.¹⁰⁰⁵

CBS attempts to secure public space, like the space of churches and schools, for poor and marginalized groups to practice articulating their hidden transcripts in relative safety. The translated Bible is a resource Africans have recruited before and can recruit again to help them struggle for life. The Bible is a familiar resource to many, and it offers a familiar and powerful language.

But the Bible, even the translated Bible, is not a neutral asset. It is not always clear whether or not the Bible is on the side of the poor in their struggle for social change. As argued in chapter three, neo-colonial versions of Christianity circumscribe how the Bible is interpreted and use the Bible to isolate and blame poor and marginalized groups. And as argued in chapter four, the Bible itself is intrinsically contested at its sites of production and reception.¹⁰⁰⁶ This includes its ancient sites of production and reception and its contemporary sites of re-production and reception.

Scott indicates that dominant discourse is a "plastic idiom or dialect that is capable of carrying an enormous variety of meanings."¹⁰⁰⁷ In contexts where the Bible is a respected

¹⁰⁰⁴ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 120.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Scott, 91.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Itumeleng Mosala's analysis of the book of Micah concludes the book of Micah is a ruling class document, there is too much going on for it to be read in a straightforward kind of way. "Be that as it may, there are enough contradictions within the book to enable eyes that are hermeneutically trained in the struggle for liberation today to observe the kin struggles of the oppressed and the exploited in the biblical communities in the very absence of those struggles in the text." Mosala, "The Use of the Bible in Black Theology," 196.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 102–3.

resource used by dominant and subordinate sectors of society, the meanings the dominant intend with the Bible can be subverted by subordinate groups. A great example of this is the way the AIC's have used the translated Bible. The Bible's message had been translated assuming the superiority of missionary-colonial doctrine, but AICs did not perceive the message in the same way.¹⁰⁰⁸ They were able to re-translate, re-interpret, and redeploy the Bible for the purpose of indigenous social healing to rebuild their community with the help of biblical ancestors. This happened in their own "safe and sequestered" spaces.¹⁰⁰⁹

West argues that faith-based sites that are controlled by marginalized groups, such as women's groups in churches, are important, because women have secured these sites in the face of patriarchy. Women have developed religious rituals and symbols that are at their disposal in these sites. These resources can be recruited for social transformation. According to CBS's theory of social change, CBS works best in locations where socially engaged scholars are invited to collaborate by those who control such sites.¹⁰¹⁰

Within the safety of their own sites, marginalized groups can practice their hidden transcripts "offstage" in a way that prepares them for the time when the hidden transcript gets revealed in public.¹⁰¹¹ Scott argues that the hidden transcript and the public transcript in most circumstances are not in direct contact, but there are times when what has been hidden gets unveiled in public.¹⁰¹² Usually this happens as a result of practicing the hidden transcript in sequestered sites until it can be articulately expressed in public at the right time.¹⁰¹³ The nature of domination in the public transcript creates the conditions where many subordinate

¹⁰⁰⁸ Even when missionary intentions were encoded in the translated Bible, they were only partially encoded. In translation, particular meanings can never be fully controlled. African translators, African languages, African contexts, and African audiences scatter and randomize colonial intentions.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 120.

¹⁰¹⁰ "CBS work only takes place in such sites when and if the Ujamaa Centre is invited by those who control particular sites invite us to enter their site and to collaborate with them." West, "Recovering the Biblical Story of Tamar: Training for Transformation, Doing Development," 137.

¹⁰¹¹ "First, the hidden transcript is a social product and hence a result of power relations among subordinates. Second, like folk culture, the hidden transcript has no reality as pure thought; it exists only to the extent it is practiced, articulated, enacted, and disseminated within these offstage social sites. Third, the social spaces where the hidden transcript grows are themselves an achievement of resistance; they are won and defended in the teeth of power." Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 119.

¹⁰¹² Scott, 202–27.

¹⁰¹³ Scott, 225.

people have similar experiences. Therefore, when the public transcript is breached and the truth of the hidden transcript is publicly expressed, a “crystallization” can occur.¹⁰¹⁴ People recognize their own experience in the “close relatives” of other people’s hidden transcripts. This recognition in the context of similar experiences of domination has the potential to connect them to “a single power grid.”¹⁰¹⁵ This can result astonishingly quickly into mass defiance. To return to the language of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, mass defiance of poor and marginalized communities constitutes an irruption!

5.2.4 Offering CBS as a resource for change in northern Ghana

Scott’s theory helps show how language workers in northern Ghana might offer CBS in way that is useful for poor and marginalized groups in their communities. Unfortunately, in northern Ghana CBS is unknown. But reading the Bible contextually is known, and translation theology, which I have analyzed as a form of post-colonial theology, has become more widely known through the work of Kwame Bediako and the Akrofi Christaller Institute, mentioned in chapter three. Consequently, the Komba Literacy and Bible Translation Project (KOLIIBITRAP), a group introduced in chapter four, may be as well-positioned as any group for experimenting with CBS in their communities.¹⁰¹⁶ As an activist-intellectual who used to be a member of KOLIBITRAP, I started learning the CBS methodology and sharing it with my former colleagues. Together, we are attempting to adapt CBS in northern Ghana to make its methodology known to marginalized groups in the poor community. If marginalized groups experience CBS in a way that invigorates them, CBS may serve as a catalyst to spark their collective imagination and energy, illustrating that the Bible can be a part of social change. In fact, CBS’s theory of change argues that there can be no social change without religious change!¹⁰¹⁷

The Ujamaa Centre at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the group that has forged the CBS methodology, has found that one of the best ways to inspire religious change is by re-reading the Bible with poor and marginalized groups, offering critical resources from biblical studies. Biblical studies scholars understand that the Bible does not speak with a singular voice. As I argued in chapter four, the Bible is contested at its sites of production and its sites of

¹⁰¹⁴ Scott, 223.

¹⁰¹⁵ Scott, 224.

¹⁰¹⁶ KOLIIBITRAP works in literacy and Bible translation in the Likɔɔnl speech varieties. Likɔɔnl is also referred to as Komba.

¹⁰¹⁷ West, “Recovering the Biblical Story of Tamar: Training for Transformation, Doing Development,” 142.

reception. Bringing together a critical analysis of the Bible's sites of production and reception is important for contemporary social struggles because as South African scholar of Black Theology, Itumeleng Mosala has warned, "unstructural understanding of the Bible may simply reinforce and confirm unstructural understanding of the present."¹⁰¹⁸ Bible translation is an act which refreshes transmissions of the past for the present situation. As Sanneh's argument demonstrated, also discussed in chapter four, Bible translation has been and remains contested at its sites of production and its sites of reception. Translation is entangled with structural forces.¹⁰¹⁹ Translation is an industry as much as it is a mission. The notion of re-translation provides communities of poor and marginalized people an opportunity to engage in 'participatory hermeneutics' as they re-enter translation processes, and re-enter the biblical narratives, to re-work some of the translational decisions which have been made for them in the past in a manner that serves their contemporary needs.

As CBS becomes known in some of the communities of northern Ghana, marginalized groups may recognize CBS as an additional resource that energizes their desire for social and religious change. They may or may not recruit CBS into their own agendas for social change. As a cultural outsider, I offer CBS to colleagues and to marginalized groups, leaving space for community members to make CBS their own, or to set it aside for the time being.

The case study in chapter four highlighted an organized group of people living with disabilities in the communities surrounding Gbintiri in northern Ghana. Using CBS as emancipatory re-translation people with disabilities engaged with and re-translated some of the discourses in Job. As CBS participants they reworked the logics of retranslation in a manner that was potentially life-giving for them. They articulated glimpses of their visions for social progress in their re-translations. They crossed entangled space and time to participate with Job in re-translating for a better life. Borrowing the language of Sithembiso Zwane, we are waiting for people living with disabilities to make that 'invigorated' time and

¹⁰¹⁸ Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa*, 32.

¹⁰¹⁹ Christopher Rowland cites Walter Benjamin who makes an argument like Mosala's. Rowland paraphrases, "cultural monuments celebrated by history could not be understood outside the context of their origins, a context of oppression and exploitation. Just as the cultural object itself will never be free from barbarity, 'so neither is the process of handing down by which it is passed from one to the next.'" Christopher Rowland, "Social, Political, and Ideological Criticism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies*, ed. J.W. Rogerson and Judith M. Lieu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 669. Citing Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 257.

space into a time and space of their own ‘invention.’¹⁰²⁰ When that happens, people living with disabilities will invite CBS facilitators into their spaces to collaborate with them in their project for social transformation. When that happens the power dynamics between facilitators and participants will be on more equal footing.

In the case study in this chapter, gender is highlighted as a key component to the entangled oppressions in the post-colonial northern Ghanaian context. My colleagues and I engaged with a series of groups of women, offering CBS to ‘invigorate’ their experience with the Bible. We offered CBS as a way to ‘rework’ the process of Bible translation, recalling the language of Cindi Katz explored in chapter two section 2.5. Eventually, CBS may become a pathway to what the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians described as an “irruption” of religious and social change.

By introducing CBS to a new context, I am attempting to negotiate the twin neo-colonial dangers of ‘isolation’ and ‘invasion.’ Women in northern Ghanaian communities are not aware of the resource of CBS. By offering the CBS experience to different groups of women, I hope it will become a useful tool for them in the collective process, not just a novel experience. CBS must be offered and should not be ‘forced.’ CBS should not be used as another tool of invasion. By offering CBS with an open hand, I hope to walk the line between cultural isolation and invasion.¹⁰²¹

5.3 Re-translating Ruth(s) in the context of sugar daddies

In a series of Contextual Bible Studies, my colleagues and I from KOLIBITRAP joined with young women in the local context to explore sexuality in agrarian contexts of limited economic resources. My colleagues and I adapted a Contextual Bible Study on the book of Ruth developed in South Africa in the context of HIV infections which considers the possibility of Boaz as a “sugar daddy.”¹⁰²² We engaged in this study with young women in

¹⁰²⁰ West and Zwane, “Re-Reading 1 Kings 21:1-16 between Community-Based Activism and University-Based Pedagogy.”

¹⁰²¹ Michael Cronin attempts to chart a pathway for translation between what François Furet calls a totalitarian pathology of difference and a totalitarian pathology of the universal. I am attempting to articulate something similar here. Cronin, *Across the Lines*, 89; François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Deborah Furet (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 29.

¹⁰²² Gerald O. West and Beverley G. Haddad, “Boaz as ‘Sugar-Daddy’: Re-Reading Ruth in the Context of HIV,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 155, no. July (2016): 137–56. The new term that has developed

school, young women in vocational training, and young and mature women in churches. The facilitators were men, and there were also some men present as participants in two of the studies.¹⁰²³

CBS invites ordinary young women and men to read a biblical text with some additional disruptive resources from biblical studies, offered in the form of questions. Additional encouragement is offered from facilitators who use their authority and experience in Bible translation to invite young women into spaces like church buildings where they are not normally welcome to interpret sacred texts. The translators become CBS facilitators. As facilitators they encourage young women and men to re-interpret the biblical text from their own lived realities.

Translators know that translating can be a liberating activity. This is especially so for groups in post-colonial settings who have historic experience with oppression. For them re-translating is a post-colonial response to being translated by missionary-colonial projects. Why should translation as a post-colonial African response stop with the perspectives of official African translators when the liberating experience of post-colonial translation can be shared with all sectors of people?

To experience translation as liberating, human beings must translate from their own sectoral perspectives. Re-translating in this mode is a necessary and ongoing act of human liberation!¹⁰²⁴ Re-translating in this mode is admittedly partial and perspectival. It is more

in South Africa is “Blessed.” See Beverley G. Haddad, “‘Taking the Wanting Out of the Waiting’: HIV, Transactional Sex, and #Blessed, in the Context of Neo-Liberal Christianity,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 161 (June 2018): 5–17.

¹⁰²³ At the beginning of the study, as part of my commitment to ethical engagement I was careful to make sure that participants consented to participating in CBS. They were not forced to be present or to participate. Any individual or group could leave at any time if they felt uncomfortable. I outlined what we would be doing in the study. I would be asking them questions about their life and about the Bible, and they would be responding as groups with spokespersons. No individual responses would be taken. We would write the group responses on paper. I indicated that I might want to use some of their written statements in a book I was writing for my University professors about the Bible and how communities can use the Bible to change the world according to God’s vision for the world. I would be careful not share anyone’s identity, and if anything gets written on paper that should not be shared in my writing, they should tell me or another colleague, and we would be careful to keep that comment private.

¹⁰²⁴ Gerald O. West, “On the necessity of embodied translation,” paper presented at The Nida School of Translation Studies, May 30—June 10, 2016, Misano Adriatico, Italy.

piecemeal in its scope compared to institutional Bible translation that is subject to various regimes of publishing. But this mode of re-translating for liberation has the power to resonate¹⁰²⁵ across social sectors in a community as it practices human agency in the face of multiple oppressions.

Rather than thinking about translating men and women as objects in a society that need to be transformed by preconceived visions of social liberation, translation and re-translation can be practiced intransitively.¹⁰²⁶ Women and men translate. As people translate and re-translate biblical stories with themes that are relevant to their own social struggles, they may become more active in their own lives. As people translate and re-translate, all the translation ‘participants’ are transformed in the process, including the translators, the materials used, and the narrative itself. This kind of multi-participatory transformation avoids translating with a ‘flat activism.’

The Bible itself becomes viewed as something more than text.¹⁰²⁷ Drawing on the notion of participation with the biblical ancestors as practiced by the West African prophet William Wadé Harris, CBS participants participate with communities who are embodied in the biblical text across time and space.

As I describe the processes of CBS, I will highlight the ways using CBS reworks the normal pathways of (Bible) translation. My colleagues and I were not fully aware ahead of time of everything that we were doing. We believed the experience of young women in school in the

¹⁰²⁵ John Holloway, “Dignity’s Revolt,” in *Zapatista! Reinventing Revolution in Mexico*, ed. John Holloway and Elíona Peláez (London; Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 1998), 177.

¹⁰²⁶ Translation studies scholar Michael Cronin argues that we should think about translation using an intransitive notion of human production. Cronin is drawing upon anthropologist Tim Ingold. Cronin, *Translation in the Digital Age*, 50–51; Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), 6.

¹⁰²⁷ “...translatability allows us to think of the Scriptures as more than merely text. For it is possible to also think of Scriptures as a context, a context that the reader (or hearer) may enter and so actually participate in their world of meaning and experience.

...But translatability and the impact of the translated Scriptures also ensure that the ‘world of experience’ can be expanded in the other direction, leading occasionally to startling and novel ways of participating in the Scriptures, shaped, in such situations by the cultural world of experience of the reader or hearer....Harris seems to operate on the assumption that the spiritual universe of the African primal world offered valid perspectives for participating in the world of the Scriptures.” Bediako, “Biblical Exegesis in the African Context - the Factor and Impact of the Translated Scriptures,” 18.

context of sugar daddies cried out to be addressed by the God of life, but we did not fully understand our own entanglements with the issues we were confronting. We trusted the CBS process, engaging in the See-Judge-Act movement, and in cycles of action followed by reflection. We listened to the participants. As we went along we improved our understanding of the entangled issues and our strategies for addressing them. This thesis is part of the process of action and reflection.

5.3.1 See: The importance of social analysis in re-translation

One of the significant contributions that CBS offers to translation is foregrounding systemic analysis. Many Bible translators are not used to thinking about the systems that we participate in. The See-Judge-Act framework of CBS suggests that to ‘see’ a problem, participants need to critically analyze that problem using all the critical tools available to them, but especially their own critical thinking.

The initial social problem the male Bible translators perceived was that young women in their communities, churches, and families were getting pregnant in school, causing them to drop out of school. The CBS process encouraged us to think about the systems in play in a young woman’s life: school systems, economic systems, family systems, marriage systems, religious systems, and health systems. We asked ourselves why this problem keeps happening again and again. Which systems work together to contribute to this repetitive problem?

5.3.1.1 Socio-economics, patriarchy, culture, and health

What we discovered was that while pregnancy is a problem, a systemic analysis that privileges the point of view of young women frames the problem differently. We engaged in a lot of dialogue with groups of young women in school, groups of young and mature women in sewing apprenticeships, and groups of young and mature women in church. The groups of young women indicated that economic vulnerability is the key problem they are facing in northern Ghana.

In Ghana young people generally go to school, or to apprenticeship in towns that are larger and more economically prosperous than the towns where they are raised. The economic context of northern Ghana is such that there is very little excess money in rural communities. The cultural context is one of patriarchy, where most men view their daughters as resources that will ultimately benefit another kinship group and not their own, so they invest the limited resources they have in the educational and vocational development of their sons. Sometimes mothers also invest in their sons to protect themselves as they get older and face increasing

marginalization in the kinship group and community. Wealthy sons offer protection for their mothers.

Students are maturing sexually at the same time they are experiencing increased economic needs and heightened social pressures in a new environment. Expenses emerging from their school environment include paying for book costs, photocopy costs, and extra fees for tutoring. Expenses emerging from their new social environment include the social pressure to spend resources on appearance, apparel, and material items like phones.¹⁰²⁸

In a rural market town like Gbintiri, a limited number of individuals (mostly men) have achieved greater wealth as compared to subsistence farmers. These individuals have acquired positions which generate wealth by force, exceptional ability, technological know-how, political skill, or economic entrepreneurship. They may hold positions such as chief, craftsman, trader, malam (or imam), pastor, teacher, clerk, politician, soldier, and policeman.¹⁰²⁹ Generally, more mature men hold these positions. The individuals in these positions have a greater share of wealth than individuals working mainly as farmers in the kinship-based system. Agriculture operates in the subsistence economy, and there are some farmers who have managed to acquire wealth and have achieved status through farming.

Many young women willingly enter into age disparate sexual relationships, expecting material benefits as appreciation for sex.¹⁰³⁰ The common term for this kind of relationship is a ‘sugar daddy’ relationship. Stereotypically, sugar daddies are older wealthier men who give young women gifts in exchange for sex for a period of time. Young women often call them daddy or uncle rather than boyfriend. The technical term for describing this phenomenon is

¹⁰²⁸ Suzanne Leclerc-Madlala, “Transactional Sex and the Pursuit of Modernity,” *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies* 29, no. 2 (2003): 213–33. Leclerc-Madlala has called these designer goods the “new needs” of modernity.

¹⁰²⁹ Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufɔ of Northern Ghana*, 81–93.

¹⁰³⁰ In sub-Saharan Africa, since material exchanges are a normal part of all types of sexual relationships, these women would not consider themselves sex workers or prostitutes as understood in Western countries. Nevertheless, community based critical reflection on the various types of sexual relationships and their deeply rooted motivations are urgently necessary. See Suzanne M Leclerc-Madlala, “Transactional Sex, HIV and Young African Women: Are We There Yet?,” *Future Virology* 8, no. 11 (November 2013): 1041–43, 1042, doi:10.2217/fvl.13.90. See also Augustine Ankomah, “Sex, Love, Money and AIDS: The Dynamics of Premarital Sexual Relationships in Ghana,” *Sexualities* 2, no. 3 (August 1999): 291.

age disparate transactional sex. Unfortunately, age-disparate transactional sex is the leading driver of new HIV infections and other sexually transmitted diseases.¹⁰³¹

In Ghana as in other African contexts, it should be noted that sugar daddy relationships are not exclusively motivated by poverty. For instance, a young woman may be befriended by her father's friend in a sexual relationship of which her family may be unaware. In Southern Africa, in addition to material benefits, research has shown that young women perceive that older men as sexual partners provide psycho-social support. Among agrarian kinship-based societies in West Africa, there are also long standing, traditionally rooted motivations for intergenerational sexual relationships.¹⁰³² Haddad indicates that the term age-disparate sex is contested.¹⁰³³ Stobenau et al. have reviewed the literature in Sub-Saharan Africa and identified three paradigms related to age-disparate sex in the literature: sex for basic needs, sex for social status,¹⁰³⁴ and sex and material expression of love.¹⁰³⁵ But there is great fluidity between each of these paradigms.¹⁰³⁶

While there are both positive and negative views of sugar daddy relationships among women and men, research confirms the greater the age disparity between sexual partners the less likely contraception will be employed and the more likely unplanned pregnancy and

¹⁰³¹ West and Haddad, "Boaz as 'Sugar-Daddy': Re-Reading Ruth in the Context of HIV," 137–47; Joshua Amo-Adjei, "Age Differences and Protected First Heterosexual Intercourse in Ghana," *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 16, no. 4 (December 2012): 58–67.

¹⁰³² David Tait, *The Konkomba of Northern Ghana* (London: Published for the International African Institute and the University of Ghana by the Oxford University Press, 1964), 94–99. Men would marry around age 40, while women around the age of 18.

¹⁰³³ Haddad, "'Taking the Wanting Out of the Waiting': HIV, Transactional Sex, and #Blessed, in the Context of Neo-Liberal Christianity," 9–12.

¹⁰³⁴ Leclerc-Madlala, "Transactional Sex and the Pursuit of Modernity."

¹⁰³⁵ Suzanne Leclerc-Madlala, "Age-Disparate and Intergenerational Sex in Southern Africa: The Dynamics of Hypervulnerability," *AIDS* 22, no. Suppl 4 (December 2008): S17–25, doi:10.1097/01.aids.0000341774.86500.53. Citing several studies, Leclerc-Madlala identifies several factors beyond economic that contribute to positive perceptions around age disparate transactional sex from both men's and women's perspective. These positive perceptions outweigh potential negative outcomes. In the context of the United States, from a masculine point, a similar psycho-social motivation for intergenerational sex may be at work where men commonly seek intimacy with women "young enough to be their daughters." bell hooks, *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2004), 145.

¹⁰³⁶ Kirsten Stobenau et al., "Revisiting the Understanding of 'Transactional Sex' in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Review of Synthesis of the Literature," *Social Science & Medicine* 168 (2016): 186–97, 192.

infections will result.¹⁰³⁷ Pregnancy is currently frowned upon by the Ghana Education Service policy for young women in school, so a young girl must drop out for a time if she becomes pregnant. If the young woman cannot get support from her partner, she may find it difficult to get support at her natal home, because there is a stigma attached to giving birth at your father's house rather than at the partner's home. Among agrarian kinship groups in northern Ghana and elsewhere on the African frontier, this would not have been a problem in the past. A young woman pregnant from her lover was not rejected by her betrothed husband, even though she was impregnated by another man.¹⁰³⁸ In chapter one, I discussed the time when kinship groups were reconfiguring themselves in order to survive in the African frontier. Kinship groups were trying to attract people, because every farmer could produce enough for himself plus a small excess. The more people a kinship group had, the more excess it could produce. In the pre-colonial context there was an internal motivation to acquire people with less concern about expenses associated with group members.

Farming has changed, marriage betrothals have changed, and perhaps just as important, the economic expectations of people have changed. The demand for schooling for all and the expense associated with school and vocational training make it less desirable for kinship groups to add members. If a man does not want a child for his kinship group, a woman's natal kinship group is not likely to want to raise that child. Abortion is another alternative young women consider, but it has social stigma and danger attached to it. While it may be legal in the health care system, many women prefer local abortion practitioners, while some try to do it themselves.

While economic factors are drivers of the phenomenon, there are also entangled socio-cultural factors which complicate the analysis. The risk of HIV indicates that these drivers are literally related to women's survival. Accordingly, theological analysis must address issues of women's survival.¹⁰³⁹

¹⁰³⁷ Joshua Amo-Adjei, "Age Differences and Protected First Heterosexual Intercourse in Ghana," *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 16, no. 4 (December 2012): 58–67. Amo-Adjei's research suggests that as age disparity between partners increases so does the likelihood of unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

¹⁰³⁸ Tait, *The Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, 99.

¹⁰³⁹ Haddad, "African Women's Theologies of Survival: Intersecting Faith, Feminisms, and Development," 384–89. Haddad argues that women's survival theologies need to be part of church theologizing, the academy, development, and the African women's theological project itself.

5.3.1.2 Theological analysis

Beverly Haddad offers an overview of the social-scientific research but also adds a theological analysis of age-disparate transactional sex. The popular understanding of sugar daddies took a theological turn in South Africa when the term #Blessed emerged on social media sites in 2015. A ‘blesser’ is an extension of the term sugar daddy which moves the sexual relationship into the realm of theology. A blesser is someone who provides a woman with the opulent wealth of consumer capitalism in exchange for an on demand sexual relationship. The woman exchanges sex in order to consume the goods which, according to the prosperity gospel, God has promised is the right of every believer.¹⁰⁴⁰ Haddad observes that while the notion of blessing in Genesis 12:2 includes material blessing, it is a blessing that is meant to be passed on to others. It is communal not individual.¹⁰⁴¹

Social scientific literature indicates that women who engage in sugar daddy relationships and those who engage in blesser relationships choose these relationships as an act of agency. For some in poor areas it is a matter of survival. But in the extreme form of blesser relationships, women use their bodies to access consumer goods they would otherwise not be able to attain. In so doing, Haddad asserts, they use their agency in a manner that questions all the major assumptions of African women’s theologies.

Haddad describes African women’s theologies as resting on three assumptions. First, women seek to be in egalitarian relationships with men. Second, women assert their agency to achieve this goal and in so doing they bring health and healing to both women and men. Third, women assert their agency in solidarity with other women.¹⁰⁴² Haddad is ‘concerned’¹⁰⁴³ that in contexts influenced by globalized neo-liberal capitalism, with structures of gendered economic inequality in place, these three pillars are under attack by women themselves who are using their agency as young desirable women to engage in “opulent life styles and consumption.” The theological strategies (not so much interpretative strategies) of ordinary women are only liberating in a hyper-individualized sense. Women are using their agency to achieve personal emancipation with little regard for the potential of their own HIV infection. Neither do they challenge the inequality built into the economic

¹⁰⁴⁰ Haddad, “‘Taking the Wanting Out of the Waiting’: HIV, Transactional Sex, and #Blessed, in the Context of Neo-Liberal Christianity,” 13–16.

¹⁰⁴¹ Haddad, 13.

¹⁰⁴² Haddad, 16.

¹⁰⁴³ I am referring to the Circle of Concerned Women.

structures entangled with patriarchy. By choosing the label #Blessed they are using the tools of prosperity theology to spiritually sanction their actions.¹⁰⁴⁴

Haddad's theological and biblical analyses¹⁰⁴⁵ are important considerations to test out in northern Ghana, despite the large disparity between these socio-economic contexts and the large distance which separates these contexts. As argued in chapter 3, neo-Pentecostal Christianity is the dominant force in the Ghanaian context. The new Christianity has largely influenced the AICs and the mainline churches. The new version of Christianity is very present in the communities I am focusing on in northern Ghana. Therefore, the theological terrain is already prepared for the 'blesser' phenomenon with one exception, the young women we are working with in rural northern Ghana do not have access to men with excessive capital resources. More work needs to be done on the conceptual and theological relationships between blessers and sugar daddies across urban and rural contexts.

Systemic social analysis has helped my translation colleagues and me see the social problem more clearly. Much is still unclear. But we can say that for young women in northern Ghana, the issues of education, sex, sugar daddies, pregnancy, marriage, consumer goods, and STDs are linked to economic vulnerability. And the logic of the prosperity gospel may be playing a role in sanctioning sugar daddy relationships.

According to the See-Judge-Act method, facilitators attempted to 'see' the problem by engaging in dialogue with young women and by engaging with critical scholarship. Groups of young women began to engage in 'seeing' their situation through these discussions. The 'see' phase of CBS continues when the study questions connect the critical social analysis we have done to the biblical text in question. The study moves into the 'judge' phase of the process when facilitator's ask questions that encourage the young women to consider whether their lived reality is in line with God's desire for young women in society. How does the Bible help them to 'judge' their reality?

5.3.2 Judge: including 'other' bodies with different entanglements in the act of making social judgements

The movement to judging contemporary realities is precisely when translators are tempted to draw on the procedures of the translation-as-invasion paradigm. Translators draw on the

¹⁰⁴⁴ Haddad, "'Taking the Wanting Out of the Waiting': HIV, Transactional Sex, and #Blessed, in the Context of Neo-Liberal Christianity," 15.

¹⁰⁴⁵ West and Haddad, "Boaz as 'Sugar-Daddy': Re-Reading Ruth in the Context of HIV."

religious judgments made by religious leaders who may be speaking from their own sectoral point of view without the benefit of cross-sectoral dialogue. Religious judgments are often based upon scriptural¹⁰⁴⁶ interpretations. How are those interpretations arrived at? Bible translators interpret and translate biblical texts based on their own embodied point of view and their own entanglements as translators, pastors, exegetical advisors, and consultants. And this is precisely the juncture where translators must in-corporate other bodies who are differently entangled into the process of (re-)interpreting and (re-)translating biblical texts.

The commitment to community, discussed in chapter four section 4.2.2.1, leads us to question the Euro-American individualist influence in society, including the individual and moralizing influence of American evangelicalism on theology. Because of the American individualized moral influences of evangelical theology, translators are tempted to interpret/translate in such a way that the Bible is used as a moral tool to tell young women and men that they are making poor individual choices that violate God's moral law. And while I recognize that the trajectory to interpret sexual relations with certain groups as leading to 'moral' decline is in the Bible, for example the 'holy seed' theology drawn from the book of Ezra and from various sections of the Bible, holy seed theology is not the only biblical theology in Scripture. For instance, the book of Ruth appears to operate with a different theology. It may be that the entanglements of typical translation teams influence them to read Ezra's holy seed theology back into Ruth. How might young women, who may be entangled with the character of Ruth through their shared economic vulnerability in agrarian economies, and men who may be entangled with the character of Boaz or the young workers in the field, actively re-interpret and re-translate this text foregrounding their entanglement so that translation teams might be able to 'hear' Ruth, perhaps for the first time?

In this subsection on the 'judge' movement within CBS, I explore CBS as re-translating governed by the logic of liberation just as I did in chapter four. In that chapter I summarized Deborah Shadd's presentation of the logics of retranslation, a discourse that has been taking place in translation studies.¹⁰⁴⁷ Drawing on Sharon Deane-Cox's notion of retranslation

¹⁰⁴⁶ Scriptures often refer to a written biblical canon, often in an authoritative way. Scripture can also refer to sacred texts in any religious tradition. The Islamic tradition of Scripture is an important dialogue partner in northern Ghana. As stated above, AICs began working with a participatory hermeneutic, CBS continues that tradition, reworking the nature of what the Bible is.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Shadd, "Response to Carolyn J. Sharp – Translating Alterity: Conflict, Undecidability, and Complicity"; Shadd, "Retranslation and Revision in a Rapidly Changing World."

which suggests retranslation is motivated by an alternative logic, Shadd presents the logics of progress and challenge as the primary alternative logics which translation studies scholars have identified as motivations for retranslating.¹⁰⁴⁸ Shadd adds the logic of dialogue as a third motivating logic for retranslating. Gerald West took up Shadd's discourse and suggested a fourth motivating logic for re-translation,¹⁰⁴⁹ the logic of liberation. West argues that in post-colonial contexts, resisting colonial translation is a necessity. I discussed how the re-translational logic of liberation can be used by CBS participants to rework the other logics for re-translation in ways that they find useful. I continue to explore CBS as a method of re-translation governed by the logic of liberation. CBS reworks the other logics of re-translation in a way that helps a community articulate its desire for a better life. I ask, how do the groups dialogue with each other? What are they confronting? What are their social visions? Do their re-translations follow the prosperity theology pathway of individual emancipation at the expense of collective emancipation despite the risks to health and the sacrifice of egalitarian relationships? Are they confronting the matrix of patriarchy and economy? How is their discourse changing the ideo-theological landscape in their locales? What are the next frontiers for them? Will it include re-translating for a better life?

5.3.2.1 Facilitating re-translating Ruth governed by a logic of liberation

The emancipatory purpose for re-translating Ruth with young women was set when the facilitators identified young women's educational and vocational development in contexts of limited economic resources as the 'theme' of the study. A theme can also be a 'burning issue' that the community is experiencing. This theme guided our selection of the biblical text of Ruth. We believed Ruth 2 and 3 offered young women resources to help them resist the system of economic and social oppression. This theme also provided a specific hermeneutical clue to help us find our way into the text of Ruth.¹⁰⁵⁰ Gender and economic vulnerability clued us into the detail in the text about land, harvest, ethnicity, fertility, and death. This was the first step in re-translating governed by the logic of liberation.

The second way we prioritized the logic of liberation was by respecting the resources already present in the local context. We recognized the presence of the Bible among the community

¹⁰⁴⁸ Deane-Cox, *Retranslation*, 2–3.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Regarding the insertion of the hyphen see chapter four section 4.1.4, above, and footnote 685, above.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, *Overtures to Biblical Theology 2* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 23.

before CBS ever began. We offered the resources of CBS as a guest to a host community. CBS makes an offer of additional critical detail to the knowledge the local groups already possess. CBS offers an opportunity to re-translate the already present translations. The translations that are already present included written translations which we used during the study. But there was also a locally produced picture translation that we the facilitators helped produce as a tool for women's literacy.

In the 1980s and 90s, the Lutheran mission in northern Ghana was involved in church planting and development. Development included well digging, tree planting, animal husbandry, care of the soil, farming techniques, health clinics, and literacy. Large scale literacy classes were active in the 1990s. By the mid-2000s most of those literacy classes had run their course. In 2006-2007 the Lutheran church had some 'remaining' funds available from a grant from Lutheran World Relief for women's literacy in northern Ghana.¹⁰⁵¹ Since the Komba Literacy and Bible Translation Project (KOLIBITRAP) had recently been formed in Gbintiri, Ghana, they applied for and received some of this money. KOLIBITRAP's literacy strategy focused on literature production as one of the keys to promoting a literature-rich environment, which contributed to sustainable reading. The idea was that literacy classes and literacy primers alone are not enough to generate ongoing interest in reading. The community needed interesting texts to read.

Building on the many women who had already attended literacy classes, KOLIBITRAP chose to produce a booklet on the story of Ruth with illustrations drawn by a local artist. An artist was identified and commissioned. Yajim Amadu, a member of the community and an artist, drew pictures illustrating the story. The pictures are a different semiotic form of communication than decoding printed text which the women could read in open-ended ways. Even those who did not know how to decode words could read the codification¹⁰⁵² of the pictures. In addition, simple one sentence descriptions were printed below the pictures for the

¹⁰⁵¹ What is the relation of excess to surplus as it relates to gleaning and development?

¹⁰⁵² Freire discusses the importance of codification and decodification as more than a process of coding and decoding. "Codification refers alternatively to the imaging, or the image itself, of some significant aspect of the learner's concrete reality (of a slum dwelling for example). As such, it becomes both the object of the teacher-learner dialogue and the context for the introduction of the generative word...decodification refers to a process of description and interpretation, whether of printed words, pictures, or other "codifications." As such, decodification and decodifying are distinct from the process of decoding, or word recognition." Freire, *The Politics of Education*, 60, notes 14 and 15.

women to practice decoding written text. The booklets were distributed in several communities and workshops were offered for women to practice reading these booklets and sharing them with others.

The CBS study began by referencing this picture book. The young women read the book, focusing on the pictures and the printed text. One young woman summarized what the story was about as follows: “Ruth laid at the feet of the man, and that is why she gave birth.” More recently, we have shifted to projecting the pictures on the wall, showing only the pictures, but no text. It would be instructive to see if the pictures were shown without text and without articulated narrative how the participants could discern ‘themes’ in the story. The following pictures were produced by Yajim Amadu, reading them from left to right. After the pictures were viewed, the first question of the CBS commenced.





Figure 4: Thumbnails of pictures drawn by Yajim Amadu (used with permission)

The third way this CBS used an emancipatory logic was through the ideo-theological grain of the CBS questions. CBS consists of a series of carefully constructed ideo-theological questions that encourage young women to explore potentially disruptive detail in a biblical text. The critical detail is offered as an additional resource for them in their struggle to foster resiliency in extremely difficult situations, to rework the narratives that oppress them, and perhaps to foster spiritually inspired resistance to oppression. The slow community-directed movement from resilience, to reworking, to resistance has been described by Cindi Katz, summarized in chapter two section 2.5 above. Drawing upon Katz's analysis, Gerald West has begun to reflect on the way the Ujamaa Centre uses Contextual Bible Study to offer disruptive detail in biblical texts to communities to facilitate resilience. For the Ujamaa Centre it is important that communities negotiate their own forms of resilience.¹⁰⁵³

¹⁰⁵³ Gerald O. West, "Facilitating Interpretive Resilience: The Joseph Story (Genesis 37-50) as a Site of Struggle," *Acta Theologica Supplementum* 26, no. 1 (2018): 17-37, <http://dx.doi.org/10.18820/23099089/>

As a reminder to the reader, Cindi Katz has identified a fine-grained process of resistance, which begins with communities building internal resilience so they can survive oppression. Resilience is a bit of ambiguous term because sometimes practices of resilience end up reinforcing forms of oppression. Nevertheless, as communities negotiate resilience, it can feed into communities perceiving the ways that systems oppress them. As they perceive the inner workings of oppression, communities can begin to rework the systems that oppress them. As communities rework the systems of oppression, that can lead to communities choosing concrete acts of social resistance on the systemic level.¹⁰⁵⁴ This process cannot be rushed, and CBS is only one part of that larger process. Within that larger process, the CBS questions are offered to help participants re-translate the details of the story, to see details in the text and in the pictures they might not have noticed. They might want to redraw the pictures on paper.¹⁰⁵⁵ Or they might think about the space between the pictures differently. In theory, the CBS questions offer participants the opportunity to move from building resilience, to reworking the logics of oppression, to more overt forms of resistance, all in the same study. But these phases are a process that cannot be put onto a timeline. Groups move at their own pace.

The ideo-theological grain of the CBS questions embraces the perspective of vulnerable young women struggling for economic survival and self-development in a patriarchal context. Beginning with the young women's perspective is a recognition of young women's dignity. This can help young women build internal resilience. Further, beginning with the young women's perspective also reworks the inner logics of the translation-as-invasion paradigm that privileges the perspective of kings and princes. The questions we used in northern Ghana have taken the following form with some modification depending on the group:

- 1) What are some of the themes in this book?

Read Ruth 1:22 and 2:1-3.

- 2) What was Ruth's plan upon arriving in Bethlehem?

actat.Sup26.1; Gerald O. West, "Contextual Bible Study and/as Interpretive Resilience," in *That All May Live: Essays in Honour of Nyambura J. Njoroge*, ed. Ezra Chitando and Esther Mombi, Forthcoming.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Katz, "On the Grounds of Globalization: A Topography for Feminist Political Engagement"; Katz, *Growing up Global*, 243–57.

¹⁰⁵⁵ The offer to draw was welcomed by young women in sewing apprenticeships. I noticed several of them tracing the picture of Boaz.

Read 2:4-7. Dramatize the scene for them, acting it out in space.

- 3) Re-read 2:7.
 - a) In your culture, can someone ask to glean among the sheaves?
 - b) Based on Ruth's request to glean among the sheaves, what might Ruth's dream be for economic survival for herself and her mother-in-law? [Optional: Read 4:3-4. Did this land somehow belong to Naomi?]

Read 2:8-16

- 4) What does Boaz say to Ruth? Re-read 2:8-9, 14-16. What is his intention?
- 5) What does Ruth do or say that shows her intention? 2:10, 2:13.

Read Ruth 2:17-3:18.

- 6) What was Naomi's role in what happened? What was Naomi's intention?
- 7) What were Ruth's hopes and fears as she approached the threshing floor?
- 8) Is this a sugar daddy relationship?
- 9) What is a sugar daddy in your context?
- 10) What are the benefits and risks of a sugar daddy relationship?
- 11) From your perspective, what systems need to change in your churches, mosques, communities, schools, and families to help young women?

5.3.2.2 Facilitating re-translating Ruth using the post-colonial logic of dialogue

Under the safety net of the governing emancipatory purpose of CBS, which was established at the outset of the study and which is signaled in the ideo-theological grain of the questions, and the presence of a familiar Bible, participants explored the details of Ruth in dialogue with each other. Different re-interpretations were articulated and written on paper in front of the group. No one interpretation was given priority over the other.¹⁰⁵⁶

¹⁰⁵⁶ The post-colonial logic of dialogue can usefully be reflected upon in relation to CBS's theory of change, especially as it relates to Scott's notion of hidden transcripts forming a "latent power grid." Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 224. When the hidden transcript is shared by different individuals, Scott argues,

Question 3 was particularly important for us. It represents a development in this study that emerged from the agrarian context of northern Ghana. Question 3 was developed after our first facilitation of this study, when a colleague, Elijah Matibin, began to spontaneously perform the act of gleaning, in order to try and motivate one particular set of young women to more deeply engage with us and the questions we were asking. Matibin used his body and the space in the church where the study was being held to perform the gendered work of gleaning. By using his body in this way Matibin signaled it was okay for the young women to access their cultural knowledge of gleaning when interpreting this text. He also signaled an openness to a different embodied and sectoral perspective than his own. Matibin illustrated how a facilitator might signal an openness to being partially constituted by entanglements other than one's own.¹⁰⁵⁷

The result of Matibin's performance was an engagement between facilitators and young women that was more collegial, less serious, and more playful. While the first group of young women we engaged with this study were not sure why Ruth would have asked to glean among the sheaves, subsequent studies have indicated several possibilities. I will discuss this more below in the section on the post-colonial re-translational logic of social progress.

The questions of CBS invite participants to pay attention to the detail of what the characters say and do. The key to this CBS is to interpret what is meant by specific statements and actions. This is dialogically explored by participants. This CBS brings out that the ancient text of Ruth walks a fine line between offering detail to the reader/hearer without explicitly interpreting what that detail means. Ruth is fantastically ambiguous. Ruth is suggestive without being explicit. Ruth is a masterpiece in what James Scott calls *infrapolitics*. Ruth is a

"social electricity" moves through the grid. "Small differences in hidden transcript within a grid might be considered analogous to electrical resistance causing losses of current." Scott, 224. Beverley Haddad argues that losses of "social electricity" may be due to "internal differences" or "external constraints." Haddad, "African Women's Theologies of Survival: Intersecting Faith, Feminisms, and Development," 372.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Nathan Esala, "I Will Gather among the Sheaves! Facilitating Embodied and Emancipatory Translation of the Book of Ruth for Translational Dialogue," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 160 (March 2018): 92. "Foucault argues that we can see a system of logic as a particular system and not as truth itself only when we are partially constituted by different systems of producing truth. We can transcend the blinders of our own social location, not through becoming objective, but by recognizing the differences by which we ourselves are constituted and, I would add to Foucault, by actively seeking to be partially constituted by work with different groups. Thus the condition of overcoming ideology is difference, a mutually challenging and mutually transformative pluralism." Sharon D. Welch, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 151.

coded text which can be interpreted by the dominant group in a society in a way that is benign; however, for those who have “ears to hear,” to borrow a phrase from Jesus in the Gospels, the details in the text are suggestive and open to being interpreted.

In relation to interpreting Ruth and Boaz’s interactions in the field, some groups of young women preferred a cautious interpretation of innuendo and romance. These interpretations would be acceptable in local churches and mosques. After being encouraged by Matibin’s openness illustrated by the use of his body in performance, the majority of groups perceived Ruth and Boaz’s interaction as the kind of sexual innuendo that they know in their contexts are governed by sexual mores less concerned with notions of sexual ‘purity.’¹⁰⁵⁸ This moment marked the shift between articulating the detail governed by dominant religious interpretations of Ruth versus re-translating the linguistic detail governed by local contextual assumptions.

In the CBS we facilitated with young women studying to be seamstresses, the young women’s ‘madams’ were also included as participants. A madam is a seamstress who has apprentices. This meant small groups of mature women seamstresses, and in one case, a small group of male tailors who had female apprentices were present. The facilitators discovered that having different sectors of society present in the study, working in their own small groups, was helpful to stimulate dialogue about different positionalities in the text. It was useful to have small groups of young women answering questions about Ruth and then listening to how small groups of more mature women answered the same question and vice-versa. Adding the male tailors’ perspectives, but keeping them in small groups, further increased the dialogism especially as it related to discerning Boaz’s intentions. The cross-sectoral dialogue opened additional power dynamics in the text and society that otherwise might have been missed or left unspoken. This illustrates the reality of different entanglements with the text across time and space and the importance of ‘in-corporating’ different sectors of society as re-translators as a starting point for collective post-colonial re-translational dialogue. (See chapter four section 4.1.4.3.)

¹⁰⁵⁸ It is important to recognize the variety in African cultures when it comes to sexual practice and notions of purity. Similarly, the Bible describes a greater variety of sexual practices in Ancient Near Eastern cultures than is often assumed in Euro-American scholarship influenced by Victorian or American evangelical notions of sexual purity.

5.3.2.3 Re-translating Ruth, the post-colonial riposte to the logic of challenge

Some male participants, when interpreting Boaz's actions in chapter 2, became aware of a dynamic of competition between Boaz and the younger men in his society. In verse 8 of chapter 2 Boaz told Ruth, "Do not go to any other field." The men felt that Boaz wanted to keep Ruth's attention on him. The study exposed male competition as an issue in the text, and it raises the issue of male oppressions within patriarchy. While women did not articulate this in the same way, the church women indicated we needed to return and do a study with the men in their churches. Accordingly, I have prepared a CBS study on Ruth and masculinities which I offer below. (See section 5.3.5.)

The unique entanglements of men may have contributed to the way they answered question 6, "What was Naomi's role in what happened, what was her intention?"

Men wondered, what is the possibility that Naomi and Boaz had made a plan about Ruth, even though it is not mentioned in the text? Was the plan a kind of entrapment? How aware was Naomi of the possibility that Ruth and Boaz might have sex on the threshing floor?

Some of these indecent¹⁰⁵⁹ or improper¹⁰⁶⁰ possibilities have been downplayed in mainstream translations¹⁰⁶¹ and commentaries. Improper here means simply outside the ideal. Improper interpretations may appear as inappropriate, impure, and distasteful, but not offensive.

Indecent means going beyond improper into what is sexually transgressive and offensive to dominant sexual mores. Charles Halton identifies a poor translation choice in 3:8 arguing the word *וַיִּלְפָּת* which has been translated "twisted" or "turned" is more naturally translated "groped" or "reached." Similarly, in 3:11 the phrase *אִשָּׁה לֵיָּהוָה* normally translated "righteous or noble woman" is better translated "industrious or strong woman."¹⁰⁶²

Despite the limitations in our contemporary translations, we found that alternative re-translations can be recovered simply by engaging in dialogue about the narrative in sectoral

¹⁰⁵⁹ Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology*.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Gerald O. West, "Queering the 'Church and AIDS' Curriculum.," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* (Indiana University Press) 34, no. 1 (2018): 125–30.

¹⁰⁶¹ Charles Halton, "An Indecent Proposal: The Theological Core of the Book of Ruth," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*, August 31, 2012, <http://www-tandfonline-com.ukzn.idm.oclc.org/doi/abs/10.1080/09018328.2012.704197>.

¹⁰⁶² Halton, 32–34.

small groups reporting back to one another. Even without access to the Hebrew text, women could use their cultural knowledge to achieve similar interpretations as scholars who build their arguments linguistically, focusing on the ancient socio-cultural world. Re-translations offer the opportunity for post-colonial riposte to the challenge of colonial translation.

Another way that this study responded to the challenge of systemic patriarchy was by addressing the possibility of Boaz being a sugar daddy. In most studies when the question, “Is this a sugar daddy relationship?” was asked, there was a time of silence. This suggests that the question itself was perceived as ‘improper.’ Can you even ask this question about Bible characters? Can you ask if our spiritual ancestors would consider something improper that has been done and is being done in our contexts? The question made some of my colleagues uncomfortable, such that the first time we facilitated this CBS, they did not allow the young women to answer the question!¹⁰⁶³ In other words, answering the question, would have been indecent!

It is worth pausing here to reflect on what happened at this point in our first CBS on Ruth and sugar daddies. The young women had begun to feel that the space was safe for them to interpret the biblical text from their own embodied perspectives. At this moment some of the facilitators must have begun to feel uncomfortable. They signaled to the young women that they were uncomfortable by not allowing them to answer the question. At that moment the space of CBS shifted from what Sithembiso Zwane calls an ‘invigorated’ space to an ‘invited space.’¹⁰⁶⁴ An invited space is a less egalitarian space, where the rules of the public transcript once again governed the discussion. (See chapter four section 4.3.10 above.) Facilitators began engaging in unidirectional speeches, they asked unplanned follow-up questions, and the young women became less responsive.

After the study was over, the facilitators engaged in critical reflection together about what happened. We agreed that even though the question makes us uncomfortable, it is worth

¹⁰⁶³ Esala, “I Will Gather among the Sheaves! Facilitating Embodied and Emancipatory Translation of the Book of Ruth for Translational Dialogue,” 94.

¹⁰⁶⁴ West and Zwane, “Re-Reading 1 Kings 21:1-16 between Community-Based Activism and University-Based Pedagogy.”

asking, because if the groups decide that this is not a sugar daddy relationship, the discussion process is valuable.¹⁰⁶⁵

In subsequent studies, the question was allowed to stand. When we engaged women in churches, their responses to the question, “Is this a sugar daddy relationship,” were dialogical. The women were not sure. And their responses are like a discussion of the possibilities. The first reluctantly agrees to the question. The second rephrases it. The third and fourth make sense of Boaz’s actions in different ways.

- It seems so.
- This is not a sugar daddy relationship; it is a happiness relationship.
- The man was trying to satisfy the woman and the girl and was not tricking her.
- There was a trick, but it was not a harmful one, since he was planning on marrying her and providing for her and not leaving her.

By asking the same question to small groups of male tailors, we discovered that not all men think that sugar daddy relationships are good for men. Many men are marginalized because of sugar daddy relationships, because it means the richest men have many women partners, whereas poorer men and younger men might have difficulty attracting a partner. Some women reported that young men in their town engage in concerted acts of gender violence perpetrated against young women as soon as they arrive in town. How might this assertion of sectoral power resonate with the dynamics between the young male overseer, Ruth, and Boaz in Ruth 2:5-7?

5.3.3 Act: Re-translating the logic of social progress for social action

After women and men began to ‘see’ the problem through critical systemic analysis, then women and men ‘judged’ the problem by re-interpreting and re-translating narrative detail in the book of Ruth. The final movement of CBS is to ‘en-Act’ the text.¹⁰⁶⁶

¹⁰⁶⁵ Rose Mary Amenga-Etego, a religious scholar at the University of Ghana who is also from northern Ghana, pointed out that Ruth, as a widow, would have gone through certain rites in her marriage to Mahlon that young women, who are those prototypically involved in sugar daddy relationships, have not yet experienced. Amenga-Etego’s point is well taken; nevertheless, Ruth had not yet given birth, and that matters traditionally. Further, there are details in Boaz and Ruth’s relationship which are like contemporary sugar daddy relationships and thus make the comparative discussion of contemporary and ancient types of sexual relationships valuable, if not conclusive.

¹⁰⁶⁶ West, “Reading the Bible with the Marginalised: The Value/s of Contextual Bible Reading,” 244.

Gerald West asks, “What is re-translation to do? More specifically, what will Bible re-translation change in our globalised neo-colonial neo-liberal capitalist world?”¹⁰⁶⁷ West’s language sounds very similar to the way Skopos theory talks about translation as intentional action to change things in the world.

The last question moves the group towards social action. However, social action depends upon social imagination. Can young women even imagine a world where sugar daddies are not necessary? In such a world, how would young women receive the economic support they need to develop themselves into mature women who can contribute to society and family systems in dignified ways?

Viewed from the post-colonial logics of re-translation, the final step of CBS asks the young women to articulate a vision of social progress and then to begin to act on that vision in small, medium, and perhaps even big ways.

The last question stands currently, “From your perspective, what systems need to change in your churches, mosques, communities, schools, and families to help young women develop?”¹⁰⁶⁸

This is a difficult question. It appears that for some young women sugar daddy relationships are the only way they see that they can get the economic resources for self-development or even survival. Given the reality that age-disparate sex is the largest driver of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, it is worth asking whether this strategy is likely to succeed? Further, as Haddad’s theological analysis points out, if women choose sugar daddy or blesser relationships, are they giving up on the dream of egalitarian relationships? Are they trading individual emancipation for collective survival?

As a potential resource from the text that might stimulate creative thought in terms of how young women might imagine a world where sugar daddies are not necessary, I return to our question number three, parts a and b.

¹⁰⁶⁷ West, “On the Necessity of Re-Translation,” 14.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Earlier iterations of the study phrased the question this way, “Is there any better way to address this issue in churches, schools, and mosques? From your perspective what needs to change?” The answers the latter question elicited tended to focus on the morality of young women’s actions rather than on the collective and systemic dimensions of sugar daddies. I do not think isolating the morality of the situation is possible apart from the economic and patriarchal components.

3a) In your culture can someone ask to glean among the sheaves? (as Ruth allegedly did in 2:7)

3b) Based on Ruth's request to glean among the sheaves, what might Ruth's dream be for economic survival for herself and her mother-in-law?

Among a group of women churchgoers, they laughed when they first heard question 3a. One group answered:

- One cannot enter to glean behind the harvesters unless one has express permission to do so. If you enter, before he has gone through the field twice, you are harvesting his grain.

Insightful comments like this support Justin Ukpong's claim that all scholarly readings "originate from and contain elements of ordinary readings."¹⁰⁶⁹ What was Ruth doing by asking the question in this way? Did she need special permission to glean behind the reapers as Tamara Cohn Eskenazi's scholarly reading asserts?¹⁰⁷⁰ Is Ruth questioning how custom supports patriarchy?¹⁰⁷¹

Was Ruth as a Moabite judge asking for a share of the excess sheaves?¹⁰⁷² It may be that Ruth was asking for an exchange so she could be included in the harvest of Boaz's field. It may also be that Ruth was 'dreaming'¹⁰⁷³ that some of the surplus grain in the patriarchal system would be allocated to her and her mother-in-law. According to Boaz's statement in

¹⁰⁶⁹ Justin S. Ukpong, "Bible Reading with a Community of Ordinary Readers," in *Interpreting the New Testament in Africa*, ed. Mary N. Getui, Samuel Tinyiko Maluleke, and Justin S. Ukpong, African Christianity Series (Nairobi, Kenya: Acton Publishers, 2001), 190.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Tikva Simone Frymer-Kensky, eds., *Ruth =: the traditional Hebrew text with the new JPS translation*, First edition, The JPS Bible commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2011), 33.

¹⁰⁷¹ Amenga-Etego, *Mending the Broken Pieces*, 188–89; 278–81.

¹⁰⁷² "The problem with Ruth and Naomi's story lies with the assumption that an excess of femininity is the only erotic strategy. Thus, Ruth is not a Moabite judge who challenges the judicial system to her advantage; the result of the triumph by excess of femininity is not always a happy one. Bread is exchanged for bitter intimacy. That excess of femininity relies on an excess of hetero-masculinity too; in this context, erotic excess is decent. Otherwise (as in surplus), it may be indecent." Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology*, 169.

¹⁰⁷³ Gerald O. West, "Doing Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation @home: Ten Years of (South) African Ambivalence," *Neotestamentica* 42, no. 1 (2008): 161–62.

4:3-4, Naomi owned a field.¹⁰⁷⁴ What is the implication of this detail? If Naomi owned a field,¹⁰⁷⁵ why did they have no food to eat? Perhaps Ruth had these issues in mind. Viewing Ruth in this way may help young women imagine what must be changed in the present so vulnerable young women and vulnerable older women have more access to the resources they need reducing the necessity of engaging in sex work.¹⁰⁷⁶

By encouraging young women to focus on the systemic, we hope to encourage them to develop group solidarity, rather than focusing on navigating sugar daddy systems as isolated individuals.¹⁰⁷⁷ To give into the logic of individualism does not question the logic of the sugar daddy system.¹⁰⁷⁸ The same applies to discussions including men in the community. The cross-sectoral dialogue may facilitate more creative thinking when it comes to articulating solutions that have the potential to succeed. (See section 5.3.5 below.) Cross-sectoral dialogue may help forge trans-sectoral solidarity. (See chapter six section 6.3.4.)

5.3.4 Reflect

What was described above is a result of a series of See-Judge-Act engagements. Each of these engagements was followed by a time of critical reflection. The CBS process has been described as an ongoing cycle of action and reflection. Thus, after each CBS, facilitators reflected upon what happened, and considered adapting the CBS or creating new ones for our next engagement or set of engagements. Academic writing is part of the process of ongoing critical reflection.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *Just Wives? Stories of Power & Survival in the Old Testament & Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 39.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Among most northern Ghanaian cultures women cannot own land. Amenga-Etego, *Mending the Broken Pieces*, 167.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Avaren Ipsen, *Sex Working and the Bible*, Bible World (London; Oakville, Conn: Equinox Pub, 2009). How does a community's stigmatization of sex work only further entrench the problem?

¹⁰⁷⁷ Building social solidarity requires building a safe site. Beverley Haddad's research with subjugated women's theologies took place over a two-and-a-half-year period. Haddad indicates that building a safe site proceeded in two phases from an ambiguous space into the women's own safe and organized site. Haddad, "African Women's Theologies of Survival: Intersecting Faith, Feminisms, and Development," 304–13.

¹⁰⁷⁸ The term "blesser" has shifted transactional sex to include the elaborate wealth of neo-liberal capitalism in the context of neo-liberal Christianity which has theologically valorized the consumption of luxury items. This is a form of women's agency which fits into a capitalist system and uses the language and theology of neo-liberal forms of prosperity gospel based Christianity. Haddad, "'Taking the Wanting Out of the Waiting': HIV, Transactional Sex, and #Blessed, in the Context of Neo-Liberal Christianity," 16–17.

In each of these CBS engagements, facilitators engaged with young women in different groups. First, we engaged groups of young women in school. In those studies, the participants were young women, whereas the facilitators were men. I mentioned how in one case, an embodied performance of gleaning by a male facilitator helped ‘invigorate’ the CBS space in a way that encouraged young women to interpret the story from their own embodied perspective. In that same study, however, there was a point where male facilitators became uncomfortable with the dialogue and did not allow women to discuss the possibility of Boaz being a ‘sugar daddy.’ The energy of the study changed at that point. The space was no longer ‘invigorated,’ but became more like a typical classroom space where teachers speak, and students listen in a one-way anti-dialogical environment. It became an ‘invited’ space.

Second, facilitators engaged women in the churches surrounding the market town of Nasuan. We invited one young woman and one older woman from all the churches in that area. That study had a lot of energy and interesting dialogue. It was during that study that the women encouraged us to come back and do a study with the men of their churches and communities. That invitation could lead toward invigorating study spaces for some of the men of that community.

Third, facilitators engaged young women in sewing apprenticeships and their ‘madams.’ This allowed us to work with mature women seamstresses and younger women apprentices together in their own organized groups. We found these spaces were difficult to ‘invigorate.’ The energy in the room was often a bit muted. The power dynamics between the seamstresses and their apprentices was difficult to rework. Nevertheless, the cross-sectoral dialogue was helpful. Perhaps the most ‘invigorated’ times occurred in a study where a group of male tailors were also present in their own small groups.

The relationships between young women in school and between young women in apprenticeships cannot be characterized with the word ‘solidarity.’ There are power dynamics between young women that are not easy to ‘crack.’ The sugar daddy system feeds competition and individualism. It is a system that encourages young women to marginalize each other. Some older women may be involved in the sugar daddy agreements. Nevertheless, the studies with young women showed signs of ‘invigoration.’ There were moments of increased energy and honesty. Individuals forged small-scale solidarities with each other.

The energy between younger women and older women, ‘Ruths’ and ‘Naomis,’ was not as productive as we had hoped.¹⁰⁷⁹ The energy and camaraderie were better between women of different ages in the churches who were not as economically intertwined. The perspective of younger male tailors was analogous to ‘male workers in the fields’ from Ruth 2:5. The perspective of mature male tailors was analogous to ‘Boaz.’ The latter sector on one occasion took the energy out of the room when it came to making action plans.

The male facilitators were raised as ‘organic’ members of the community.¹⁰⁸⁰ They have become engaged in paid language development work and are partially entangled in neo-liberal economic systems. The author is a biblical scholar and translator who makes a living outside the community, but who lived and worked in the local area for ten years. Each facilitator’s positionality comes into play in the studies. The participatory hermeneutics ‘entangle’ everyone with the narrative. When study participants start participating in the narrative in ways that are novel and potentially uncomfortable, it can be difficult for facilitators to remain facilitators. The facilitators were tempted to stifle discussion when difficult issues were being discussed and ‘hidden transcripts’ were being shared. That happened on at least one occasion. The presence of ‘struggle’ in the participatory hermeneutics of CBS indicates to me as a biblical scholar the potential presence of struggle in the circulation history of the narrative.¹⁰⁸¹

Because women are under male surveillance, it would help to have women facilitators who are regularly present and who develop CBS into a regular site that is safe for women

¹⁰⁷⁹ For South African research on the difficult relationship between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law see Madipoane Masenya (ngwana’ Mphahlele), “‘Ngwetši’ (Bride): The Naomi-Ruth Story from an African-South African Woman’s Perspective,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 14, no. 2 (1998): 81–90; Haddad, “African Women’s Theologies of Survival: Intersecting Faith, Feminisms, and Development,” 234–37.

¹⁰⁸⁰ In some studies certain facilitators were very careful to recognize that they came from a different community and kinship group ‘that was distinct and ‘outside’ from the *tiŋ* or ‘earth shrine neighborhood’ where the majority of the study participants lived

¹⁰⁸¹ The Masoretic text (MT) of Ruth 2:5-7 is quite difficult. To me this suggests ‘struggle’ in the formation and textual history of the MT. One can also view the Septuagint, the Targums, the Peshitta, and the Vulgate as further circulations of the MT narrative. Briggs, “Contested Mobilities.” A careful observation of the translation decisions in these different versions reveals instances of contestation in the translation history of this circulated narrative. My preliminary analysis of these ancient translations in Ruth 2:5-7 indicates that translators tried to clarify and close-down the problematic interpretative options which stem from the MT, but in so doing, they open new options that audiences can explore.

organized by women.¹⁰⁸² To return to Katz's framework, women need time to develop internal resilience that helps them survive. Women also engage in surveillance of each other. It takes time to develop solidarity with each other and a common hidden transcript. As they develop 'survival theologies,' given enough time they may begin to rework dominant biblical interpretations. Given enough time to rework dominant biblical interpretations and the ideologies that contribute to their oppression, they may develop practices of overt resistance. As Scott's theory argues, when a hidden transcript of resistance is articulated in public, it has the potential to ignite resistance.

Articulations of overt resistance in public space are potentially dangerous, and that is why marginalized groups are so careful about overt resistance. Re-translations may offer marginalized groups ways of using biblical language as a form of infrapolitics.¹⁰⁸³ The language of infrapolitics is a shielded or coded form of speech that offers speakers a chance to critique dominant structures in a way that is not fully open. Haddad argues that infrapolitics was the primary way the women she was working with developed survival theologies.¹⁰⁸⁴ This study revealed that the coded and disguised language of infrapolitics is an important mode of dialogue even between women of different ages whose economic relations are intertwined.

5.3.5 Ruth and masculinities?

Before I conclude this chapter, I offer a piece of critical reflection emerging from the studies which may be useful for future engagement. The male tailors indicated to us that sugar daddy relationships do not benefit all men. Also, we heard from women in churches that it would be useful to facilitate a study for church men.

Perhaps the next step for CBS facilitators might be to follow-up on the invitation from the women of the churches around Nasuan to come back and work with the men from the

¹⁰⁸² After a year or more of weekly meetings with poor women in a poor rural South African Anglican congregation, Haddad, a woman-priest and religious scholar writes, "As our group sessions increasingly became a safe and sequestered social site, the women began to refer to it as 'our organisation'." Haddad, "African Women's Theologies of Survival: Intersecting Faith, Feminisms, and Development," 310.

¹⁰⁸³ "Infrapolitics is, to be sure, real politics. In many respects it is conducted in more earnest, for higher stakes, and against greater odds than political life in liberal democracies. Real ground is lost and gained." Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 200.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Haddad, "African Women's Theologies of Survival: Intersecting Faith, Feminisms, and Development," 389.

churches around Nasuan. They might consider taking a similar plan inviting one older man and one younger man from each congregation.

Facilitators might consider doing a CBS on masculinities. The Ujamaa Centre has done several studies on masculinities. I am also going to offer another study on masculinities in chapter six. The study offered here has not been tested. It does emerge from the studies in this chapter in that it engages with male themes of competition in the book of Ruth.

Tell the story using the picture booklet projected on a screen up to chapter 3:18.

- 1) What is this story about?

Read 2:1-7. (Show pictures.)

- 2) Reread Ruth 2:6-7. What do you think the young man wants with Ruth as he reports to Boaz?

Read 2:8-16

- 3) Reread 2:15-16. (Show the associated picture.) How does Boaz respond to the young men regarding Ruth? Based on what he says and what he does, what do you think is Boaz's intention regarding Ruth?

Read 2:17-3:18

- 4) What was Naomi's plan?
- 5) Did Boaz know about it?

Read 3:9 again

- 6) What is Ruth requesting from Boaz?
- 7) Considering the difficult situation of women and men, what needs to change in our society and culture so men (young and old) can successfully manage the situation? Advise men about what needs to change. (Creative idea - make a song or proverb.)
- 8) What is your action plan (short term and long term)?

After completing a study on Ruth with women, and a study on Ruth with men, it may be possible for men's and women's groups to report back to each other. Could part of their action plan be to discuss what they learned with the other group? These two studies on Ruth may be useful for women and men open to the experimental practice of (re-)constructing more egalitarian relationships.

5.4 Conclusion

I concluded the ‘See’ section above with the poignant theological analysis offered by Haddad regarding the way that the #Blessed phenomenon is evidence that young women in South Africa have recruited the prosperity gospel to spiritually sanction the way they have turned their bodies into a sexual commodity in exchange for the riches of the neo-liberal economy. In so doing they have asserted their own agency for individual emancipation according to the tenets of the prosperity gospel. But they do not challenge the patriarchal structures that prevent truly egalitarian relationships, neither do they challenge the inequality of the economic systems. There is no act of emancipatory solidarity with other women, but rather a prioritization of attaining personal wealth and comfort at the expense of a larger emancipatory agenda for African women.¹⁰⁸⁵ Haddad sees this as a popular theological development within neo-liberal Christianity that challenges the core assumptions of the African women’s theological project.

The situation in northern Ghana is not as economically ‘developed’ as the situation in South Africa. Still, neo-liberal Christianity is active in northern Ghana through the influx of the prosperity gospel in urban and rural environments. Chapter 3 argued that the new charismatic churches and their prosperity gospel work in tacit agreement with neo-liberal elites who control the African state. The agreement involves the new churches focusing on individualized and spiritualized morality but not addressing systemic morality. The separation of the collective and political from the individual and the moral while focusing the individual on the spiritual causes of individual poverty constitutes neo-liberal African Christianity. The sugar daddy system in rural northern Ghana, while not as developed economically as the blesser system in urban South Africa, works hand-in-glove with the assumptions of neo-liberal Christianity’s individualized prosperity gospel.

Ghana’s system of rule is governed by what Gifford calls neo-patrimonialism.¹⁰⁸⁶ In the current economy, neo-patrimonialism produces excess wealth in male individuals. Given that

¹⁰⁸⁵ Haddad, “‘Taking the Wanting Out of the Waiting’: HIV, Transactional Sex, and #Blessed, in the Context of Neo-Liberal Christianity,” 16.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Neo-patrimonialism is a form of patriarchy applied metaphorically to the African state which operates within the neo-liberal political economy. It “is based on the kind of authority a father has over his children. Here, those lower in the hierarchy, are not subordinate officials with defined powers and functions of their own, but retainers whose position depend on a leader to whom they owe allegiance. The system is held

situation, women will continue pursuing sugar daddy relationships and blesser relationships. In sparse economic contexts, sugar daddy relationships are a risky form of survival. Within neo-liberal Christianity men and women have found a way to spiritually sanction such relationships despite the risks.

Young women in northern Ghana are currently in a position where sugar daddy relationships appear to some of them to be the most promising pathway to a better life, notwithstanding the risk of STDs and pregnancy. The CBS engagements in this chapter question the wisdom of the risks young women are taking, but the studies have not offered a concrete alternative for them.

What is a realistic and safe pathway to a better life for young women in northern Ghana? I would like young women to question the prosperity gospel paradigm with its focus on individual prosperity and its jettisoning of collective approaches that promote a better life for different sectors of women. What kind of practices of alternative solidarity can they construct? Haddad's earlier research may be instructive in being realistic about what patient experimental practice looks like for women in the very difficult circumstances they navigate.

Haddad, an ordained Episcopal priest, worked with South African women in her parish and in her parish's community in the 1990's just after South African independence. Haddad engaged the established women's group of the Mother's Union and introduced CBS as an additional site to help uncover what Haddad calls theologies of survival.¹⁰⁸⁷ Over a two-and-a-half-year period, Haddad met with women weekly and engaged in CBS. Haddad concluded that women's survival theologies exist in these locations and can be recovered. CBS was particularly useful in the recovery process. Over the two and a half years Haddad indicates that the group showed signs of "embryonic organization."¹⁰⁸⁸ Because women are under surveillance, it took a long time for them to practice sharing their hidden transcripts with each other. As group solidarity developed, they began articulating emerging survival theologies. The slow and steady solidarity they developed created a cohesiveness that has potential for overt resistance when the time is right. Haddad's identity as a woman priest was helpful in

together by loyalty or kinship ties rather than by a hierarchy of administrative grades and functions." It includes "ethnic clientelism" as part of its structure. Gifford, *African Christianity*, 5; Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 7-14.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Haddad, "African Women's Theologies of Survival: Intersecting Faith, Feminisms, and Development."

¹⁰⁸⁸ Haddad, 379.

the process of facilitating safe space for women to practice their hidden transcripts. The critical biblical and theological resources Haddad contributed added to the women's resources. Haddad took the emphasis and perspectives on survival theologies into church and academic discourses.

Applying Haddad's research to the Ghanaian context suggests that activist-scholars and activist-facilitators should have modest expectations for what a few CBS engagements can accomplish. Patient CBS facilitators who are convinced of the value of CBS will keep exploring ways to be catalysts for post-colonial responses to neo-liberal Christianity in its two dominant versions: the prosperity gospel and the developmentalist gospel. To this we might add a third, the neo-colonial version of translation theology active in some corners of the Bible translation industry. Using CBS with patience and time, local groups of women can develop greater cohesiveness and solidarity. The critical resources of biblical studies articulated in CBS offer women resources to build resilience as they slowly rework the dominant interpretations and ideo-theologies that oppress them. Women will initially be quite cautious in front of CBS facilitators. The women will be watching to see whether facilitators, whether male or female, are genuinely on their side. Haddad found in her work in South Africa that women worked primarily in the realm of infrapolitics, winning and losing ground in this art of shielded speech.

This chapter has argued that engaging groups of young and mature women through CBS on the book of Ruth has a lot of potential. The CBS process invites groups of women to try using a participatory hermeneutic to actively interpret a text from their own embodied and cultural perspectives. It invites women (and men) to dialogue with each other as they consider possible re-translations from their different sectoral lived experiences. This re-translational dialogue across sectoral groups of women (and men) may help women develop survival theologies in the midst of adverse economic circumstances. As women cross over time and space to participate with biblical characters, they may develop a biblical language of infrapolitics. A biblical language of infrapolitics uses biblical language as a form of coded speech that critiques the current situation without risking backlash or direct conflict.

Women living in adverse circumstances may welcome professional translators (whether Bible translators, theologians, or translation scholars) who are willing to follow their lead and collaborate with them in the ways Haddad indicated. With their status, they can help women secure space, add critical resources from the biblical tradition, and take the urgency of

women's survival into theological discourses in the church, the academy, and other public sites.

Drawing upon the AIC's mode of re-translating from chapter three, chapter four argued for privileging the positionality and agency of bodies of marginalized Africans in the process of re-translating biblical texts using an emancipatory purpose and an emancipatory process. The case study involved people living with disabilities dialogically re-translating Job, arriving at interpretations that counter dominant ideo-theologies in pursuit of a better life for themselves and for their whole community. Their agentive re-translations responded to the developmentalist 'gospel' of NGO's and to the neo-colonial health and wealth gospel of the new Christianity, both of which in different ways treat people living with disabilities as objects rather than agents. As people living with disabilities govern the ongoing process of re-translating for liberation they build internal resiliency that can eventually contribute to reworking dominant ideo-theologies which damage people living with disabilities and hurt the community. The method of re-translating from the perspective of people living with disabilities constitutes an irruption in theological and translational method.

Chapter five continued chapter four's emphasis on the importance of embodiment, positionality, and agency by focusing on the importance of gender in Bible translation and in activist translation studies. The post-colonial approach to re-translating using CBS works with a theory of change that prioritizes the perspective of marginalized groups of women in activist re-translations. Across Africa young women are exploring new forms of agency using their bodies in the neo-liberal economy in order to survive. In wealthy urban contexts some women are using their bodies in pursuit of consumer goods at the expense of their health and at the expense of the collective pursuit of egalitarian relationships with men. These emerging forms of individualist agency are being sanctioned by the prosperity gospel's alliance with patriarchy. Using CBS in rural northern Ghana, young women re-translated details in the book of Ruth, interpreting Ruth's, Boaz's, and Naomi's relationship in a way that foregrounds the sugar daddy system at work in Ghana. The process of re-translating has the potential to rework dominant interpretations of the biblical text in the northern Ghanaian context, offering resources for internal resilience. The process has the potential to irrupt and disrupt the alliance between the individualist emphasis of the prosperity gospel, traditional patriarchy, and Ghana's neo-patrimonial economic and political system.

Chapter six continues to address the alliance between translation, gender and the neo-patrimonial system of governance and economics at work in (northern) Ghana. The chapter focuses on the way ethnicity has been and continues to be translated by the missionary-colonial translation-as-invasion paradigm discussed in chapter two. Ethnicity has become a tool of manipulation used mainly by male elites to foster inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflict as they pursue extractive economic gain on the local level in participation with the systems of the national and international neo-patrimonial economy. The case study explores the potential for ordinary women and men to re-translate ethnicity in biblical texts in ways that use religious language and power to resist extractive systems that harm women's bodies, harm the environment, and disadvantage the community as a whole.

6 Chapter 6 Towards religious re-translations for trans-sectoral resistance from ethnic and gender manipulations in the neo-patrimonial political economy

In the last chapter I discussed the way young African women in southern Africa living in the neo-liberal economy supported by neo-liberal Christianity are questioning the core assumptions of African women's theologies. I explored the economically poorer rural context of northern Ghana to see how similarly or differently young African women are responding to the economic and theological influences of neo-liberalism in their context. The case study explored how Contextual Bible Study might be leveraged as an alternative space for women to explore how they might use their agency to dialogically re-translate the narrative of Ruth as they imagine constructing a social and theological vision which works towards liberation for all sectors of society, beginning with vulnerable young women struggling to survive.

In this chapter I link individual and community survival to translations of gender and ethnicity in neo-colonial post-colonial northern Ghana. I trace the roots of several inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts in northern Ghana, pinpointing elite males' competitive desire to consolidate and accumulate power in the realms of business, chieftaincy, and politics. I explore the potential of religious re-translations of ordinary women and men to disrupt the ways elites manipulate ethnic conflicts for wealth accumulation at the expense of women's bodies, the land, and community.

Ethnicity is closely tied to language and translation.¹⁰⁸⁹ As I argued in chapter one, constructions of kinship and their associated language and translation practices in indigenous pre-colonial time were more diverse than is generally recognized. Matrifocal practices were linked to pre-colonial constructions of kinship and translation. In chapter two, I described how colonial translation translated notions of tribe and ethnicity from African kinship practices in ways that fit European preconceptions and aided colonial overrule by establishing a system of ranked ethnicity and establishing alliances between colonizers and chiefly patrilineal. In this chapter I explore how translation of ethnicity also involves translation of gender in the way it strengthens patrifocal practices and weakens matrifocal practices. In

¹⁰⁸⁹ Ethnicity first appeared in Oxford English Dictionary in 1972. The term ethnic is much older. There was a shift from in scholarly literature from using the word tribe to using ethnic group in the 1970s. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 4, 11.

order to acquire the high levels of wealth necessary to be part of the national and international economy, the competition between ‘tribes’ and between patriline within tribes is causing a number of inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts in northern Ghana. The bodies of women, the collective wealth of the community, and the land itself suffer as a result.

It may be useful to review some of the argument of chapter two. Colonial translation, drawing on practices similar to missionary translation¹⁰⁹⁰ as discussed in chapter three section 3.2.2, established a system of ranked ethnicity. I mentioned ranked ethnicity in chapter two section 2.5.6, but I will describe it in greater detail in the next section. While ranked ethnicity did have roots in the pre-colonial era, my argument was that the colonial translation of the invasion narrative followed by the establishment of customary law helped to systematize ranked ethnicity.

Colonial administrators called for and funded translators who translated the narrative embedded in lunsu praise poetry. Translation transformed a poetic genre of oral performance into the narrative form of written historiography. The colonial translation of lunsu into an invasion narrative strengthened the cultural power of the perspective and claims embedded in lunsu, making pre-colonial acts of raiding and the occasional conquest of certain kinship groups appear like absolute conquest of all independent kinship groups and their lands.

Customary law was built upon the invasion narrative. Customary law translated the social perspective of chiefly patriline on social practice into law backed by colonial powers of enforcement. This strengthened the perception that pre-colonial invasion and conquest justified the practice of ranked ethnicity and colonial overrule. So-called ‘state’ societies believed themselves to be superior to so-called ‘stateless’ or headless societies.

Colonial translation transformed diverse pre-colonial kinship groups into a ranked ‘caste’ system¹⁰⁹¹ based on the colonial version of tribe/ethnicity. Simultaneously, colonial translation strengthened the patriarchal system by strengthening the cultural memory of pre-colonial patrilineal practices while weakening the memory of matrilineal practices. These

¹⁰⁹⁰ “Modern colonial missions almost everywhere sought to make diverse others into ethnic subjects through objects.” John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnicity, Inc*, Chicago Studies in Practices of Meaning (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 29.

¹⁰⁹¹ I use the inverted quotes on the word ‘caste’ to mark a similarity in logic of the ranked system under indirect rule to the well-established caste system in India. In northern Ghana the ranked system was being constructed based on tribe, and not significantly integrated into the indigenous religious system.

colonial translations prepared the way for future neo-colonial alliances in the post-colonial state.

In the first section of this chapter (6.1), I describe the ranked ethnic system produced by the colonial making of ethnicity and I relate it to northern Ghana's inter-ethnic conflicts. I argue that ranked ethnicity was a patriarchal caste system supported by the colonial translation of the invasion narrative and the systematization of customary law. I pick up the historical story from chapter two as I recount how decentralized and independent ethnic groups began to organize ethnically as a riposte to their subordinate status under the tribal caste system of indirect rule. In the independent post-colonial era, students attending boarding schools who came from independent kinship groups were characterized as belonging to lower ethnic groups by the ranked ethnic system inherited from colonial indirect rule. Those students from diverse but interrelated kinship groups were discriminated against in similar ways. Based in part upon their shared marginalization, they began to think of themselves and organize themselves based on a shared sense of tribe. The students' collective experience of ethnic marginalization in school formed the basis of a larger notion of tribal identity.¹⁰⁹² When some of those students became teachers, they formed the Konkomba Youth Association. The teachers who had experienced discrimination and commonality based on tribe when they were students, promoted the value of a larger tribal identity as teachers in their home communities in creative ways.

At roughly the same time in post-independent northern Ghana, missionary-initiated Bible translation and African language literacy were being offered to rural communities in the Konkomba language. The student initiative and the missionary initiative both shared a larger notion of ethnolinguistic/tribal identity and a desire to promote a larger conception of shared identity between disparate but loosely allied kinship groups. The missionary-colonial initiative included a theological component through its translation of the Bible that implicitly affirmed the political vision of the teacher-student organizers. At that time, the two initiatives, both with an expansive notion of Konkomba identity, became entangled.

Supported by theological translation that destigmatized them and relativized higher ranking based on ethnolinguistic/tribal identity,¹⁰⁹³ Konkomba activists drew on three systems of

¹⁰⁹² Following Mamdani, I use the word tribe to refer to is colonially inscribed political and territorial meaning. See footnote 5, above.

¹⁰⁹³ Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 1.

power operating in post-colonial northern Ghana to help them gain legal rights to the land they had been living on and farming: financial, political representation, and chieftaincy. The 1979 and 1992 Constitutions reaffirmed the land rights of paramount chiefs (also referred to as kings) and the system of ranked ethnicity. The 1981 and 1994 northern conflicts resulted from these complex dynamics. Local language Bible translation and literacy could not help but play a role in the conflicts around the ranked ethnic system and land rights.

In the 21st century the ranked ethnic system continues to operate through the paramount chieftaincy system, a system that remains significant because of its legal connection to allodial land rights.¹⁰⁹⁴ In the 21st century political boundaries are being realigned to more closely align with the four main kingdoms (Mamprusi, Dagomba, Nanumba, and Gonja) and the boundaries established for those kingdoms through colonial translation.¹⁰⁹⁵

The second section of this chapter (6.2) branches from discussing intertribal conflicts to intratribal conflicts.¹⁰⁹⁶ Intratribal conflict is a result of the substructure of indirect rule and the ranked ethnic system, that is, the patriarchal royal class system. The Dagbon crisis, which is the largest intratribal conflict in the north, is centered on competing patriline for chieftaincy. Within the Dagbon crisis the competition centers around which patriline controls the tribe. The colonial-patrilineal order within the concept of tribe is unstable. Its contradictions are being challenged, but the rights granted by the colonial-patrilineal construction of tribe are not being deconstructed. The Dagbon crisis is inextricably linked to competing patriline's control of land rent, especially in the city of Tamale, one of the fastest growing cities in West Africa.

In the 20th and 21st centuries whenever the Dagbon conflict died down, other intra-ethnic conflicts were stirred. There have been long-standing kinship group related conflicts internal to both the Komba and Bimoba societies. I refer to these as intra-ethnic conflicts because they

¹⁰⁹⁴ "In the official view of land tenure today, the chief holds allodial (sovereign) rights; all other members of the community, including lesser chiefs, have only usufructuary rights, which may be abrogated by the chief at will." MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 168.

¹⁰⁹⁵ For example, the boundary of the newly inaugurated North East Region (2019) is similar to the 1908 boundary of the Gambaga Province of the North East District of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Intratribal conflicts stem from the political and territorial implications associated with the concept tribe initiated by translational interaction between British authorities and local agents in the colonial era and then enshrined as law under indirect rule with the help of textual colonial translation .

involve ethnically ambiguous marginal groups, to return to Kopytoff's description introduced in chapter one section 1.1.3, who have not historically conformed well to the colonial translation of 'tribe.' Some of the actors in these intra-ethnic conflicts aspire to tribal power because they are connected to land rights and chieftaincy. These intra-ethnic conflicts are aggravated by elite men¹⁰⁹⁷ who seek to consolidate three sources of power in the political economy. They desire to control natural resources, such as trees, sand, and minerals in the local environment. In the process forests are cut down, soil is depleted, and water is drying up. People's lives are hurt as elites fuel conflict for their political advantage or exploit the land for their economic advantage. The end of the section poses some questions to traditional Bible translation elicited by intratribal and intra-ethnic conflicts in a patriarchal class system in a neo-patrimonial political economy.

In the third part of the chapter (6.3), I pick up where I left off at the end of chapter five, by turning to religion as a potential source of resistance to ethnic conflict, whether intertribal, intratribal, or intra-ethnic. I recall two sources of pre-colonial indigenous religious power that contended with colonial masculine power: William Wadé Harris and matrifocal morality through female genital power. Post-colonial African appropriations of the translated Bible are a third source of entangled religious power that communities can draw from. These sources of power are brought together by offering a Contextual Bible Study that has the potential to invigorate trans-sectoral resistance to the patriarchal class systems that manipulate ethnic conflict and do violence to women's bodies so they can use up the earth's collective resources for their own profit and power. The study is offered in the hope that sectors of women and men from different ethnic groups experiment with re-translating that resists being co-opted and manipulated by what Paul Gifford calls Ghana's 'neo-patrimonial' system.¹⁰⁹⁸ (See chapter 3 section 3.4.2 above, and 6.1.4.2 below.) In the process of resisting manipulation, trans-sectoral groups may also begin the process of social healing.

6.1 Ranked ethnicity as a patriarchal ranked ethnic caste system

According to Donald Horowitz, ranked ethnic systems place one ethnic group as a higher caste than others.¹⁰⁹⁹ Horowitz argues that this is generally achieved through conquest. If a conquest did not happen or is not acknowledged there is likely to be no cultural or historical

¹⁰⁹⁷ Occasionally, a woman politician or a business-woman may gain power in the neo-patrimonial system.

¹⁰⁹⁸ For a definition of neo-patrimonialism see footnote 1086 above.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 29.

basis for asserting the ranked hierarchy of one ethnic group or tribe over another. Chapter two argued that the translation of the invasion narrative from oral tradition into historiography transformed a chiefly praise chant used for praising ancestors' feats of raiding into a written history of the founding of Dagbon, one of the three kingdoms of the Dagbamba, the one centered in Yendi under the paramount chief or king, the Ya Na.¹¹⁰⁰

The foundation of invasion and conquest was built upon the 'reification' of customary law. In other words, there was a pre-colonial diversity in oral tradition, as argued in chapter one. Oral tradition includes narratives and rhetoric that describe custom. Custom is analogous to law. Under colonization the high chiefs and princes collaborated with British officials to make their versions of custom into a binding customary law without recourse to broader social dialogue. They took what was a diverse custom and homogenized it so that they could narrow it down, control its interpretation, and turn it into a whip useful for punishment and extraction.¹¹⁰¹ The customary court system is well known among ethnic groups like Konkomba, Bimoba, Nawuri, and Chumburung¹¹⁰² to be a system that extracted large sums of money and cattle from their people for what appeared to them to be arbitrary reasons. The system appeared quite hypocritical and contradictory to them. Those who won and lost in court was a function of proximity to customary (and colonial) power.

The pre-colonial system of 'nam,' a system of kings and sub-chiefs, was supposed to be a pre-colonial structure undefiled by British intervention. But as I argued in chapter two section 2.5.4, drawing on Drucker-Brown's analysis of the Komba-Bimoba conflict in the colonial period, this was not the case. Wyatt MacGaffey provides ample evidence of British meddling in the history of the 'skin' of the Ya Na.¹¹⁰³ The system of chieftaincy was a powerful patriarchal method of governance based on loyalty to the paramount chief, the divisional

¹¹⁰⁰ The three or four Dagbamba kingdoms are: Mamprugu centered in Nalerigu under Nayiri, Dagbon centered in Yendi under Ya Na, and Nanuḡ centered in Bimbilla under the Bimbilla Na. The Mossi kingdom centered in Ouagadougou is also a relation to Nayiri and Mamprugu. The Gonja kingdom centered in Yagbum is also referred to as a royal 'relative' of the Mamprusi.

¹¹⁰¹ Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 184.

¹¹⁰² "The people call themselves /kyòḡbòròḡ àwùyè/ 'Chumburung people', and the language /kyòḡbòròḡ-nò/ 'in Chumburung'." Keir Hansford and Gillian Hansford, "Borrowed Words in Chumburung," *African Languages and Cultures* 2, no. 1 (1989): 39.

¹¹⁰³ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 58–68.

chief, the chief, and the sub-chief. During the colonial period, British administrators began using their power to force new ‘skins’ into the Dagbamba hierarchy of skins, thus changing the pre-colonial tradition.¹¹⁰⁴ Post-colonial Ghanaian governments have subsequently meddled with the hierarchy of skins in the north.¹¹⁰⁵

Ranked ethnicity was enforced by a legalized system of indirect rule, ideologically buttressed by the justification of the invasion narrative. The patrimonial character of ranked ethnicity was manifest in the colonial system of chieftaincy. Under indirect rule, chiefs were shorn of local accountabilities and were given broad authority over everyone inside ‘his’ container, that is, his chiefdom. Chiefdoms were nested inside one another building up to a paramount chief who ruled over the entire kingdom. In the north there were four paramount chiefs: Nayiri for Mamprugu, Ya Na for Dagbon, Bimbilla Na for Nanuŋ and Yabonwira for Gonja. Under colonial rule, the system of tindana or the territorial steward was attenuated, at least in the eyes of the government. The power that the tindana had to check chiefs was reduced in this period. Still, the chief ruled best if he was in harmony with the tindana. Conflicts between these systems create tension.

But what about women in this system? Was there a bilateral system of rule? Amadiume argued that there was another system that the patriarchal system was in dialogue with, that is, the system of females and maternal kin.¹¹⁰⁶ Amadiume makes this argument regarding the Tallensi, a collective of kinship-based societies sharing a similar language west of the Gambaga escarpment. As argued in chapter 1, Amadiume argues that the bilateral system is fundamental to African society, and that scholars have misread rituals and have described pre-colonial African history in a way that is biased by European patriarchy. Colonial translations have thus contributed to weakening African matrifocal practices.¹¹⁰⁷ Some additional evidence supports Amadiume’s thesis. For example, in some of the shrines of

¹¹⁰⁴ A skin is like a stool in southern Ghana. It is analogous to the system of thrones in medieval Europe.

¹¹⁰⁵ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 59–65; Drucker-Brown, “Communal Violence in Northern Ghana: Unaccepted War,” 39–40; 47–48.

¹¹⁰⁶ Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 32–33.

¹¹⁰⁷ I use the term matrifocal following Laura Grillo who is consciously developing Amadiume’s and Cheikh Anta Diop’s arguments for matriarchy. Grillo, *An Intimate Rebuke Female Genital Power in Ritual and Politics in West Africa*, 15. Amadiume uses the term matriarchy but unlike Diop she does not necessarily mean a system of African queens or matriarchal inheritance. *Reinventing Africa*, 19.

Dagbon, a woman can be a tindana.¹¹⁰⁸ MacGaffey argues a tindana functions like a chief in many respects.¹¹⁰⁹ Even though matrifocal systems have been attenuated by the bolstering of the patrifocal systems in the colonial and post-colonial periods, matrifocal systems persist and in some contexts the matrifocal aspects of rituals remain potential sources of religious resistance to excess imperial masculine force.¹¹¹⁰ I will return to this argument in the third section of this chapter.

6.1.1 Ripostes to the ranked ethnic caste system

In the immediate post-independence era, the patriarchal intertribal caste system was weakened by the government's centralizing policies, but it was allowed to persist. Eventually, as I will narrate, subsequent post-colonial governments reaffirmed the link between paramount chiefs and land rights. These decisions eventually led to the northern conflicts of 1981 and 1994. The substructure upon which the intertribal caste system and royal patriarchal class system is built is the colonial translation of the pre-colonial invasion narrative, which as MacGaffey pointed out, has not been significantly challenged by scholarship in the post-colonial era.¹¹¹¹ Similarly, Amadiume argues the masculine imperialist perspective in African scholarship persists in the way it reads the pre-colonial era.¹¹¹²

Several independent kinship-based societies mounted social ripostes to the system of ranked ethnicity through ethnic organizing in northern Ghana in the post-colonial era. In 1981 and

¹¹⁰⁸ In Dagbon MacGaffey recounts three different ways succession can occur for a tindana. Some shrines have a line of men and a line of women. Some are passed on from a tindana's oldest daughter's firstborn son. Some shrines only go to men of different gates, which are determined by divination. MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 93–94.

¹¹⁰⁹ MacGaffey, 69–108.

¹¹¹⁰ One remnant of matrifocal systems in the Ghanaian political environment is the role of mangazia, or women's organizer. Amadiume would question whether the mangazia is a representative system, because such representative systems have been co-opted by elite males in the Nigerian context. *Reinventing Africa*, 177.

¹¹¹¹ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 19.

¹¹¹² Amadiume judges Cheikh Anta Diop to be an exception to this claim. Amadiume applies a Diopan perspective to contemporary Nigeria. Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 161–82. Amadiume discusses the masculine imperialist invasion perpetuated in the post-colonial era by male elites. In Amadiume's view, male elites in the post-colonial African state have made the situation for grassroots women worse. She argues in Nigeria this is largely true at the local governance level as well. The only way for women to engage is if they are co-opted by masculine imperialist system.

1994 the Konkomba mounted a social riposte that is especially relevant for this thesis. In 1994 the Konkomba allied with other similarly structured kinship-based societies: the Nawuri, Basaari, and Chumburung. All these loosely affiliated kinship-based societies were subordinated in the ranked system.

Before I discuss the Konkomba coalition's riposte to ranked ethnicity, I need to recall an earlier riposte to the system of ranked ethnicity initiated by the Kusasi in the town of Bawku in the 1960s. To my knowledge, the Kusasi riposte was the first ethnic response to the ranked system in the post-colonial era in northern Ghana. Bawku is located well to the north of the Gambaga escarpment.¹¹¹³ Bawku was one of the early outposts of the Mamprusi kingdom. (See chapter one sections 1.2.2.2 and 1.2.2.4.) Nayiri is the paramount chief or king of Mamprugu who resides a significant distance away from Bawku in Nalerigu. Bawku is a center of trade. For many years the Mamprusi in Bawku spoke Hausa as much or more than Mampruli.¹¹¹⁴ The farming area surrounding Bawku is densely populated by people now labelled Kusasi. Originally Kusasi was a term used by Mamprusi to refer to "a population of interrelated clans and lineages with diverse origins, living in dispersed settlements."¹¹¹⁵ In other words, initially 'Kusasi' was not a term of self-designation used by the people themselves. Eventually those disparate groups acquired a common Kusasi identity such that "conflict with the Mamprusi has been a major context for this newfound solidarity."¹¹¹⁶

The conflict has roots in the colonial and post-colonial eras. In the 1930s, the colonial government helped create several new skins for smaller Kusasi chiefs. Those skins were not over the central town of Bawku. In the early 1960s when Kusasi delegations requested to be paramount over Bawku, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's CPP government supported a Kusasi chief over Bawku. This was unprecedented and fueled much of the northern opposition to the CPP in the Northern People's Party. After Nkrumah was ousted in 1966, eventually Nkrumah's main political opponent, Dr. K.A. Busia, was elected Prime Minister of the second Republic of Ghana in 1969. Busia's regime established the National House of Chiefs through the Chieftaincy Act of 1971, giving that house the power to vet all future applications for

¹¹¹³ The area around and south of the Gambaga escarpment is the primary focus of this thesis. Many Kusasi people live just north of the escarpment, and some have migrated into the area south of the escarpment.

¹¹¹⁴ Drucker-Brown, "Communal Violence in Northern Ghana: Unaccepted War," 47. I note linguistic practices can change in response to market conditions and as part of a strategy of language planning.

¹¹¹⁵ Drucker-Brown, 48.

¹¹¹⁶ Drucker-Brown, 48.

chieftaincy. This directly undid Nkrumah's intervention into chieftaincy in Bawku. The Kusasi-Mamprusi conflict has sparked again and again in the 20th and 21st centuries, killing many lives and destroying much property.¹¹¹⁷

The Kusasi riposte to the ranked ethnic system was not the only ethnic riposte in the early post-colonial era. But the Kusasi-Mamprusi conflict set an 'ethnic' precedent for subsequent conflicts. The issues of 'allodial' land rights and paramount chieftaincy will become increasingly entangled as the story continues.

6.1.2 Factors that contributed to the Konkomba riposte to ranked ethnicity

I now focus on the Konkomba riposte to the ranked ethnic system, because it resulted in two major conflicts which garnered national attention in 1981 and 1994. The second of these conflicts, known as 'The Guinea Fowl War,' was on a larger scale geographically than most other ethnic conflicts in Ghana.

There are several factors related to the Konkomba social riposte to ranked ethnicity in post-colonial northern Ghana. First, the experience of oppression and tribal-based discrimination under customary law was a factor that mobilized disparate and independent kinship groups through their shared experiences of oppression. Second, the rights of all citizens as established in Ghana's independent constitutions call ranked ethnicity into question. Third, Nkrumah's emphasis on detribalization and his weakening of the institution of chieftaincy in the immediate post-independence era bolstered the hopes of many ethnic groups who had been disenfranchised and discriminated against by indirect rule. Fourth, students of the post-colonial education system who became teachers engaged in conscientizing disparate kinship-based societies to the benefits of a larger concept of tribe based on similarities in language, culture, and oppression.¹¹¹⁸ Fifth, rural Konkomba farmers began to migrate to southern

¹¹¹⁷ Christian Lund, "'Bawku Is Still Volatile': Ethno-Political Conflict and State Recognition in Northern Ghana," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 41, no. 4 (2003): 587–610; Christian Lund, *Local Politics and the Dynamics of Property in Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0803/2007038690-t.html>.

¹¹¹⁸ It seems to me that organizing similar kinship groups into a larger concept of tribe required drawing on the resources of matrilineal relations among structurally similar groups, but only patrilineal relations between those kinship groups who had relations with those groups who either practiced the politics of nam or were caught up in it. No doubt that some kinship groups on the lower levels of the hierarchy of nam had much in common with some of the decentralized kinship societies and were probably well connected through their mothers and marriage.

locations for better farming of yams. Konkomba people migrated and eventually established themselves all along the trade route from north to south, all the way to the yam market in Accra.¹¹¹⁹ Sixth, business minded migrants sought not only to farm but also to control the yam market. This established significant resources for those traders and eventually would result in a large amount of capital for a few businessmen. These businessmen utilized ethnicity as part of their business advantage. Seventh, ethnic organizing in rural areas was bolstered by missionary Bible translation and African literacy, which was also engaging in ethnolinguistic organizing motivated by Christian mission connected to language development. Eighth, ethnic organizing paired with a stronger economic base made Konkomba become more active in politics. Eventually they were able to get some individuals affiliated with their ethnicity into government office.¹¹²⁰

The first factor that contributed to the riposte to ranked ethnicity were the myriads of experiences of oppression, discrimination, and extraction at the hands of chief's police and customary courts. These experiences of oppression unified disparate groups and motivated them to try to rework the ranked ethnic system.¹¹²¹ Pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial experiences of oppression continue to be remembered and experienced in the present. Oppressions include material acts of extraction, and forms of social degradation. Drucker-Brown's research in Nalerigu in the early 1960s indicated that superiority was a cultural feeling. "The sense of superiority that individual Mamprusi, and particularly royals feel towards individual Tallensi, Lowiili, or Konkomba, is a fact which must be mentioned."¹¹²² Individuals share stories how at markets Konkomba people would be standing somewhere and a Dagbamba royal might come up and place a bicycle against him as if he were a tree. In the post-colonial era before the tribal conflicts of the 1980s and 1990s Nayiri was still conscripting labor from communities. Subordinate tribal identity was not the only factor in conscripted labor, but it was one factor. People feared becoming embroiled with the chief's

¹¹¹⁹ Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 139, 156–59.

¹¹²⁰ The Northern Regional Minister has in recent years been a Konkomba. The current minister of defense is a Konkomba man from the Bimbilla area. Some individuals are elected and then receive appointments into government offices.

¹¹²¹ "Resistance, then, originates not simply from material appropriation but from the pattern of personal humiliations that characterize that exploitation. While the extraction of labor or grain from a subordinate population has something of a generic quality to it, the shape of personal domination is likely to be far more culturally specific and particular." Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 111–12.

¹¹²² Drucker-Brown, *Ritual Aspects of the Mamprusi Kingship*, 9.

police and customary court cases. I have heard a few anecdotes regarding exorbitant fines issued from post-colonial customary courts over what appear to the defendants to be arbitrary and ‘nonsense’ cases.

The second factor that contributed to the social riposte to the ranked ethnic system was the realization that these discriminations violated the rights of individuals enshrined in Ghana’s various constitutions. These rights stand today under the 1992 constitution. Nevertheless, Ghana’s various post-colonial governments have continued to perpetuate and maintain the ‘customary’ system alongside the constitutional system. The state enshrined what Talton calls “a dual system of belonging.”¹¹²³ Two competing systems were in play. One recognized the equality of all Ghanaian citizens. The other only recognized the political legitimacy of the historically centralized tribes that were supported by the British government.

This ethnic-based political inequality, although a product of British rule, was institutionalized in postcolonial regimes in ways that undermined notions of equality guaranteed by the constitution that exacerbated notions of ethnic exclusivity and tensions between communities.¹¹²⁴

There were two strains of independence movements in Africa. Mamdani characterizes them as conservative and radical.¹¹²⁵ Jay Oelbaum analyzes the two traditions in Ghana as populist and liberal.¹¹²⁶ The more conservative strain, which in Oelbaum’s analysis would be the liberal tradition, addressed the racial problem of colonial rule. It removed white European rule but kept in place the Native Authorities and the system of ranked ethnicity. The more radical or populist strain characterizes Kwame Nkrumah and the Convention People’s Party (CPP) government in Ghana. The radical or populist strain preferred direct rule over indirect rule.

The third factor that contributed to the Konkomba social riposte to ranked ethnicity was the way Nkrumah’s CPP government weakened Native Authorities through the assertion of

¹¹²³ “The dual system of belonging reflects the weakness of the postcolonial state and its inability to effectively accommodate the cultural and political diversity of its various ethnic communities.” Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 146.

¹¹²⁴ Talton, 145.

¹¹²⁵ Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 25.

¹¹²⁶ Oelbaum, “Ethnicity Adjusted? Economic Reform, Elections, and Tribalism in Ghana’s Fourth Republic,” 245.

centralized power over them. When Nkrumah became the leader of the Gold Coast Government in 1951, he facilitated the passing of the Local Government Bill of 1951, which contributed to chiefs being taken off local ruling councils. The Local Government (Amendment) Act 14 of 1959 completed the removal of all non-elected chiefs from local governments and government payrolls.¹¹²⁷ However, Nkrumah did not dismantle the Native Authorities completely; he simply sought to reduce their power and bring them under centralized control. The CPP government's answer to decentralized despotism was centralized despotism, a shift back toward direct rule, albeit with different ideological commitments.¹¹²⁸ The perpetuation of the dual system of fused power, which the CPP did not dismantle, was strengthened by subsequent post-colonial governments. The dual system has most adversely affected rural populations and the emerging urban communities in formerly rural areas.

The fourth factor that contributed to the social riposte to ranked ethnicity emerged through ethnic organizing in the 1970s. The organizing of marginalized ethnic groups into affiliated tribes emerged initially in schools. Education was one of the emphases of the late colonial government as Nkrumah and the CPP took control of it. This was continued into the immediate post-colonial era. The educated were all boys and the experiences of boys from disparate subordinate kinship groups uniting in school based on similarities in language and culture would eventually be projected across all disparate and formerly independent ethnic groups. Some of those former schoolboys formed the nucleus of what would become the Konkomba Youth Association (KOYA) in the 1970s.¹¹²⁹ They encouraged all kinship groups

¹¹²⁷ Ferguson and Wilks, "Chiefs, Constitutions and The British in Northern Ghana," 339.

¹¹²⁸ "The exceptions in postcolonial Africa were leaders who worked aggressively to create a viable rural citizenry. Yet most leaders of postcolonial states focused on replacing European with African power. They embarked on top-down social and political change...the rural majority continued to be ruled by customary laws of postcolonial versions of Native Authorities." Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 186. See also Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 26–27.

¹¹²⁹ There were precursors to the ethnic organizing of the 1970s and 80s which occurred towards the end of the colonial era. Nevertheless, Talton refers to Ghana's independence as the birth of Konkomba social politics. Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 127.

who spoke dialects of Konkomba to get education, to end cultural practices such as the infant betrothal of women, which contributed to warring between kinship groups.¹¹³⁰

The fifth factor that influenced the riposte to ranked ethnicity in the late 20th century was migration. After Nkrumah's ouster many of the northern schools were closed. The few northerners who had gone to school became leaders in migrating. Many young men went south and began farming in what was more fertile soil. They were able to get some income and buy goods from the southern sector that were not available in the north. When they returned home, this motivated more young men to move south; some eventually moved permanently. Others migrated for business training in tailoring, a needed skill in the north as people were buying fabric from the emerging Ghanaian fabric market. The influence of Christianity and Islam also spread because of this form of migration.

The sixth factor that fueled the riposte to ranked ethnicity was the shift that Konkomba farmers made from producing yams to marketing them. KOYA played a part as they encouraged farmers to engage in the transport and marketing of yams as part of their larger emphasis on self-help.¹¹³¹ The agricultural context of the 1970s helped facilitate this shift for Konkomba farmers in what was called operation feed yourself under General Acheampong's military government. While state-sponsored agricultural activity centered on farming implements for large scale capitalist farming, these were focused on large chiefs. This large investment scheme eventually failed because it depended on government subsidies and graft.¹¹³² The economic downturn which Ghana experienced at the end of the 1970s did not affect Konkomba businessmen as much because they were focusing on the unsubsidized yam market that produced food for local consumption. Subsistence farmers focused on yams that did not require much fertilizer or heavy equipment. Initially Konkomba middlemen remained small, but they chose Asante women as middle-women over Dagbamba and Nanumba traders. By 1981, Konkomba were successful yam farmers who also controlled marketing.¹¹³³

¹¹³⁰ Talton discusses how ending infant betrothal was an issue addressed by Assemblies of God missionary nurse Charlese Spencer. Infant betrothal hampered girl's education, 119. These two issues, a focus on education and ending infant betrothal, were a focus for the Konkomba Improvement Association in the 1950s, 125–27. These two issues were picked up again 20 years later as a focus for KOYA, 154.

¹¹³¹ Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 156.

¹¹³² MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 149.

¹¹³³ Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 159.

Initially yams were not a product for export, but that changed in the 1980s and 1990s and yams have become a source of capital for elite businessmen.

The seventh factor that emerged as part of the Konkomba riposte was the government construction of roads. This contributed to migration and the development of the yam market. Oelbaum reports that the colonial government began constructing roads for trade in the 1920s.¹¹³⁴ In the Gambaga area in the 1940s and 50s colonial roads were built to facilitate trade in Ghana and between British and French territories in Africa. An east-west road moved along the southern edge of the escarpment from Gambaga through Nakpanduri and Bimbagu and on to Bunkpurugu. In the lead up to independence, as part of the CPP government's promise to northerners who voted in the United Nations plebiscite to stay with Ghana after independence rather than joining French Togoland, a major north-south road was built, linking the Tema port to Togo and Burkina Faso.¹¹³⁵ That road cut through Konkomba country and linked a formerly isolated area to trade and transport.

The eighth factor that emerged as significant in the middle of the 1970s was the missionary translation of the Konkomba Bible and the literacy development program associated with it. Missionary Bible translation began with language development work in the 1960s. The language work received a boost in the 1970s from KOYA's organizing work. KOYA activists had experienced a larger sense of ethnic identity in school and through migration to southern Ghana; they promoted that larger notion of ethnic identity throughout the area. This larger notion of ethnolinguistic identity was assumed in missionary initiated language development efforts.¹¹³⁶ The growth of Konkomba literacy classes provided a tangible skill to rural farmers, a benefit associated with a larger tribal identity and associated with its argument for development.

The ninth factor significant for mounting a riposte to ranked ethnicity was voting power. The common sense of a larger tribal identity became useful in mobilizing votes in areas that were formerly disparate and not united. The economic base that Konkomba farmers and traders

¹¹³⁴ Jay Oelbaum, *Spatial Poverty Traps and Ethnic Conflict Traps: Lessons from Northern Ghana's "Blood Yams"* (London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI), 2010), 16, <http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/4530.pdf>.

¹¹³⁵ Drucker-Brown, "Local Wars in Northern Ghana," 99.

¹¹³⁶ In the study of the relationship between linguistics (language) and society the emphasis on social groupings shifted from objective linguistic classifications to account for complex sociolinguistic factors. Missionary language practices also contributed to this shifting awareness.

had developed also played a role here. When wealthy businessmen began to emerge, they were able to provide the resources necessary to back candidates in the neo-patrimonial political economy.

These nine factors would merge together around a tenth factor, the issue of paramount chieftaincy and its link to allodial land rights. These factors came to a head in the late 1970s and again in the early 1990s and contributed to the 1981 and 1994 intertribal conflicts.

6.1.3 Summarizing a history of Konkomba ethnic organizing with a focus on land rights
While there have been many ethnically related conflicts in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the intertribal conflict between Konkomba and the Dagbamba societies is the largest, most well-known, and most researched. Drucker-Brown argues ethnic groups are normally able to manage the tensions between them. It takes a series of factors coming together to realize the potential for war.¹¹³⁷ In the Konkomba case, perhaps the decisive factor was the government's opening of the issue of land ownership and their subsequent clarification regarding land ownership and the paramount chiefs of the north in the 1979 and 1992 Constitutions.

In what follows I offer a brief recapitulation of the story of Konkomba organizing, especially as it relates to their struggle for land rights. In the late 1950s a new educated group of young Konkomba elites formed the Konkomba Improvement Association, organized as a self-help group advocating for Konkomba involvement at the local and national levels. Their embryonic efforts sought to establish greater Konkomba unity by ending feuding between kinship groups associated with the marriage practice of infant betrothal. They also sought to encourage more Konkomba children to go to school.¹¹³⁸ Ghana's independence created an environment that nurtured the birth of Konkomba politics. As Nkrumah worked towards detribalization, Konkomba were gaining a greater ethnic/tribal consciousness and pursuing their own political interests.¹¹³⁹ In 1963 Nkrumah made Saboba into a new political district.

¹¹³⁷ Drucker-Brown, "Local Wars in Northern Ghana," 101.

¹¹³⁸ Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 121. The Konkomba Improvement Association's emphasis on infant betrothal was less about women's education as it was for missionary Charlese Spencer, but more focused on ending 'tribal' conflict. Here tribe referred to one's kinship group or patrilineal clan, not one's larger ethno-linguistic tribal identity.

¹¹³⁹ "Konkomba ethnicity, therefore, was a product of Ghana's political modernization and development. Yet tradition remained the primary means through which local societies were pushed to the margins of local politics,

Nkrumah expanded political districts to weaken the dominance of chiefs by weakening their control of boundaries. Nevertheless, many people viewed traditional structures (chieftaincy and the indirect rule of Native Authorities) as more legitimate than state political structures and thus Konkomba leaders felt it necessary in terms of popular opinion to challenge Dagbamba hegemony at the traditional level.¹¹⁴⁰ One way this was done was through the pursuit of Konkomba chieftaincies and chiefdoms. The district commissioner of the newly established Saboba district, Isaac Bawa, was in a tense relationship with Nkrumah regarding chieftaincy. Nkrumah challenged the office of chief, whereas Bawa only challenged the institution of chieftaincy among dominant tribal groups who already had paramount chiefs. Bawa worked to implement practices of chieftaincy for decentralized Konkomba communities, even though many Konkomba communities were not particularly interested in chieftaincy. A ‘sideshow’ contest among Konkomba communities started at that time regarding which community should be the seat of paramount chieftaincy for Konkomba communities.¹¹⁴¹

After Nkrumah's ouster in February of 1966, the National Liberation Council 1966-1969 decided to merge the Saboba and Zabzugu councils, reversing the CPP's decision to expand political districts. The CPP was trying to use political districts to destabilize the customary power of chiefs. The committee overseeing the combined Saboba and Zabzugu council was over-represented by Dagbamba. Konkomba leaders perceived that Dagbamba leaders would block Konkomba advancement to protect the continuation of their ethnic advantage gained from the policies of indirect rule.¹¹⁴²

As previously indicated, Busia was elected Prime Minister of the second Republic of Ghana in 1969. Busia's regime established the National House of Chiefs through the Chieftaincy Act of 1971, giving that house the power to vet all future applications for chieftaincy. This directly undid Nkrumah's intervention into chieftaincy in Bawku, where the CPP supported a

and it served as the means through which they challenged their marginalization." Talton, 127. This is a good illustration of how the entanglement of African time causes activists working for liberation to choose what appear to be opposed tacks. Talton argues that the Konkomba emerging elites were really working towards collective advancement, not personal advancement, nevertheless, the voices of the most marginalized are not included in most readings of the historical transcript.

¹¹⁴⁰ Talton, 129.

¹¹⁴¹ Talton, 129–30.

¹¹⁴² Talton, 131–33.

decentralized group, the Kusasi, to obtain paramount chieftaincy against the wishes of Nayiri, who was king over several Mamprusi chieftaincies that served as outposts for his kingdom, including Bawku.¹¹⁴³ For Konkomba this application for paramountcy would have to go through Ya Na in Yendi, and if an application for chieftaincy included the Bikɔm or Komba, it would have to go through Nayiri. This made acquiring paramount chieftaincy unlikely.¹¹⁴⁴ Despite several moves that might be interpreted as against Konkomba politics, Busia's regime reversed its earlier decision and granted Saboba its own district constituency¹¹⁴⁵ and this continued to allow the political arm of government to rub against the traditional.

Ghana continued to vacillate between military and civilian governments in the 1970s. In 1972 Busia was overthrown by General Acheampong, who ruled as military leader until he was overthrown in the 1979 coup d'état, and Dr. Hilla Limann was subsequently elected in 1979. Each successive government sought support from northern chiefs.

6.1.3.1 KOYA and the struggle for land

The Konkomba Youth Association (KOYA) was inaugurated in 1977 during their first Easter convention. Youth associations were a larger trend in political activism and self-help among highly politicized ethnic groups in postcolonial Africa.¹¹⁴⁶ KOYA was one such group formed by educated Konkomba professionals and civil servants who lived in Tamale.¹¹⁴⁷ KOYA's initiatives were quite similar to those of the Konkomba Improvement Association founded twenty years earlier. They sought to end the practice of infant betrothal and promoted formal education. Land reforms were added to their agenda after the government started initiating a land reform process.¹¹⁴⁸

In 1978 General Acheampong's government began a process of land reform, attempting to break with colonial policy in the north that had made all northern land 'public' land, owned by the government. An unintended consequence of the northern lands being under state

¹¹⁴³ Drucker-Brown, "Communal Violence in Northern Ghana: Unaccepted War," 47–49.

¹¹⁴⁴ Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 134.

¹¹⁴⁵ Talton, 135.

¹¹⁴⁶ Carola Lentz, "Youth Associations and Ethnicity in Northern Ghana," in *Ethnicity, Conflicts, and Consensus in Ghana*, ed. Steve Tonah (Accra: Woeli Pub. Services, 2007), 42–59.

¹¹⁴⁷ KOYA was founded through a series of conversations between Alfred Cotin, George Uka, Anthony Adams Bukari, Joseph Likanli, Samuel Kwaku, Daniel Ngula. Also Dan Neina Jobor, Isaac Bawa Bukari, Johnson Bilidou, and Nakoja Namuel. Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 151.

¹¹⁴⁸ Talton, 154.

control was that it limited ethnic conflict and official claims over the right to land. In most areas local procedures for land administration operated outside of government oversight.¹¹⁴⁹ Southern lands had long been vested in chiefs, traditional owners, and families. Northern chiefs wanted the same rights. The Committee on Ownership of Land and Positions of Tenants in Northern and Upper Regions, also known as the Alhassan Committee, was formed to determine who were the original owners of land in the north. KOYA hoped to influence the committee and petitioned for recognition of Konkomba clans as rightful owners of land around the Oti River. However, the commission opted to continue the policy of ethnic privilege, citing that the Dagomba¹¹⁵⁰ owned all land claimed by Konkomba “by right of conquest.”¹¹⁵¹

KOYA’s petition served as a public riposte that carefully skirted the hegemony of Scott’s notion of ‘the public transcript.’¹¹⁵² (See chapter two section 2.3.1.4.) Rather than addressing the Dagbamba invasion narrative or their claims to rights of conquest, KOYA claimed the rights of Konkomba people by virtue of being present on the land and being the “original inhabitants.”¹¹⁵³ The committee’s response was to double down on the public transcript, to invoke the right of conquest and the story of invasion, which was transformed from praise-chant into historiography by colonial acts of translation as described in chapter 2.

After the ouster of Acheampong, under newly elected President Limann, the 1979 Constitution (Article 188) enshrined land reforms in the Northern Region, moving in a similar fashion as the direction initiated by the Alhassan committee of the previous government. The 1979 Constitution divested the State from holding the northern lands in trust and returned the land to their “original owners.” The term original owner was not explicitly spelled out. But following the logic of the Alhassan Committee, original owners was

¹¹⁴⁹ Talton, 135.

¹¹⁵⁰ Dagomba is an anglicized version of Dagbamba. Dagomba refers to eastern Dagbon more often than western Dagbon. (Western Dagbon is referred to as Mamprugu, the term I am using in this thesis.)

¹¹⁵¹ Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 146–48.

¹¹⁵² Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 2–4.

¹¹⁵³ The issue of “first inhabitants” or autochthones has its own problems as a basis for land ownership, because of the fluid pre-colonial practices of migration and ethnic identity. In the 1981 and 1994 conflicts Dagbamba princes would claim that the Dagomba and the Nanumba were the original inhabitants and that the Konkomba were invaders from Togo, despite their portrayal of themselves as invaders to the British during colonization, and so much evidence to the contrary. Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 144.

interpreted to mean the four paramount chieftaincies: Ya Na for Dagbon, Bimbilla Na for Nanuɔ, Nayiri for Mamprugu, and Yabonwira for Gonja. From the perspective of Konkomba, who only recently began to participate in chieftaincy, but who had long inhabited northern land, and who had many bitindam or tindamba ‘territorial land heads,’ the Alhassan Committee’s assertion of the invasion myth and the interpretation of the 1979 constitution was a step backward. Now Konkomba communities were being characterized as ‘chief less’ and ‘landless’ despite evidence to the contrary in both cases, but especially regarding land, since they inhabited it and were known as successful farmers throughout the country, specifically in the yam trade.¹¹⁵⁴

Talton recounts the specific dynamics which contributed to the 1981 conflict in the area around Bimbilla. The Konkomba won the combat portion of the conflict. But at the end of the conflict, the situation returned to the status quo.¹¹⁵⁵ Talton argues conflict was not a tactic to achieve transformation but a product of the transformations that already took place. Talton lays blame for the conflict at the feet of government policy. The government refused to resolve the dual system of belonging.

After this conflict in 1981, Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings led a second coup d’état and President Limann was overthrown. Rawlings ruled a military government until he was elected in 1992. A new constitution was penned in 1992 with similar wording to the 1979 constitution regarding land ownership. Only now the term “skin” was added which implied chief, but did not specify what level of chief.¹¹⁵⁶ Despite the lack of specificity, the 1992 Constitution has been interpreted as referring to the four paramount chiefs having allodial rights, whereas all other claimants, including smaller chiefs and tindamba only have usufructuary rights, that is, the right to the farm produce of the land.¹¹⁵⁷ In many places land

¹¹⁵⁴ Talton, 150–51.

¹¹⁵⁵ Talton, 161–69.

¹¹⁵⁶ "(3) For the avoidance of doubt, it is hereby declared that all lands in the Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions of Ghana which immediately before the coming into force of this constitution were vested in the Government of Ghana are not public lands within the meaning of clauses (1) and (2) of this article.

(4) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, all lands referred to in clause (3) of this article shall vest in any person who was the owner of the land before vesting, or in appropriate skin without further assurance than this clause." The Republic of Ghana, "Constitution of the Republic of Ghana" (1992), art. 257.

¹¹⁵⁷ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 168.

can be sold by paramount chiefs without any consultation with the villages or the caretaker chiefs.¹¹⁵⁸

A much larger conflict ensued in 1994 between those groups who had been subordinated under ranked ethnicity and those groups privileged by ranked ethnicity. The Nawuri, Chumburung, and Basaari fought alongside the Konkomba, while the Dagbamba and Gonja recruited the Nanumba.¹¹⁵⁹ The Komba, Bimoba, and Mamprusi of the area around the Gambaga escarpment were hesitant to join due to the series of conflicts that had already taken place between them in the mid to late 1980s.¹¹⁶⁰ The government did not intervene in the 10 days of heaviest fighting. More than 178,000 people were left homeless, 300 villages were destroyed, approximately 15,000 people were killed, “and tens of thousands of people were left wounded and emotionally scarred.”¹¹⁶¹

There is a link between the 1981 and 1994 conflicts to the 1979 and 1992 Constitutions. Both constitutions reiterated democratic notions of citizenship as applicable to everyone, including northerners, but at the same time the Constitutions implicitly reinforced ethnic hierarchies inherited from the despotic legacy of indirect rule by investing the four paramount chieftaincies as allodial owners of all northern land. The contradictory dual systems of belonging worked against each other. The conflict was increased by Konkomba gains in representative and economic power.¹¹⁶² These democratic and economic forces rubbed against notions of ethnic hierarchy, or what I have been calling the ranked ethnic ‘caste’

¹¹⁵⁸ R. K. Kasanga, *The Role of Chiefs and Tendamba in Land Administration in Northern Ghana*, Our Common Estate (London: Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, 1996), 7.

¹¹⁵⁹ Kaye and Béland, “The Politics of Ethnicity and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: The Case of Northern Ghana,” 184.

¹¹⁶⁰ Drucker-Brown, “Local Wars in Northern Ghana”; Drucker-Brown, “Communal Violence in Northern Ghana: Unaccepted War.”

¹¹⁶¹ Kaye and Béland, “The Politics of Ethnicity and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: The Case of Northern Ghana,” 184.

¹¹⁶² Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 145–46.

system.¹¹⁶³ It is no accident that conflicts ensued after the establishment of both of these constitutions.¹¹⁶⁴

6.1.3.2 A history of Konkomba language development and Bible translation related to Konkomba ethnic organizing

My focus on the role of (Bible) translation in political history requires a brief review of the events that led to the linking of language development, Bible translation, and Konkomba social activism. I argue that literacy even in local languages is part of ‘modernization,’ and that Bible translation as a theological and spiritual activity implicitly challenges the underling logic of the ranked ethnic caste system.

The agreement between the University of Ghana’s Institute of African Studies and SIL International paved the way for Bible translator Mary Steele to arrive in Ghana in 1962. In that same year, Kwame Nkrumah commented on the need for the Institute for African Studies to “study the history, culture, and institutions, languages, and arts of Ghana and of Africa in new African-centered ways—in entire freedom from the propositions and presuppositions of the colonial epoch.”¹¹⁶⁵ Nkrumah advised foreign professors and lecturers must realize that “their mental make-up has been largely influenced by their system of education and the fact of their society and environment. For this reason, they must endeavor to adjust and reorientate their attitudes and thought to our African conditions and aspirations.”¹¹⁶⁶

In terms of the study of linguistics there was a real intention to shift from a European-centered analysis towards an African-centered analysis through descriptive approaches to

¹¹⁶³ Jon Kirby identifies cultural factors which contributed to problems in managing the conflict. Konkomba seek to avoid agitating and interpret agitation as bullying and constraining others freedom. For Dagomba being weak is shameful. In addition, Kirby identifies the separation of spiritual from material power in the current political system as contributing to conflict, especially as it relates to the offices of tindana ‘priest’ and na ‘chief.’ Jon P. Kirby, “Peace Building in Northern Ghana: Cultural Themes in Ethnic Conflict,” in *Ghana’s North: Research on Culture, Religion, and Politics of Societies in Transition*, ed. Franz Kröger and Barbara Meier (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2003), 173–74.

¹¹⁶⁴ Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 161.

¹¹⁶⁵ Kwame Nkrumah and Samuel Gyasi Obeng, *Selected speeches*, vol. 5 (Accra: Afram Publ., 1997), 128. Referenced in D. Zizwe Poe, *Kwame Nkrumah’s Contribution to Pan-Africanism: An Afrocentric Analysis*, African Studies : History, Politics, Economics, and Culture (New York: Routledge, 2003), 144.

¹¹⁶⁶ Nkrumah and Obeng, *Selected speeches*, 5:129. Referenced in Poe, *Kwame Nkrumah’s Contribution to Pan-Africanism*, 144.

language.¹¹⁶⁷ Accordingly, phonological research on Likpakpaanl was published in 1966.¹¹⁶⁸ A language and dialect survey was carried out in the same year in which Steele was judged to be ahead of her time in her consideration of socio-linguistic factors in language standardization.¹¹⁶⁹ Translation was carried out using the approach laid out by Eugene Nida.¹¹⁷⁰ It was a radical approach at the time of grammatical transformation and dynamic equivalence, however, its theoretical approach could be applied in a homogenizing

¹¹⁶⁷ Herman Batibo recounts that it was the influence of African linguists like Professor Gilbert Ansre of Ghana and Professor Ayo Bamgbose of Nigeria that caused him to study African linguistics rather than French Studies at the University of Sorbonne in Paris. Prior to his departure for Paris, while attending a conference in Limuru Kenya on African linguistics, Ansre, a foundational individual in terms of the agreement between the Institute for African Studies at the University of Ghana and SIL, along with Bamgbose, changed Batibo's focus to the African continent. "Herman Batibo, University of Botswana," accessed October 7, 2018, <https://linguistlist.org/studentportal/linguists/batibo.cfm>.

¹¹⁶⁸ Mary Steele and Gretchen Weed, *Collected Field Reports on the Phonology of Konkomba*, Collected Language Notes (Accra, Ghana: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, 1967).

¹¹⁶⁹ Steele, "Konkomba Dialect Survey"; Mary Steele, "Konkomba" (The Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation, 1966).

¹¹⁷⁰ In a book translated and edited by the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship, translation studies scholar Anthony Pym's assessment of Eugene Nida's approach is both critical and appreciative. Pym explores three critics of Nida's approach, YC Whang, a Bible translator, Henri Meschonnic, a poet, and Lawrence Venuti, an academic. *On Translator Ethics*, 112–20. Pym urges a reconsideration of Nida's approach for three reasons. "First, his sovereign translator is empowered by allegiance to an external cause (faith), and that cause is able to provide uncommon agency. Second, that subjectivity is not positioned within any sending or receiving language, thus allowing it to occupy an interlingual position. Third, the success of a translation is not judged on the basis of the source text as such, but on the effects in the moment of reception—an assertion made by Nida in an era when most of linguistics and virtually all translation theory was focused exclusively on the moment of production." Pym, 111.

manner¹¹⁷¹ and its ideology has been judged to be covert.¹¹⁷² The publication of *Uwombor aagban pɔɔn* (New Testament in Konkomba) occurred in 1978.¹¹⁷³ Whereas *Naawuni Kundi Palli* (New Testament in Dagbanli) was first published in 1974.¹¹⁷⁴

The first literacy primers in Likpakpaanl were published in 1966, and Steele began teaching classes in Saboba.¹¹⁷⁵ Initial interest was low.¹¹⁷⁶ The literacy effort really expanded with the

¹¹⁷¹ For example, in the 1950s the Assemblies of God missionaries and indigenous translators were involved in the second historical attempt at Dagbanli Bible translation. In 1966-67 the Catholics were invited to join the project and the Bible Society took over. At some point, translators went to a one-month training course featuring Eugene Nida where he taught the dynamic equivalence approach of the Good News Bible. It is not clear how much of the earlier approach was allowed to stand in the publication of the first New Testament in 1974. Sule-Saa's 2004 interview of translator Daniel Wumbee describes the early Assemblies of God translation approach as follows: "The translation task among the Dagomba was an all-embracing affair, including consultations with various professional and institutions in the society. Thus builders, weavers, carpenters, butchers, blacksmiths, herbalists, hunters, *lunsi* (drummers) and the general public made inputs into the Dagbani Scriptures. For instance, builders provided translators with the right names of the materials and measurements used in building. Weavers were helpful in describing and giving names of materials for clothes.... The drummers and traditional orators assisted in the composition of poetic texts or idiomatic expressions. The traditional royal courts also offered an environment conducive for capturing the appropriate diction for meaningful translation. Thus, the translation process drew in Christians and non-Christians, as well as people of diverse backgrounds." Sule-Saa, "Owning the Christian Faith through Mother-Tongue Scriptures: A Case Study of the Dagomba and Konkomba of Northern Ghana," 49.

¹¹⁷² Antonia Carcelen-Estrada, "Covert and Overt Ideologies in the Translation of the Bible into Huaorani," in *Translation, Resistance, Activism*, ed. Maria Tymoczko (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 82-84. "The Huaorani create a visual text of their body that lacks meaning. Huaorani meaning is protected in the depth of silence, waiting for the right time to emerge culturally from the margins.... The white missionaries created a text from Huaorani stories to slowly shift the axiological elements of Huaorani sacred beliefs. From oral to written, from myths to Bible, Huaorani communities seem to have passively accepted Western cultural impositions. What we are witnessing is a severe case of miscommunication, where neither party is willing to engage in meaningful conversation, but where ethics and ideology are at stake." Carcelen-Estrada, 86.

¹¹⁷³ The first SIL New Testament in Ghana was published in 1976 in Kusaal. "Who We Are | GILLBT," accessed June 30, 2018, <http://www.gillbt.org/who-we-are/>.

¹¹⁷⁴ Sule-Saa, "Owning the Christian Faith through Mother-Tongue Scriptures: A Case Study of the Dagomba and Konkomba of Northern Ghana," 49.

¹¹⁷⁵ Sue Ann Hasselbring, "Cross-Dialectal Acceptance of Written Standards: Two Ghanaian Case Studies" (Ph.D. Thesis, Johannesburg, University of South Africa, 2006), 253, <http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/715/thesis.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

¹¹⁷⁶ Hasselbring, 173.

arrival of SIL linguist Margaret Landon in 1975, at the time the New Testament was nearing completion. The literacy program was relaunched in December of 1976, with the training of 13 facilitators from different parts of the Konkomba area who had been identified by three church bodies participating in the translation and language program: Evangelical Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, and Assemblies of God.¹¹⁷⁷ In 1977 during the Literacy Days event, 79 certificates were handed out for readers who completed the training.¹¹⁷⁸

Hasselbring indicates that the relaunching of the Likpakpaanl literacy program connected the Likpakpaanl language development activities with the development and ethnic conscientizing work of KOYA.¹¹⁷⁹ At the inauguration of KOYA in 1977, there were some literacy facilitators present who advocated for the adult literacy program and even sold literacy materials during the inaugural event. As KOYA leadership moved around the area, advocating that parents send their children to school, they also encouraged participation in Likpakpaanl literacy classes.¹¹⁸⁰ The missionary-initiated language development work was picked up by African-led ethnic socio-political organizing efforts.

KOYA was interested in the community literacy program. A literacy committee was formed in 1979. That literacy committee has changed names and acronyms. It was called the Konkomba Language Development Project (KOLADEP) and was later named the Rural Integrated Literacy and Development Project (RILADEP), by which it is still known.¹¹⁸¹ The committee hired Kenneth Wujanji as the full-time project manager of the Likpakpaanl literacy program in 1981. In April of 1981 Wujanji was also elected as president of KOYA.¹¹⁸² While many of the leaders in KOYA and RILADEP were already employed by Ghana Education Service as teachers, others had no other employment. Thus, the translation and literacy work also provided limited material resources such as bicycles to literacy supervisors and facilitators, many of whom were also working with KOYA. KOYA for its part was dependent on local funds, which it successfully raised.

¹¹⁷⁷ These same church bodies were involved in the Dagbani translation.

¹¹⁷⁸ Hasselbring, "Cross-Dialectal Acceptance of Written Standards: Two Ghanaian Case Studies," 149.

¹¹⁷⁹ Hasselbring, 148.

¹¹⁸⁰ Hasselbring, 150.

¹¹⁸¹ Hasselbring, 151.

¹¹⁸² Hasselbring, 150.

The literacy program expanded significantly in the years when KOYA was also expanding. Between 1977 and 1980 the literacy program had a large increase each year in the number of level 1 classes. In 1977, the program had 20 classes, 20 teachers, and 285 students. In 1980, there were 181 classes, 206 teachers, and 2,050 students.¹¹⁸³ The *Konkomba – English (Likaln - Likpakpaaln) Dictionary* was published in 1981. Fifteen titles were published in Likpakpaaln between 1978 and 1980, fifteen more between 1981 and 1990, while only three in the 1990s. Topics covered in these publications include literacy, health, agricultural development, folk stories, anecdotes, and scripture portions.¹¹⁸⁴ The Konkomba Bible including the Old Testament was published in 1997.

The point of connecting these two movements is to emphasize that missionary-initiated literacy would have garnered less popular interest if it did not coincide with the (neo-)indigenous efforts of KOYA leadership.¹¹⁸⁵ The KOYA leadership, who experienced the benefits of having a larger sense of tribal identity in school, advocated for that larger identity in their home communities and beyond. The missionary workers brought a sense of ethno-linguistic homogeneity to their language development work that was probably foreign to the indigenous communities. The disconnect between language similarity and a larger sense of tribal identity may help explain why there was initially low interest in literacy and language development.

6.1.4 Assessing the Konkomba riposte to ranked ethnicity

In this section I offer three assessments from different perspectives on the Konkomba challenge to ranked ethnicity. Each of these perspectives is looking for what scholars can learn moving forward, especially as it relates to translation. First, I will offer a socio-political assessment, based on Mamdani's theorizing and Talton's historical work. Second, I will offer a metaphor of a three-legged stool as the components of power which elites are struggling to

¹¹⁸³ David Bendor-Samuel and Margaret M. Bendor-Samuel, *Community Literacy Programmes in Northern Ghana* (Dallas, Tex: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1983), 43–44.

¹¹⁸⁴ Hasselbring, "Cross-Dialectal Acceptance of Written Standards: Two Ghanaian Case Studies," 150.

¹¹⁸⁵ I use the term neo-indigenous to refer to the Western educated leaders, who to a great extent are the bridge between indigenous communities and missionary-colonial mentalities. Talton does not use the term but describes it well when he writes, "Western educated leaders were the primary African product and response to the influences of missionaries and colonial officials. All three blurred the lines between tradition and modernity, reactionary and progressive and combined elements of African practices with European modernity." Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 122.

control in Ghana's neo-patrimonial political and economic system. Third, I will offer a theological assessment of what the Konkomba riposte to ranked ethnicity, and others like it, might mean from the perspective of post-colonial African translation theology.

6.1.4.1 Talton's socio-political assessment of Konkomba organizing

Mamdani argues that the form of oppression determines the terms of the response. Tribalism was the form of colonial rule, as experienced under indirect rule.¹¹⁸⁶ Tribalism, also referred to as ethnicity, can be leveraged to signify revolt against colonial rule.¹¹⁸⁷ Tribal organizing has been criticized as parochial and regressive rather than supra-ethnic and progressive. But as Lentz shows in her discussion of Youth Associations in northern Ghana, the supra-ethnic movements in the north tended to refer back to the expanded boundaries of centralized chieftaincy under colonial rule.¹¹⁸⁸ Thus supra-ethnic movements have tended to refer back to indirect rule and practices of ranked ethnicity. So rather than pre-judging a movement as ethnic and parochial, Mamdani suggests it is better to look at the social base and the objectives of a movement. In other words, it is possible for a local ethnic-based stance to have democratic potential, while also acknowledging the limitations of tribal organizing for thorough-going social change. In a sense, it could be argued, one cannot have detribalization unless the infrastructures of tribalism in the present system are dismantled. Until that happens, subordination with an ethnic basis demands that the subordinated assert the value of their own ethnicity, at least as a starting point toward mutual liberation.

In relation to Mamdani's claim that the form of rule is replicated in its revolt, Talton shows that Konkomba leadership was imaginative. They did not simply respond to their ethnic marginalization by seeking "to socially and politically reposition Konkomba clans within Ghana writing Konkomba versions of ethnic history."¹¹⁸⁹ Instead KOYA organized people at the grassroots level, "around education, economic self-sufficiency, and political

¹¹⁸⁶ "My point is that modern tribalism has to be understood not only as a historical phenomenon, but also as one that is contradictory. It signifies both the form of rule, and the reform of revolt against it. Whereas the former is oppressive, the latter *may be* emancipatory." Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 183. (Emphasis original.)

¹¹⁸⁷ I am following Mamdani's use of tribe. See footnote 5, above.

¹¹⁸⁸ Lentz, "Youth Associations and Ethnicity in Northern Ghana," 58.

¹¹⁸⁹ Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 184. Perhaps writing or translating Konkomba histories would have been to respond to the colonial translation of invasion narratives in a way that simply asserted an alternative view, without questioning the underlying logic of such narratives.

autonomy.”¹¹⁹⁰ Konkomba activism did not fight the top-down assertion of tribal dominance through the assertion of their own invasion myth with a counter history of their own assertion. Instead, they worked to organize their communities by encouraging them to pursue formal education, economic autonomy, and political representation.

On the other hand, Talton argues that in the end Konkomba activism has not yet been able to overcome the prescriptions of the model which subjugated them. Konkomba businessmen, teachers, ex-servicemen, and government employees sought to compete on an equal basis with their centralized neighbors by building a Konkomba identity that was based on British prescriptive notions of legitimacy with its notions of centralization, chieftaincy, tribe, and customary law. Rather than struggling to change the paradigms which prescribe how equality is constituted by altering existing laws that disenfranchise decentralized societies,¹¹⁹¹ Konkomba leaders led by the Konkomba Youth Association (KOYA), “fought for acceptance within the existing political framework.”¹¹⁹² They achieved much political and economic power while staying within the strictures of the existing political model that presumes hierarchical structures controlled by patrilineal chieftaincies as normative. What should communities do once ethnic organizing has reached an end, a stalemate, or becomes self-defeating?

6.1.4.2 The three-legged stool of power in Ghana’s ‘fused’ social system and its neo-liberal and neo-patrimonial political economy

Based on Talton’s historical survey of Konkomba social politics in a fused system which combines the ranked ethnic system with individual rights guaranteed by the Constitution in a neo-liberal economy, I have come up with a metaphor for the Konkomba ethnic organizing for power as a three-legged stool. The first leg of the stool is power through the traditional system of chieftaincy. Though some argue chieftaincy is weakening to the point of irrelevancy, pursuit of chieftaincy continues to be a significant factor in most contemporary Ghanaian conflicts, because it is legally connected to allodial land rights. Chieftaincy controls other benefits such as market taxation. Acquiring a skin can translate into profitable income. The second leg of the stool is power through political office. In order to get into one of the elected or appointed positions of political office, individuals must associate themselves with

¹¹⁹⁰ Talton, 184.

¹¹⁹¹ Talton, 182.

¹¹⁹² Talton, 14.

one of Ghana's two major political parties. These parties continue the two traditions of populism and liberalism, mentioned above. The other issue needed for achieving political power is people who will vote for you and ethnicity seems to be one significant factor in local voting.¹¹⁹³

The third leg of the stool, which some argue was crucial in the Konkomba case is the development of an economic base of power. Konkomba businessmen were able to gain control of the yam market. Konkomba farmers migrated to areas where they could farm yams in the most fertile soil. Konkomba car owners and drivers transported yams. Konkomba businessmen controlled the yam trade at markets in the south.

Unlike cocoa and cassava, Konkomba and other yam producers controlled the price and distribution with very limited government interference. The improved roads in Northern-Ghana included those that connected Yendi, Bimbilla, and Salaga; Tamale to Bolga; Tamale to Accra, through Kumasi. When the colonial government opened road transport in the 1920s it facilitated growth in yam production among the Konkomba and their migration to southern areas to farm. Commercial yam farming increased wealth among Konkomba and fostered the emergence of Konkomba "Big Men."¹¹⁹⁴

While yams are produced and consumed in Ghana, eventually as Ghanaians and other West Africans moved outside the country, export of yams increased.¹¹⁹⁵ The businessmen who were profiting from the trade of yams in the south added the yam export and significantly increased their disposable income. They were able to enter Ghana's neo-patrimonial system as wealthy elites. They had the economic capacity to back political candidates who otherwise would have been ignored. Given the increasing sense of shared ethnicity that Konkomba kinship groups felt, they were able to mobilize larger numbers to vote as a block, motivated as they were by the galvanizing social riposte to the ranked ethnic system. In other words, Konkomba began to vote in candidates who were not from Dagbamba societies and who did

¹¹⁹³ Though dated Oelbaum argued that historically ethnicity was not as major of a factor as people think in national voting in Ghana. Oelbaum, "Ethnicity Adjusted? Economic Reform, Elections, and Tribalism in Ghana's Fourth Republic," 268.

¹¹⁹⁴ Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 167.

¹¹⁹⁵ By 2002 yam exports were valued over 8 million dollars. Oelbaum, *Spatial Poverty Traps and Ethnic Conflict Traps*, 18.

not feel obligated to work as closely with the first leg of the stool dominated by Dagbambas.

The three legs of the stool operate within an economic and political context. The economic context is the world economy governed by the neo-liberal policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Since the 1980s Ghana, under the military government of Jerry Rawlings, has cooperated fully with the IMF policy of structural adjustment. Even those political parties who descended from the socialism of Nkrumah agreed on the necessity of promoting the private sector and the Structural Adjustment Program.¹¹⁹⁶

Ghana has become something of a star of the Structural Adjustment Program. Despite Ghana's cooperation, Paul Gifford argues that structural adjustment policies have not worked in Ghana.¹¹⁹⁷ Ghana's underlying system of government is not based on a "rational-legal administrative framework" as in Western democracies, which utilize "hierarchies of administrative grades and functions."¹¹⁹⁸ Rather, Ghana's underlying system of government is neo-patrimonialism, a system of loyalty based on real or fictive kinship ties, in which ethnic clientelism continues to reinforce ruling class interests.¹¹⁹⁹ Structural adjustment policies have only served to strengthen neo-patrimonialism. Gifford argues that in Ghana there is a lack of independent transparent procedures. The building of institutions necessary for development has not proved possible. There is a lack of accountability. Wealth is flaunted.¹²⁰⁰ This is the economic and political context of twenty-first century Ghana. Increasingly, all public jobs are based on neo-patrimonial loyalty to the ruling political party.¹²⁰¹ Even the private operation of banks and radio stations are linked to political affiliation.

¹¹⁹⁶ Nugent, "Living in the Past: Urban, Rural and Ethnic Themes in the 1992 and 1996 Elections in Ghana," 292.

¹¹⁹⁷ Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 5–6.

¹¹⁹⁸ Gifford, 7.

¹¹⁹⁹ Gifford, 7. Gifford, *African Christianity*, 4–6. "The African state, from birth was essentially an agency for control and extraction. There was never any merging of state and society as common expressions of shared values." Gifford, 4.

¹²⁰⁰ Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 12.

¹²⁰¹ In Mamprugu, intra-ethnic struggle for power is focused on control of political power. Paramount chief, Nayiri, and most of his followers in the Nalerigu and Gambaga constituencies have supported the National Patriotic Party (NPP), the ruling party from January 2001–2009, and again since January 2017. Mamprusi elite

Oelbaum credited the growth of the international side of the yam market to the policies of structural adjustment.¹²⁰² Viewed from the angle of neo-patrimonialism, the Konkomba control of the yam market has produced a deeper entrenchment of neo-patrimonialism and ethnic clientelism in the rural areas of the north. And as Oelbaum's analysis indicates, the new economic growth of elite Konkomba businessmen and the new political participation of Konkomba votes and politicians have contributed to fueling ethnic conflict. Ethnic conflict appears to be one of the results of structural adjustment in poor rural areas. And a significant result of ethnic conflict is loss of the economic gains enjoyed by the rural farmer due to the growth of the market.¹²⁰³ Oelbaum calls this situation a poverty trap.¹²⁰⁴

Due to the ethnic organizing of Konkomba people, the growth of the yam market, the emergence of wealthy businessmen, and the emergence of Konkomba politicians, it appears representatives of Konkomba people are participating and competing for control in two of the three legs of power. One leg, that of chieftaincy and the colonial legacy of indirect rule, is still largely under the sway of the ranked ethnic system. Still, Konkomba have made inroads into that first leg. Every Konkomba (and Komba) community now has a chief, who in most cases works in concert with the utindaan or tindana. But Konkomba chiefs, like the chiefs of all formerly kinship-based societies, remain on the lower levels of that system. Nevertheless, they are working to develop their own divisional chiefs and perhaps their own paramountcy.¹²⁰⁵ This struggle is a major source of inter and intra tribal conflict.

Viewed more systemically in a way that also describes the Dagbamba struggle, two legs of the stool can be said to be transitioning from the patriarchal caste system towards the neo-patrimonial class system, while one of the legs continues to perpetuate a colonial-influenced version of chieftaincy that remade pre-colonial history to support ranked ethnicity and the

politicians struggle for power within the NPP. A politician may press his or her advantage in one of the other legs of power in a struggle to consolidate their hold on all three legs of power.

¹²⁰² Oelbaum, *Spatial Poverty Traps and Ethnic Conflict Traps*, 18. Non-traditional exports like yams are now traded on the international market. From the commercial farmer side of the equation, statist policies have had little to do with the growth of the yam market.

¹²⁰³ Oelbaum, 3.

¹²⁰⁴ In ranked systems, market forces are likely to benefit some of those from subordinate groups who have been blocked from economic growth, however, in ranked systems that is likely to cause war, which in turn returns people into poverty. Oelbaum, 22.

¹²⁰⁵ These internal chieftaincy rivalries may be a sideshow to the real power struggle, but they have deleterious consequences for local communities. Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 130.

colonial patriarchal caste system. For example, government policy continues to privilege the office of chieftaincy over and against the office of tindana, investing one with land rights while divesting the other. MacGaffey argues that this is a significant divergence from past practices. MacGaffey's research reveals that colonial policies and post-colonial perpetuation of those policies transforms historical practices in Dagbon as much as it does in Konkomba communities.¹²⁰⁶

So, the contradictory system of dual belonging continues to persist. And it has tangible effects on society as the government and business continues to commodify land.¹²⁰⁷ In many places land can be sold by paramount chiefs without any consultation with the villages or the caretaker chiefs.¹²⁰⁸ In areas where land can be rented for a handsome profit, land can be sold more than once to the same buyer by different claimants to land ownership. MacGaffey writes,

In rural areas where land is not greatly in demand for the kind of enterprise that generates rents, tindanas and village chiefs are still on the safe side of the expanding commercial frontier. Most of them seem unaware of their vulnerability, the likelihood of what they think of as their traditional patrimony will be taken from them by onrushing capitalism...¹²⁰⁹

6.1.4.3 The translation theology thesis and Konkomba post-colonial political and economic entanglements

A third approach to assessing the Konkomba response to the ethnic caste system referred to as ranked ethnicity is theological. As I have done in previous chapters, I draw on African

¹²⁰⁶ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 69–108; 109–33.

¹²⁰⁷ “I cannot prescribe how these conflicts and tenure arrangements can be resolved. It is worth noting, however, that standard notions of private property do considerable violence to traditional tenure arrangements. Simultaneously, the statement that land reforms and titling schemes should respect tradition (e.g. Cord, 2007) is also deeply problematic, given the extent to which exclusion and violence are implicated in ‘tradition’. As a first step, it will be necessary to have a more detailed study of how land is actually acquired in practice.” Oelbaum, *Spatial Poverty Traps and Ethnic Conflict Traps*, 22.

¹²⁰⁸ Kasanga, *The Role of Chiefs and Tendamba in Land Administration in Northern Ghana*, 7.

¹²⁰⁹ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 171.

translation theology to help assess Bible translation's theological contributions, in this case in the context of a riposte to a ranked ethnic system.

Sanneh argues that colonial era Bible translation paid Africans "huge 'vernacular' complements" in relation to their standing in the modern world.¹²¹⁰ I argue that Konkomba people already had a proud and dignified standing; but in relation to the way the modern world viewed them and in relation to ranked ethnicity, I judge Sanneh's claim to be right. Sanneh also argues that African literacy helped Africans become "modernizing agents."¹²¹¹ The data from this thesis indicate Sanneh is also correct in this respect. Konkomba people took up the mantle of literacy and ran with it. However, Sanneh also argues that somehow this vernacular activity opened up the whole system to equal access. The data from this thesis do not bear this out so clearly.

Gerald West argues that John and Jean Comaroff make a more nuanced argument in their explication of the dialectics of modernity.¹²¹² The Comaroffs argue that the entangled dialectics of modernity are "always to be understood *at once*, as economic and cultural, political and symbolic, general and particular."¹²¹³ Industrial capitalism could not have taken place without "the civilizing mission."¹²¹⁴ The Comaroffs claim Protestant mission and colonial capitalism were intertwined, but not necessarily sharing a common cause.¹²¹⁵ West, drawing on Mbembe, claims that "colonialism and post-colonialism are inherently entangled, and the Bible is a significant factor in their entanglement."¹²¹⁶

How can the Bible be useful in the struggle if it is part of the entanglement? Is the post-colonial translated Bible ultimately on the side of equal access from an intertribal perspective?

¹²¹⁰ Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 172.

¹²¹¹ Sanneh, 173.

¹²¹² West, "Accountable African Biblical Scholarship: Post-Colonial and Tri-Polar," 40.

¹²¹³ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*, 2:409.

¹²¹⁴ Comaroff and Comaroff, 2:409.

¹²¹⁵ "Nonetheless, there was also a profound resonance, over time, in the modes and consequences of their activities; the spiritual, financial, and civic ends that each pursued, in their own ways, were closely interdependent." Comaroff and Comaroff, 2:409.

¹²¹⁶ West, "Accountable African Biblical Scholarship: Post-Colonial and Tri-Polar," 40.

Given that most languages in the north have a Bible in one of their speech varieties, this could be taken as an indication of an egalitarian impulse in translation.¹²¹⁷ Solomon Sule-Saa's assessment of Bible translation engages both a Dagomba and a Konkomba perspective. Using Sanneh's theology thesis, Sule-Saa argues that northern Christians practice a kind of multiethnic acceptance of each other because of their supra-ethnic Christian faith.¹²¹⁸

Sule-Saa's research recognizes the translation of the Bible occurs in many ethnic groups. After Africans appropriate Bible translation from post-colonial ideo-theological perspectives and use literacy to challenge the ranked ethnic system, what is the ongoing theological and religious role for reconstructing society in a way that is more equitable for all parties? How far does the intertribal engagement initiated by missionary-colonial translation—that the post-colonial supra-ethnic paradigm responds to—extend?

Given the Bible's ambiguous content, and the fact that an intertribal perspective already cedes much ground to missionary-colonial translation, is it possible to use the translated Bible, and re-translate it so that it becomes a more overtly emancipatory resource in the struggle that is occurring in entangled post-colonial times and spaces? For example, drawing on the language of Musa Dube's Semoya perspective, how might multiethnic "healing"¹²¹⁹ extend to those outside the church without assuming conversion?

Post-colonial re-translation needs to engage with the contradictory impulses in the Bible. What are the egalitarian messages inside the Bible? Where does one find these messages? What is to be done about the Bible's own traditions and messages of structural legitimation,

¹²¹⁷ For example, most of the language groups referenced in this chapter have a translated form of the Bible. Likpakpaaln Bible (Konkomba) was launched in 1997. The Mɔɔr Bible (Bimoba) was launched in 2004. The Dagbanli Bible was launched in 2007. The Likɔɔnl New Testament was launched in 2014.

¹²¹⁸ Sule-Saa cites a Dagomba Christian song translated into English to illustrate his claim. "If different ethnic groups are in communion, it is because of Jesus. If Dagomba are in communion, it is because of Jesus. If Konkomba are in communion, it is because of Jesus. If Akan are in communion, it is because of Jesus. If white people are in communion it is because of Jesus. We are all in communion with one another because of Jesus." Sule-Saa, "Owning the Christian Faith through Mother-Tongue Scriptures: A Case Study of the Dagomba and Konkomba of Northern Ghana," 52.

¹²¹⁹ "A Semoya framework, therefore, is a mode of reading that resists discrimination and articulates a reading of healing: healing of race and gender relations; of individuals, classes, and nations. It is an interpretative practice that seeks healing of relations by understanding the interconnectedness of things and people rather than their disconnectedness—and highlighting the need to keep the relationships affirming to all the involved parties." Dube Shomanah, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 192.

hierarchy, and oppression?¹²²⁰ How did/does the ‘making of the Bible’ via missionary-colonial translation parallel the ‘making of ethnicity’ via colonial translation?¹²²¹ If the making of the Bible uses the same logic as the making of ethnicity, what dangers are lurking for indigenous communities who appropriate translated Bibles? To ask the last question again, if the manner in which the translated Bible was made used a similar logic that colonial administrators and native translators used in the making of ethnic groups, what ramifications will that have down the line at the intra-ethnic level?

6.1.5 Unranked ethnic conflict within a ranked system and Bible translation

Before I close this first section on subordinate ethnic and ‘tribal’ organizing as a riposte to a ranked ethnic system, it is important to broaden the dynamics, lest the situation seem binary, as if patriarchal ranked ethnicity in the Northern Region necessarily pits a centralized Dagbamba society practicing the politics of *nam* against a decentralized collective of kinship groups who now conceive of themselves as one tribe.

In the area south of the Gambaga escarpment, a particular dynamic flared up between Mamprusi, Bimoba (Moba), and Komba (Bikɔɔm) groups.¹²²² Fighting between Bimoba and Komba kinship groups took place on four occasions in 1984, 1986, and 1989. Some of the towns involved in the conflicts included Bimbagu, Jimbale, Nakpanduri, Nasuan and others. These two ‘decentralized’ sets of kinship groups developed their ethnic identities in the late pre-colonial and colonial eras in relationship with each other. During the pre-colonial era of migrations, the fluid nature of ethnicity was such that small groups who migrated for various reasons from kinship groups whose identities were ‘Konkomba’ or ‘Bimoba’ might fuse with a kinship group in the new location. The fusing group might add a language to their repertoire and merge their ethnic identities, perhaps forming a ‘fictive’ subsidiary line within the

¹²²⁰ Walter Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology: Essays on Structure, Theme, and Text* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 4–5.

¹²²¹ “There is now a growing literature on the ‘invention of tribalism in colonial Africa’ – they understand tribalism as an effect of colonialism rather than the very form of colonial rule. Second, in understanding ethnicity exclusively as an artifact of colonial rule, they miss its other side, that ethnicity is also the form of the anticolonial revolt...That is why, rather than conceiving of an ethnic identity as simply ‘invented’ by statecraft as ‘imagined’ by intellectuals, it would make more sense to speak of the ‘making’ of an ethnicity.” Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 185.

¹²²² The Moba family of clans who speak dialects of Mɔɔr are referred to as Bimoba or B’moba. The Bikɔɔm family of clans who speak dialects of Likɔɔnl or Likpukpaanl are referred to in the literature as Komba or the Mamprusi Konkomba or just as Konkomba.

patrilineal kinship group.¹²²³ In other cases, migrant groups lived in proximity to each other without fully merging. Perhaps they were in a process that might have led to fusion, given enough time. The communities of Bimbagu and Jimbale are good examples of the latter. In these cases, the issue of who migrated first becomes important in terms of the practices of the territorial cult. The ancestors of the ‘first’ settlers are given priority in the distribution of land for farming. Sometimes, those who migrated later, for various reasons come to outnumber those who migrated first. This has become the case among the Konkomba farmers who migrated around Bimbilla in areas where Nawuri kin groups claim to be the first inhabitants. Nanumba claim to have conquered Nawuri, while the Konkomba late-comers are the most numerous.¹²²⁴

I have been emphasizing that the factors that contribute to ethnic conflict are multiple. As Drucker-Brown argued, most of the time groups are able to manage the factors that bring tension between them so they can live in peace. When a number of factors coalesce, communal war may occur.¹²²⁵ A significant factor between the Bimoba and Komba in the 1980s was related to the recognition of hierarchy in a local community as it relates to control of market taxes. In many communities south of the Gambaga escarpment Komba kinship groups were remembered as the ‘first’ inhabitants of the land.¹²²⁶ As the first inhabitants they controlled the distribution of farmland, fishing rights and other shared subsistence practices. Bimoba kinship groups were more vulnerable, as they were often not given the best farmland. Bimoba families, therefore, were more eager to send their children to school as soon as colonial school was offered, perceiving a potential benefit there. Bimoba children became more educated and were the ‘first’ in the area to be involved in government positions in the colonial era. They controlled market taxes for the colonial government, whereas Konkomba communities, because of their better farmland, produced the majority of the farm products.

¹²²³ Talton recounts memories of two kin groups who fused, the Kpaltiib and the Chabob around Saboba. *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 28–29.

¹²²⁴ Drucker-Brown, “Communal Violence in Northern Ghana: Unaccepted War,” 51.

¹²²⁵ Drucker-Brown, “Local Wars in Northern Ghana,” 101.

¹²²⁶ It is not uncommon that those who are first inhabitants in present recollections have traditions that recount inhabitants who preceded them. For example, Froelich’s records of Komba oral history recount that among the ‘old Komba’ clans around Gushegu, the group of Kombas whose traditions recount that their ancestors inhabited the land before a series of other Dagbamba and Komba migrants came to the land, remember that there were unnamed inhabitants who preceded them. Froelich, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo*, 246.

This worked well until taxation pushed men connected with the colonial power into the market, which had largely been run by women.

Drucker-Brown's analysis of the genesis of these conflicts returns to the colonial era and the development of the institution of chieftaincy among non-chiefly groups. In the 1940s the British sought to expand chieftaincy and native courts among Bimoba-Konkomba communities.¹²²⁷ Since Bimoba individuals were tax collectors who were educated in the colonial system, it is not hard to imagine that British administrators would have been more aligned with Bimoba contestants for chieftaincy. Predictably, Mamprusi chiefs aligned with Konkomba (Komba) clans who were known to them as the first inhabitants. The Mamprusi had long worked with certain Konkomba bitindam 'territorial shrine owners.' Making Konkomba elders into chief would serve Nayiri's interest of preventing the British and educated Bimoba from aligning too closely.¹²²⁸ To use Mamdani's language, the bifurcated powers of direct rule and indirect rule in the colonial state were aligning differently.¹²²⁹

As the post-colonial era progressed, chieftaincy emerged as the symbol for corporate identity even for groups who historically did not practice chieftaincy.¹²³⁰ Moreover, ownership of land has become associated with chieftaincy, such that the offices of tindamba or bitindam and the rights of first inhabitants have become disputed.¹²³¹

In relation to the Komba and Bimoba conflict, the Komba were influenced by KOYA's work among their southern Konkomba neighbors. Komba youth who migrated to the south for farming when schools closed due to fallout from political coup d'état met other Konkomba kinship groups who had been influenced by KOYA. In areas around Bimbilla and other southern locations in the Brong-Ahafo and Asante regions Konkomba kinship groups rubbed shoulders with each other. This ethnic awareness and social organizing wound up playing a factor in the Komba and Bimoba conflict.

The economic aspects of KOYA's organizing influenced Komba individuals who had migrated south for farming. When they returned to their home communities in the north, they

¹²²⁷ "Mamprusi District: Annual Report [1947]," Endangered Archives Programme, fol. 3, accessed July 18, 2018, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-3-145>.

¹²²⁸ Drucker-Brown, "Local Wars in Northern Ghana," 98.

¹²²⁹ Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 16–17.

¹²³⁰ Drucker-Brown, "Communal Violence in Northern Ghana: Unaccepted War," 50.

¹²³¹ Drucker-Brown, 51.

began to suggest changes to market practices at home. In the 1970s and 1980s, Komba communities began to reduce their patronage of markets dominated by Bimoba tax collectors. They began to grow markets in towns where they could control the market taxation as well as control the products being sold. One of these key market towns was Nasuan. A market which developed a bit later was Gbintiri. Rather than seeing commonality across ethnic and cultural lines with their Bimoba neighbors and relatives, the growing Konkomba ethnic consciousness contributed to the growing competition across ethnic lines.

Shifting the location where people attended markets would not have been an easy task for leaders to organize and must have capitalized on some common feelings of injustice, stemming from the practices of tax collectors and traders. Not surprisingly, Bimoba leaders opposed the shift of the market locations. The market locations and taxes were a significant factor along with the assertion of seniority around chieftaincy that contributed to the conflagration of conflict. As the conflict progressed, what frustrated the average Bimoba in Bimbagu was the Komba leadership's refusal to share the land in the same way as they had done in the past. Komba land owners (chiefs and bitindam) asserted control over all tree fruits on the land, the fruits of which had been granted to Bimoba kinship groups since their settlement in the vicinity in pre-colonial times.¹²³² The common people on both sides of this equation are losing out due to the competition at the top.

In the midst of this competitive and complex context, missionary-colonial Bible translation and literacy also entered from both sides. The Konkomba Bible and literacy project began to interact with the Komba communities not only from indigenous directions vis-à-vis KOYA, but also through the missionary network. Lutheran missionaries among the Bimoba and Komba¹²³³ were connected with the Bible translation and literacy work of the Ghana Institute of Linguistics Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT). Mary Steele, the first SIL missionary in Ghana, worked with the Konkomba and the Bimoba Bible language development and translation projects. After the Konkomba or Likpakpaaln New Testament translation was published in 1977, a few years later Steele moved on to Bunkpurugu and began work on the Bimoba or Mɔɔr New Testament. The Bimoba New Testament was

¹²³² Drucker-Brown, "Local Wars in Northern Ghana," 101.

¹²³³ The Lutheran Mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana began its work in Bunkpurugu in the 1970s. In the early 1980s the Lutheran Mission began work among the northern Konkomba or the Komba. The missionaries planted several preaching stations and started an agricultural development project that included literacy as one of its components.

published in 1986. I should also include the Mampruli New Testament, which was being worked on in the midst of this time as well. The Mamprusi translation work began much earlier than the Bimoba or the Konkomba, with scripture portions available in the 1950s. The GILLBT-sponsored New Testament translation project began in the 1970s and was published in 2001.

Bible translation inadvertently contributes to the linguistic separation of ethnic groups who are partially intertwined. Upon close inspection 'kinship groups' are not clearly separated from one another. Tribes are even less so. If one would look at pre-colonial realities, one would see much similarity as well as difference. This is particularly true if one would look at the matrilineal or matrifocal elements of relations and culture.

The Bible itself has been translated as if it shared the missionary-colonial conceptions of languages and ethnicities as distinct. But that does not have to be the case. What if the Bible can be re-translated in a way that reconstructs some of the unranked notions of kinship that were practiced in the pre-colonial era? Where does the Bible itself reveal a more fluid conception of kinship and ethnicity? If this possibility were offered to communities with live histories of ethnic struggle, are there ways it might be perceived as liberating? I ask this question because many of the conflicts, such as the Bimoba and Komba conflicts, do not appear to have clear socially productive agendas in the interests of common people on both sides of the conflict.

6.2 Patriarchal class systems

The patriarchal ranked ethnic system was built on a patriarchal royal class system. Even though the riposte discussed above resisted the ranked system, it did not clearly resist the patriarchal class system. To some extent, the Kusasi riposte, discussed first, and the Konkomba riposte, discussed in detail, emulated the logic of the royal class system.

To help me engage the patriarchal royal class system, I highlight three entangled issues – intratribal/intra-ethnic conflict, social class, and gender. I argue that the contemporary dynamics in northern Ghana produce a system of patriarchal intratribal/intra-ethnic class conflict and that Bible translation must recognize its participation in those entangled dynamics.

The late twentieth century in northern Ghana under the Structural Adjustment Program saw a significant increase in intertribal conflict, particularly within the overarching ranked ethnic system of the north. Another dimension of conflict, which clearly emerged in the Dagbon

crisis in the early twenty-first century, is conflict within the tribe itself. Mamdani theorized that if the intra-ethnic nature of conflict is not addressed, Africa will not get past the legacy of indirect rule. "To understand the phenomenon known as tribalism, it is necessary to explore and connect both of its dimensions: the intraethnic and the interethnic, tribalism as internal civil war and as an external tension between tribes."¹²³⁴

I distinguish intratribal conflict as conflict occurring within a group that has already embraced and benefited from the colonial translation of tribe, but is now struggling with material consequences of patrilineal hierarchy. Intra-ethnic conflict is conflict occurring within and sometimes between kinship groups that are still struggling with the ongoing ramifications of their ethnic marginalization suffered under colonial rule based on the colonial hierarchy of tribe established in part through translation. Many of the powerful actors in these ethnically ambiguous marginal kinship groups aspire to power associated with the colonial concept of tribe.

Intribal and intra-ethnic conflict are built upon the same foundation as intertribal conflict. In tribes with a tradition of royalty, there is a ranking of royals above commoners. Among ethnolinguistic groups who are still developing a tradition of chieftaincy, economic and political factors help foster an internal hierarchy analogous to social class. In northern Ghana there is intense competition over access to royal patriarchal structures that are linked to chieftaincy, because of the rights paramount chiefs have in the sale of the land and because of their rights to the material resources which the land produces like trees, sand, and even oil. The most lucrative positions of chieftaincy in areas where there is high land rent, natural resources, or access to government and non-government resources may involve intense competition between different patrilineal lines within the existing royal class that often leads to intratribal conflict. Among groups who are still developing a tradition of chieftaincy who have unranked kinship systems, the competition for power between individuals and their associated patrilineal lines often leads to intra-ethnic conflict.

In addition to chieftaincy as a form of social power analogous to social class, there is also the issue of gender. A remnant of women's power related to land is evidenced by the bilateral tindana systems with both male and female tindamba. As chieftaincy has increased in power of the tindamba system, this had the effect of pushing women out of having a say in the way the resources of the land are shared. According to Amadiume, women were traditionally the

¹²³⁴ Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 184.

ones who engaged in marketing.¹²³⁵ In northern Ghana women continue to be crucial in trading but are no longer in control. The imposition of market taxation affected pre-colonial practice in favor of males from the chief's or tindana's house.

For a rural subsistence market embedded within a neo-liberal capitalist economy, the high cost of paying to enter the Ghanaian economy and even higher costs of entering the world economy through business or education seem to require that individuals get access to more than their share of what is produced locally. If someone happens to get that access, they tend to create a social class mentality, sharing it with the sons of their choice. Even though the remnants of the bilateral kinship system are still present in northern Ghana, the international market's structure is biased toward men. It appears that at the national level men also have greater control of economic resources. The systems filter resources to the boys (patrilineally or matrilineally) that they believe have the greatest potential.¹²³⁶ To return to our last chapter, one can see how the logic of sugar daddies is one-way young women can gain access to some economic resources.

To further the discussion of how the royal class is entangled with intratribal conflict in the Ghanaian neo-patrimonial economy, I turn to address intratribal conflicts around the highly lucrative position of Ya Na in Yendi where the paramount chief asserts land rents in Tamale and controls the system of chieftaincy in Dagbon. All the allodial land rights in the region stem from Ya Na and his appointees to chieftaincy. The next subsection (6.2.1) discusses intratribal conflict within the ranked system of Dagbon. The subsequent subsection (6.2.2) expands the analysis into unranked ethnic systems, within Komba and Bimoba communities. The nature of their conflict, though similar, is distinguished by the term intra-ethnic conflict.

6.2.1 The Dagbon crisis of intratribal conflict

The Dagbon crisis irrupted in Ghana in the 21st century, but the struggle between the Andani and Abudu gates to the paramount chieftaincy of Ya Na has been the theme of politics in Dagbon, dating back as far as the 1880s. The major change brought about by the British in the early 20th century was they outlawed violent conflict as a form of resolving disagreements. The lusi drum chant, which I discussed in chapter 2, became the place where conflict was resolved by its supposedly neutral recounting of history. "Despite tradition's

¹²³⁵ Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 176–77.

¹²³⁶ For a discussion about women's and men's access to the cash economy and their cultural obligations to share see chapter 1 section 1.5.2.

supposed fidelity to historical truth, it provides endlessly regressive possibilities for argument; the dispute between the Andani and Abudu factions that began in the 1880s remains unresolved.”¹²³⁷ Drummers themselves indicate that there are different renditions of history, and only a political commitment to one side or the other permits a choice between them.¹²³⁸ The story of British interventions in Dagbon chieftaincy, followed by the post-colonial Ghanaian government interventions into the same is worth reading, but I will not recount it here.¹²³⁹

The current outbreak of fighting occurred on 27 March 2002. The palace and 36 houses were burned down. Thirty people were killed, including Ya Na Yakubu. His body was dismembered and burned. There was fighting between Andanis and Abudus in every community where they coexisted. The fighting was bloody. Much property was damaged. The costs to the local economy were enormous. "In the space of two months government spending required to handle the Yendi dispute and others at Bawku and Bimbilla totaled 3.3 billion cedis (\$500,000).”¹²⁴⁰ One minister explained that the amount spent is comparable to what is required to build over 30 basic schools or 20 clinics for these districts. Given all the work that was done on peace building, all the military forces that had to keep peace in the area for years, the costs of the conflict must be immense. No doubt some businessmen benefited from the costs associated with the conflict.

The intratribal conflict in Dagbon is itself related to control of land and the control of paramount chieftaincy. MacGaffey argues since the 1930s, when the British instituted indirect rule and asserted that Ya Na in Yendi had authority over Tamale where their regional seat of government was, Dagbamba chiefs have been keenly aware of the potential gain from land rental.¹²⁴¹

How does translation play a role? In chapter two I described how oral tradition was made into customary law. Not only did customary law hurt the subordinate groups under ranked

¹²³⁷ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 50.

¹²³⁸ MacGaffey, 68.

¹²³⁹ MacGaffey, 58–68.

¹²⁴⁰ The Daily Graphic, 1 April 2002 p. 13. In another article: “All three administrative areas are among the most deprived of the 110 districts in the whole country.” The Daily Graphic, 5 June 2002, p. 1.

¹²⁴¹ MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana*, 171.

ethnicity like the Konkomba ethnic groups, customary tradition has been leveraged to make claims on paramount chieftaincy and the access to controlling land rentals that went with it. In other words, given the winner take all results of gaining access to chieftaincy, colonial acts of translating tradition, of ‘making nam’ or ‘making ethnicity,’ are also competitive. When the turn to tradition cannot resolve the conflict, because there are different versions of that tradition, the response in 2002 was the outbreak of armed conflict. Therefore, colonial acts of translation that were made into binding ‘custom’ are being rolled back into sites of struggle. When the struggle cannot be resolved, and when the stakes of winning are so high, armed conflict may result that will eventually be subdued by the government forces. These conflictual outbursts harm the poor and tend not to resolve the problem. The instigators who are pressing the problem forward are not deterred by the results.

6.2.2 Komba and Bimoba intra-ethnic conflicts over chieftaincy

I will now discuss the Komba and Bimoba unranked ethnic groups. While they have had their own significant history of inter-ethnic conflicts, discussed above, in the 21st century these groups have their own intra-ethnic conflicts related to chieftaincy and designs on divisional or paramount chieftaincy.

The inroads of capitalism into rural northern Ghana have created new forms of wealth for businessmen who are now able to engage Ghana’s neo-patrimonial political and economic system. In this system there is no great distinction between personal and public wealth. A businessman will spend his own ‘private’ money to get someone elected into office. Once in office the public funds must now replenish that private money to the extent these two categories become quite blurred. From a popular perspective for people from decentralized kinship groups, public office is not viewed differently than the office of chieftaincy. The benefit of the office of chieftaincy is that once enskinned, a chief is a chief for life. Second, the office of paramount chief gives one allodial rights to sell land, and the natural resources in and below the land. When connected to business and political power, a divisional chief may be a lucrative position to be in, like a paramount chief but on a smaller scale.

In January of 2010, an intra-ethnic Komba (Bikɔɔm) conflict which had been brewing for some time broke out in the town of Temaa and the adjacent community, formerly known as Majielogil. The conflict was related to a new skin or chieftaincy that was attempting to be established in Majielogil. The kinship group who inhabited the main town of Temaa had a chief established there since before Ghana’s independence. Both communities maintained

territorial shrines. The Temaa community objected to this new chief coming to live next to them. They worried because this new skin was being backed by powerful businessmen and politicians and because the chief was enskinned by Nayiri.¹²⁴² The Temaa community resolved not to allow the chief to arrive home and a conflict ensued. A second fight occurred in March of 2010, such that all the homes of the community of Majielogil were burned and razed to the ground. The costs to the community members are still being felt. An entire sub-community was forcefully removed. Military and police forces came and stayed in Temaa for more than a year. And this was paid for by local government coffers.

In 2009 an intra-ethnic Bimoba (Moba) conflict occurred between two Bimoba kinship groups in two villages.¹²⁴³ Another conflict between kinship groups took place in Nakpanduri in 2009. These minor skirmishes appear to be related to a series of conflicts that have plagued Bunkpurugu, the leading Bimoba town in Ghana. Bunkpurugu became a district capital in 2005. It is also the seat of the longest established Bimoba chieftaincy, preceding Ghana's independence.¹²⁴⁴ After the murder of several leading individuals, the army established a curfew in Bunkpurugu in September of 2015 which allowed people to leave their compounds in the mornings for only a few hours each day to get water and do other necessary things. The issues that fed the conflict were chieftaincy and were related to the sale of land and the control of weapons.

The individuals who are initiating the economic and strategic pressure behind these chieftaincy posts are businessmen with access to power in government. These businessmen aspire to bring together the three legs of the metaphorical stool I discussed above. In the context of Ghana's neo-patrimonial political economy, those individuals who would control that three-legged stool would not feel compelled to share with those outside their patrimony.

¹²⁴² According to some sources, after the 1994 conflict, it was decided in Saboba, possibly without the consent of Nayiri, that Temaa should hold the sub-paramountcy for Bikɔɔm communities. Before the chief could establish himself in Temaa, he died. At which point, the issue of a paramount chief for Bikɔɔm was lying dormant.

¹²⁴³ A. K. Awedoba et al., *An Ethnographic Study of Northern Ghanaian Conflicts: Towards a Sustainable Peace: Key Aspects of Past, Present, and Impending Conflicts in Northern Ghana and the Mechanisms for Their Address*, Rev. ed (Legon, Accra, Ghana: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2011), 286.

¹²⁴⁴ The skin of Bunkpurugu was a significant contributor to the Komba-Bimoba conflicts of the 1980s. Drucker-Brown reveals how the vacant skin of Nayiri and the extended vacancy of the Bunkpurugu skin were connected in the Bimoba and Komba conflicts of the late 1980s. Drucker-Brown, "Local Wars in Northern Ghana," 94.

All alliances and loyalties would run through them. One method of protest available for those who do not have the means to buy power in government is to resort to armed conflict. The cost to individuals seeking education or economic advance is significant. But the wealthy businessmen do not stop their machinations and those resisting them are staunch.

6.2.3 Spending natural land resources to level up in the economy

As stated above, the costs of entering the neo-liberal economy are too high for subsistence farmers, especially when the price of raw foods is kept especially low. Whether one wants to enter the economy on the regional, national, or international level, the costs are beyond the reach of subsistence farmers, even those working in a collective. The costs of education to acquire high levels of education, or to acquire the means to buy a large truck to enter the transport business, are exorbitant for them.

There is a temptation for an aspiring chief, or one who is fortunate enough to already have secured that position, to look upon the resources at hand and try to use them to produce a source of ongoing capital wealth. There is a temptation for a chief, and perhaps also for a tindana if he is still powerful, to cut their trees for cash, to sell the sand in their rivers, to use and sell their land for whatever profit they can make to help their sons enter the contemporary economy at whatever level seems to be in reach. Every level up is followed by another one, and each level up requires capital. The justification for spending local resources is that this person or the new business will bring wealth back into the community, but at what cost to the fertility of the soil? At what cost to the water supply? Do the resources that come back in ever equal the resources that go out? Sustainability is not a productive concept for those interested in leveling up in the market.

The land at the top of the Gambaga escarpment around Nakpanduri has been protected government land, a natural forest since independence in 1957. Beginning with the return to democracy in the 1990s the trees have been mostly cut down. At the bottom of the escarpment on the north side, much sand has been removed. Trees have been cut around the river to make way for farming. I expect these natural resources were useful for those needing to spend resources to get into the economy at some level or to spend to get access to government offices. But I doubt the community will experience much return on this loss of their shared resources. Further, the ecological impacts on water tables are likely to borne by women and children, and the poor in general.

6.2.4 Assessing Bible translation literacy in the context of patriarchal class systems and intra-ethnic conflict

In section 6.1.4.3 above, I discussed the translation theology thesis in relation to Konkomba ethnic organizing and Bible translation in the late 20th century. I discussed the optimistic claim that Bible translation opens up the whole system to greater egalitarian access. In the 21st century, it is quite tempting for Bible translators to perceive themselves to be opening up the whole system to equal access. Given the proliferation of intratribal and intra-ethnic conflict, how does Bible translation contribute to equal access? Do the facts bear out the claim at the sites of a translation's reception and at its sites of production?

In relation to sites of the Bible's reception, how can Africans use or even re-translate their Bibles to rework the desire to mimic the structures and behavior of the patriarchal royal class system on all levels of society? How will Africans use their translated Bibles to rework systems which are producing intra-ethnic conflict? How will they use their Bibles to respond to those trying to consolidate power through acquiring control of chieftaincy so they can use the land and its resources to acquire wealth and power in the world economic system?

For African Bible translators at the translated Bible's sites of production, how does a translation project, which is entangled with all this history, mitigate the competitive class system and economy already at work in their context? How does a translation project 'incorporate' women in its decision-making processes at sites of production as well as reception? How does a proposed or active translation project deal with the realities of intra-ethnic conflicts experienced in their communities? How might the presence of intra-ethnic conflict affect how they translate? Bible translation projects must also consider how they will manage the Bible's own internal ambiguities related to tribal hierarchy, patriarchy, and intra-ethnic violence. Which biblical texts offer details with the potential to subvert the patriarchal royal class system? I recognize many of these are difficult questions to address directly, nevertheless, they are realities in many contexts in Africa, given the systems that have long been at work.

In the post-colonial neo-colonial era Bible translation continues to be practiced as if the Bible itself is neutral in relation to the harsh systemic realities African societies are facing. The translated Bible is a player in African political contexts where intertribal, intratribal, and intra-ethnic conflicts abound. In some contexts, intra-ethnic social class is under construction. Bible translation plays a part. In other contexts, elites are competing for ethnic foundations

and royal thrones upon which they can consolidate tribal power. Bible translation is not neutral in such a situation. What purpose is the translated Bible serving in this context? What processes are being used to help transform the lived reality of intra-ethnic conflict into a situation that conforms to God's vision for African social life? How can the Bible be re-translated into a tool that does not confuse or subjugate African communities, but rather offers them resources to recreate dignified and life-giving community?

6.3 Re-translating for resistance in contexts of neo-patrimonial oppression

In section 6.1.4.2 I introduced the metaphor of a three-legged stool as a way of describing the relationship between economic power, political power, and chieftaincy power. I suggested that elite men are attempting to control each leg of that stool, each of those three forms of interconnected power, in order to consolidate their power in rural areas for use in the neo-patrimonial Ghanaian political economy. Achille Mbembe argues it is often rural African locations where embedded economies of extraction are operating in direct contact with world markets, sealed off from African national economies.¹²⁴⁵ The pursuit of these three forms of power is causing havoc as elite competitors or groups of competitors try to control all three legs of the economy.

Ethnicity is being manipulated in each of these three forms of power within the neo-patrimonial system. Bible translation is being carried out in competitive intra-ethnic contexts where ethnicity is being manipulated in order to consolidate power. Instead of leaving Bible translation practice as an ideologically neutral practice that lends itself to manipulation or contributes to social confusion, in the third section of this chapter I explore an emancipatory post-colonial form of re-translation that resists ethnic manipulation. Emancipatory re-translation engages a fourth source of power, religious power. Drawing on historic practices, how have African people engaged religion to successfully struggle against the misuse of power and social manipulation?

6.3.1 Sources of religious power in the struggle against ethnic conflict

In chapter three I discussed the early 20th-century West African prophet, William Wadé Harris. Harris confronted the insatiable economic system of colonial powers that refused to observe a Sabbath in their economic practice. Harris also confronted missionary-colonial religion that acquiesced to colonial governments' desire to use African bodies to fight

¹²⁴⁵ Achille Mbembe, "Ways of Seeing: Beyond the New Nativism. Introduction," *African Studies Review* 44, no. 2 (2001): 5.

European battles. Harris' religious teachings had political consequences! Because Harris was so influential, the political consequences of his teachings put him at odds with the economic and military agendas of colonial authorities.¹²⁴⁶

Shank highlights the unifying social power of Harris' movement. The social cohesion Harris' movement created among disparate African 'tribes' further threatened colonial agendas.

There was created a new indigenous lay religious movement covering a dozen ethnic groups and involving new patterns of unity in the midst of diversity: one God, one theocentric law (the Ten Commandments), one day (Sunday), one book (the Bible), one symbol (the cross), one baptism (break with "fetishes"), one place of worship, one institution (church leadership by "twelve apostles").¹²⁴⁷

Gerald West offers a related ethnic analysis of the social movement led by the South African prophet Isaiah Shembe. West argues that Shembe's primary purpose in appropriating the Bible was "to provide a religio-cultural (but resolutely non-ethnic) ethic that builds community among marginalised Africans."¹²⁴⁸ But a second purpose that depends upon and emanates from the primary purpose was "an external ethic over and against both the religio-cultural and political-economic systems of missionary-colonial-*khlowa* Christianity."¹²⁴⁹

Both of these African Christian prophets in two very distant locales on the continent used the Bible and Christianity to construct supra-ethnic communities as part of their internal religious response and external political response to missionary Christianity and colonial politics, respectively. A second way Africans have used religion across ethnic lines has occurred in women's indigenous rituals that originated in pre-colonial times, and have been used in colonial, and post-colonial women's ritual protests. In chapter one, I highlighted matrifocal morality as an organizing feature that helped migrating pre-colonial Africans construct kinship groups. Laura Grillo has identified the ritual and embodied basis of matrifocal morality to be rooted in postmenopausal women's ritual power in society. Grillo calls this 'female genital power' or FGP, to provide a positive counter to the well-publicized acronym FGM, 'female genital mutilation.'

¹²⁴⁶ Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 281.

¹²⁴⁷ Shank, "The Legacy of William Wadé Harris," 174.

¹²⁴⁸ West, *The Stolen Bible*, 316.

¹²⁴⁹ West, 316.

As the basis of FGP, Laura Grillo offers a “deep hermeneutical reading” of the Dipri ritual as practiced by a subset of allied Abidji and Adiokrou ethnic groups in the southern Lagoon region of Côté d’Ivoire.¹²⁵⁰ The antecedent to that ritual is called Egbiki. Egbiki involves post-menopausal women exposing their nakedness in the dead of night to protect the upcoming Dipri ritual from malevolent sorcery.¹²⁵¹ Grillo observes that FGP appears broadly across West Africa.¹²⁵² In West Africa, post-menopausal women form another gender category in society who are ritually powerful.¹²⁵³ The source of elderly women’s power is located in their genitals, and when they ritually expose their nakedness, they are powerful enough to catch the strongest malevolent sorcery.¹²⁵⁴ FGP is located in elderly women’s bodies. In Grillo’s reading of the Dipri ritual’s ethnogenesis, FGP is also connected to the spirits of the river.¹²⁵⁵ In pre-colonial time, FGP was a secret source of protective power that an Abidji kinship group shared with an Adiokrou kinship group to cement their alliance, fusing cultural practices in the process. In other West African societies, an ethnic group’s connection to the spirits of the river and the land is located in elderly women’s bodies, whose bodies represented both genders. Because of the sacredness of elderly women, and the connection to water and land, all women are sacred.

The ritual use of female genital power is performed in the dead of night, but occasionally it can be brought into the political arena and performed in the daytime. This power of naked postmenopausal women’s bodies was used in colonial times to respond to the imperialist and masculinist disregard for women’s agency and matrifocal morality.¹²⁵⁶

The post-colonial state has continued the colonial state’s disregard for women as sacred moral centers of African society. Women have continued to lose ground both materially and

¹²⁵⁰ Grillo, *An Intimate Rebuke Female Genital Power in Ritual and Politics in West Africa*, 15, 21.

¹²⁵¹ Grillo, 24–25.

¹²⁵² Grillo, 2, 15, 128.

¹²⁵³ “After menopause the female body not only outgrows its reproductive function, it also takes on a double-sexed aspect. . . . Thus the power of the Mothers resides in the capacity to *surpass* the biological function and social stage of maternity and to assume an equally consequential spiritual power, the secret and sacred locus of which is their sex.” Grillo, 44.

¹²⁵⁴ “Relating the details of the Egbiki rite in the Adiokrou village Yassap, the chef de terre emphasized that the mothers’ capacity to dominate witches’ evil designs relies on moral righteousness, they wear their nakedness like armor.” Grillo, 46.

¹²⁵⁵ Grillo, 22–24, 142–43, 146–47. This puts post-menopausal women on par with the gods.

¹²⁵⁶ Grillo, 88–89, 94–99.

morally.¹²⁵⁷ Grillo's analysis of Cote d'Ivoire's two civil wars, in 2003 and 2011, and the interwar period, catalogs how women and children have suffered in these conflicts. The conflicts have ethnic components connected to land rights. Because of the intimate connection women's bodies have to land, home, and kinship, women's bodies are targeted for violence in ethnically motivated land conflicts. Doing violence to women's bodies disregards the sacredness of women, decreasing an opposing group's power, and damaging the fabric that undergirds African society. Sexual violence has become a widespread weapon of war, carried out on a massive scale with impunity by male actors on all sides of the conflicts.¹²⁵⁸ Grillo recounts several instances during this period when women recruited FGP as a ritual response to amoral and reprehensible post-colonial politics.¹²⁵⁹

These two sources of indigenous religious power mirror the sources of translation theology, one source being indigenous African religion, the other being indigenous African Christian religion. A third source of power, the translated Bible, was appropriated by Africans like Harris and Shembe and put to religious use in the struggle against imperialism. Sule-Saa makes a similar argument for the multiethnic use of the translated Bible in northern Ghana. All three of these sources are brought together as resources for resistance available to communities in the present. All three of these sources play a part in re-translating the translated Bible for liberation in a neo-patrimonial system of power, in which elites compete for power. In neo-patrimonial politics, human bodies and the body of the earth are expendable as collateral damage in that zero-sum game.¹²⁶⁰ Women's bodies are especially targeted, eroding the material and moral center of African society in the process.¹²⁶¹

¹²⁵⁷ Grillo, 154.

¹²⁵⁸ Grillo, 175–85.

¹²⁵⁹ Grillo, 185–97. This practice of masculine post-colonial politics is often fueled by neo-colonial entanglements.

¹²⁶⁰ Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Duke University Press, 2019).

¹²⁶¹ “In many ways, the form of domination imposed during both the slave trade and colonialism in Africa could be called phallic.... Male domination derives in large measure from the power and the spectacle of the phallus—not so much from the threat to life during war as from the individual male's ability to demonstrate his virility at the expense of a woman and to obtain its validation from the subjugated woman herself.” Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 13.

6.3.2 Why re-translate the ambiguous Bible?

The analysis in the first two parts of this chapter indicates that the struggle northern Ghanaians are facing is urgent. Internal competition in the neo-patrimonial system lends itself to external exploitation. Following the logic of the current system to its end will result in scenarios that serve invasive neo-colonial interests in Africa. In this third section of the chapter, I am arguing for the use of religious resources to resist political and economic forces that bring death to African peoples. The Bible is one such resource that can be reclaimed through emancipatory re-translation.

Engaging in Bible translation using colonial-era methods is not up to the task of post-colonial liberation. The analysis of the situation in northern Ghana suggests Bible translation has difficulty charting a way through the web of intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic conflicts. Elites will continue to vie for control of the three sources of power: chieftaincy, political representation, and economic power. Ethnicity is a very useful tool of manipulation in that struggle for power. Bible translation lends itself to ethnic manipulation and may even contribute to ethnic conflict and confusion. Bible translation, as it is currently practiced, is at best a contradictory tool for the suffering African masses in 21st century northern Ghana. At worst, Bible translation contributes to “confuse, frustrate, and even destroy our people.”¹²⁶² Translators and theologians must reckon with the fact that the Bible is not only part of the solution in Africa, it is part of the problem in Africa. How can the translation of the Bible be recruited for thorough-going post-colonial liberation?

South African Black Theologian, Takatso Mofokeng, argues the Bible, paradoxically, is both a part of the problem and a part of the solution.¹²⁶³ Mofokeng argues it is not enough to suggest that the problem is restricted to people who misuse the Bible, as if “the Bible is essentially a book of liberation.”¹²⁶⁴ While it is true many people do use the Bible to support their racist and oppressive preconceptions, the problem is more profound, because the Bible is ‘internally’ ambiguous. There are texts in the Bible that lend themselves to “oppressive interpretations and oppressive uses because of their inherent oppressive nature.” Mofokeng

¹²⁶² Mofokeng, “Black Christians, the Bible and Liberation,” 40.

¹²⁶³ Mofokeng, 37.

¹²⁶⁴ Mofokeng, 37.

continues, “any attempt to ‘save’ or ‘co-opt’ these oppressive texts only serve the interests of the oppressors.”¹²⁶⁵

Stephen Fowl has argued that it is a hermeneutical overstatement to say that texts have inherent ideologies.¹²⁶⁶ Responding to Fowl, Gerald West engages 1 Timothy 2:8-15, a ‘text of terror,’¹²⁶⁷ probing the question whether texts have ideological grains, and if so, whether it is possible to read against an oppressive grain in a text of terror for liberation.¹²⁶⁸ In other words, the Bible is part of the problem, but can it also be part of the solution?

Writing in South Africa in 1988, Mofokeng argues that black Africans have very few options. The Bible must be retained by the masses of black people, because “no easily accessible ideological silo or a storeroom is being offered to the social classes of our people that are desperately in need of liberation.”¹²⁶⁹ Mofokeng argues Marxism is too far ahead of the African masses and African religions are too far behind. Mofokeng argues Black theologians “who are committed to the struggle for liberation and are organically connected to the struggling Christian people” must “do their best to shape the Bible into a formidable weapon in the hands of the oppressed instead of leaving it to confuse, frustrate, and even destroy our people.”¹²⁷⁰

The people in northern Ghana are in a different situation than South Africans were when Mofokeng was writing.¹²⁷¹ Northern Ghanaians have more than one ideological storeroom to draw from. African indigenous religions continue to offer valuable religious resources, such as matrifocal morality and FGP that have historically been used in the struggle against oppressive colonial and neo-colonial forces. To the extent Christianity is useful in the

¹²⁶⁵ Mofokeng, 38.

¹²⁶⁶ Stephen Fowl, “Texts Don’t Have Ideologies,” *Biblical Interpretation* 3, no. 1 (1995): 15–34.

¹²⁶⁷ Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (London: SCM Press, 1992), 1–5.

¹²⁶⁸ West, “Taming Texts of Terror: Reading (Against) the Gender Grain of 1 Timothy.”

¹²⁶⁹ Mofokeng, “Black Christians, the Bible and Liberation,” 40.

¹²⁷⁰ Mofokeng, 40.

¹²⁷¹ The decolonial turn in South Africa after liberation has prompted re-appropriations of indigenous religion in that context. Madipoane Masenya (ngwana’ Mphahlele), “A Bosadi (Womanhood) Reading of Proverbs 31:10-31,” in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible* (Atlanta, GA ; Geneva: Society of Biblical Literature ; WCC Publications, 2001), 145–57; Hulisani Ramantswana, “Decolonising Biblical Hermeneutics in the (South) African Context,” *Acta Theologica* 36 (July 2, 2016): 178–203.

struggle, it is the indigenous African Christianity that is rooted in what Kwame Bediako calls the primal imagination of indigenous religion. African Christian prophets, such as William Harris, have struggled against oppression using religion holistically, combing the sacred and the secular in their African Christian religious practice. African communities, like the African prophets, have used the Bible as a tool for social healing. How can the Bible be re-translated using these ideological storerooms so that it becomes a powerful tool for resistance and liberation?

Contextual Bible Study offers resources from critical biblical studies as an additional resource for African peoples to use in their struggle. CBS contributes biblical resources to the religious resources Africans already possess. CBS offers biblical resources that are calibrated for the struggle Africans are facing so that Africans can use their religious storerooms to re-translate the Bible for social change. In this way, CBS contributes to a collaborative process of ordinary Africans and African biblical scholars re-translating for a better African social life.

CBS offers the Bible as a resource that does not confuse, frustrate, and destroy African communities in a manner that returns the Bible to Africans' collectivist orientation, and in a manner that does not separate the sacred from the secular. Using CBS African theologians working with ordinary Africans can rework the ideo-theological constraints of individualist missionary-colonial Christianity and neo-colonial Christianity entangled with neo-indigenous Christianity. Together Africans can chart paths different from the developmentalist gospel and the prosperity gospel, both of which constrain the way the Bible communicates to African audiences.

Below I offer a CBS that addresses the struggle for power in a neo-patrimonial political economy. This study offers calibrated biblical resources to northern Ghanaian communities to help them re-translate the Bible for religious resistance to manipulations of ethnicity and instigations of gender oppression that corrode Africa's moral fiber.

The biblical text of Judges 6—9 embodies struggles between kinship patriarchy, royal patriarchy, ethnicity, land, and gender. This prompt for re-translating may spark African indigenous resources for post-colonial resistance to the neo-patrimonial politics that threaten African political, social, ecological, and economic life. The CBS is offered in the West African spirit of religious inclusion. Indigenous Christian, Muslim, and Africanist religious

practices are not the same, but they are united in their quest for constructing better lives for the masses struggling under the weight of oppressive systems.

6.3.3 CBS on power, violence, and oppression in tribal conflicts

This CBS is in the preparation stage. I offer it here as a potential for the kinds of resources that might be generated around the issue of intertribal conflict and gendered power.

This study focuses on the dynamics of intratribal and intra-ethnic conflict, patriarchy, and the destructive bent that masculine power can take for communities and especially for women and children. There are trajectories in the biblical text that show how intratribal conflict can be intertwined with intertribal conflicts, problematizing the clear lines between one tribe and another. This study touches on the resources of prophetic power, as practiced by William Harris and Isaiah Shembe, and women's power as practiced by matrifocal morality. The character of Jotham gives a speech with elements of the prophetic cast in the discourse of oral tradition. Women's power to resist tribal conflict comes to the foreground at the end of the story.

Women's roles are often neglected due to pre-colonial practices of patrifocal power and the invasion of colonial imperial masculine power. Whether groups inherit matrilineally, patrilineally, or bilaterally, colonization has bolstered patrifocal masculine power to the detriment of West Africa's dual-sexed practices of social organization. This trajectory has been continued by African governments even after independence. The structures which enshrined and protected women's sacred power in traditional society have been eroded. Nevertheless, matrifocal morality continues to assert its moral influence through cultural traditions and through contemporary political protest against elite leaders whose politics of power are unconcerned about the suffering of poor people, of women, of children, or the degradation of the environment.¹²⁷²

This CBS focuses on the sons of Gideon, Jether, Abimelech, and Jotham, and the issue of gender with a special emphasis on the way patriarchy and violent masculinity play into tribal conflict and gender oppression. The study is intended for both women and men.

This CBS covers a lot of biblical text, spanning three chapters. The majority of the questions are on chapter 9. This is more text than is normally studied. It may be useful to break the study up across a whole day, during a church retreat, or across a series of days, depending on

¹²⁷² Grillo, *An Intimate Rebuke Female Genital Power in Ritual and Politics in West Africa*.

the time available. The plot is also quite complicated. So, after reading the selected texts, I offer an optional extended plot summary. This is not a preferred CBS strategy because it intervenes between the participants and the biblical text. However, occasionally such a strategy can be used to help facilitate comprehension of a complicated narrative. Another option would be to develop a set of pictures that retell the story pictorially as the Ruth study did.

Read Judges 6:1-4; 6:33-34; 7:1,7:16-24; 8:10-12; 8:18-23, 8:28-32, 9:1-57

1) What is this story about?

Optional: After recording responses, depending upon the group's comprehension of the relationships between characters in this narrative, consider offering this (or a similar) retelling of the plot as a summary to help the participants review this rather complex plot.

Gideon was one of the famous "judges" of Israel. A judge is not a necessarily a chief or a king, but rather a leader who emerges to rescue the people of Israel from oppression. Gideon was given the name "Jerub-Baal" which means "He struggles with Baal." (Baal means a god or a human lord or a headman). The people of Israel were being oppressed by the people of Midian. Whenever the people would plant food, the people of Midian would come and camp near them and destroy all the produce of the land. The people cried out to the Lord God because the land was being wasted. God raised up Gideon, and Gideon led the people of his clan against them, and he called other Israelite clans to help him. Gideon's clan with the help of some others chased the kings of Midian (whose names were Zeba and Zalmunna). When he caught them, he told his son to kill them, but his eldest son was too afraid to kill them. So, Gideon killed them himself.

When some of the people of Israel asked Gideon to be a king over them. He refused. He said, "I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The Lord will rule over you." (Judges 8:23) Gideon returned to his hometown. Because of Gideon's work, the land of Israel had rest for forty years. Gideon received many gifts and Gideon had many wives. Gideon fathered 70 sons. One of Gideon's "concubines" or junior wives who was from the town of Shechem. She named her son, Abimelech, which means, "my father is king." Finally, Gideon died.

After Gideon died, Abimelech, one of the sons of Gideon, went to his mother's clan people in the town of Shechem. And he told them to ask the "headmen (or lords) of

Shechem” whether it is better that 70 sons of Gideon rule over them or if it is better that one of his sons, one who is their own flesh and blood, should rule over them? The headmen of Shechem gave money to Abimelech from their idol’s treasury. Abimelech used that money to hire men to help him kill all of his father’s brothers. But the youngest son remained alive because he hid himself. The youngest son was called Jotham.

The headmen of the towns of Shechem and Beth-millo made Abimelech their chief. When Jotham heard about it, he climbed up a nearby mountain, Mount Gerizim, and he shouted to the headmen of Shechem so they could hear him. Jotham told them a parable about the trees who wanted a ruler over them. The trees asked the olive tree to rule over them. But the olive tree refused because the olive tree was busy making olive fruits. The trees asked the fig tree to rule over them, but the fig tree refused because the fig tree had to make figs. Then the trees asked the vine to rule over them, but the vine refused because the vine had to make grapes for wine. Each of these trees preferred to continue to focus on making their good fruit for people to enjoy instead of spending their time ruling over the trees. Finally, the trees asked the thorn bush to rule over them. The thorn bush said, “Fine, come and enjoy my shade. If not, may the fire of the thorn bush come and consume the great trees of Lebanon.” Then Jotham said, “If you have done what is right by father’s family then enjoy Abimelech. If not, let fire come out from Abimelech and consume the lords of Shechem and Beth-millo.” Then Jotham ran away to another town because he was afraid of his brother Abimelech.

Abimelech became ruler over Israel (not just Shechem) for three years. He put his officer Zebul to help him rule over Shechem. During that time the Lord God caused confusion between Abimelech and the headmen of Shechem so that Abimelech could get no profit from Shechem. A man named Gaal moved into Shechem and the headmen of Shechem transferred their loyalty to Gaal rather than to Abimelech’s servant Zebul.

When Zebul, the officer of Abimelech, heard what they were doing, he became angry and he sent a messenger to Abimelech telling him to come that night so that in the morning Abimelech and his soldiers would come and attack Shechem. So Gaal and his people went out to fight Abimelech, but Abimelech won. Abimelech’s officer Zebul chased Gaal away so that he could no longer stay in Shechem.

The next day, Abimelech divided his warriors into three groups. And when the people of Shechem came out to their fields, two groups of Abimelech’s warriors killed them. The

third group led by Abimelech attacked the city gates and he fought the people inside the city for the whole day. He destroyed the city. But there was a tower, which was a shrine for the town's people. The headmen of the city and their women and children entered that tower. Abimelech led his men up to a mountain where they all cut brushwood and they carried the brushwood back to the tower and they laid the brushwood against the tower. Abimelech set fire to that wood and burned the tower and killed all one thousand people who were inside.

The next day Abimelech went to another town called Thebez and camped next to it. He attacked the city and took it. There was another high tower in that city. All the men and women went into that tower and shut themselves in. They locked themselves and climbed to the top of the roof of that tower. Abimelech came to the tower, and fought against it, and came near to the entrance of the tower to burn it with fire. But a certain woman threw a grinding stone on Abimelech's head, and crushed his skull. Abimelech said to the young man who was helping him. "Take my sword and kill me so that it will not be said of me that a woman has killed him." So, the young man took the sword and thrust it through him. When the Israelites saw that Abimelech was dead, they all went home.

Read 8:18-23

- 2) Gideon uses a strategy of making his son Jether into a man. Does it work? What do the people think about Gideon's sons?

Read 8:29-32

- 3) Who was Abimelech's mother among Gideon's wives? What important details are given about her?

Read 9:1-6

- 4) Abimelech stokes a conflict between his mother's brothers and his father's sons in order to gain power.¹²⁷³ What steps does Abimelech take to accomplish his goal of becoming a king?

Read 9:7-21

- 5) Jotham has a two-part speech (verses 7-15 and 16-21). What kinds of power does Jotham use and activate?

¹²⁷³ In northern Ghana kinship groups are constructed along patrilineal lines. In southern Ghana, kinship groups are constructed primarily along matrilineal lines. This study may result in different contextual applications given differences in contexts.

Read 9:22-31

- 6) Who are the characters in these verses? What are their alliances with each other?
Optional: Draw a picture illustrating the characters and their relationships with each other. For example, verse 22 tells us Abimelech became a commander in Israel for three years. Verse 28 tells us that Abimelech had made a man named Zebul to be a sub-chief for him in Shechem.
- 7) A series of three battles take place. Which groups does Abimelech fight in each of these battles and why?
 - a. 30-41
 - b. 42-45
 - c. 46-49

Read 9:50-57

- 8) Abimelech proceeds to attack another town, the town of Thebez, in the same way that he attacked Shechem, his mother's brothers' hometown.
Part a is for women. Part b is for men.
 - a) What does the text suggest about women's resources for stopping destructive masculinities in ethnic/tribal warfare?
 - b) What resources/strategies does this text offer to men for dealing with destructive practices of ethnic/tribal warfare in our communities?
- 9) What resources does this text offer for addressing destructive masculinity in tribal warfare in our communities?

6.3.4 Towards trans-sectoral re-translations for resistance

This CBS is meant to inspire trans-sectoral re-translations that resist manipulations of ethnicity and its associated (gender) violence in the neo-patrimonial political and economic context of northern Ghana. The ambiguities of tribe, ethnicity, and kinship that are at work in Judges 6—9 make it a potential resource for the present day in northern Ghana. There are many potential “lines of connection” between the components contributing to ethnic conflict that are also at work in this text.¹²⁷⁴ For example, ethnicity remains an important reality in Ghana. In this part of Judges, ethnicity has both positive and negative features. Crucially, the ethnic Israelite perspective, the viewpoint a reader naturally adopts, is problematized. The reasons Israelite identity becomes problematic have internal intra-ethnic and external inter-

¹²⁷⁴ Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction*, 225.

ethnic components. The boundaries between internal and external are ambiguous depending on whether one prefers to privilege matrilineal or patrilineal relations. There are economic and political factors in play. There is an emerging royal-class dynamic as Gideon and Abimelech consider royalty. Abimelech, whose name means ‘my father is king’ is a particularly relevant character. In Abimelech’s rule, the combination of patriarchy, royalty, and ethnic violence begins to run amok as Abimelech’s desire for power and willingness to use violence get out of control. Entire kinship groups of men and women suffer in the narrative, but it is a woman who takes action to stop the violence. This is an especially important dynamic given the discussion above about rape as a weapon of war. Even though the woman uses violent means to stop the violence in the story, it will be interesting to see how marginalized communities re-translate that dynamic.

Rather than translating the Bible with a post-colonial sensibility but using a missionary-colonial method, this CBS charts a path that responds more actively to the systems that are at work in the northern Ghanaian context. The selection of groups and communities marginalized by (gender) violence and (ethnic) manipulation would be crucial to the success of these engagements. Sensitivity to the local dynamics of conflict will be needed to bring out the potential for trans-sectoral resistance. Facilitators will need to be careful to make sure this study is properly calibrated to local dynamics of conflict. Questions can be adjusted so as not to fan the flames of a local conflict. The intention is to problematize the way ethnicity, royalty, economic factors, and the use of violence are being combined to consolidate elite male power.

The quest to consolidate power is so competitive that it ends up destroying the actors involved. The competition for power is so violent that it destroys human life and the environment. The systems at work steal, rob, and destroy. And therefore, it is the systems that must be resisted. When groups from ‘opposed’ sectors explore re-translating biblical texts for their collective life together, they contribute to the process of forging trans-sectoral solidarity, resistance, and transformation.

This chapter has addressed the way missionary-colonial translation sewed seeds of ranked ethnicity and royal patrilineal class competition in the northern Ghanaian context. These seeds are being manipulated in the competition for power in ways that produce intertribal, intratribal, and intra-ethnic conflicts. These conflicts frequently harm the bodies of women, the land, and the communities of the region. Conventional Bible translation practice

continues to be limited in the way it contributes to constructing ethnicity by missionary-colonial translation's legacy. The making of the translated Bible largely continues to mirror colonial translation's making of ethnicity in neo-colonial post-colonial time. Post-colonial practices of re-translation for liberation offer pathways for ordinary women and men to re-translate biblical texts, reworking colonially drawn ethnic and gender lines and developing trans-sectoral and trans-temporal alliances of resistance. In order to survive the patriarchal competition for power in Ghana's neo-patrimonial political economy, women and men must draw on the moral reservoirs of Africa's religious traditions as they re-translate sacred texts to resist destructive forces.

In the conclusion of this thesis, I will consider ways CBS as post-colonial re-translation for liberation might contribute to reworking some of the practices of African Bible translation.

7 Chapter 7 Conclusion

These six chapters have taken a journey through time, centered in a local context, the geographical context south of the Gambaga escarpment in northern Ghana. Chapter one selected analytical tools designed to temporarily ‘disentangle’ strands of indigenous pre-colonial time. Each of these tools helps people in the present time discern different aspects of the distinctive material practices of the pre-colonial “life world.”¹²⁷⁵ Then when the strands are entwined again, in the present time of entanglement, people may be able to discern that pre-colonial time was full of possibilities with many potential trajectories. The discussion of four settlement patterns illustrates the diversity of language and translation practices in pre-colonial time. The focus was on social survival in a difficult environment. Divination emerged as a spiritual-social practice that connected people to their environments facilitating an iterative process of hermeneutical translation to help people interpret their problems socially and contextually. As pre-colonial trading and raiding started to transform the context, divination practices evolved as people experimented with the market-based value system. The diverse genres of oral tradition offered the chance for all sectors of society to be in poetic dialogue during funerals and other social events. As the raid and trade social economy grew, the material and moral place of women in society started to change. Women became the mobile element in society, and their role as cultural translators in society emerged. All of these diverse practices related to translation were part of the indigenous pre-colonial era.

The colonial era was also full of potential, despite its expressed intention to use translation to achieve political, economic, and cultural domination. (Chapter three describes some of the unintended trajectories of colonial-era translation.) Chapter two focuses on the invasive intention and method of colonial-era translation.

The colonial translation of pre-colonial raiding into an invasion narrative served as a cultural justification for internal and external political and economic domination in northern Ghana. The translation of invasion was a form of cultural invasion. The translation of the performance genre *lunsi* into written historiography of indigenous invasion made an implicit argument that justified the rights of foreign occupation in the short term, while in the long term it strengthened the cultural argument for (royal) elites to legally extract resources from the masses without the messy necessity of local accountability or local reinvestment. The translated invasion narratives served as the substructure that justified the enshrinement of

¹²⁷⁵ Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 15.

royal viewpoints in customary law. The cultural power of the invasion narratives continues into the post-independence era. All subsequent acts of translation must deal with the translation-as-invasion paradigm, a paradigm that establishes an elite point of view as the starting point for interpreting history, law, theology, literature, etc.

Chapter three turned to theological translation describing three versions of Christianity that have emerged: missionary-colonial Christianity, African Independent Christianity, and the new Christianity. Studies of Bible translation comparing missionary-colonial Christianity and African Independent Christianity show that the colonial era, like the pre-colonial era, was full of different potential trajectories. Missionary-colonial Christianity held firm doctrinal teachings, some of which differed from rationalist positions, but ultimately worked with Enlightenment notions of progress. As part of missionary-colonial Christianity's desire to communicate its doctrinal teachings, missionaries engaged in the vernacular translation of biblical texts with the assumption that translation would communicate the superiority of their doctrine. The superior ideo-theological assumptions of missionary-colonial religion contributed to Africans exiting from missionary-colonial control in favor of the theological assumptions of African religion. The ideo-theological assumptions of African religion helped independent Africans to 'turn' the invasive intention of their translated Bibles into divination sets used for social healing.

In the AICs, the Bible was used as a religio-cultural tool to help marginalized Africans reconstruct their communities beyond ethnicity. Reconstructing African community required engaging the Bible politically and economically. African independent prophets engaged in re-translating the Bible using participatory hermeneutics, and in some contexts, community members contributed to re-writing the Bible, appropriating prophetically re-translated teachings for contemporary applications.

The neo-liberal era birthed a new version of Christianity with new prophets who constructed an African Christianity that is spiritual and material in an individualist moral framework. This version of Christianity is doctrinally fixed around the health and wealth gospel. The Bible is a key to its authority, but the details of its texts are only minimally read so they can be made to easily fit in the new Christian ideo-theological framework. The new version of Christianity has been spiritually and materially calibrated to work with neo-indigenous Africans inside the neo-liberal political and economic system. Accordingly, African elites working with a neo-patrimonial system of governance welcome new Christianity's focus on the moral and

spiritual development of the individual as long as it does not branch into a systemic and collective analysis of the spiritual-material morality of neo-liberal political, economic, and social practices.

Chapters four through six engaged in ‘experimental practice’ to develop a post-colonial approach to re-translating biblical texts contextually rooted south of the Gambaga escarpment. Chapter four focused on the notion of entanglement arguing that those groups who are marginalized within a marginalized community are entangled differently across time and space than pastors and teachers, those who are normally selected as professional Bible translators. Contextual Bible Study (CBS) was introduced as the method this thesis would use to construct a post-colonial and emancipatory approach to re-translating biblical texts for community-led liberation. CBS reworks the logic of invasion by prioritizing an emancipatory process that is governed by an emancipatory purpose without predetermining an outcome.

The case study in chapter four explores how a Bible translation team learned to become facilitators of CBS and settled on working with people living with disabilities. Using the CBS method, people living with disabilities re-translated biblical texts in the book of Job governed by liberation as an alternative to the colonial logic of invasion. Socially, the bodies of people living with disabilities are being ‘translated’ by two dominant paradigms: the health and wealth gospel and the Euro-centric developmentalist model. The health and wealth gospel assumes individuals have disabilities because of their own sin, or the malevolent spiritual-material activity of a relative, or an ancestor, whereas the Euro-centric developmentalist paradigm dismisses Africa’s spiritual-material connection as being in any way related to disabilities. As re-translating agents, people living with disabilities used the CBS method to rework the processes of translation as they started exploring language and articulating their embodied theologies by re-translating the discourse of Job. Their re-translations responded to the logic of invasion by using an alternative emancipatory logic, as they dialogically expressed social visions for social healing for themselves and their fellow community members. People living with disabilities continue to be monitored by their families in northern Ghana and are still exploring how they want to move forward in their emancipatory social project considering whether they want to engage this set of facilitators and whether they want to use CBS. The values of CBS urge activists to wait for the community to take the lead to direct future engagements.

Chapter five addressed the external invasion of European masculinist ideology in anthropological cultural translation that interprets the dual-sexed focus of pre-colonial ritual in patriarchal terms. It also explored an internal patriarchal pressure asserted through African Bible translation. Some Africans prefer masculine references to the name of God in their Bibles. African translators, responding to the preferences of church leaders, are translating African deities that have both masculine and feminine characteristics in ways that indicate God is masculine, sometimes transforming the common feminine words for God by borrowing terms for God from other languages, or even creating grammatical neologisms in their language that lend themselves to patriarchal interpretations. African women's theology has resisted such patriarchal language, challenging theologians from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania to hear their voices as "the irruption within the irruption."¹²⁷⁶ Feminist translation also employs strategies that resist patriarchal pressures.

African women's theologies have informed the social analysis that contributed to the formation of a CBS on Ruth in the context of 'sugar daddies' in northern Ghana. Young women were the primary agents of re-translation in this CBS. At first, the groups of young women were cautious to broach the hidden transcript that admitted the reality of sugar daddies in their lives. Encouraged by the CBS questions and the embodied performance of a facilitator, some women re-translated the signs in the translation of Ruth understanding them to be sexual signals like those experienced in sugar daddy relationships. This invigorated the CBS environment bringing laughter and playfulness into the dialogue. Engaging with older women and some men broadened the social dialogue bringing occasional injections of energy into the discussions.

The prosperity gospel continues to produce and sanction sugar daddy relationships, dividing women from each other. There is much patient work to be done if African women's theologies are to gain ground. Modest steps are required for groups of women seeking to construct collective and inclusive theologies of survival. Dialogically re-reading, re-translating, and re-interpreting the book of Ruth offers the additional resource of the language of biblical narrative to women as a language of infrapolitics, a religious and political language for women (and men) to play with as they try to gain ground without risking retribution, in neo-patriarchal cultural and neo-liberal economic contexts.

¹²⁷⁶ Oduyoye, "Reflections from a Third World Woman's Perspective: Women's Experience and Liberation Theologies," 247–48.

Chapter six branched from gender to ethnicity in political and religious translation. In the neo-colonial post-colonial era, ethnicity has been a source of conflict and instability that is tearing Africa's social body apart. The intertribal, intratribal, and intra-ethnic dynamics of several recent ethnic conflicts were explored. Grillo's research reveals that women's bodies are being assaulted in ethnic conflicts, eroding the moral and material power African ethnic societies were founded upon. Contemporary Bible translation practice in northern Ghana (and elsewhere in Africa) is being practiced in this kind of ethnically charged and patriarchal context. The conventional practice of Bible translation lends itself to being manipulated by elites who are struggling for power in local contexts so they can wield power in national and international economies. In response, a CBS was constructed which makes ideo-theological suggestions that have the potential to counter neo-patrimonial manipulations of ethnicity and gender. The combination of African religious resources, biblical texts, and CBS questions as prompts for re-translation, may foster trans-sectoral resistance rather than acquiescence to the categories constructed by missionary-colonial translation.

7.1 Some conclusions emerging from the chapters

These chapters indicate there are multiple trajectories in every era, and yet each era has distinctive material practices, a *Zeitgeist*, what Mbembe calls its "languages of life."¹²⁷⁷ According to Mbembe's theory of entanglement, eras of time "interlock" with each other, "each age bearing, altering, and maintaining the previous ones."¹²⁷⁸ A post-colonial practice cannot return to the pre-colonial era without engaging the colonial era. Hence, the title of this thesis suggests that post-colonial translation must deal with the colonial-era translation-as-invasion paradigm.

In northern Ghana, Bible translation approaches that attempt to sidestep the ideologies of writing by urging rural African communities to embrace their orality at the expense of writing are difficult for marginalized language communities to accept.¹²⁷⁹ Post-colonial practices

¹²⁷⁷ Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 15.

¹²⁷⁸ Mbembe, 16.

¹²⁷⁹ The following anecdote comes from my personal experience: "A church-planting mission organization that has used primarily oral Bible teaching methods has found the same resistance to strictly oral methodology from new converts in the Bikɔɔm area. One Bikɔɔm Christian who had been brought up in the storytelling tradition of this church told the American missionary who taught him, 'You are scattering us like tortoise meat in the forest.' The Bikɔɔm traditional stories typecast the tortoise as a very traditional slow-moving animal that other

must deal with the socio-political ramifications of the translation-as-invasion paradigm. That may be why African Bible translation has continued to embrace vernacular writing, despite its ideological ambiguity.¹²⁸⁰ However, standard written Bible translation practice, even when placed in a post-colonial ‘translation theology’ frame, largely assumes the hierarchy of elite sectoral perspectives. Other sectoral post-colonial perspectives are largely ‘spoken for’ through the processes of standard translation practice.

By contrast, Contextual Bible Study constructs a post-colonial practice that attempts to combine the life-giving elements of sectoral dialogue that are present in pre-colonial discourses of oral tradition, bringing them into the literate colonial-era dialogue through writing group statements on paper in a dialogical fashion. In other words, CBS does not attempt to re-pristiniate pre-colonial-era translation or begrudgingly continue with the ideologies of colonial-era translation. CBS returns pre-colonial agency to sectors that were effectively removed from legal public discourse by the translation-as-invasion paradigm. CBS accomplishes this by sharing colonial-era strategies with all sectors of society, such as ideologies of writing, and interpreting a text through a ‘close reading.’ CBS encourages each sector to re-interpret their traditions’ texts from their own lived experience, re-asserting the validity of their social perspective in public discourse through collaborative cross-sectoral reading and writing practices. CBS incorporates aspects of the pre-colonial and colonial eras into its experimental post-colonial practice, and it does so in a way that serves the ideological interests of marginalized groups in the present.

In the present time of entanglement, CBS as post-colonial re-translation responds to powerful acts of invasion, resisting invasion, using a variety of potential strategies, guided by a set of values. Colonial translation has left little room for neutrality. Translation as invasion is an ongoing action. To make its response to invasion explicit in process and purpose, CBS prompts people to re-translate for post-colonial liberation. CBS works with the egalitarian dialogical ideologies of oral tradition, but also makes use of literate ideologies through its structured set of questions that return groups to the study’s overt ideo-theological orientation. As an emancipatory post-colonial practice, CBS urges groups to participate inside biblical

wiser animals tend to cheat. The tortoise is often compared to the Bikɔm people themselves who have clung to their traditions, do what is right, and often feel cheated by other people. The statement implies that by using only traditional methodologies (i.e., exclusively oral) the missionaries are contributing to their exploitation or at least not helping them overcome it.” Esala, “Implementing Skopostheorie in Bible Translation,” 315.

¹²⁸⁰ Esala, “Ideology and Bible Translation: Can Biblical Performance Criticism Help?”

narratives, sometimes suggesting interpretations that go against a dominant ideo-theological reception of a text.¹²⁸¹ Participants are invited to reimagine the dynamics involved in narratives.

The kinds of re-translations marginalized groups articulate as they participate in biblical narratives in the African time of entanglement are not ordered in the way conventional translation is ordered. The dialogical re-translations that communities articulate during CBS are partial. One moment, they focus on appropriating a text; the next moment, they shift to retell the story of the biblical narrative. CBS as emancipatory re-translation is characterized by a fluid moving back and forth between the biblical text and the contemporary context. With the possible exception of articulations made during the action step of CBS, the re-translations articulated during CBS are not meant for re-transmitting the text for a new audience. The articulations of CBS re-translate, but they do not restrict themselves to re-translating the narrative world alone. CBS as a process of re-translation is intended to develop pathways for life-giving community receptions of a biblical text in the present.

CBS responds to the ideologies of narrative and canonical ordering by using ‘burning issues’ in the community’s experience as a summons for what texts to engage, or what parts of a narrative to engage. For instance, the study of Ruth chose not to engage Ruth 4. The story of Ruth giving birth to Obed lends itself to serving royal patriarchal agendas in the past and the present.¹²⁸² As socially engaged theologians, the facilitators felt that this chapter was not useful to our desire to be on the young women’s side, so we chose to skip it for the time being.

Even though we chose to skip engaging Ruth 4, ideologically difficult texts can be re-translated through CBS. If a community desires to engage a ‘text of terror’, it is those groups who are most likely to be marginalized by the text who should take the lead in re-translating

¹²⁸¹“In the case of 1 Timothy we see the power of an emerging androcentric interpretation of Genesis 2-3, initially proposed by this text and then taken up by centuries of ecclesiastical interpretation. Here there is real [ideological] grain! The grain of the history of interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:8-15 is unambiguously against women, and so it should not surprise us that it takes considerable effort and perseverance to read against this grain.” West, “Taming Texts of Terror: Reading (Against) the Gender Grain of 1 Timothy,” 165.

¹²⁸² Phyllis Trible argues that the women in chapter four reclaim the narrative from the patriarchal attempt to co-opt it. Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 194–95; Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 85.

the text, governed by the logic of liberation.¹²⁸³ Re-translating a text of terror is a task that should not be undertaken lightly because texts can wound people.¹²⁸⁴ Indeed, scholars of liberation hermeneutics indicate that marginalized groups often prefer an indirect approach to texts that marginalize them, rather than immediately engaging texts that terrorize them. Nevertheless, there may come a time for encountering a text of terror. Phyllis Tribble uses the story of Jacob wrestling at the Jabbok as “a paradigm for encountering terror.”¹²⁸⁵ Those who re-translate these texts must recognize that both the Bible and translation are sites of struggle. The strange figure with whom Jacob wrestles will wound, but re-translators hold on, seeking healing of wounds and a blessing. “If the blessing comes—and we dare not claim assurance—it does not come on our terms. Indeed, as we leave the land of terror, we limp.”¹²⁸⁶

CBS reworks the nature and purpose of collaboration involved in translation. The translation-as-invasion paradigm involves justifying the alliance between (neo-)colonial representatives and an elite (royal) class to rule in an efficient and low-cost manner.¹²⁸⁷ CBS as re-translation reworks the alliance of the translation-as-invasion paradigm. The nature and purpose of

¹²⁸³ Some examples are 1 Timothy 2:8-15 for women in the church and Genesis 19 for communities practicing alternative sexualities. West, “Taming Texts of Terror: Reading (Against) the Gender Grain of 1 Timothy”; Gerald O. West, Charlene Van der Walt, and Kapya John Kaoma, “When Faith Does Violence: Reimagining Engagement between Churches and LGBTI Groups on Homophobia in Africa,” *HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 72, no. 1 (2016): 3, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i1.3511>.

¹²⁸⁴ Gerald West highlights the argument of Itumeleng Mosala regarding the ideology behind biblical texts at their sites of production and reproduction. “The concern of Mosala is not that black theologians *cannot* read any text, no matter what its encoding, against the grain, but that they *ought not* to do this without *recognizing* what they are doing. The danger, Mosala warns, is that apparently tamed texts may come back to hurt and haunt us.” West, “Taming Texts of Terror: Reading (Against) the Gender Grain of 1 Timothy,” 161.

¹²⁸⁵ Tribble, *Texts of Terror*, 4.

¹²⁸⁶ Tribble, 5.

¹²⁸⁷ Where a royal class did not exist in the pre-colonial era, colonial translation undertaken by administrators working with local translators contributed to creating the royal class by establishing hierarchy. This was the strategy in the North-West province. Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 72. Where a royal class had developed in the pre-colonial era, colonial translation strengthened the royal class into a tribal caste system, creating layers of hierarchy using the translation of pre-colonial invasion narratives to help establish the logical justification for the caste system. (See chapter six section 6.1.)

CBS's accountabilities attempt to do more than move beyond invasion; they work toward the inverse of invasion.¹²⁸⁸

The inverse of invasion does not mean the oppressed become the oppressors, or that the theologian or activist become revolutionary leaders of the people. The inverse of invasion means reworking the inner logic of invasion. Part of the way CBS reworks the inner logic of invasion is by focusing on an emancipatory rehumanizing process as it works toward an emancipatory purpose. The vision of what social emancipation (the purpose) will look like involves a discussion initiated by groups that have been structurally disadvantaged by the invasive system. CBS works with the marginalized within the marginalized, trusting the pain-bearers of society to lead the way towards well-rounded social healing—the inverse of invasion.

CBS's theory of change maintains that society's 'pain-bearers' are in the best position to help society find its way toward social healing, from the inside of social wounds out. The first two case studies in this thesis bear this out, at least in a preliminary way, while the third case study is yet to be practiced. When groups who have suffered the most from a social wound feel safe enough to practice their hidden transcripts, they begin healing their social wound, without simply reversing the wounding process with an intention to injure. People living with bodily disabilities demonstrated their capacity for gracious and gentle care of their family members, many of whom may have been a part of the wounding process. (See chapter four section 4.3.5.)

CBS's theory of change works with a modest, but important role for the activist intellectual in social change.¹²⁸⁹ The activist translator can fill the role of the activist intellectual.¹²⁹⁰ For the activist, the inverse of invasion means transformation must be led by marginalized groups; transformation of all actors moves beyond 'flat activism,' threading the line between engagement and isolation in a way that respects the sacred agency of local actors in the process of transformation.

¹²⁸⁸ The values of CBS help reconfigure the nature of CBS's collaboration. (See chapter four section 4.2.2.)

¹²⁸⁹ West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 111; Haddad, "African Women's Theologies of Survival: Intersecting Faith, Feminisms, and Development," 382. (See chapter five section 5.2.3.)

¹²⁹⁰ In Bible translation, consultants are often biblical scholars and local translators are trained teachers or pastors. Literacy facilitators are often organic intellectuals, some of whom will have the giftings to facilitate CBS.

The case studies with people living with disabilities and with young women in sugar daddy relationships revealed that facilitators must trust the process and not attempt to manufacture results. Established alliances of domination will not change because a few people felt invigorated by a CBS experience. Activist translators will need to trust marginalized groups whose bodies are on the line in these engagements. If they appear to be moving slowly, it may be that marginalized groups are actively being monitored by more powerful sectors of society, or it may mean that the groups themselves are not in solidarity with one another. CBS as re-translation often requires patient engagement.

The CBS experiences with young women in chapter five illustrate the difficulty of achieving safe spaces for groups that are not in solidarity with each other. For young women, the neo-liberal economy supported by neo-liberal Christianity has broken up their internal solidarity. In this difficult situation, biblical narratives offer a strategic linguistic resource. As marginalized groups of women practice re-translating the story of Ruth, they learn to wield a biblical language of infrapolitics. They can speak about their situation using biblical characters and biblical narratives as a shield of protection. The language of infrapolitics offers marginalized groups the opportunity to gain important ground in social dialogue with less risk to themselves.¹²⁹¹

Chapters four and five taken together illustrate both the power and limitations of agency in re-translating for liberation. CBS offers an opportunity to share the emancipatory experience of translating with all actors involved in translation, bringing a translation's sites of production closer together with its sites of reception. In chapter four I argued that the bodily entanglements of marginalized groups of people living with disabilities give them important perspectives on the way the biblical text is entangled with the present. The insights of people living with disabilities and young women in sugar daddy relationships are crucial to understanding particular entanglements with the biblical text. These entanglements can help 'turn'¹²⁹² and re-turn the text into a resource for liberation.

Chapter five problematized the notion of agency. Women in South Africa are asserting their agency to engage in blesser relationships. They assert their agency to acquire and consume the goods of neo-liberal capitalism. Neo-liberal Christianity discourses assert that it is every

¹²⁹¹ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 200.

¹²⁹² 'To turn' is a metaphor for translation in many African languages. St. André, *Thinking through Translation with Metaphors*.

person's God-given right to have consumer goods. These theologies help women justify their choices. Some women are using their agency in neo-liberal Christianity with an individualist goal rather than a collective social goal. African women's theologies have encouraged women to use their agency to work towards egalitarian relationships with men while remaining in solidarity with one another. CBS helps marginalized groups re-translate as agents, but its process and purpose construct re-translation for collective liberation rather than individualist liberation.

Chapter six argued that conventional Bible translation takes place within a context where ethnicity is being manipulated to consolidate the traditional power of chieftaincy, the political power of representation, and economic power. Women are being targeted and suffer the consequences of the moral and material degradation of their internal resources. As women suffer, so the ordinary community suffers. Conventional post-colonial Bible translation is ineffective in mounting a response and may even lend itself to being co-opted by the agendas of post-colonial elites for neo-colonial ends. An emancipatory post-colonial approach requires re-translating with a political and economic edge combining indigenous religious resources for resistance. To be effective, re-translating for resistance in the 21st century will work towards trans-sectoral solidarities across gender, ethnic, and religious lines.

7.2 A remaining question

As I conclude this argument for post-colonial re-translation, it is important to ask how CBS as re-translation can be re-turned for African post-colonial Bible translation.¹²⁹³ The experimental practice of CBS as emancipatory re-translation can be used in concert with more conventional post-colonial African-led Bible translation practices.

How can African post-colonial translators engage with the processes of CBS as re-translation? How can professional translators methodologically act as responsible translators maintaining integrity within their professional guilds but also practice translational loyalty with poor and marginalized groups in their audiences?

¹²⁹³ “‘Post-colonial’ for us refers to actual times of colonialism, for we are all post-colonies of particular kinds. Doing our biblical scholarship post-colonially is not a matter of making a scholarly choice to use a particular set of theories among other sets of available theories. Doing biblical scholarship in African post-colonies is, by definition, to do post-colonial biblical interpretation.” West, “African Biblical Scholarship as Post-Colonial, Tri-Polar, and a Site-of-Struggle,” 246.

A few suggestive thoughts will have to suffice.

First, it is time to revisit the question of the nature of Euro-American missionary involvement in post-colonial contexts. Africans have the personnel necessary to do the technical tasks of translation. Projects must be African-initiated and African-led. Anything less is a perpetuation of the neo-colonial missionary paradigm. Post-colonial translation must be led by those groups and individuals who make a post-colony their home.¹²⁹⁴

I believe the COVID-19 pandemic has reopened the dialogue around the merits of a missionary moratorium. I recognize the complexity involved in raising the question. Most missionaries, including myself, would not trade our experiences. I became more human by living in northern Ghana. I learned how to live graciously in a heterogeneous community. I underwent a series of ideo-theological transformations that I value.¹²⁹⁵ However, most mission and development agencies subscribe to missionary-colonial ideo-theological positions. This puts missionaries in a difficult position regarding the emancipation of the contexts and people to which they are sent. They find themselves in a position akin to a double bind.¹²⁹⁶ I also recognize that young Euro-Americans will continue to be drawn to Africa, Asia, and Latin American. But on the whole, the “baggage”¹²⁹⁷ of professional missionaries (and development workers) makes the cultural, theological, and development work for social transformation more difficult for African colleagues to facilitate.

I also recognize African colleagues have concerns about the implications of a missionary moratorium. Many of my friends from marginalized contexts recognize that the imperial alternative to neo-liberal neo-colonial cultural invasion is cultural and material isolation. The fact is that Euro-American business interests have extracted and continue to extract wealth from many parts of the world, including remote parts of the African continent. Despite this,

¹²⁹⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic has sent the majority of missionaries ‘home.’ Some stayed in their post-colonial contexts. Some wanted to stay but were not allowed.

¹²⁹⁵ Marion Grau warns that when “progressive and mainline” Euro-American Christians in the twenty-first century turn away from mission out of a sense of shame regarding Western colonialism they also turn away from fellow Christians in Africa, Asia, and the Americas, even questioning the validity of their Christian identities. Marion Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony: Salvation, Society and Subversion* (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 15.

¹²⁹⁶ Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind; Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*. (San Francisco: Chandler Pub. Co., 1972), 208.

¹²⁹⁷ Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony*, 288.

many corporations and government agents prefer to act as if they have no interconnection or ongoing responsibility in places from which they have extracted wealth. How would a missionary moratorium avoid cultural and material isolationism, another deadly neo-colonial strategy?

I am not suggesting that the alternative to invasion is isolation. Americo-European Bible agencies, who remain true to their calling, must be ‘converted’ to becoming genuine colleagues with their post-colonial partners learning how to engage in mission in our complicated and interconnected contexts.¹²⁹⁸ Such agencies have accumulated much practical knowledge and resources that can be shared. It is time to release control of knowledge, technologies, and resources and take on a more humble disposition.¹²⁹⁹ It is time to start learning from each other how to engage marginalized areas in our respective contexts in processes of translation and re-translation for social healing.¹³⁰⁰

Contextual Bible Study offers a cross-contextual tool that is already being adapted for European and North American contexts.¹³⁰¹ In other words, the legacy of missionary-colonial methods is just as harmful for Europe and North America as it is for Africa! The legacy of

¹²⁹⁸ De Gruchy, “Reversing the Biblical Tide: What Kuruman Teaches London about Mission in a Post-Colonial Era.”

¹²⁹⁹ Grau proposes a form of encounter she describes as hermeneutical and theological circumbulation. Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony*, 2–3. Affirming the theological orientation of liberation theologies, Grau argues for a “polydox engagement that moves beyond the “apartheid of theory” that defined previous decades of theological engagement, and engages in the fruits of an emerging “coalitional consciousness” under-girded by a “love hermeneutics.”” Grau, 40.

¹³⁰⁰ Social healing requires treating the causes of illness rather than temporarily ameliorating the symptoms. Writing from the discipline of missiology Brian Konkol offers a critique of the mission as accompaniment paradigm of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as it is currently practiced. Konkol argues that mission as accompaniment is a good starting point; however, its current practice does not sufficiently address neo-liberalism as the dominant economic force fueling climate change and economic inequality. The dominant practice of mission as accompaniment is more akin to mission as anesthetic, treating the symptoms but not the causes of social sickness. Brian Edward Konkol, “From Anesthetic to Advocacy through Mission as Accompaniment: Towards a More Effective Response from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s Global Mission to Mechanistic Dehumanization” (Ph.D. Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2016), 25, <http://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za.ukzn.idm.oclc.org/handle/10413/12984>. Konkol draws on Grau’s notion of circumambulation and argues for a “converted” practice of mission as accompaniment. Konkol, 260-63.

¹³⁰¹ John Riches, *What Is Contextual Bible Study?: A Practical Guide with Group Studies for Advent and Lent* (London: SPCK, 2010); Hall, *Insights from Reading the Bible with the Poor*.

missionary-colonial methodology continues to harm those who are colonized by it, and those who are complicit in perpetuating its practices and dispositions.

For African-led post-colonial translation agents and agencies, I believe that translators will benefit from learning about the values and processes of CBS. CBS influences the way conventional translation programs do translation for the better. CBS differs from conventional translation in the way a translator thinks about himself or herself. Most conventional translators have constructed their identities in their communities at least partially according to the translation-as-invasion paradigm. CBS restructures the translator's position as one of reciprocity. There is give and take. Translators must have the disposition of facilitators, sharing the tools of translating with CBS groups.

I recognize that not all translators will be gifted facilitators of CBS. They can still be involved with African colleagues who are equipped to facilitate CBS in their contexts. Translators and emerging CBS facilitators can learn how to adapt¹³⁰² CBS for their contexts by working with experienced CBS facilitators affiliated with the Ujamaa Centre.¹³⁰³

Even if conventional translators do not facilitate CBS in their context, they can participate in CBS as careful listeners. After listening to the re-readings, re-translations, and re-interpretations of participants of CBS, there is a place for conventional translators who are gifted in the use of language to re-translate the biblical text in ways that work within the guilds of professional translation.¹³⁰⁴ Conventional translators translate differently than the participants of CBS. While the re-translations of CBS move fluidly between the textual world and the people's lived reality, professional translators will probably keep their translational

¹³⁰² CBS is not intended to be copied and pasted but recalibrated in each context. CBS seeks to avoid the assumptions of what Greg Urban calls "the metaculture of modernity." Greg Urban, *Metaculture: How Culture Moves through the World*, Public Worlds, v. 8 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Briggs, "Contested Mobilities," 287–88.

¹³⁰³ The Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal holds workshops where they model and teach the Contextual Bible Study methodology.

¹³⁰⁴ African Bible translation is increasingly interested in translation studies and interfacing with the guilds focused on translation studies.

articulations focused on the biblical narrative and the narrative flow, but they can do so in a way that maintains loyalty to marginalized groups in their audience.¹³⁰⁵

Another important way that CBS promises to change conventional Bible translation practice is related to the order of translation. Within Bible translation, there is an important question of which texts are translated first? What is the order of translation? CBS processes invite African translators to hear the cries of their communities as they make choices for which texts to translate. In other words, the community collaborates with the translators in selecting which texts to translate first.

African American author Vincent Wimbush has argued that, historically, for African communities, the time when the Bible first comes into a community is a formative time. All subsequent engagements are to some extent built upon those first engagements.¹³⁰⁶ CBS argues that communities should work through biblical texts in a way that brings life rather than death for marginalized groups within a community. Once communities have re-translated texts in a way that brings them life, then subsequent (professional) post-colonial re-translations are more likely to be received in the same way.

CBS (re-)introduces biblical texts to a community based on themes or burning issues that the community identifies. When a community chooses to address an issue that it identifies as a motivation for engaging a biblical text, then contextual concerns drive choices of text and canon. Contextual concerns drive a community's entrance into and out of a text. The choice of textual engagement is motivated by something inside the community's experience, not something outside the community's experience. CBS argues the ideo-theological choice of translational ordering should be chosen by the community's calling and desire for thoroughgoing collective liberation, rather than some other ideo-theologically motivated choice.

¹³⁰⁵ "This article argues that CBS reorients the application of interpersonal loyalty in functional translation to marginalised groups in the host community and to source text scholars who privilege African contexts, including marginalised perspectives within African contexts, in their study of the ancient text and world. Such reorientation is theoretically important. CBS also challenges the initiators of a translation to reorient their own loyalty in relation to marginalised groups in the host audience." Esala, "Loyalty and Liberation: Skopos Theory's Ethic in Dialogue with Contextual Bible Study's Commitments," 448. See also the conventional translation of Job 3 that draws from and footnotes insights from several CBS engagements at the end of the article, 453-454.

¹³⁰⁶ Vincent L Wimbush, "Reading Texts Through Worlds, Worlds Through Texts," *Semeia* 62 (1993): 131.

Furthermore, the epistemological privilege of poor and marginalized groups suggests that when a community desires to enter into a biblical text motivated by a theme, they must take care to enter into the text on the side of those who are most vulnerable. From this positionality, the CBS questions offer the participants calibrated resources for liberation from within biblical studies relevant to the study's theme. Then, the vulnerable group's experience with the text is more likely to heal the community rather than further wound it.

Post-colonial translators who carefully listen to those emancipatory re-interpretations articulated by marginalized members of their community are more likely to produce conventional re-translations that are accountable to marginalized groups in their communities. And perhaps more importantly, communities are more likely to receive those conventional re-translations in ways that are concomitant with their earlier receptions, receptions that have already been calibrated to limit harm and maximize life-giving trajectories for social healing.¹³⁰⁷

¹³⁰⁷ Dube Shomanah, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 192.

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