

**PRAGMATIC THEORY APPLIED TO
CHRISTIAN MISSION IN AFRICA:
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
LUO RESPONSES TO 'BAD' IN GEM, KENYA**

By

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Abstract

Linguistic research showing dependence on context in deriving language meaning discloses the integral linking of the Luo language with their departed ancestors and the upholding of customary laws. Meaning and impact being transformed in the process of translation from one context to another explains the severe limitations found in previous attempts at cross-cultural understanding between Western and Luo (African) peoples.

Studying Luo people's understanding of 'bad' in the light of the above reveals much that often remains invisible to Westerners. 'Bad' arises from the activities of ghosts acting through people's hearts often as a result of breaking taboos. Cleansing, especially of ghosts, through prayer, keeping customary laws and salvation are used to counteract such 'bad'.

Conventional Biblical and mission hermeneutics are, in failing to account for pragmatic linguistics, found seriously wanting. Forces and powers being spiritually based in a monistic worldview amongst the Luo render clear cross-cultural communication with a rationalist and monotheist West impossible.

Theological education based on African languages is advocated as the way to engage the challenges of Christianity with Luo ways of life in a way that will result in a deeply rooted African church, and a moral, vibrant, intellectually and economically active African society.

Acknowledgements

The early formation of the thinking that makes up this thesis arose between 1988 and 1991 when colleagues at Mukinge Girls Secondary School in Zambia where I was teaching, such as Goliath Kasabula and Fackson Ntamo helped me to realise how much I had to learn about Africa. Thanks particularly to Dorothy Haile and Steve Weandt (of the African Evangelical Fellowship) who were inspirations to me. Before I ever left for Africa Peter Batchelor encouraged me to visit the people in their villages, and Ian Wallace gave an informed ear to my probing questions.

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Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations Used	1
Glossary	2
Maps	5
Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION	8
1.1. History of the Luo People of Gem	9
1.2. Theological and Ecclesial Background	12
1.3. Short History of Yala Theological Centre	16
1.4. A Worldview Rooted in Belief in Juok (Vital Force)	17
1.5. Consequences of Cross-cultural incomprehension	18
1.6. Theological Education, Pragmatics and Theology	21
1.7. Target Readership	22
1.8. Summary of Contents of Subsequent Chapters	25
Chapter 2. LANGUAGE THEORY AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	28
2.1. Introduction	28
2.2. Pragmatics – the role of context in understanding	32
2.3. The cooperative principle	36
2.3.1. ‘Contribution to be as Informative as Required’	48
2.3.2. ‘Don’t say what you Believe to be False’	52
2.3.3. ‘Don’t say that for Which you don’t have Adequate Evidence’	55
2.3.4. ‘Avoid Obscurity of expression’	62
2.3.5. ‘Avoid Ambiguity’	63
2.4. Theories in Pragmatics	63
2.4.1. Relevance Theory	64
2.4.2. Speech-act Theory	67
2.4.3. The Breadth of Context	68
2.5. Other Linguistic Considerations	70
2.5.1. Beyond the ‘Age of Reason’	71
2.5.2. How Variety has been Done Away With	74
2.5.3. The Challenges of Translation	76
2.5.4. Translations that Corroborate Ignorance	80
2.6. Research Methodology: Style of Life – to Enable Learning as the People Learn	83
2.6.1. A Brief Biography	84
2.6.2. Learning of Language	87
2.6.3. Living With	88
2.6.4. Have no Money	89
2.6.5. Judge Not	92

2.6.6. Don't Ask Questions	95
2.6.7. Undercutting Presuppositions	97
2.6.8. Loaded Judgments	101
2.6.9. Cover Ups	102
2.6.10. Avoiding Guilt Traps	103
2.6.11. Questioning the Universality of Academia	107
2.6.12. Discerning Muzzled Debates	112
2.7. The Research Process	113
2.7.1. Critiquing Authors Writing of their own People	113
2.7.2. Research Timetable and Procedure	117
2.7.3. Verification Procedures	125
2.7.4. Analysis of 'Bad'	130
2.8. Conclusion	134

Chapter 3. SETTING THE SCENE: THE PEOPLE OF GEM 136

3.1. Introduction	136
3.2. Physical and social statistics for Gem and Siaya	137
3.3. Beliefs and Practices in Gem	141
3.3.1. <i>Luo Kitgi gi Timbegi</i> (The Luo, their Customs and Traditions)	141
3.3.1.1. To Move your Homestead and Build your House	142
3.3.1.2. Mothers and Children	143
3.3.1.3. Matters of Marrying	144
3.3.1.4. A Senior Elder Dies	145
3.3.1.5. Community Pleasure	145
3.3.1.6. Fishing, Magical Practitioners, other Bad Ways to Die	146
3.3.2. <i>Chike Jaduong' e Dalane</i> (Traditional Rules for the Keeper of a Homestead)	148
3.3.3. A Subjective Description of 'Real Life' in Gem	153
3.4. Example Contexts for Language Use Analysed in Chapters 4 – 6.	158
3.4.1. A Death in Setini Village	159
3.4.2. A Discussion with a church leader following a service in a Roho church	164
3.4.3. A Sermon Preached at a home Meeting in a 'Power' church	167
3.5. Conclusion	168

Chapter 4. GIMA RACH EN (WHAT BAD IS) 170

4.1. Introduction	170
4.2. Means used to Identify the Bad	171
4.3. Discussion of Bad Things	175
4.3.1. <i>Kindi kod Nyasaye</i> (Between you and God)	175
4.3.2. <i>Gik ma Ndalogi</i> (Things of Today or Modern Things).	182
4.3.3. <i>Jochiende / Shaitani</i> (Ghosts and the Devil)	187

4.3.4. <i>Kit Ng'ato</i> (the Character of a Person)	188
4.3.5. <i>Kit gi Timbe Joluo</i> (the Nature and Customs of the Luo)	190
4.3.6. <i>Kweche</i> (Taboos)	194
4.3.7. <i>Siasa</i> (complex loaded relationships), <i>Kaka Itiyo Kod Ji</i> (How you Interact with People) and 'Relational Bad' in General	196
4.3.8. Other Categories of Bad Things.	202
4.3.8.1. Primary Level Bad	202
4.3.8.2. Bad of spiritual Origin.	203
4.4. Conclusion	205

Chapter 5. KA MA RACH OAE (WHERE BAD COMES FROM) 207

5.1. Introduction	207
5.2. Means Used to Locate the Source of the Bad	208
5.3. The Universal Causes	215
5.3.1. <i>Satan / Jochiende</i>	215
5.3.2. <i>Chuny</i> (Heart)	219
5.3.3. <i>Ketho kwer</i> (Breaking Taboo)	223
5.4. Specific Causes of Bad in the Life of the Luo People	227
5.4.1. Ritual origins	227
5.4.1.1. <i>Kia</i> (Don't Know)	228
5.4.1.2. <i>Gak</i> (State of being Unclean)	231
5.4.1.3. <i>Kuong' Mar Anyuola</i> (Curse of the Family)	233
5.4.1.4. <i>Juok</i> (Witchcraft)	234
5.4.2. Will-Based Origins	236
5.4.2.1. <i>Gombo</i> (Desire)	236
5.4.2.2. <i>Kionge Yie Moromo</i> (Lack of Faith)	239
5.4.3. 'Modern' Origins	240
5.4.3.1. <i>Loka</i> (Overseas / Globalisation)	240
5.4.3.2. <i>Jarachar Ok Dwar</i> (Not Wanted by Whites)	241
5.4.4. <i>Kuonde Moko Ma Rach Ae</i> (Other Sources of Bad)	243
5.4.5. Effect of Environment	244
5.5. Conclusion on Where Bad comes from	244

Chapter 6. GOLO RACH (GETTING RID OF BAD) 246

6.1. Introduction	246
6.2. Methodology and results table	246
6.3. Major categories	251
6.3.1. <i>Luong Nying' Nyasaye</i> (Calling on God)	251
6.3.2. <i>Weche Mitiyogo</i> (Words Used)	257
6.3.3. <i>Rito Chike</i> (Keeping Customary Laws)	261
6.3.4. <i>Liete Kod Rapache</i> (Funerals and Memorial Services)	266
6.3.5. <i>Lamo</i> (Prayer)	270

6.4. Other Categories	273
6.4.1. <i>Warruok</i> (Salvation)	273
6.4.2. <i>Riembo Jochiende</i> (Chasing Away Bad Spirits)	274
6.4.3. <i>Chokruok</i> (Meeting Together)	275
6.5. Recent innovations	276
6.5.1. <i>Gik Ma Ndalogi</i> (Modern Things)	276
6.5.2. <i>Chanruok Maber</i> (Good Planning)	277
6.5.3. <i>Pesa</i> (Money)	279
6.6. Conclusion	281

Chapter 7. PRAGMATICS, HERMENEUTICS AND MISSION 284

7.1. Introduction	284
7.2. Placid Tempels and African Philosophy	287
7.2.1. Is Tempels Correct?	294
7.3. Biblical hermeneutics in the West – a Survey	299
7.3.1. The Physical, the Spiritual, and the Meaningful	299
7.3.2. Assumptions that Lead the Hermeneutical Exercise Astray from its very Inception	305
7.3.3. Opening the Hermeneutical Can of Worms	309
7.3.4. Biblical Hermeneutics' Expanded Horizons	314
7.4. Aspects of Luo hermeneutics	319
7.4.1. Worldview as Reflected in Language	319
7.4.2. An Interpretive Example	322
7.4.2.1. Explaining the <i>Dholuo</i> Version to someone from Britain	324
7.4.2.2. Explaining the English Version to someone from Luoland	325
7.4.2.3. Discussion of the above Commentaries	326
7.4.2.4. Pragmatic Application	327
7.4.3. Hermeneutics and power	328
7.4.3.1. Hermeneutics and Morality	328
7.4.3.2. Power Relations – Is 'bad' that which Counters 'Vital Force' in Gem?	331
7.4.3.3. Things are Power	334
7.4.3.4. Pragmatics and the Power of Things and of Being	335
7.4.3.5. The Impact of the West on Luo Hermeneutics	338
7.5. Conclusion	341

Chapter 8. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PRAGMATICS FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION 343

8.1. Introduction	343
8.2. Countering TEE (Theological Education by Extension) Critics	346
8.3. Barriers to Progress	351

8.4. Educational Theories	362
8.5. What to Do?	372
8.6. Conclusion	379

Chapter 9. CONCLUSION **380**

Appendix 1. Elders' Counsel – a course at Kima International School of Theology	385
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Bibliography **388**

Figures

Figure 2.1. The four components in language from which meaning is derived	29
Figure 2.2. The constitutive maxims of the Cooperative Principle	36
Figure 3.1. Livelihood Strategies for Sauri Sub-location in Gem, 2004.	140

Maps

Map 1. East Africa, showing the location of the Yala area	5
Map 2. Map of region in which Yala Theological Centre operates	6
Map 3. Map of Gem, showing neighbouring tribal areas (constituencies) and extent of Map 2.	7

List of Tables.

Table 2.1. The cooperative principle and its application to native <i>Dholuo</i> speakers	45
Table 2.2. Environment in which bad things were mentioned	124
Table 3.1. The Contents of Mboya's book indicating the length of the Longest Chapters in Number of Pages	142
Table 3.2. Contents of Raringo's Book indicating the Length of the Longest Chapters in Number of Pages	149
Table 4.1. 'Bad things' in their categories as identified according to frequency	172
Table 5.1. Where the bad comes from (in addition to <i>chuny</i> and <i>jachien</i>) (in order of frequency)	214
Table 6.1. Categories of Removal of Bad Things	248
Table 8.1 Ten Weaknesses of the TEE Movement in Africa according to Steyn	347

List of Abbreviations Used

AIC African Indigenous/Independent/Instituted Churches

ACK Anglican Church in Kenya

CP Cooperative Principle

CCA Church of Christ in Africa (also known as *Johera*)

KIST Kima International School of Theology

LOI Language of Instruction

NCK National Council of Churches of Kenya

OAIC Organisation of African Instituted Churches

PA Public Address

PP Politeness Principle

SSA Sub-Saharan Africa

TEE Theological Education by Extension

YTC Yala Theological Centre

Glossary

Note that non-English words given in Italics in this thesis are in *Dholuo* (the language of the Luo people), unless otherwise indicated. Readers should be aware that some references and quotes are of African uses of English, which are profoundly different from British English.

An indication of the ‘contextual effects’ presumed in the use of a few of the key words used in this thesis are given below.¹

Africa For the purposes of this thesis, ‘Africa’ refers to Sub-Saharan Africa.

African A dark skinned person who has been born and brought up in Africa.

Chira An illness arising from the breaking of taboo (*Dholuo*).

Emotion While seeming to describe much of what goes on in African churches, this word is not a good translation from African languages. Terms that come close to filling the semantic space of ‘emotion’ in *Dholuo* or *Kiswahili* imply the presence and activity of spirits. Hence, for example, Rasmussen’s telling us “that their emotional church services provide an outlet for people from the strains of their everyday lives” would not have such a secular implication in the original vernacular.²

Gueth ‘Blessing’ (*Dholuo*).

Jachien Ghost (demon, devil, spirit) (*Dholuo*). This term is extremely wide in meaning and use. Literally it seems to mean ‘he who haunts’ or ‘haunter’ as *chieno* is to haunt. Any enemy, someone against you, is *jachien* to you. A *jachien* is also the living spirit of a troublesome departed ancestor. Thus traditionally he (or it) is dealt with by pleasing the dead, or in some cases acting against a particular ghost. *Jachien* is also often used to translate devil and satan.

Jochiende Plural for *jachien* (as above).

¹ These definitions are intended to give a general idea of the meaning of a word, and in no way claim to be limiting or precise. This arises from a core argument of this thesis, that definitions given to words from cultural and linguistic environments unfamiliar to readers easily become more misleading than helpful. (Creswell recognises that “Seldom does one see an extensive ‘Definitions of Terms’ section in a qualitative study because the terms as defined by informants are of primary importance.” (CRESWELL, JOHN W., 1998. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: choosing among five traditions*. London: Sage Publications. p77.)

² (RASMUSSEN, ANE MARIE BAK, 1996, *Modern African Spirituality: the independent Holy Spirit churches in East Africa, 1902-1976*. London: British Academic Press, p160.) Rasmussen elsewhere explains these ‘emotional’ church services in terms more in tune with the vernacular language of the Luyia people who are neighbours to the Luo of Gem in Kenya: “purification in these [Holy Spirit] churches is confined to confession accompanied by bodily movements and driving demons from the church ...”. (p73.)

Luo Name given to people considered to be of the same ethnic origin who now share many similarities in their language, found particularly in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Congo, Sudan, Ethiopia and in smaller numbers elsewhere.³ In this thesis ‘Luo’ unless otherwise specified refers to the Kenya-Luo.

Magic This amorphous word can be used to translate *juok* of *Dholuo*. I use it in this thesis to describe the power or vital force that is in the universe and can be manipulated by men to bring about that which they desire.

Missionary I use this term in the sense widely understood in Sub-Saharan Africa being a Westerner who has come to Africa with the overt intention of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Mzungu A person who walks around a lot, or a particularly wonderful able person. Refers to people of European ethnicity (*Kiswahili*).

Rational An intelligent way to think, say or do something, which varies according to the culture of the people concerned. Hence we have ‘British (Western) rationality’ and ‘Luo (African) rationality’.

Religion Often given as the translation of *dini* (*Kiswahili*) or *din* (*Dholuo*), a term that comes to East Africa via Arabic. I avoid this word as much as possible because of its impact in Britain as a compartment in life that is redundant in many people. (There are people who are religious, but many who are not.) Such presupposes a dualistic worldview largely absent among the Luo of Gem. “For Africans religion is quite literally life and life is religion.”⁴

Roho A translation often given for ‘spirit’ in English both in *Kiswahili* and *Dholuo*. Originally a loan word from Arabic in *Kiswahili*.

Shaitani A *Kiswahili* pronunciation (or equivalent) of Satan originating in Arabic, in East Africa identified with personalised-bad, and often a synonym for witchcraft.

Sin “But an important consequence arises out of the marking of the word ‘sin’ in the Judaeo-Christian sense of offence against God, is that it cannot now be used cross culturally without qualification.”⁵ This difficulty is discussed in this thesis. It is extremely

³ Luo and Dinka-Nuer are the two languages of the Nilo-Saharan group. (GORDON, RAYMOND G., Jr. (ed.), 2005, ‘Ethnologue: Languages of the World, (Fifteenth edition).’ Dallas: SIL International. <http://www.ethnologue.com/> (accessed 23.10.05).)

⁴ (MAGESA, LAURENTI, 1997, *African Religion: the moral traditions of abundant life*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, p33.) African religion “is written everywhere in the life of the people” says Mbiti. (MBITI, J.S., 1991, ‘Where African Religion is Found.’ 69-75 In: Uka, E.M., (ed.) *Readings in African Traditional Religion: structure, meaning, relevance, future*. New York: Peter Lang, p74.) So also Healey. (HEALEY, JOSEPH G., 1981, *A Fifth Gospel: the experience of black Christian values*. New York (Maryknoll): Orbis Books, p140.) “Most are agreed that the attempt to define ‘religion’ is itself a Western enterprise [whereas] ... non-Western cultures ... tend to see reality as a whole” says Niles. (NILES, DAMAYANTHI, 2004, ‘How the study of popular religions can help us in our theological task.’ 210-218 In: *International Review of Mission*. Volume 93, Number 369, April 2004, p211.) Manus holds that much study done into ‘African Religion’ has been “as *Wissenschaft* (objective science)”, thus perhaps questioning its social relevance. (MANUS, UKACHUKWU CHRIS, 2003, *Intercultural Hermeneutics in Africa: methods and approaches*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, p10.)

⁵ TAYLOR, D., 1985, ‘Theological Thoughts about Evil.’ 26-41 In: Parkin, D., (ed.) *The Anthropology of Evil*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd. p29.

difficult to discern whether on particular occasions the use of ‘sin’ (*Dholuo: richo*) is intended to be understood or is understood in terms of ‘offence against God’ or ‘breaking of taboo’.

Tradition The living faith of those now dead.⁶

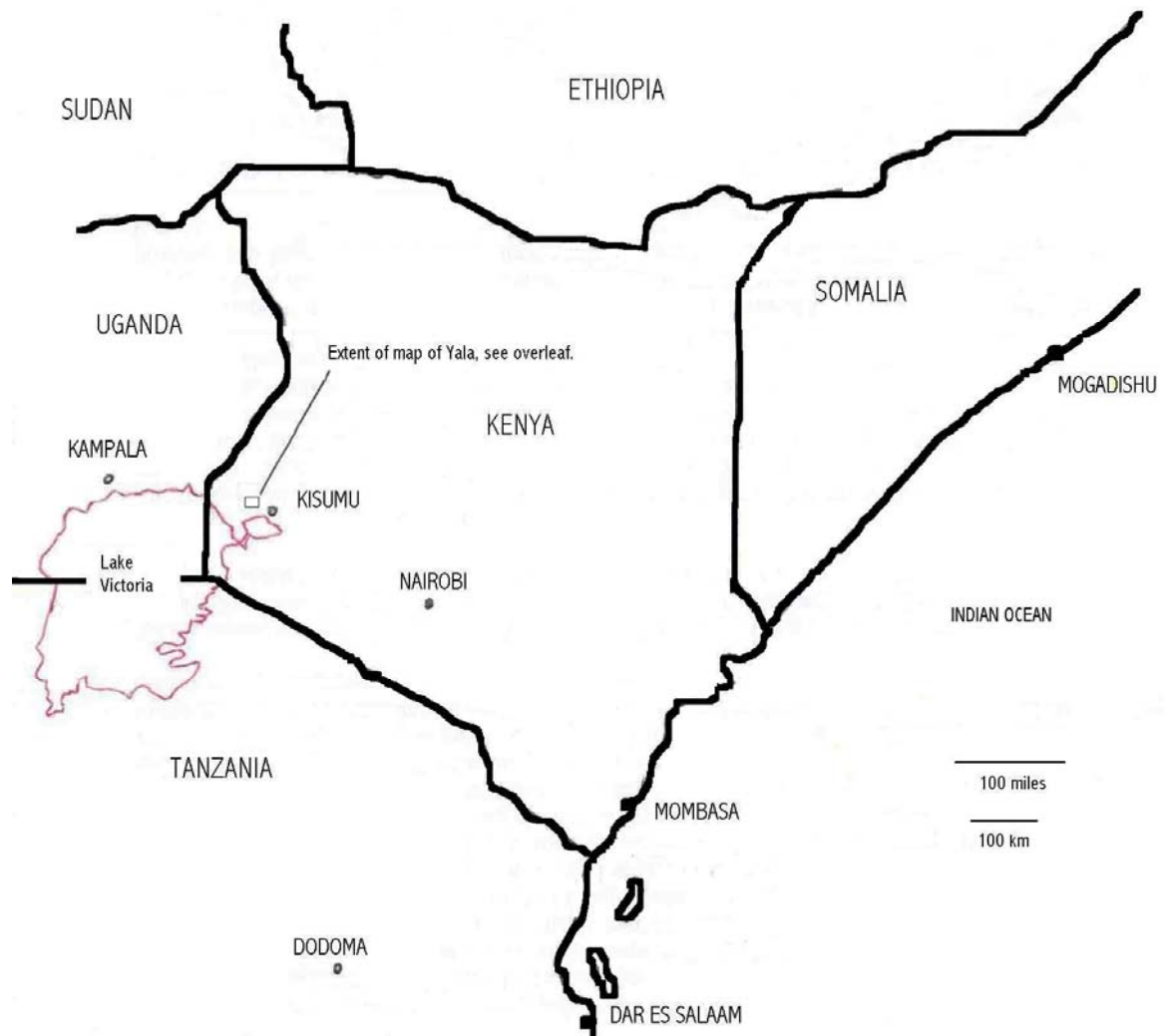
West I consider Westerners to be people of European descent, and ‘the West’ to consist of their communities and societies.⁷

Witchcraft A term whose contextual impact in British English is of something ancient, primitive and foundationally evil. I use it in this thesis in those instances where *juok* or magic seem to have a hidden mystical evil intention.

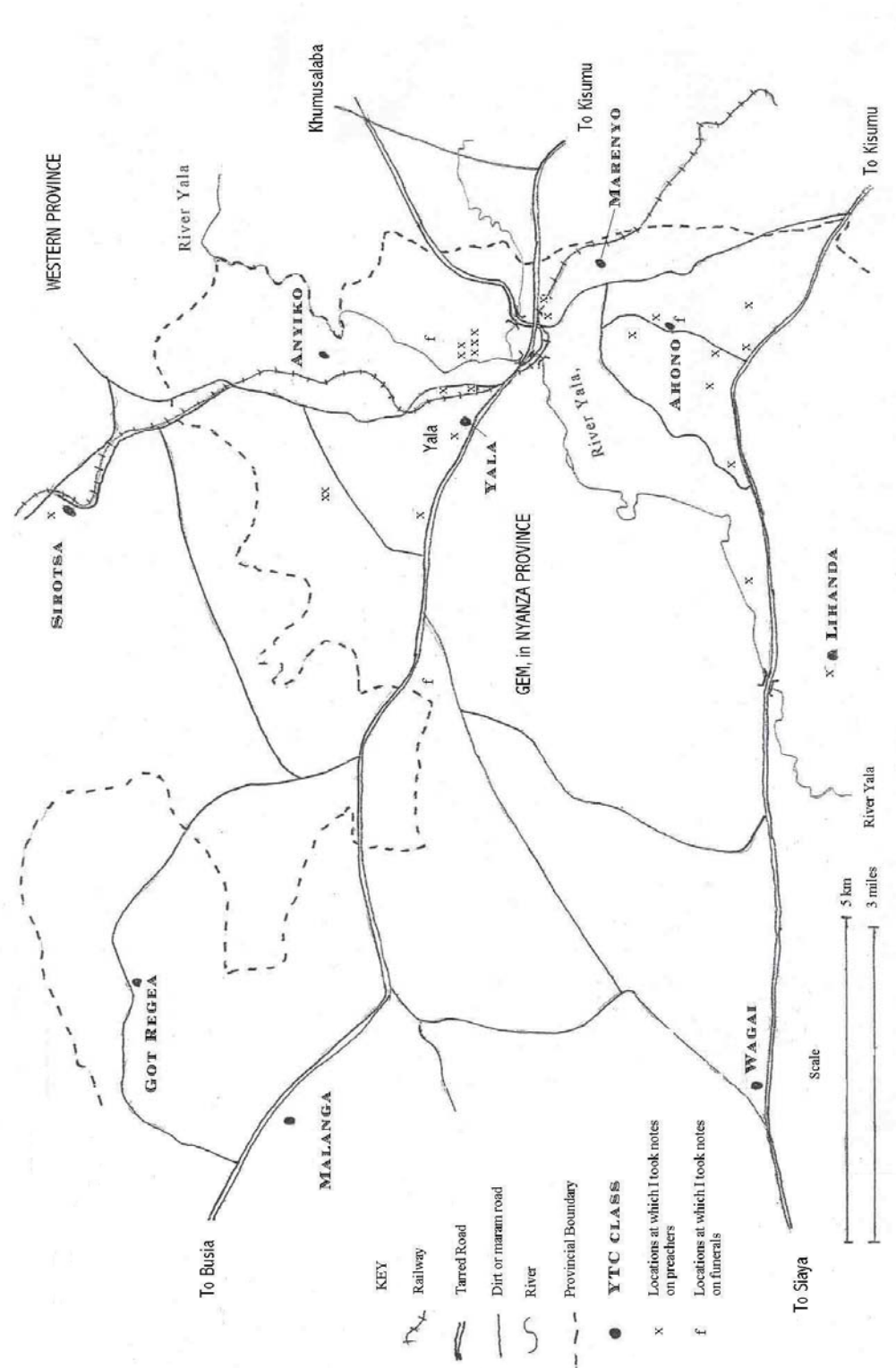
⁶ ONWU, NLENANYA, 1991, ‘The Challenge of the African Context for Christian Higher Education.’ 52-73 In: *Christian Education in the African Context Proceedings of the African Regional Conference of the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education. Harare 4-9 March 1991.* Michigan: IAPCHE, p57.

⁷ I use ‘West’ in a similar way to Maranz, who states that: “Although the author recognises that Western culture can be divided into many cultures and subcultures, for the purposes of this book the term Western seems justified.” (MARANZ, DAVID, 2001, *African Friends and Money Matters: observations from Africa.* Dallas: SIL International, p11.)

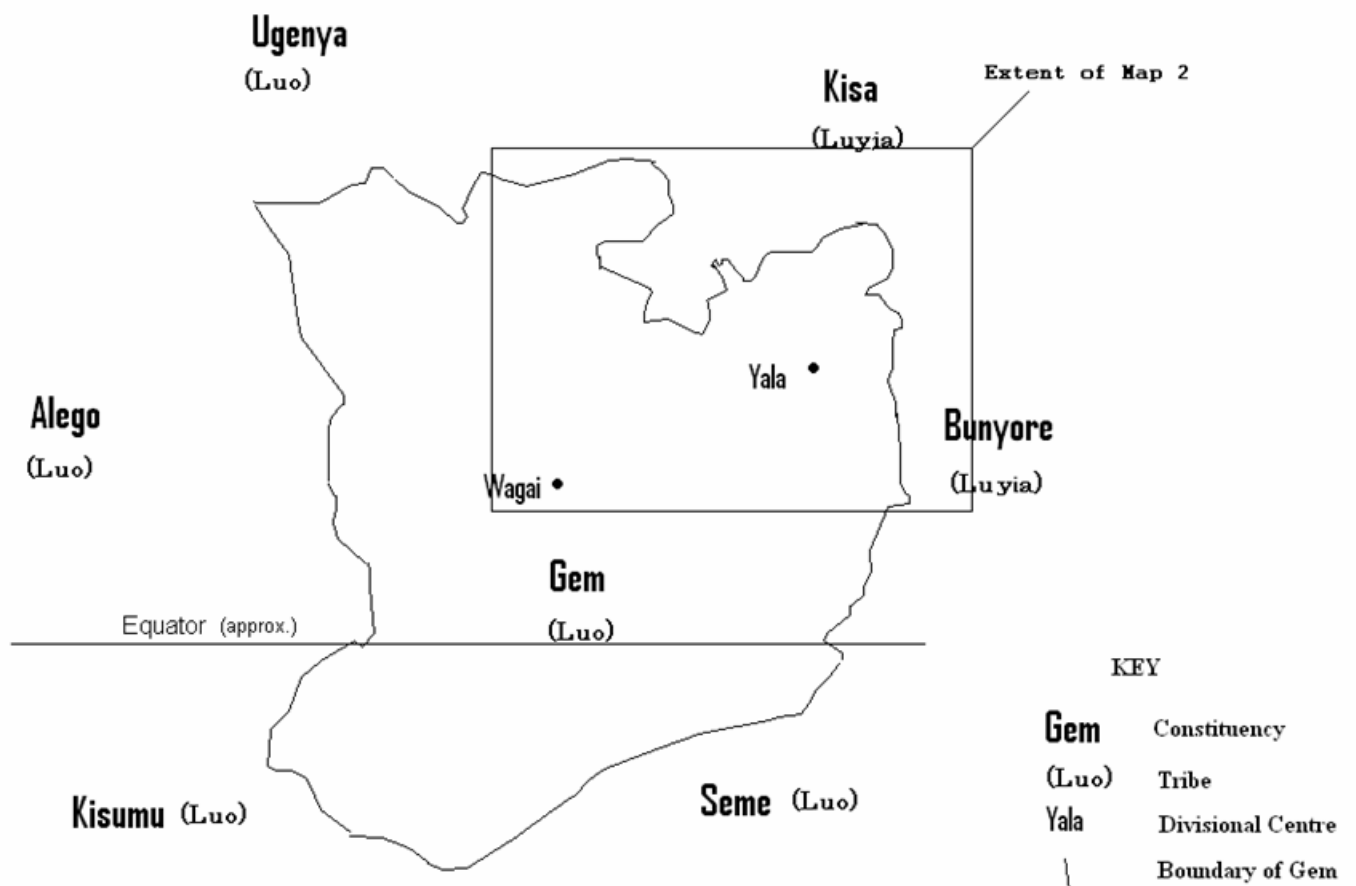
Map 1. East Africa, Showing the Location of the Yala area



Map 2. Map of Region in which Yala Theological Centre operates



Map 3. Map of Gem, showing Neighbouring Tribal areas (Constituencies)
and Extent of Map 2.



CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Mission to Africa and more specifically Luoland in Western Kenya is the central theme to this thesis. The thesis is about language. It explores the consequences of insights into pragmatics (the study of the way language is used) for the cross-cultural exercise of mission. Pragmatics provides a missing key that explains puzzles that have troubled scholars of mission for decades. A study of what is ‘bad’ as understood by the Kenyan Luo people is another major theme. This is the case study by which pragmatic linguistics are applied to investigate the lives of the Luo people. So then this thesis is also about the Kenyan Luo people of Gem,⁸ their ways of life, and particularly the position of the Christian church in their community. The life of African people is often said to be ‘holistic’. This thesis explores the practical nature of this holism. Myself having originated from a Western background, in which issues of ‘development’ and economics are given high prominence especially in consideration of ‘Third World’ issues, means that I have not been able to ignore such in my consideration of theology. Hence this thesis contains a theology of development.

This research attempts to explore the underlying causes of miscomprehension of many kinds often observed in the course of Christian mission to Africa instigated from the West. The hypothesis tested by studying the Luo people of Gem, including an in-depth examination of their understanding of ‘bad’, is that an over-simplistic understanding of the derivation of language meaning is foundationally at fault. This study understands that “we

⁸ Gem has a total area of about 400km² with a population of 140,000 (MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND PLANNING, nd. Siaya District Development Plan, 2002-2008: *effective management for sustainable*

need to know more about the ‘experiences’ of individuals about ... [phenomena] and the meaning they ascribe to these experiences.”⁹ This research follows the phenomenological tradition, given by Creswell as searching for: “the meaning of the *lived* experiences for several individuals about a concept of phenomenon” which involves “exploring the structure of consciousness in human experiences.”¹⁰ It also draws strongly from the tradition of ethnography, especially in the use of observation as against interview for acquiring foundational data. This research asks how the Luo people of Gem, and by implication more widely the people of Sub-saharan Africa make sense of their experiences, and then explores the implications of these findings for practice in church and mission.

1.1. History of the Luo People of Gem

The Nilotic language group, of which Kenyan *Dholuo* is one, is thought to have emerged about two thousand BC.¹¹ The renowned Luo historian Ogot clearly has a bone to pick with Western historians for their considering of the Luo as lazy¹² or otherwise primitive.¹³ Ogot tells us that the three significant groups of *Dholuo* speakers to arrive in Western Kenya were the *Jokajok* (‘the people of God’), followed later by the *Jokaowiny*, and later the *Jokaomolo*.¹⁴ There is some controversy as to the origin of the name ‘Luo’.¹⁵ The

economic growth and poverty reduction. (by the) Rural Planning Department, Ministry of Finance and Planning.)

⁹ Creswell. *Qualitative Inquiry*. p95.

¹⁰ Creswell. *Qualitative Inquiry*. p51.

¹¹ OGOT, BETHWELL A., 1996, *Economic Adaption and Change among the Jii-speaking peoples of Eastern Africa*. Kisumu: Anyange Press Ltd. p3.

¹² Ogot, *Economic Adaption*. p9.

¹³ (OGOT, BETHWELL A., 1967 *History of the Southern Luo. Volume I. Migration and Settlement 1500-1900*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, p14-15.)

¹⁴ Ogot, *Economic Adaption*. pp80-84.

account given by Onyango-ku-Odongo¹⁶ is that a son of a great chief Kuku Lubanga¹⁷ while at one time considered a coward, killed a rival chief single handedly and later gave birth to his own son who he called “Lwo”. The latter himself became a great chief after whom his people called themselves. Some generations later a descendant of his, also called Lwo, engaged in a quarrel with his brother which resulted in his fleeing to what is now Kenya. Those early Luo migrants were also known as ‘*Jokajok*’ (people of God) as Lwo is reported to have said ‘*Jok kene*’ (God alone)¹⁸ as he set out.

The *Jo-gem* (people of Gem) emerged from one of the major groups of the Omolo cluster (*Jokaomolo*) who entered Kenya sometime after the *Jokajok*.¹⁹ They fought the Luyia in the 19th Century for the land now known as Gem. The *Joojuodhi* combined with the *Jokwenda* and *Jokanyanga* clans make up the people of Gem of today. The *Joojuodhi* became the *Jobilo* (war-prophets who possessed a special bracelet and three pots of medicines “... to control the rain, the wind, and the army worms”.²⁰) of Gem, from whom famous chiefs such as Rading Omolo, Odera Ulalo (the first colonial chief in Gem)²¹ and Odera Akang’o²² emerged. Odera Akang’o was particularly influential in promoting education in Gem, thus contributing to Gem’s being evaluated as early as 1914 as the

¹⁵ In *Dholuo* itself ‘Luo’ appears to mean ‘follow’, so could have arisen to describe the people who followed the Nile South through Sudan and beyond. (MIRUKA, OKUMBA, 2001, *Oral Literature of the Luo*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, p1.)

¹⁶ ONYANGO-KU-ODONGO, JAMAL MIKLA, 1976, ‘Book 1. The Early History of the Central Lwo.’ 25-170 In: Onyango-ku-Odongo, J.M. and Webster, J.B., 1976, *The Central Lwo during the Achonya*. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau

¹⁷ Meaning ‘kuku-god’, because of his great exploits.

¹⁸ (Onyango-ku-Odongo, ‘Book 1.’ p61.) Note that this quote is not Kenyan Luo (*Dholuo*) but a Ugandan dialect of *Dholuo*. The phrase ‘God alone’ (Nyasaye *kende* or also *Yesu kende* in *Dholuo*) is frequently to be heard in Gem today, in my experience especially by older ladies who are saved (*jomowar*) apparently demonstrating a somewhat fatalistic faith in ‘God’.

¹⁹ OGOT, BETHWELL A., 2003, *An Autobiography: my footprints in the sands of time*. Kisumu: Anyange Press Ltd. p1.

²⁰ Ogot, *An Autobiography*. p1.

²¹ MBOGO, JOSEPH ONDUNGA, 2003, In conversation. Mbogo, whose home was near Anyiko, was a self-taught historian of the Luo, particularly of Gem.

“paramount Luo Location.”²³ While also being agriculturally better placed (having a higher rainfall and better soils) than many Luo locations, Schiller gives the following reason for Gem’s general ascendancy in Luoland:

In the late Nineteenth Century Gem was fairly centralized. Led for a century in its fight for living space by the dominant Jo Karading lineage, [i.e. the family of Rading Omolo] strong paramount *ruodhi* (chiefs) unified the location under their sway and had the clans co-operating in decision making as well as could be expected in a lineage type clan system whose natural tendency was to split apart, not unify.²⁴

In Gem as in Siaya District in general “... the *Mzungu* (European) became the man of culture par excellence, the one to whom all deferred.”²⁵ In Kenya in general the Luo seem to have a reputation for having been quick to imitate the white man²⁶ leading to “the image of a ‘Luo man’ as an educated person, with powerful intellectual skills ...”²⁷ Such has not prevented problems from besetting the Luo homeland. Hunger in Siaya District²⁸ is a frequent experience. “The common response to such ... is simply to try to live through those periods of hunger...”²⁹ and in fact “remittances from wage labour [typically outside of Siaya itself] have become the critical variable in rural survival ...”.³⁰ Land is chronically in short supply.³¹

²² MAYOR, A.W., 1955, *Thuond Luo*. (Luo Heroes) Kisumu, Kenya: Anyange Press Limited, p29-33.

²³ SCHILLER, LAURENCE DANA 1982, ‘Gem and Kano: a comparative study of two Luo political systems under stress c. 1880-1914.’ Volume 1. PhD thesis, Northwestern University, 1982, p334.

²⁴ Schiller, ‘Gem and Kano.’ p338.

²⁵ COHEN, DAVID WILLIAM, and ODHIAMBO, E.S. ATIENO, 1989, *Siaya: the historical anthropology of an African landscape*. London: James Currey, p113.

²⁶ OKECH, OMONDI, 2004, In conversation on 20th September 2004 in my home in Ahono village. Okech is a Luo man from Alego.

²⁷ Cohen and Odhiambo, *Siaya*. p121.

²⁸ Gem, that forms the focus for this study, is a part of Siaya District.

²⁹ Cohen and Odhiambo, *Siaya*. p63.

³⁰ Cohen and Odhiambo, *Siaya*. p67.

³¹ Siaya produces enough food for itself for only four months of the year, according to the Ministry of Finance and Planning. (*Siaya District*. p15.) Other indicators given in this document indicate conditions widely known as being of ‘poverty’ such as a life expectancy of 52.6 years, an infant and child mortality of

1.2. Theological and Ecclesial Background

“Her grandchildren will shatter your head, but you will bite their heels.”³² These were God’s words to the serpent who had succeeded in tempting Eve to eat fruit forbidden by God.³³ The words of God that result (Genesis 3:14-19) are taken as words of judgment or curse. Yet in them we also find a glimmer of hope – that the grandchildren of Eve will one day have opportunity to smash the head of the serpent (here presumed to represent the devil). From this point on,³⁴ God is seen in the Scriptures as working out the salvation of his people. From Abraham to Moses, then the kings and prophets, we observe the working out of his plan for Israel. With Christ in the New Testament we see God’s plan for salvation for the whole world. That is – all those who believe in Jesus as Lord. This message of salvation through Christ has reached Kenya, and has had a profound impact on the people of Gem that form the focus for this study.

Early Protestant Anglican Missionary Christianity came to Gem primarily from Uganda. Nyanza Province of Kenya (at the time called Kavirondo) which includes Gem, was originally considered a part of Uganda. The leadership of the Anglican Mission in Nyanza was not transferred to Mombassa until 1921.³⁵ Ogot tells us that local men who started churches early in the 20th Century were frustrated by their subsequently being refused

215 children per 1000 births (p8.), 38.4% AIDs infection amongst blood donors (p22.) and little prospects for industrialisation (p15.) in Siaya District.

³² This quote is taken from the Bible, *Muma Maler*, Genesis 3:15b. (My translation.)

³³ Bible, *Muma Maler*. Genesis 3:1-13.

³⁴ See Bright (BRIGHT, J., 1980, *A History of Israel* (third edition). London: SCM Press.) for details.

baptism, resulting in resentment and beginning of AICs (African Indigenous Churches).³⁶ Such refusal arose through missionary's fear that Africans might appropriate the Christian message "in terms of their own historical and cultural experiences ...".³⁷ Bible translation was, according to Ogot, resisted until the 1930s for the same reason.³⁸ The ready appropriation of the Gospel is however widely evident from the development of *laini* villages,³⁹ which in Ogot's description of the one founded by his father, were strongly foundationally Christian.⁴⁰ Ayany agrees with Ogot's description of Luo people's enthusiastic appropriation of Christianity:

The coming of the Whites brought the religion of Christianity. When they first came people entered [the church] like the whole world.⁴¹ People walked from Imbo Kadimo as far as Maseno [a distance of more than 25 miles] just to receive the Holy Communion. People began to build homesteads in which all Christians stayed together [the *laini* villages] and in those homesteads people had great joy due to the new thing [i.e. the Gospel] that had reached them.⁴²

These villages were unfortunately not to last.⁴³ Ogot tells us that in 1933 his father was the last to leave the village that he had himself founded,⁴⁴ suggesting that the growing size of the villages made them unmanageable. Ayany tells us that the reasons the Christian villages fell apart are still the reasons why it remains difficult for Luo communities to

³⁵ PICKENS, GEORGE F., 2004, *African Christian God-Talk: Matthew Ajuoga's Johera narrative*. New York: University Press of America, p89.

³⁶ Ogot. *An Autobiography*. p11.

³⁷ Ogot. *An Autobiography*. p12.

³⁸ Ogot, *An Autobiography*. p12.

³⁹ In which houses were built in lines, instead of the roughly circular or ring patterns of traditional homesteads.

⁴⁰ Ogot. *An Autobiography*. p16.

⁴¹ The meaning of this sentence is not entirely clear in the original. It seems to be a use of hyperbole to emphasise the great impact of Christianity.

⁴² Ayany, *Kar Chakruok*. p35. (My translation.)

⁴³ Ayany. *Kar Chakruok*. p35.

⁴⁴ Ogot. *An Authobiography*. p18.

develop.⁴⁵ At the time churches had begun Primary schools, largely “taught in *Dholuo*”,⁴⁶ which were in 1924 forced to come under mission control in order to obtain government aid.

The relationship between the church in Nyanza and Uganda continues to be close.⁴⁷

Arising from Rwanda and entering Kenya in 1937, the East African Revival has had a profound impact on the Christianity in Nyanza, including Gem.⁴⁸ Wiggins recalls exciting times of enthusiastic meetings including confession of sins and experiences of the Spirit of God during his time in Nyanza.⁴⁹ Welbourne and Ogot describe its impact⁵⁰ especially on the Anglican church. Preaching became very popular. The movement was not without its critics, as women were said to be leaving their husbands to join it. Some parts of the movement were extreme, condemning the use of any medicines. Advice sought from Uganda encouraged the movement’s members to stay within the Anglican church, and to concentrate on repentance and confession of sins. Those who kept this advice are the members of *lalruoke* (fellowships), a movement within the Anglican church, up to today. Others were more in favour of *kuhama* (separation), the major ongoing evidence of which is the CCA (Church of Christ in Africa) that formally broke away from the Anglican church in 1957.

⁴⁵ Ayany, *Kar Chakruok*. p35.

⁴⁶ Ogot, *An Autobiography*. p22.

⁴⁷ Partly as many Ugandans are ethnically closer to the Kenyan Luo, than their fellow Kenyans. The Padhola language of Uganda is a dialect of Kenyan *Dholuo*. (AYANY, SAMUEL, 1989, *Kar Chakruok mar Luo* Kisumu: Lake Publishers and Enterprises, p24.)

⁴⁸ Pickens, *African Christian*. p100.

⁴⁹ WIGGINS, MAXWELL 1974, A ‘Healing Revival Movement within the Anglican Church’ by the Bishop of Victoria, Nyanza 6th September 1974. Unpublished. Wiggins was Archdeacon of South Victoria Nyanza (1957–59) having been in East Africa from about 1946. (EXPATRIATES — ‘Biographies Tanzania (Tanganyika And Zanzibar, United Republic Of.)’)

<http://www.teara.govt.nz/1966/E/ExpatriatesBiographies/TanzaniatanganyikaAndZanzibarUnitedRepublic/en> (accessed 17.11.05))

⁵⁰ Welbourne and Ogot. *A Place to*. pp28-38.

Gem is in a part of Kenya renowned for its Christian independency.⁵¹ “... an already indigenised charismatic Christianity ... had begun to take root in Nyanza well before the European missionaries ever contributed a presence in the region” shares Hoehler-Fatton.⁵² Significant landmarks in independency include the birth of the Nomiya Luo church founded by John Owalo in 1907,⁵³ the *Roho* Movement in Luoland on the death of Alfayo Odongo Mango in 1934,⁵⁴ then CCA (Church of Christ in Africa) (also known as the *Johera* (people of love)) in 1957.⁵⁵ Legio Maria, also a renowned AIC in Luoland began in 1963.⁵⁶ Personal experience tells me that the splitting of churches and forming of new ones continues apace in Luoland today. Those movements reveal a great deal about the nature and development of Christianity in Luoland over the past hundred years. Much research has been done on them and much of it of great value.

Important more recent changes in the church are connected with the increasing accessibility of Luo communities to outsiders. This is as a result of widespread formal education in Luoland being in English, and the increasing ease of communication and travel particularly of Christians from Europe and the USA. The growth of Pentecostalism and charismatic movements elsewhere have had their impact in Luoland, including Gem,

⁵¹ Reasons for independency are discussed in detail by Barret (BARRET, DAVID B., 1968, *Schism and Renewal in Africa: an analysis of six thousand contemporary religious movements*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press, p98.)

⁵² HOEHLER-FATTON, CYNTHIA, 1996, *Women of Fire and Spirit: history, faith and gender in Roho religion in Western Kenya*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p206.

⁵³ OORO, Rt. Rev. HEZRON AGINA, 1994, *Kitap Lamo mar Nomiya Church*. Kisumu (unpublished) p i.

⁵⁴ OGOT, BETHWELL A., 1999, ‘Reverend Alfayo Odongo Mango 1870-1934.’ 109-131 In: Ogot, Bethwell A., 1999, *Re-introducing Man into the African World: selected essays 1961 – 1980*. Kisumu: Anyange Press Ltd.

⁵⁵ GROOT, FRANCIS, 1980, ‘Christianity in an African Lakeside Town.’ 177-190 In: *Missiology: an international review*. Vol. VIII, April 1980, p186.

resulting in the birth and then growth of many Pentecostal churches especially in urban and market centres. These churches have a characteristic orientation to ‘modernisation’.

Successful church leaders have *Wazungugi* (their white supporters – a mixture of *Dholuo* and *Kiswahili*) who provide funds for church development and projects. The frequency of visits by Christian Europeans and Americans have important ongoing influences on Gem’s churches. Some of these are positive, although church splits and corruption also all too easily arise as a result.

1.3. Short History of Yala Theological Centre

YTC (Yala Theological Centre) was founded in Yala, Gem in early 1994. In its early days it was clearly set up to benefit from white person’s ‘*juok*’.⁵⁷ That is, its initiators expected it to yield financial, material and perhaps prestige benefits. I, the white person putting himself forward as teacher,⁵⁸ clearly did not understand their issues. There was little reason for people to invest their time and energy in listening to or participating with an upstart *Mzungu* (white man) with little apparent backing who would probably not be around for long anyway. The reasons for my having ‘little apparent backing’ were two-fold. One, I was an independent missionary with limited resources, but especially two, I was determined not to put money up front, but wanted instead to share God’s word from a position of weakness and vulnerability. Not bringing in major money or ‘projects’ of

⁵⁶ OGOT, BETHWELL A., 1999, ‘A Community of Their Own: the search for a new order by the Legio Maria.’ 209-224 In: Ogot, Bethwell A., *Re-introducing Man into the African World: selected essays 1961 – 1980*. Kisumu: Anyange Press Ltd. p209.

⁵⁷ Mysterious power, often *pesa* (money – *Kiswahili*).

⁵⁸ Despite knowing that I would not be able to share relevantly I set myself up as teacher so as: 1. to learn in the process of discussion. 2. because of the desire by supporters from the West to see their missionary being active in doing something that they understood and 3. to give myself an identity and role.

course meant that I was not caught up in a lot of administration and need for accountability or management, so had more opportunity to learn language and culture.⁵⁹

Incredulity resulted in dwindling in interest in this programme almost to zero. Some serious theft cases added to its demise. Some major disappointments in our volunteer personnel began to be occluded by the growing dedication to this task by our Director Abraham Omay. My fluency in *Dholuo* and *Kiswahili* constantly growing meant that I became more and more aware of how people understood the issues that they were facing. Although still constantly discouraged by empty apparent-promises, low attendance, lack of funds etc., we began over the years to find a few people willing to share in teachings of God's word in this way.⁶⁰

1.4. A Worldview Rooted in Belief in *Juok* (Vital Force)

“It is difficult to over-emphasise its significance”⁶¹ says Ogot in reference to the impact of *jok (juok)* beliefs on the Luo worldview. He emphasises that this is “the fundamental

⁵⁹ “... the besetting sin of European missionaries is the love of administration.” (ALLEN, R., 1960 *Missionary Methods, St. Paul's or Ours?* London: World Dominion Press, p120.) Healey realised that an important part of loving people is to love their culture and traditions, (Healey, *A Fifth Gospel*. P51.) which is hard to do when tied up in administration. “Precision and rigor in keeping accounts ... is foreign, threatening, and indicates a lack of understanding of the needs of ordinary [African] people.” (Maranz, *African Friends*. p38.)

⁶⁰ See Harries (HARRIES, JIM, 2004, ‘Heart-Led Development: an East African Study.’ Submitted to Oxford Centre for Mission Studies for the IDR Workshop: The Integration of Christian Mission and Transformational Development: practical implications Monday 20th and Tuesday 21st September 2004 at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, Woodstock Road, Oxford. http://www.jim-mission.org.uk/articles/heart_led.htm (accessed 01.06.05).) for how many Western-originated projects in Africa seem to be desirable for their spin-off material / financial rewards rather than or more than what they are intended (by the Westerners) to contribute.

⁶¹ Cohen and Odhiambo, *Siaya*. p123.

concept [that] underlies practically all aspects of Nilotic life.”⁶² This thesis explores ways in which worldview presuppositions such as that of monism⁶³ not only force the English language to traverse unfamiliar territory, but also ‘attack’ and alter its very roots and foundations. Threats to language extends to such bastions of enlightenment as “*the standards of rationality*” (my emphasis).⁶⁴ I suggest that scholars are all too frequently slow to realise that “all reason functions within traditions”⁶⁵ and so a rationality can only be as universal as its worldview. Accusations of irrationality, instead of giving offence, should be accepted as indicating worldview differences. Such does not indicate absolute standards of inferiority or superiority. It follows that imparting a change in rationality, requires a parallel change in worldview. Without this, the impact of ‘rational instructions’ can be other than that which would be anticipated in their worldview of origin.

1.5. Consequences of Cross-cultural Incomprehension

It is the false assumption of the universality of one’s particular rationality, I suggest, that underlies the failure of projects devised by those operating in one worldview from being effective in another.⁶⁶ This predicament is aggravated by the internationalisation of

⁶² OGOT, BETHWELL A., 1999, ‘The Concept of Jok.’ 1-11 In: Ogot, Bethwell A., *Re-introducing Man into the African World: selected essays 1961 – 1980*. Kisumu: Anyange Press Ltd. p10.

⁶³ Ogot, ‘The Concept of Jok.’ p9. ‘Monism’ is defined by Ogot as a “one-world view, as opposed to the dualism of European and Indian philosophies.”

⁶⁴ BERNSTEIN, RICHARD J., 1983, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: science, hermeneutics and practice* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. p8.

⁶⁵ Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism*. p130.

⁶⁶ Harries, Jim, 2006, ‘Mzungu alisema, Mwafrika alisema: sera za lugha zinazotakikana kanisani kwa Bara ya Afrika.’ (The White Man said, the African said: language policies that are advisable in the church on the African continent.) Maarifa Lecture presented at Kima International School of Theology on 15th March 2006. I have used this paper (written in *Kiswahili*) to explain how from the African perspective the Western perception of the universality of their own rationality despite its being grounded in foundation-less objectivity is as if ‘objectivity’ on which rationality is based is a foreign god, whose identity is being kept secret by Western nations.

English, the language in which formal discourse about projects is often held. Many of Gem's residents have acquired familiarity with English while remaining unfamiliar with all its cultural logic. Many Westerners do not have the time needed to sufficiently perceive the incoherence between English-language-usage and what is happening on the ground. Hence Luo people are often more in tune to funding that comes with projects, than the projects' supposed long term aims in terms of sustainability.⁶⁷ The following example, which occurred in Gem, illustrates this. (Names have been changed.)

Local people were quick to affirm to Stanley the probability of success in his project. So he set-to building a workshop intended to house at least two large furnaces so as to be able to teach a number of young men the blacksmith's art. Unfortunately Stanley's view of 'simple technology' was extremely foreign to the Setini village context – where blacksmiths were known to operate with portable home-made equipment under a tree. The initial apparent enthusiasm by locals for the project, interpreted by Stanley as meaning that volunteers would be available in setting it up, turned out to be oriented more to wanting to make money from him. At the same time, no one was ready to tell Stanley that his project wouldn't work. Words having power and the fact that the landowner of the site of the project would not be happy to have people discourage his wealthy visitor, meant that no one would tell Stanley the truth. Having a white man set-up shop was clearly a success for Setini villagers. This could lead to any number of further links to the West, and associated funding and development being brought to the village. To advise Stanley to select a different location (perhaps in town) for his project was not an option for Setini villagers because of the loss of finance and prestige thus implied. Villagers saw 'success' as depending on Stanley and his foreign funding base and not on them. Rates of pay being

⁶⁷ Maranz, *African Friends*. pp150-151.

about £1.00 sterling per day meant that Stanley's British level budget could go a long way in employing locals, but Stanley ended up employing no-one, because having paid employees was not setting the foundation that he wanted for the spirit of his project.

Stanley was oblivious to the kind of restrictive taboos that Setini villagers were operating under. Such taboos (*kweche*) are extremely numerous, and very effective especially on ancestral land, such as the site of the workshop.⁶⁸ Breaking taboos would be inviting the wrath of ancestors, while non family members investing in (by volunteering or making contributions to) this project would be giving allegiance to the wrong set of ancestors. The detail of applicable taboos is tied in with the intricacies of relationships, inter-marriage and extra-marital sexual activities, offences committed of various kinds and so on, going back as many generations as living memory. The danger of haunting and subsequent death and disablement that could result from angering the sensitive-departed was sufficient in itself for some villagers to be wary of close involvement in Stanley's project. (This project continued for about 6 months at a low level, then was abandoned, and the building has remained unused ever since.)

⁶⁸ While the workshop was built on the church compound, the land concerned belonged to a certain family, and in fact even legally had not yet been designated to the church.

1.6. Theological Education, Pragmatics and Theology

Running through this thesis, especially in Chapters 4-6, is a study of ‘bad’ (*rach*) as understood by the Kenya Luo. This study demonstrates how what on one level can appear familiar, is at a deeper level vastly foreign to Western ways of thinking. Another thread running through this thesis is the consideration of what theological education is appropriate for leaders of Christian churches in Gem. In short – given the Luo people’s worldview and especially foundational belief in *juok*, and the ways in which such has come to affect their understanding of what is bad, it asks how the people understand God’s word and how they can best be led to develop this understanding in orthodox Christian ways?⁶⁹ ‘Normal’ Christian teaching from the West is assumed to be, and indeed found to be, sometimes unhelpful.⁷⁰ In simple terms this is because Christian teaching from the West is a ‘correction’ to or a building onto a cultural context very different from that found in Gem in Kenya today. Hence “one can [legitimately] demand or even require a vernacular direction for the faith in the interests of orthodoxy.”⁷¹

The necessary contribution of considerations of pragmatics to missiology and anthropology is an important contribution of this work. Western people’s assumptions as to the existence of objectivity, and insistence that life be oriented to it, makes it hard for them to comprehend the Luo who use language to create livability especially in relation to and in the context of their dead predecessors. An awareness of issues of pragmatics in language

⁶⁹ Teaching what is ‘orthodox’ cross-culturally may require an ‘unorthodox’ approach. See Section 8.2.

⁷⁰ For Western mission as “catastrophic departure from the Bible” see Sanneh. (SANNEH, LAMIN, 1989, *Translating the Message: the missionary impact on culture*. New York: Orbis Books, p163.)

⁷¹ Sanneh *Translating*. p174.

may prove to be the missing link that has to date frustrated numerous scholars in their research into non-Western Christianity and worldviews.⁷²

1.7. Target Readership

Unless otherwise indicated or clearly an African-interpretation, the reader should assume that the intended impact of a word is a British-English one.⁷³ The context and use of English in Kenya is so vastly different from that in Britain that I cannot claim accuracy of this thesis for Kenyan English speakers.⁷⁴ In taking this position, I may be flying in the face of authors like Smith who say that: “no statement about a religion is valid unless it can be acknowledged by that religion’s believers.”⁷⁵ To keep to that dictum we could never write in a language other than that of the practitioners of the religion, which taking

⁷² This has certainly been this author’s experience. The same has been suggested by others, such as Masolo (MASOLO, D.A., 1995, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, p193.): “perhaps what we need ... is situational analysis of how people *use* different aspects of everyday discourse.” (my emphasis.) “... the impact of pragmatics has been colossal and multifaceted” says Liu. (LIU, SHAOZHONG, nd, ‘What is Pragmatics?’ <http://www.gxnu.edu.cn/Personal/szliu/definition.html> nd. (accessed 12.04.05).) Smalley, writing in 1995, concedes in terms of Bible translation that “Research into this growing area of theory, often called discourse analysis, is not yet as fully developed as some of the others.” (SMALLEY, WILLIAM A., 1995, ‘Language and Culture in the Development of Bible Society Translation Theory and Practice.’ 61-72 In: Anderson, Gerald H., (ed.) *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. 19:2, April 1995. (electronic edition))

⁷³ So the reasoning that is foundational to this thesis is British and rooted in British context, horizon and traditions because “Reason is not a faculty or capacity that can free itself from its historical context and horizons ... reason ... gains its its distinctine power always within a living tradition.” (Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism*. p37.)

⁷⁴ I realised this when Kitamura, from Japan, said that the Turkana (of Kenya) were “totally absorbed in their emotion” (KITAMURA, KOJI, 1990, ‘Deep Involvement in Social Interactions Among the Turkana’, *African Study Monographs*. Supplement 12:51-58, March 1990, p51.) and then: “Although they do not mind telling a lie, they attempt to make their utterance truthful.” (p54.) “Deep involvement” in Japan, we are told, is only tolerated in certain sports. (p58.) If Japanese English is so hard for me to understand, then how does British English come across to Kenyans? Jenkins tells of an encyclical issued by the Vatican that incensed the West, because it was aimed at the non-West: “North Americans did not realise ... that the Vatican was just not speaking to them” he shares. (JENKINS, PHILIP, 2002, *The Next Christendom: the coming of global Christianity*. Oxford.New York: Oxford University Press, p197.) What should the Vatican do, when what is appropriate in one context, is not in another?

'language' as explained in this thesis is a sheer impossibility.⁷⁶ The attempts of recent scholarship at political correctness⁷⁷ have smoothed over worldview differences. If indeed ethnocentrism is the "tendency to judge or interpret other cultures according to the criteria of ones own"⁷⁸ then I suggest that it is best to concede to being ethnocentric, which people are by nature, rather than vainly deceive ourselves to the contrary.⁷⁹

While aimed particularly at the mission community, I consider this thesis as relevant to others concerned with life in Gem, and rural Africa, in areas such as health, education, agriculture, child care etc. Demonstration of the vital importance of careful and vulnerable approaches to a community is one of the practical purposes of this research. New initiatives in Gem and other rural African communities need to be considered in relation to life's full context and become a part of the people's core values in order to be esteemed and sustained. This is difficult to assure if these initiatives have attached budgets, as donor money itself easily results in acceptance of ventures that are otherwise outside of people's

⁷⁵ SMITH, WILFRED CANTWELL, 1959, 'Comparative Religion: whither and why?' 31-58 In: Eliade, Mircea, and Kitagawa, Joseph, (eds.) *The History of Religions: essays on methodology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p42.

⁷⁶ As every subgroup make use of language in a unique way and when considering pragmatic linguistics we find that such *use* of language is an essential part of the language.

⁷⁷ For example the use of supposedly British English to coincide with Kenyan English. Ogot refers to the tendency of scholars since the colonial era of emphasising that African people are *not* different from Western people. (OGOT, BETHWELL A., 1999, 'Racial Consciousness among Africans.' 79-88 In: Ogot, Bethwell A., *Reintroducing Man into the African World: selected essays, 1976 – 1980*. Kisumu: Anyange Press Ltd.) Nandi tells us that the "central message of the DYM [Dini ya Musambwa] concerns the love of God ...", writing in English, as if members of DYM could comprehend the implicatures of English words like 'love' or 'God'. (NANDI, JACOB OGODO MANYASA, 2001, 'A Historical and Theological Analysis of the Dini ya Musambwa in Kenya with Special Reference to Bungoma District.' PhD thesis, Maseno University, 2001. p252.) Pickens uses an English translation of Ajuoga's words to produce his thesis. (Pickens. *African Christian*.) James writes about Christianity is as if it is the 'religion of a people', and not God speaking to people, illustrated by her comment that the "periphery appropriated Christianity to itself" (JAMES, WENDY, 1999, (1988) *The Listening Ebony: moral knowledge, religion and power among the Uduk of Sudan*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p15.) rather than 'God spoke to people on the periphery ...'.

⁷⁸ SEYMOUR-SMITH, CHARLOTTE, 1986, *Palgrave Dictionary of Anthropology*. London: Macmillan, p97.

⁷⁹ Because anthropological monographs tell us more about the anthropologist than the people being investigated (Bennet, *In Search of the Sacred*. p170.) it is vain for a person from culture X to claim to understand culture Y by what is said or written by someone of other than culture X.

understanding and heart-felt interest. Differences between Western and Luo values and life orientation are in this thesis stressed to compensate for the effect of many outside initiatives into Gem being heavily subsidised by outside funds and thus accepted and (apparently) valued, in the interests of those funds. The concealing of deep disquiet by Gem's residents in seeking to maintain such flows of income has had the effect of obscuring important cultural considerations from outside view. Such behaviour of foreigners can be compared to that of a grazing animal used to a grassy field which is moved to a bush area with infrequent tufts of grass. In making the tufts of grass central to all its discussions on reporting back to its colleagues this animal could easily have them thinking that the acres of bushes and scrub between the tufts are inconsequential, or even absent. The animals minds are only in tune with the familiar (grass)! I am in this thesis attempting to compensate for such widespread and misleading predispositions.⁸⁰

My heavy reliance on little-known research methodology (see Chapter 2) means that the observations made in this thesis arise out of the peculiarity of the methodology employed as well as any idiosyncrasies of the people of Gem and their ways of life. To confine the breadth of my conclusions only to Gem could misleadingly imply that they are a strange and singular people! That would neither be correct nor just. Hence I am careful to indicate periodically when, in my view, a lot of my findings are more widely applicable to neighbouring regions, all of Africa, and even beyond. It would be unjust to report that novel research techniques have resulted in the discovery of a unique community, when they have actually only revealed what has been widespread but hidden. Note that: "in

⁸⁰ This attempt is subjective but arising from long exposure to the Gem community.

recent times, most African scholars ... now see African religion [for which read African life] as one in its essence.”⁸¹

1.8. Summary of Contents of Subsequent Chapters

This introductory chapter includes a brief history of Gem, especially of the church in Gem and of Yala Theological Centre, followed by an outline background to Gem’s culture and its interaction with the West.

Chapter 2 provides us with an exposition on live pragmatic issues amongst the Luo people of Gem, that are also more widely applicable to SSA (Sub-Saharan Africa). Practical issues pertaining to translation between African and Western languages and cultures considered with pragmatics in mind reveal major weaknesses and flaws in how this critical communication process often occurs. Listening to language without participating in the associated culture is shown to be to misunderstand. The research methodology presented has been developed through a combination of practical experience and wide reading. A combination of current trends in favour of qualitative methodologies and knowledge of pragmatics results in the advocating of long term learning through participatory exposure to a community from a position of vulnerability.

Chapter 3 supplements the outline information given on Gem in the Introduction (Chapter 1) in presenting physical and social statistics, an impression of the Luo people’s customs

⁸¹ Magesa, *African Religion*. p26.

and traditions, and an outline of 'real life' in Gem. Detailed contexts for some of the language uses analysed in Chapters 4 to 6 are then given.

Chapter 4 divides that which the Luo of Gem consider as 'bad' into categories, that are then discussed in detail. Things most frequently considered to be 'bad' include the way someone relates to *Nyasaye* (God), 'modern things' and poor inter-personal relationships. As also in Chapters 5 and 6, instances for discussion are selected *at random* so as to illustrate the points made with regular and not 'ideal' situations. The identification of bad features of life is invariably tied in with particular Luo spirituality.

Implicit beliefs on the origin of bad for the Luo of Gem are in Chapter 5 shown as being vastly different from those of Westerners. Ghosts residing in people's hearts are responsible for all bad in the Luo worldview.

The source and nature of bad being spiritual, it should not surprise us that in Chapter 6 the means found being used to get rid of it are of the same order. Words and rituals variously associated with Luo customary practices are the primary means used to do away with 'bad'.

Chapter 7 seeks to apply the discoveries of prior chapters to the discipline of Biblical Hermeneutics. Descriptions of African religion as rooted in belief in 'vital force' are supported. In other words, widely accepted development-oriented views on Africa that is at

odds with authors such as Tempels⁸² are found to be on spurious foundations when the impact of witchcraft beliefs and ancestors is included in the contextual equation of understanding. The central belief of Luo (African) people in vital force, a logical corollary to the discoveries on ‘bad’ made in Chapters 4-6, is a necessary starting supposition in the exploring of Biblical Hermeneutics for it to be helpful in the African context.

Chapter 8 utilises insights arising from pragmatics to uncover unhelpful conceptions that have been guiding theological education programmes in Africa. Progress in educational initiatives is depicted as facing opposition from the dominance of Western educational models, whereas the real opponents are the dead. An appeal is made for theological (and other) education to address local concerns using local languages.

The concluding Chapter 9 considers wider implications and ramifications arising from the consideration of pragmatics in Luoland in previous chapters. Foundational assumptions as to the universality of objectivity that theoretically underlie much of the West’s intervention in Africa having been undermined in this thesis, there is a need for a new grounding for international relations. The foundation here advocated is theology – seeking God for arbitration between the diverse cultures of the world.

⁸² TEMPELS, PLACIDE, 1959, *Bantu Philosophy*. Paris: Presence Africaine. (Scholarship underlying the Millennium Development project certainly seems to ignore Tempels’ discoveries about African ways of understanding. Sachs tells us that “the barriers to development in Africa are not in the mind, but in the soils, the mosquitos, the vast distances over difficult terrain, the unsteady rainfall, ...” (SACHS, JEFFREY, 2005, ‘The End of the World As We Know It: the fight against extreme poverty can be won, but only if Bush recognizes that military might alone won’t secure the world.’ *Guardian*. Tuesday April 5th 2005, <http://WWW.commondreams.org/views05/0405-26.htm> (accessed 16.05.05).) Sach’s implicit denial that African people’s belief in ‘forces’ can have anything to do with their state of ‘poverty’ has achieved sufficient acclaim for extremely widespread scholarship, publicity and lucrative funding to be oriented towards means of achieving the millennium goals that ignore particular African beliefs and philosophies. Another scholar, Punt, does not appear to realise that belief in vital forces is at the root of *ubuntu* (see section 7.1).)

CHAPTER 2. LANGUAGE THEORY AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

“... ujumbe unapowakilishwa kwa lugha isiyo ya utamaduni unaorejelewa matatizo ya utafsiri huanza” (“once a message is presented in a language that is of a different culture to that of the target language, the problems of translation begin” – *Kiswahili*).¹

2.1. Introduction

Recent advances in linguistics and the study of translation have much to offer in aiding our understanding of different peoples of the world. In this chapter I attempt to outline those areas of research that are pertinent to the gaining of an understanding of the Luo people in Kenya with whom I have lived since 1993. I draw particularly heavily on the field of linguistics known as pragmatics, that could be defined as the “study of the relations between language and context that are basic to an account of language understanding” or “the study of deixis (at least in part), implicature, presuppositions, speech acts, and aspects of discourse structure.”² I then go on to consider vulnerability to a people as a prerequisite for accurate social research, and how such vulnerability has been achieved in this case.

¹ MATUNDURA, BITUGI, 2004, ‘Matatizo Apatayo Mtafsiri.’ 9 In: *Taifa Leo*. March 29th 2004, p9.

² From LEVINSON, STEPHEN C., 1983, *Pragmatics: Cambridge text books in linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press pp21 & 27. I acknowledge, with Levinson (p32), the limitations of definitions:

Grice's investigations into pragmatics³ have stirred up great interest. Sperber and Wilson have proposed 'Relevance Theory' to stand in opposition to some of his postulations on the implications of language use on meaning⁴ while drawing on his basic discoveries. Others have followed him to various degrees. Perhaps few have been as ardent in their following of Grice's principles as has Leech.⁵ Leech has built on Grice by adding numerous additional principles, maxims, sub-maxims and scales to Grice's CP (Cooperative Principle). Despite the critiques launched against Leech's understanding,⁶ his writing has particular value in exposing pragmatic principles in clearly analysable and falsifiable ways. I want to take advantage of this latter quality of Leech's writing. Linguists these days accept that the meaning of texts can rarely be ascertained without consideration of extra-linguistic factors. In simple terms I found that language consists of the following:

Figure 2.1. The four components in language from which meaning is derived⁷

phonetics → syntax → semantics → pragmatics.

"if one really wants to know what a particular field is concerned with at any particular time, one must simply observe what practitioners do."

³ e.g. GRICE, H.P., 1971, 'Utterer's Meaning, Sentence Meaning and Word Meaning.' 54-70 In: Searle, J.R., (ed.) 1971, *The Philosophy of Language: Oxford readings in philosophy*. London: Oxford University Press

⁴ SPERBER, DAN and WILSON, DEIRDRE, nd. 'Relevance Theory.' http://www.dan-sperber.com/relevance_theory.htm (accessed 21-01-03)

⁵ LEECH, GEOFFREY H., 1983, *Principles of Pragmatics*. London and New York: Longman.

⁶ For example see Brown and Levinson (BROWN, PENELOPE and LEVINSON, STEPHEN C., 1987, (1978) *Politeness: some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p2.) and Spencer-Oatey and Jiang (SPENCER-OATEY, HELEN and JIANG, WENYING, 2003, 'Explaining Cross-cultural Pragmatic Findings: moving from politeness maxims to socio-pragmatic interaction principles.' 1633-1650 In: *Journal of Pragmatics*. 35 (2003) PDF WWW.elsevier.com/locate/pragma (accessed 03.12.03.))

As syntax is derived from phonetics, so semantics draws on both in an attempt to derive meaning. Circumstances in which semantics alone fails to discern meaning without the consideration of environment or external factors of language use,⁸ are considered under pragmatics.⁹ A consideration of pragmatics becomes more and more important as the cultural gap between speaker and listener widens, because innate assumptions of contextual factors vital for correct understanding become more distant. In considering pragmatics this thesis challenges the view that one can through the use of a foreign language alone penetrate deeply into a culture.¹⁰

My use of pragmatics in this thesis is not an arbitrary selection from a choice of options amongst methodologies sitting on a shelf. It has been the only alternative that has made sense of my observations and data. It is only my personal realisation of the pragmatic nature of language that enabled me to respect both ‘Luo wisdom’ and ‘Western

⁷ Adapted from Leech, *Principles of Pragmatics*. p12.

⁸ Which is really *all* circumstances.

⁹ “The meaning of a word is its use in the language.” (Wittgenstein, cited in HANFLING, OSWALD, 1989, *Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, p42.) “The priority of knowledge over action was turned on its head by Wittgenstein” says Hanfling. (Hanfling, *Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy*. p164.) That is, prior philosophers had assumed that action was taken as a result of knowledge, whereas to Wittgenstein “We know because we act, rather than the other way around...”. (Hanfling, *Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy*. p164.)

¹⁰ The view that the use of Western languages alone enables a profound understanding of African people’s cultures is implicitly extremely widespread. It is reflected in the practice by anthropologists of visiting their target populations for periods of only one to two years, or less. Also in the debates engaged in setting up millennium development goals that occur in Columbia university in New York predominantly in English – for example see Sachs volumous writings. (SACHS, JEFFREY D. nd. ‘List of Publications.’ www.earthinstitute.columbia.edu/about/director/publicat.html (accessed 21st April 2007).) Theologians and missionaries who write for and teach African people in English without detailed studies of African languages make the same assumption – for example see Scott, (MOREAU, SCOTT, 1990, *The World of the Spirits: a Biblical study in the African Context*. Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House.) and O’Donovan’s writings (O’DONOVAN, WILBUR Jr., 1995, *Biblical Christianity in African Perspective*. (2nd edition) Exeter: Paternoster Press.) that claim to unpack deep aspects of African Christianity for African people using English. (I here assume language and culture to be inseparable.)

wisdom' as both being correct, although apparently contradictory. That is, each makes sense in its context. It follows that neither fits in the context of the other.

Long and hard debates on research methodology in the social sciences result in a swinging from paradigm to paradigm. The time in which a researcher could assume to be an invisible and impartial observer is now long gone, yet recognising him as a part of the action brings numerous issues in its wake. In acknowledging the key role of pragmatics in the formation of meaning I have taken a broad approach to research methodology, especially consideration of research-context. My approach to the Luo (and other African) people is part of the context to be borne in mind when considering results. Hence no survey or questionnaire data has been sought for in this research. I have not set out to generate data for analysis in a Western academic environment. Data that follows is integrally linked to the context from which it has arisen. I do not claim to have drawn up tables of results on the basis of scientific method. I suggest rather that claims to 'objectivity' in social science research are a problem that this thesis seeks to unveil and overcome. This thesis seeks to show how I can say 'look at this photograph' and not 'please re-analyse these results.'

The methodology utilised in this research arises from the intent to communicate the Gospel of Christ to the Luo people in Kenya in a way that is meaningful, relevant and penetrating. This requires a close knowledge of the people's way of life and worldview, achieved by sharing in Luo life as a member of their community. Avoiding powerful positions helps to gain acceptance. The door that is thus open to learning as the people learn, and understanding as the people understand is utilised in sharing the insights that

make up this thesis. As the mission work that I engage in, so also the outcome of this research could, I believe, only be repeated if someone takes the same or a similar approach to a people as here outlined.

2.2. Pragmatics – the role of context in understanding

Pragmatics is in this thesis used as a research tool to penetrate through prior misconceptions to the heart of the Luo people's way of life. Pragmatics considers the part of the derivation of meaning of language that arises from the context of its use. The discipline of pragmatics has arisen from the realisation that semantics alone is insufficient to discover the meaning of language. Language does not consist of encoded thoughts, but observable stimuli.¹¹ It is used to have an impact. That impact being aimed at a context, means that language must always be understood in the light of a context. The fact that the impact and meaning of language changes as the context changes means that even the same language (for example English) used in a context unfamiliar to British speakers of English (such as in Gem) needs translation for the British to correctly understand it.¹²

My investigations into pragmatics have helped me to understand why people in a foreign (to me) culture can appear to be saying one thing, while intending another. A knowledge of

¹¹ GUTT, ERNST-AUGUST, 2006, Time spent in discussion with Ernst-August Gutt at the Bible Translation and Literacy Conference Centre, Ruiru, Nairobi on 31st August 2006 from 10.00am to 12.30am.

¹² This is contrary to the "conduit metaphor" way of understanding language all too often falsely assumed in the West, described by Mojola as: "1. Ideas or thoughts are objects. 2. Words and sentences are containers for those objects. 3. Communication consists in finding the right word container for your idea-object...". (MOJOLA, ALOO OSOTSI and WENDLAND, ERNST, 2003, 'Scripture Translation in the Era of Translation Studies.' 1-25 In: Wilt, Timothy (ed.) *Bible Translation Frames of Reference*. Manchester: St Jerome Publications, p7.))

the context that they are assuming for themselves, and/or for their reader or listener is a prerequisite for understanding what someone intends by their speaking or writing. This means that I can only be enabled to clearly comprehend the discourse going on in Gem in Kenya in so far as I have been able to share in the contextual presuppositions (in their minds and in their environment) of the *Dholuo* speakers of Gem. For me to get some way towards this has taken many years of vulnerable exposure to the Luo people and their ways of life. Learning of the Luo language has given me insights into the kinds of implicit translations that Luo people make into English. This has enabled me to translate between the cultures of the Luo and those familiar to me from my childhood in the UK. This translation-ability is profoundly subjective and even subconscious.¹³

My understanding of language, including language learning, is that it is a two-level process. On the one level is competence in phonetics, syntax and to some extent semantics. At the second level is a comprehension of the context (within which I include the whole of a person's life and worldview) as the backdrop to the use of the language. The latter is difficult to acquire in a language school. It is often lacking in the understanding by Westerners of African uses of language because the vast cultural gap between Westerner and African makes it difficult especially for the former to share closely in the life of the latter – something that I have personally tried very hard to do over a long period (from 1988 to date).

I presuppose fundamental difficulties in translatability in this thesis. This is not to say that comparison and communication between languages and cultures is impossible. Clearly it is

¹³ Gutt uses the term 'cognitive'. (Gutt, 'Time Spent.')

possible, people are constantly engaging in it and it in some respects is helpful.¹⁴ But the inevitable partiality of translation can have serious consequences. These can be demonstrated by taking different sports as illustrations of human cultures. Imagine two peoples with two languages, one of football and one of cricket. Now explain to a footballer how to make a fast bowl or how to hit the ball for six using only the language of football. Or explain to the cricketer using the language of cricket that a corner is awarded after the ball has crossed the end-line, or that a kick at goal that hits the post is considered a failure. Surely the cricketer and the footballer can talk, communicate and compare, but surely also the impressions that they will be given of each other's sports will be seriously distorted. Such distortion is likely to render much of the advice given by a cricketer to a footballer ('hold the bat with both hands') or the other way around ('never be offside') unhelpful. The way to rectify this situation is to *observe* and (even better) *participate* in the game played by the other and thus learn the language of that game; as it is used.

Ignorance of certain obscure contextual factors can result in serious misconstrual of language communication. You will cease to appreciate the compliments paid to you by what you had assumed was a paint salesman as you showed him around your house, if you subsequently discover that he is a thief plotting to burgle you. Were you ever right to have thanked him for his kind words? An office worker who assumed for a whole year that one of the company secretaries was simply friendly and helpful would be considered not to have understood her if he did not realise that she was trying to seduce him. A farmer may be overjoyed at being given access to a field of lush grass, until he discovers a few months later that the damp conditions in this field cause all his cattle to contract the debilitating liver-fluke disease. Metaphysics is especially significant in this area. For example:

¹⁴ Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism*. p167 in reference to Gadamer.

people's embracing of secularism as an alternative to Christianity would be revealed as folly should it be discovered that secularists spend eternity in hell.

The above can easily be applied to situations of foreign intervention in Gem. The objectives of Millennium workers¹⁵ are clearly hindered if, unbeknown to them, they are understood as trying to turn African people into the white man's slaves.¹⁶ It often takes time for foreign visitors to Gem to realise that people's interest in and praise of them is motivated by the hope for financial gain, and ceases if such does not transpire.¹⁷ What may appear to be very sensible advice to a church may not be accepted by Gem's residents should it interfere with their particular funeral practices and thus make them vulnerable to haunting and ghosts.

In line with Sperber and Wilson¹⁸ and in recognition of the fact that 'meanings' are not carried by words distinctly from the context of their use¹⁹ instead of referring to 'meanings' of words, sentences etc. I will in this thesis refer to 'contextual effects'. I accept that because understanding is achieved through the interpretation of stimuli it results

¹⁵ Who are seeking to help residents of Gem to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goal of reducing poverty, as from 2005. (NATION CORRESPONDENT, 2006, 'Kenyan Village to Gain from UN anti-poverty Plan' 22 In: *Daily Nation*, Friday, January 13th 2006.)

¹⁶ As suggested to me on a number of occasions.

¹⁷ Maranz, *African Friends*. pp63-94. It usually does transpire, as Western projects in Africa almost invariably include financial contributions.

¹⁸ SPERBER, DAN and WILSON, DEIRDRE, 1995, *Relevance: communication and cognition*. (second edition). Oxford: Blackwell, p109.

¹⁹ Attempts at "working out ... a theory of what words mean – independent of any particular context", (such as that by Berg (BERG, JONATHAN, 2002, 'Is semantics still possible?' 349-359 In: *Journal of Pragmatics*. 34 (2002) (PDF) (accessed 20.06.03) www.elsevier.com/locate/pragma p358.) are in my view asking for the impossible. Ariel explains that Berg is the only author trying to maintain such a position. (ARIEL, M., 2002, 'Introduction.' 345-348 In: *Journal of Pragmatics*. 34 (2002) (PDF) (accessed 20.06.03). www.elsevier.com/locate/pragma p347.) Gibbs tells us that: "pragmatic information pervades all aspects of utterance interpretation." (GIBBS, RAYMOND W., 2002, 'A New Look at Literal Meaning in Understanding what is Said and Implicated.' 457-486 In: *Journal of Pragmatics*. 34 (2002) (PDF) www.elsevier.com/locate/pragma (accessed 20.06.03) p482.)

in only a “resemblance relationship” between the thoughts of one producing an utterance and those of the listener, although the degree of resemblance achieved may be perfectly adequate and certainly this is a very normal part of communication.²⁰

2.3. The Cooperative Principle

Grice proposed that part of the pragmatic component of language is CP (the Cooperative Principle). This claims that a speaker will express himself in such a way as to be maximally cooperative. I am accepting the general validity of this principle, in application to Western nations and from within a materialist worldview. The CP is divided into four subcategories being :

Figure 2.2. The constitutive maxims of the Cooperative Principle²¹

1. Quantity: Give the right amount of information
2. Quality: Make your contribution true
3. Relation: Be relevant
4. Manner: Be perspicuous

²⁰ GUTT. ‘Time spent’

²¹ Leech, *Principles*. p8, adapted from Grice.

Levinson²² explains that these principles are “applicable to all kinds of cooperative exchanges” although sometimes the cooperativeness is not found at the surface but at a deeper level. Leech shows us how the CP is compromised by competing principles, particularly PP (the politeness principle). According to Leech there are clearly times when someone will be less than totally ‘cooperative’ so as to be polite. Metalinguistics, irony, hyperbole, tact and other maxims all compromise the CP.²³ For the purposes of this study of language use in Africa I also want to consider another factor that can result in less than fully cooperative use of language.

Allan²⁴ talks of the presence of over-hearers, who while not being addressed in a conversation, are known to be within earshot. The knowledge of an over-hearer’s presence affects what, how and why something is said. We speak differently to someone if we are alone with them than when in company. This is particularly likely if over-hearers are of ill-intent and liable to use knowledge acquired to harm the speaker. That situation is chronically the case in much of SSA, including Gem in Kenya. The hold of witchcraft and ancestral spirits on African people is widely acknowledged.²⁵ Ancestral spirits may at any time be eavesdropping on conversations. A listener could be a witch, or otherwise liable to jealousy and abuse of privileged knowledge through manipulation of cosmological spiritual forces. Yet the profound impact that these beliefs have on language use and meaning is often not realised.²⁶

²² Levinson, *Pragmatics*. p103.

²³ Leech, *Principles*. Chapters 4-6.

²⁴ ALLAN, KEITH, (nd.) ‘Meaning and Speech Acts.’ Monash University http://www.orts.monash.edu.au/ling/speech_acts_allan_html (accessed 10.01.03) .

²⁵ For examples see Mbiti (MBITI, JOHN S., 1975, *Introduction to African Religion*. London / Nairobi: Heinemann) and Evans-Pritchard (EVANS-PRITCHARD, E.E., 1976, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*. (abridged.) Oxford: Clarendon Press, p1.)

²⁶ “... witchcraft beliefs are present all the time, but remain as it were latent during periods of minimal social tension.” (Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles*. 1976, p xxiv.)

Consideration of the presence of ancestral spirits and of assumed evil intent on the part of hearers effected through witchcraft, takes us into the realm of linguistic presuppositions. Levinson in Chapter 4 argues convincingly that contrary to earlier theories, presuppositions belong at least in part to pragmatics and not to semantics alone.²⁷ That is, presuppositions are not contained within a text, but rather “sensitivity to background assumptions about the world seems to be something quite general about presuppositions.”²⁸ Levinson goes on to say that “if a sentence is about t, then the existence or actuality of t can be assumed to be non-controversial or given, unless there are specific indications or assumptions to the contrary.”²⁹ This seems clearly to apply to the pre-supposed presence of spirits and witchcraft powers.

Users of English like to ask whether something is ‘real’ or not. They assume a duality of categories – the ‘real’ and the ‘unreal’. Evil spirits are often considered to fall into the latter category. While such a discussion may be meaningful in an environment of post-enlightenment dualism, it makes little sense in the African context.³⁰ In a holistic society, in which subjective and objective are not distinct categories, what is subjective or spiritual (such as evil spirits) are just as ‘real’ as houses, chickens and firewood.³¹

²⁷ Levinson, *Pragmatics*. See especially p225. Hence Bach tells us that “presupposition is a pragmatic phenomenon.” (BACH, KENT, nd, ‘The Semantics-Pragmatics Distinction: what it is and why it matters.’ <http://online.sfsu.edu/~kbach/semprag.html> (accessed 22.01.03))

²⁸ Levinson, *Pragmatics*. p187.

²⁹ Levinson, *Pragmatics*. p221.

³⁰ “their ideas of reality, and their reality itself, are different from ours” shared Blixen of the Kikuyu people of Kenya. (BLIXEN, KAREN, (Dinesen, Isak,) 1937, *Out of Africa and Shadows on the Grass*. Middlesex: Penguin Books. p246.)

³¹ Those who advocate holistic mission that includes “economic development, health or education” (such as ARMET, STEPHEN, 2002, ‘Holism and Popular Grassroots Movements.’ 370-381 In: *International Review of Mission*. Vol. XCI, No. 362, July 2002, p370.) are unfortunately misguided because the latter, as understood in the West, are products of dualism and not holism. Assuming a ‘holistic Gospel’ can be an excuse to use of a lot of finance and Western technology in mission with minimal thought as to its impact.

Little time has been taken to investigate the underlying causes of differences in the pragmatics of African and European languages. Egner puzzled for many years over why Ivorian friends made promises that, not only did they not subsequently fulfill, but even that they knew at the time of speaking that they could not fulfill.³² Hence a friend who worked for the government promised to attend a certain function, even though he knew that he would be in a distant town at the time of the function. Egner concluded that promises in Ivory Coast are not made simply by stating that ‘I will do X’, but by then repeating one’s commitment in a certain way. This conclusion is in Egner’s view supported by a novel by Ngugi.³³ Rather than suggesting that Ivorians are going contrary to the CP in their use of language, Egner suggests that she was facing a semantic problem in which ‘I promise’ in conventional English must be translated as ‘I promise ... (and again) I promise’ in the Ivory Coast.

This tendency of linguists to monopolise the understanding of meaning and especially translation within semantics has been recognised. Venuti shows us how confining the understanding of translation to linguistic considerations results in the ignoring of many very consequential power related issues.³⁴ I suggest that Egner has fallen into such a trap.³⁵ My time in East Africa informs me that repetition of a promise is not what makes it effective. There is something extra-lingual going on. I consider Mugambi’s

³² EGNER, INGE, 2002, ‘The Speech Act of Promising in an Intercultural Perspective.’ SIL International http://www.sil.org/silewp/2002/001/silew_P2002-001.pd+ 2002 (accessed 8-01-03)

³³ NGUGI, WA THIONGO, 1969, *Weep Not, Child*. London: Penguin, p96.

³⁴ VENUTI, LAWRENCE, 1998, *The Scandals of Translation: towards an ethics of difference*. London: Routledge

³⁵ “The examination of lexical expressions from some languages has shown that the type of promise by which the speaker puts himself under an obligation exists in all of them.” (Egner, ‘The Speech Act.’ WWW.)

suggestion that there are three ‘modes’ of discourse³⁶ as an inadequate explanation of such misunderstanding, unless it implies that African people are always in the assertive (religious) mode, which I do not understand as being his point.³⁷

Mhogolo tells us that “an African person is free to tell an outsider something that is not true, that is, lies.”³⁸ I have observed that *wageni* (‘visitors’ or ‘strangers’ – *Kiswahili*) to this part of the world, particularly from distant Western countries, do not need to be told only the truth.³⁹ I suspect that people easily feel justified in being conservative with the truth in interacting with Westerners, in part because they find that they do the same to them. There need be no intentional deceptiveness on the part of Westerners, for translation and different conventions in language use render straightforward communication impossible. This might not matter very much if stakes were low, but often does matter because large amounts of money are involved in many communications with the West.⁴⁰

³⁶ MUGAMBI, JESSE NDWIGA KANYWA, 1983, ‘Problems of Meaning in Discourse with Reference to Religion.’ PhD thesis, University of Nairobi, 1983.

³⁷ Mugambe suggests that communication failures occur through people not being clear whether they are speaking scientifically, religiously or philosophically.

³⁸ MHOGOLO, GODFREY M., 1985, *Endelea Kukua Muadili ya Kristo*. Dodoma: Central Tanganyika Press, p64. (My translation.)

³⁹ In the First Century Mediterranean world even men of the same town related with “an implied deep distrust which in practice prevents any effective form of cooperation ... strangers are looked upon as potential enemies, while foreigners ... are considered certain enemies.” (MALINA, B.J., 1981, *The New Testament World: insights from cultural anthropology*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, p33.)

⁴⁰ Communication failure between Western and African people would be less important if Westerners did not so often build great projects on what are in effect misunderstandings. In other words, it does not matter much whether or not I understand how you relate to your wife / husband, unless I appoint myself as your marriage counsellor.

Southall finds a routine ‘deceptiveness’ practiced by the Alur (a Luo group living in Uganda).⁴¹ Southall tells us that there is a “divergence between stated rules and observed or even recollected behaviour, and the great verbal stress by the Alur on regularities which do not obtain in practice.”⁴² He adds that “... one gets the impression of a far more stern and rigid system of parental discipline than ever appears in practice to the most careful observer of family life.”⁴³ Parkin shares of the Luo of Nairobi that people who express the desire for one wife and few children “frequently continue to take a second wife and beget more children.”⁴⁴ Makokha comments:

... a Luo would never admit ignorance of what he didn’t know; such that when asked by a White (potential employer) if he knew A.B.C the Luo would say ‘yes’ to get employed. When during the employment he appeared not to know what he said he knew, he would say he had forgotten; & consequently his employer would tell him what to do or how to do it. Thus most Luos got employed and learned more from the Whites ...⁴⁵

Anglican Bishop Otieno Wasonga (a Luo from Gem) tells us what will make an African keep his promise. Instead of the Bible, Wasonga suggested that we put a human head in a pot and ask someone to swear by it. If people were to “lie in the name of the dead, they’ll strangle them” he shared.⁴⁶ Such respect for the dead is clearly seen

⁴¹ SOUTHALL, AIDAN W., 1970, *Alur Society: a study in processes and types of domination*. London: Oxford University Press.

⁴² Southall, *Alur Society*. p238.

⁴³ (Southall, *Alur Society*. p71.) Language was being used to dominate neighbouring tribes. The “logically planned system of administration” was never carried out, (p240.) but talk of it was sufficient to convince others. Despite living closely to the Alur for many years Southall does not say that the Alur themselves recognised that they speak in this way, presumably because ‘native speakers intuitions about how they speak can be quite different from how they actually speak’. (WOLFSON, NESSA, & MARMOR, THOMAS & JONES, STEVE, 1989, ‘Problems In The Comparison Of Speech Acts Across Cultures.’ 174-195 In: Blum-Kulka, Shoshana, et al. (1989) *Cross Cultural Pragmatics: requests and apologies*. New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation, p182.)

⁴⁴ PARKIN, DAVID, 1978, *The Cultural Definition of Political Response: lineal destiny among the Luo*. London: Academic Press, p287.

⁴⁵ Makokha, Rt. Rev. Dr. Byrum, personal communication, August 10th 2005.

⁴⁶ (WASONGA, OTIENO, 2001, ‘How the Gospel Should be Communicated in Rural Africa’ *Maarifa Lecture* given at Kima International School of Theology on 21st February 2001.) Before the coming of the

in the Luo people's orientation to *juok* (spiritual) powers, that are closely related to the dead.

Magesa accuses Westerners of distorting the understanding of Africa by applying a vocabulary that they would not use with their own people: "Simply by applying a certain vocabulary one can easily turn Gods into idols, faces into grimaces, votive images into fetishes, discussions into palavers, and distort real objects and matters of fact through bigotry and prejudice."⁴⁷ Using conventional English to describe what happens among African people is however the more misleading, because it can only ever be an approximation to the truth. The use of exotic terms is a help to the listener or reader to know that they are on unfamiliar territory.⁴⁸ Social and cultural differences do not disappear just because we do not refer to them.

Ways of using language become habitual. Thus phrases with obsolete meanings may be in use. I find myself saying '*joliel ema obaro koth*' (the people of the home where the funeral is to be held have diverted the rain) if we have a dry day when we expected a wet one. This understanding is so commonly held, that I find myself using it in explanation of the absence of rain, even though if you questioned me closely I would

Bible Luo people would swear by *mbira*, being a pot that contained various medicines, including a human skull. (OWUOR, MARGARET, A., 1995, 'The Impact of the Teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on the Luo Traditional Funeral Rites and Practices with special references to Jokanyamkago of Migori District.' MA thesis, University of Nairobi, 1995, p95.)

⁴⁷ (Magesa, *African Religion*. p30.) Armstrong does not agree that 'palavers' are the same as European 'discussions'. African meetings are: "often formal and complex, and I suspect that the history of the word 'palaver' expresses the total incomprehension of the European who, for some business or other reason, were present at various African formal debates." (ARMSTRONG, ROBERT G., 1979, 'The public Meeting as a Means of Participation in Political and Social Activities in Africa.' 11-26 In: UNESCO 1979, *Socio-political Aspects of the Palaver in some African Countries*. Paris: UNESCO, p14.) See footnote 62 in this chapter for Healey's analysis of African communication. See also Maranz, *African Friends*.

⁴⁸ See Section 2.5.2.

deny belief in the powers of local diviners to affect rainfall patterns. This is similar to a practice likely to be found in a household where one person tends to have a lot of visitors. Other members of the household will tell this person that ‘there is a visitor for you’ whenever an unknown person is approaching. Any visitor may even come to be known loosely as ‘X’s person’.⁴⁹

Parkin applies to the Kenyan Luo what he has learned from Bloch⁵⁰ that “the formalisation of speech can restrict the content of what is being communicated to a limited range of assumptions, expectations and responses.”⁵¹ In relation to urban Luo society, Parkin realises that even when people state that they are not in favour of polygyny, retrievable ‘shadows’ of its significance remain.⁵²

Language use may be affected by something even if that thing is not there at the time of a particular incident or event. A belief in the ability of diviners to divert rain affects my use of *Dholuo* even if I claim not to share that belief. The expectation that a particular member of a household who has a lot of visitors is the likely destination of a particular stranger seen approaching, would be there even if that stranger actually turned out to be visiting someone else. To say that the use of *Dholuo* is affected by the assumption of the presence of over-hearers with evil intent is therefore not necessarily to say that all users of the language always assume this at all times. Rather, that this has

⁴⁹ While some-what obsolete phrases may still be habitual, it is also true that the habitual use of a phrase shows that it is not obsolete. Hence my use of the term *joliel ema obaro koth* begins to have me believe that diviners may divert rain.

⁵⁰ BLOCH, M., 1975, ‘Introduction.’ In: Bloch, M., 1975, *Political Language and Oratory in Traditional Society*. London: Academic Press

⁵¹ Parkin, *The Cultural*. p24.

⁵² Parkin, *The Cultural*. p26.

had important causative effects on the design and accepted use of the language, as well as on the culture of the Luo people as a whole.

The possibility of being over-heard by non-visible spiritual powers, plus the tendency to assume an evil intent on the part of one's hearer, thus affect the degree of compliance of language usage with Grice's CP. An uninformed person would assume that CP would apply in a conversation between, say, two people talking alone in the middle of an empty field. Yet in Luoland, a field is never empty! Instead language use has evolved such that conversants are, consciously or sub-consciously, continually avoiding traps and pitfalls that would be occasioned by telling 'over-hearers' the wrong things in the wrong ways or on the wrong occasions.⁵³ This can be compared to the travelling of a vehicle along a potholed road. I have often been alarmed when driving and suddenly seeing a distant but approaching vehicle swerve into my lane for no apparent reason. The pothole that the driver was avoiding only became apparent on drawing nearer to that part of the road. Hence people say and do things that continue to be unexpected, until one gets a close understanding of the state of the road, which in this instance is the standing of a language in relation to beliefs about over-hearers.

⁵³ "... societies with relatively simple technologies ... see an occult power in many actions and events where the law of a modern industrial society does not." (ALLOTT, A.N., and EPSTEIN, A.L., and GLUCKMAN, M., 1969, 1-21 In: 'Introduction.' In: Gluckman, M., 1969, (ed.) *Ideas and Procedures in African Customary Law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p68.) Gadamer suggests that on meeting something foreign a person will "seek to achieve ... a 'fusion of horizons', a fusion whereby our own horizon is enlarged and enriched." (cited in Bernstein *Beyond Objectivism*. p143.) His suggestion that therefore "nothing ... is ... beyond the possibility of understanding" (p144) however seems to ignore the pragmatic fact that language in use does not itself carry all the presuppositions that are required for its full understanding, as they are part of the context of the use of that language, using 'context' in its broadest sense.

Table 2.1. The cooperative principle and its application to native *Dholuo* speakers⁵⁴

<i>Maxims</i>	<i>Sub Maxims</i>	<i>Are The People Of Gem Following This Maxim?</i>	<i>Brief Explanation</i>
Quantity: Give the right amount of information	Contribution to be as informative as required	No	This depends on the situation
	Contribution not to be more informative than required	Yes	People will not provide more information than needed
Quality: Make your contribution true	Don't say what you believe to be false	No	It is acceptable to say what is false if this helps one's situation
	Don't say that for which you lack adequate evidence	No	One does not need evidence in order to say something
Relation: Be relevant		Yes	What is said is in some way relevant to the situation
Manner: Be perspicuous	Avoid obscurity of expression	No	Obscurity can be intentionally built into language
	Avoid ambiguity	No	Ambiguity is considered advantageous
	Be brief	Yes	Not significantly different from European use of language
	Be orderly	Yes	Not significantly different from European use of language

⁵⁴ Maxims derived from Leech, *Principles*.

Hence we get the ‘unexpected’ results shown in Table 2.1. Contrary to the CP, among the Luo of Gem informative-ness may be minimal. Similarly it is relatively likely that someone should say something that they believe to be false, so as to distract the assumed over-hearer from the truth that may give him an opening to engage in his evil art.⁵⁵ Someone is certainly likely to speak in obscure ways in order to hide the nub of what they say from over-hearers. Kerbrat-Orecchioni tells us that trilogues are characterised by “flexibility, instability and unpredictability” and “can lead to apparently contradictory utterances.”⁵⁶ Taylor implies that the use of figurative rather than direct language was normal when discussing what was important for Ugandan people. He only succeeded in being told what was actually in people’s minds when he himself managed to speak figuratively to them.⁵⁷

Another challenge to the integrity of CP arises on correcting the widespread Western understanding of language as a neutral means of passing on information, as against its possessing of power itself. Inroads have been made into such a simplistic understanding, for example by Austin who has correctly identified much of language use as being

⁵⁵ Such evasiveness to deceive evil powers is very common in Luo tradition. Traditionally a man avoids regularly following the same path in case someone should take advantage of his predictability by planting magical substances to harm him. (Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. pp171/172.) A spirit thought to be out to kill a baby can be deceived into leaving it alone by making out that the baby is already dead. (Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p107.) That this evasiveness extends to language use should not be surprising.

⁵⁶ (KERBRAT-ORECCHIONI, CATHERINE, 2004, ‘Introducing Polylogue.’ 1-24 In: *Journal of Pragmatics*. 36 (2004) (PDF) www.elsevier.com/locate/pragma (accessed 03.12.03) p7.) Kerbrat-Orecchioni tells us of a man sitting with his wife before a therapist. The man wants to tell the therapist something, while concealing it from his wife. Recent scholarship has revealed that much ‘dialogue’ is in fact ‘polylogue’. That is, conversations must frequently be understood as not only between two people. I have yet to find a paper that considers this in relation to over-hearers in the spiritual realm.

⁵⁷ TAYLOR, JOHN V., 1963, *The Primal Vision: Christian presence amid african religion*. London: SCM Press, pp29-30.

performative or speech *acts*.⁵⁸ Language not only informs, but also changes those who are listening and hence the environment and circumstances of the speaker. This becomes even more the case when over-hearers in the spiritual realm are taken into account. Hence a popular site for weddings in much of the Western world is in church; in order for God to ‘overhear’ and thus add to the surety of the commitment entered into. Words themselves having power in their influence over unseen spiritual forces means that the degree to which speech does ‘act’ in parts of Africa such as Luoland, is often greater than in the West. Given the presence of a listening divine being, language is strongly effective in determining the world and not only in describing it.⁵⁹ Cooperation in the provision of information becomes a more minor role as the role of divine agents increases. In a very ‘religious’ Africa, these agents have the major part to play. Even should this part not be considered in a certain instance, its impact on the structure of a language as a whole will nevertheless have remained (as discussed above).

In reference to Austin⁶⁰ Lumwambu tells us that “... those phrases are considered according to the traditions of the Luo, and if they are considered according to the traditions of the Luo, they are meaningful according to the traditions of the Luo. This is why if you concern yourself with translation, then that is a different set of questions altogether.”⁶¹ (My

⁵⁸ My emphasis. (AUSTIN, J.L., 1962, *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p52.)

⁵⁹ Especially if “the Negro African does not draw a line between himself and the object ...”. (SENGHOR, LEOPOLD SEDAR, 1964, *On African Socialism*. New York, London: Frederick A. Praeger, p72.)

⁶⁰ Austin, *How to Do*.

⁶¹ LUMWAMBU, PETER, 2004, Response to research seminar held at Maseno University entitled ‘Uvumbuzi wa Isimu Amali – kwa Wajaluo, Kenya: uhusiano wa lugha na utamaduni wake.’ held on 23rd September 2004. (The title of this seminar could be translated into English as being: “Discoveries on Pragmatic Linguistics amongst the Luo of Kenya: the relationship between a language and its culture.”)

translation from *Kiswahili*.) In other words, speech acts in *Dholuo* do not easily translate into other languages.⁶²

2.3.1. ‘Contribution to be as Informative as Required’

This is another sub-maxim identified by Leech as within the CP. A key word here is ‘required’. In practice the people of Gem simply do not ‘require’ certain kinds of informativeness. Social and economic life runs on more limited amounts of certain types of information than people are accustomed to in the West.⁶³ One reason for this is the suspicion that can easily be aroused when certain (but many) types of information are sought after. Davis⁶⁴ in her discussion of a ‘substantial world’⁶⁵ discovered that for the Tabwa people things are associated with events and events with things. This research carried out in Zaire (now the Congo), applies more widely over Africa, and certainly among the Luo of Kenya. Knowledge of things is not neutral.

Mboya describes a Luo practice by which certain things put into certain places in particular ritual ways, come to have their own inherent powers. Hence *ndagla* is made up of a variety of objects as prescribed by the *ajuoga* (Luo diviner) which when buried

⁶² “The communication system of Nyabihanga [village in Tanzania] remained a great mystery to me” shared Healey, after two years in this village. (Healey, *A Fifth Gospel*. p91.) Despite knowing *Kiswahili* Healey still struggled with Nyabihanga pragmatics.

⁶³ “Africans readily share space and things but are possessive of knowledge ... Westerners readily share their knowledge but are possessive of things and space.” (Maranz, *African Friends*. p30.)

⁶⁴ DAVIS, CHRISTOPHER O., 2000, *Death in Abeyance: illness and therapy among the Tabwa of Central Africa*. London: Edinburgh University Press.

⁶⁵ See also Section 7.3.1.

or placed in critical places will harm someone who is passing.⁶⁶ I have occasionally taught, in Luo churches, about how to show ‘love’ secretly (as in Matthew 6:1 “Be alert so that you do not do good things before people so that they see you, because if you do this, there is no reward that you will receive from your father in heaven”) (translated from Luo Bible.⁶⁷) My suggestion that one can show love by leaving someone an anonymous gift of money in their bag was met by horror! This is because this practice very closely resembles that of placing *ndagla* that is intended to harm someone and also of *loko dhoch* in which some illness or problem is removed from a person, and transferred to someone or something else, that must then be lost. The person who finds this thing, will acquire the disease or the problem. This is related to the Old Testament practice of using a scapegoat to take away sins.⁶⁸

These illustrations show that in the Luo understanding ‘things’ or actions are never neutral. Every thing seen or done, every journey or activity, is open to interpretation as to its meaning.⁶⁹ Conversations are among the things carefully attended to by hearers intent on discerning cosmological and spiritual processes. The more one talks on certain subjects and in certain ways the more one reveals and the more one thus opens oneself up to suspicion of various kinds. Casual requests for or confiding of information can easily lead to various interpretations. Let me give some examples:

⁶⁶ Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p171.

⁶⁷ Bible, *Muma Maler*.

⁶⁸ (See Bible, *New International*. Leviticus 16:10.) There is an equivalent practice in Luoland, of getting rid of an animal with which someone has had sexual relations. (Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p20.)

⁶⁹ See Davis, *Death in Abeyance*. p255.

I may have noticed that a cow belonging to a neighbour is unwell, but commenting on this to the owner may prompt him to wonder why I was looking at his cattle. The slightest tone of pleasure in my voice may reveal to him that I am actually happy to see that his animals are unwell, and am making my comment to ‘rub salt into his wound’. He has almost certainly already suspected that someone has bewitched his herd; now I have moved to the top of the list of suspects.⁷⁰

Although it is acceptable and advisable to ask after someone’s children, caution is needed before asking for specific information. “... the Luo cannot understand why people want or need information about their children, unless they intend some harm. As children are considered to be frequent targets for witchcraft ...”.⁷¹ Perhaps I knew that my colleague was struggling to pay school fees for a certain child. Then if I ask whether that child is still in school or not my colleague may be suspicious that I am either gloating over his misfortune or was instrumental in some way in preventing his child from finishing school, perhaps by bewitching his business to stop him making money to pay school fees.⁷²

Various defensive strategies may be used in the above instances. The person concerned may try to lead me along, to further test to see whether I will continue to gloat over

⁷⁰ Tempels adds: “The fact that a thing has belonged to anyone, that is has been in strict relationship with a person, leads the Bantu to conclude that this thing shares the vital influence of its owner.” (Tempels, *Bantu*, p82.) Suggesting that there is a problem with someone’s property is therefore tantamount to an attack on the person himself in a way that is hard to explain using British English.

⁷¹ BLOUNT, B.G., 1972, ‘The Luo of South Nyanza, Western Kenya.’ 275-280 In: Molnos, Angela, 1972, *Cultural Source Materials for Populations Planning in East Africa*. Volume 2. Nairobi: East African Publishing House.

⁷² “It is forbidden and feared in many African societies to ‘praise’ somebody else’s children or property, for to do so may cause the mystical power to harm or destroy the child or property.” (MBITI, JOHN S., 1969 *African Religions and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann, p198.)

him. Alternatively he could tell me what is not true, either to deny me the information that I need to apply my medicine, or to stop me from gloating at his misfortune or simply because my question was inappropriate. As much of a man's wealth as possible may well be kept hidden.⁷³ That which cannot be kept hidden such as wives, livestock, house, vehicles and children, are carefully protected against attack by various herbs and spells. Hence my colleague Paul Otieno shared with me that older men (who have their own homes and therefore wealth) do not find it easy to go to church and be saved, because this would interfere with the various protective measures that they have in place.⁷⁴

The impact of these restrictions on life is enormous. Certain types of information and certain ways of obtaining information are strictly taboo. Concealing the truth and telling lies are considered perfectly acceptable in certain circumstances, given the severity of the spiritual risks that would be entailed through inappropriate revelations. Certain types of discussion on many issues are strictly curtailed by the need to comply with the above (unspoken and unwritten) taboos. Questions concerning the managing of finance or resources in business, medical treatment, particular relationships, the amount of wealth someone does or does not have, aspects of someone's life history, what caused certain things to happen, and so on should be avoided.⁷⁵ Secrecy and

⁷³ African "People with moderate to extensive means can be divided into the *hidere*s and the *revealer*s." (Maranz, *African Friends*. p138.) I here refer to the 'hidere's', who keep their assets as secret as possible to avoid beggars.

⁷⁴ (OTIENO, PAUL, 2001, In Conversation. Otieno, Paul is the pastor of a Zion Harvest Mission Church near Bumala, Kenya.) "Some of the independent Church sects ... have men and women who specialise in dealing with this power, this presumably making these sects more attractive to older men." (Mbiti, *African Religions*. p199.)

⁷⁵ Hence a "Bemba [person from Zambia] invariably denies 'that he has any food at all'." (RICHARDS, AUDREY, I., 1995, *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia: an economic study of the Bemba tribe*. Hamburg: LIT Verlag, p215.)

deception have become the norm.⁷⁶ Revealing what in Western terms may be known as ‘the truth’ about situations is the exception and unlikely to occur.⁷⁷

2.3.2. ‘Don’t Say what you Believe to be False’

It is normal and acceptable for people anywhere to use words to make life more bearable. There is no cardinal rule among the Luo people that words must be fixed to some notion of objective reality.⁷⁸ Rather, they are considered free to roam.

Stating that which is false is as a result a normal everyday experience. Examples that I could give are legion. I was frequently amazed in the early days of my learning *Dholuo* and *Kiswahili* how people would report that I know these languages very fluently. A Christian lady whose Godly walk I respect greatly, thought nothing of asking me to forge a copy of a certain medical certificate by typing it for her so that she could show people that she is a qualified nurse. A Christian leader who is now an ordained minister did not bat an eyelid in asking me to produce certificates for him from our Bible teaching programme, although he had not done a stroke of work towards them or

⁷⁶ “Much that goes on in the halls of power at all levels is ambiguous, shrouded in secrecy. ... The highest levels of society operate this way because the lowest levels, and those in-between, also do.” (Maranz, *African Friends*. p92.)

⁷⁷ I am not in this discussion denying that the opposite may also apply. That is, that there is information that a Luo person would desire but a Westerner would withhold. As already mentioned, my writing is as to a British and not to an African audience.

⁷⁸ “The purpose of words is not to establish logical truth, but to set up social relationships...”. (DONOVAN, VINCENT J., 1978, *Christianity Rediscovered: an epistle from the Masai*. London: SCM Press, p28.) Healey reports that children told a certain White catholic father whom they knew well that a recent visitor was the first white man they had ever seen, despite the fact that this father was white. (Healey, *A Fifth Gospel*. p51.) This language use was intended to communicate the children’s excitement at having seen this visitor, and not ‘factual reality’ (as understood in a British sense.)

attended even one class. His reasoning was simply that those certificates might help him to enter a residential theological course that he was applying for.

Young men regularly deceive young women regarding wealth that they don't have. One young groom borrowed furniture for his house to impress his new wife, who was reported to be askance when the owner took it all back again later leaving their house bare. I have heard frequent instances in which a girl's family is given the impression that certain cattle belong to their daughter's suitor, indicating that he will easily be able to pay dowry, when these cattle actually belong to somebody else.⁷⁹ Similarly, it is normal for someone in business to say that he has no money, even if he has a lot of cash stashed up somewhere. It is absolutely normal for people to make commitments that they do not subsequently keep, if in the course of making the commitments they manage to save face or gain respect. This happens to us constantly at YTC, where people commit themselves to attending our classes or a certain class, while surely knowing that they will not turn up.⁸⁰

This tendency to the use of language independently of 'reality' on the ground is not confined to the Luo in Kenya. We have already seen this from Mhogolo, a Tanzanian African bishop, above. It is hard for people to grasp that there can be anything wrong

⁷⁹ The people who have said this are not residents of Gem.

⁸⁰ The *Dholuo* term *abiro* seems to mean 'I will' but more accurately 'I may ...'. People's agreement is far from the implication of the English word 'yes'. (Healey, *A Fifth Gospel*. p156.) Other non-Western societies, such as China appear to be similar, hence we are told of China that "Detours or feigned agreement will enjoy far greater preference than blatant disagreement when one has to disagree with another." (GUODONG, LIANG, and JING, HAN, 2005, 'A Contrastive Study on Disagreement. Strategies for Politeness between American English and Mandarin Chinese.' in *Asian EFL Journal*. March 2005, Vol. 7., Issue 1, article 10, http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/March_05_lghj.doc. (accessed 12.04.05)) Interestingly, Guodong and Jing have found that for Chinese as against American students "rates of disagreement decrease with the increase

with saying what they believe to be false, if this appears to help their situation.

Teaching at KIST (Kima International School of Theology), with the final year BA and Diploma students I wrote a quote on the board from Nietzsche⁸¹ saying “we need lies in order to live.” The students laughed – as if to say that I had identified with where they were at.⁸²

Language in Gem is one of the creative forces people have at hand to help them to get by in life. Clearly it has its referential function. It refers to some things that are visible and ‘real’ such as cattle, water, money, firewood and food, as well as spiritual forces such as enmity and the presence of ancestors (*jochiende*). Every individual then attempts to utilise that language which is available to him in order to make his life as bearable as possible. And why not, one may ask? There is nothing in language itself that forces it to follow a pattern of some assumed objective world.⁸³ In Kenya as it appears also elsewhere in Africa, language is free. Words are servants of men to be sent hither and thither and not men servants of words.⁸⁴

of social distance” (Guodong and Jing , ‘A Contrastive Study.’ WWW.) That is, one is less likely to disagree with foreigners, particularly those of high status.

⁸¹ Cited by Steiner. (STEINER, GEORGE, 1998, *After Babel: aspects of language and translation* (third edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press, p238.)

⁸² KIST class on 15th May 2003.

⁸³ Can the truth of language exist apart from subjectivity: “If there are true propositions about what is, then the categorical framework of language must be equivalent to the ontological structure of what is.” (KELLY, THOMAS A.F., 1996, *Language, World and God: an essay in Ontology*. Dublin: the Columba Press, p40.) ‘What is’ would then seem to be many and varied, that is, subjective.

⁸⁴ Evans–Pritchard’s account of marriage customs (EVANS-PRITCHARD, E.E., 1950, ‘Marriage Customs of the Luo of Kenya.’ 132-142 In: *Africa: Journal of the International Africa Institute*. London: Oxford University Press.) is incredibly insightful and clearly laid out considering the brief period of his stay in Kenya. Evans-Pritchard clearly wrote little from observation, but much through what he was told, and by translation. Although broadly similar, the differences between his account and that of Mboya (Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*.) demonstrate the difficulty for an outsider of understanding language and pragmatics. For example, I suspect the Luo’s enthusiasm to tell how they *meko* (take hold of girls by force) resulted in Evans–Pritchard’s explaining that a girl may be *meko* more than once in one marriage, (Evans-Pritchard ‘Marriage Customs.’ p136.) something for which I have found no other evidence, and the truth of which I doubt greatly.

2.3.3. ‘Don’t say that for which you don’t have Adequate Evidence’

This sub-maxim assumes that the provision of helpful information is the key function of language. When language is used as a force to bring about an effect the need of ‘evidence’ appears differently. A political party can claim popularity to boost their image, even if their actual following is small. In a holistic spiritual world ‘evidence’ is hardly a major issue. When words are instrumental in bringing effects, people are quick to say what is desirable even in the absence of evidence. They are quick to deny something even if there is evidence for it should it be undesirable. Language is here a means to bring about a result.⁸⁵

Some examples will help to illustrate this practice. On the positive side, people say, while waiting for a bus or train, that *ochiegni chopo* (it is shortly to arrive) or *obirosani* (it is coming right now). They are especially likely to speak in this way if they sense someone’s impatience, even though they have no way of knowing whether the bus is just over the horizon or many hours distant. Saying *ochiegni chopo* cajoles it on its way and encourages the distraught person waiting. Then there are reports of sickness. Some students were late to our YTC class⁸⁶ through taking a sick lady to a doctor (by pushing her as she sat on a bicycle). While already knowing what the answer would be, I asked the students how the sick lady was. *Ober matin koro* (she is

⁸⁵ There is a tendency, also identified elsewhere in this thesis, for current scholarship to assume Africa’s ‘ills’ all to have arisen due to its period under colonial domination. Hence: “... legacy of colonial struggles ... contributes to this lack of self conscious reflection on method and theory.” (WEST, GERALD, 2005, ‘African Biblical Hermeneutics and Bible Translation.’ 3-29 In: Loba-Mkole, Jean-Claude, and Wendland, Ernst R., (eds.) 2005, *Interacting with Scriptures in Africa*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, p4.) Fewer authors recognise Africa’s innate extra-colonial cultural traits.

⁸⁶ On 14th May 2003.

somewhat better now) they shared. To have said otherwise would have been to counter the action of the treatment she had been given.⁸⁷

When praying for a sick baby on one occasion I realised that my (Luo) colleagues were holding the mother's loose morals (the baby was illegitimate) responsible for the child's illness. The mother knelt and repented repeatedly and noisily as we laid hands on her. The following day I asked a colleague how the baby was. *Ober koro* (she's well now) he told me. As a believing Christian he had no choice but to tell me this, as the mother had repented and had been prayed for in the name of Jesus. The following day the baby died.

A few years later our pastor (of Zion Harvest Mission Church, Ulumbi) taught on healing. He told us that if someone is sick and then is prayed for, they should not say again that they are sick. Even should their ailment continue, they should deny this emphatically and say that it is gone.⁸⁸ Whisson gives us an example of how people will deny a belief in magic yet live in fear of it.⁸⁹ These are clearly examples of stating

⁸⁷ Under-reporting of illnesses can be explained as due to people wanting to encourage the sick by telling them that they are well. (OMAYA, ABRAHAM, 2003, Omay'a's reflections on my first draft of Chapter 2, received on 28.09.03. Unpublished.)

⁸⁸ "All healing is a fundamentally hermeneutic or interpretive activity." (PILCH, J.J., 1988, 'Understanding Biblical Healing: selecting the appropriate model.' 60-66 In: *Biblical Theology Bulletin*. Vol. 18 January 1988, No. 1. 1988, p63.) As "faith, repentance, wholeness, community, reconciliation and even conversion [are] concomitant of healing", conceding that one is not healed is conceding that a problem remains in the above areas. (POBEE, JOHN S., 1995, 'Healing – an African Christian theologian's perspective.' 247-255 In: *International Review of Mission*. Vol. LXXXIII Number 329, April 1994. p254.) "Not having faith is a big sin, that will seriously hurt someone." – (my translation) says popular East African Christian literature (BOMBAY, CAL R., nd. *Dhambi, Magonjwa na MUNGU*. p14.)

⁸⁹ WHISSON, MICHAEL G., 1962, 'The Will of God and the Wiles of Men (an examination of the beliefs concerning the supernatural held by the Luo with particular reference to their function in the field of social control)' *Conference of East African Institute of Social Research*. Makerere University College, held at Limuru, Kenya, January 1962 (unpublished paper held at MIAS (Maryknoll Institute of African Studies), Nairobi, Kenya.) p32.

things that are directly contrary to the evidence available.⁹⁰ Its happening in this way in Christian circles leaves me with little doubt that the same thing occurs in the ‘traditional’ healing context.

The above discussion may, from a Western perspective, appear to be an attack on the sensibility, capability and rationality of the Luo people’s use of their language. Over-arching (judgmental) terms such as ‘primitive’ and ‘superstitious’ may come to mind. In my experience Luo people will not usually deny their orientation to and fear of spirits. They may conceal their close association with witchcraft practices so as not to endanger their relationship with their mother churches,⁹¹ to avoid the derision of Westerners,⁹² and because the English understanding of ‘witchcraft’ is not a good translation of what goes on in Africa.⁹³ In a recent case in which African Christians were accused by Spong, an Anglican Bishop, of having “a very superstitious kind of Christianity”,⁹⁴ it clearly seemed to be Carey and not the Africans themselves who created a stir about this.⁹⁵ To Carey, suggesting that African Christians were involved in witchcraft was considered to be an insult. But it seems to be primarily Carey who

⁹⁰ Kleinman points out that healing can occur at different analytical levels, e.g. biological, behavioural or social. Hence the confusion as in English ‘healing’ is normally assumed to be ‘biologically.’ (Kleinman, *Patients and Healers*. p372.)

⁹¹ SCHOFFELEERS, MATTHEW, 1994, ‘Christ in African Folk Theology.’ 73-88 In: Blakely, Thomas D., Van Beek E.A., and Thomson, Dennis L., 1994, *Religion in Africa: experience and expression*. London: James Currey, p81.

⁹² Karanja conceals Kikuyu ‘superstition’ by using terms like “pragmatic and experimentative approach to supernatural powers” to describe them. (KARANJA, JOHN, 1999, *Founding an African Faith: Kikuyu Anglican Christianity 1900-1945*. Nairobi: Uzima Press, p2.)

⁹³ See following paragraph.

⁹⁴ (CAREY, ANDREW, 1998, ‘African Christians? They’re just a step up from witchcraft. What Bishop Spong had to say about his fellow Christians.’ *Church of England Newspaper*, July 10th 1998, www.starcourse.org/spong/interview.html (accessed 20.06.03))

⁹⁵ Carey (Carey, ‘African Christians?’ 1998.) is disparaging of Spong for having accused the Africans of being superstitious. England (ENGLAND, ROBERT STOWE, 1998, ‘Mrs. Spong suspects Lambeth ‘campaign’.’ For *United Voice*. Posted September 30th 1998, www.episcopalian.org/EU/dispatches/cspong.asp (accessed 20.06.03).) says that his comments “offended the African bishops at Lambeth” without explaining how he knows this to be the case. England’s and Carey’s accounts both show that Spong was offensive primarily to the race-conscious West not the African Bishops.

finds this character of the Africans to be offensive, and not the African people themselves.

There are other linguistic and pragmatic factors to consider here. On arriving in Gem in 1993, at which time I was using English in communicating with church leaders, I was struck at the frequency with which I was assured that there was no *witchcraft* in Gem any more. From Maranz, who tells us that someone's being a witch could be a reason for denying them hospitality,⁹⁶ it follows that to say 'there are no witches' could be used to mean 'we are all welcome into each others homes.' Murray explains that for the *Balokole (Kiganda)*, which we can take as being 'the saved', witchcraft beliefs are rejected out of hand, but instead '*shaitani*'⁹⁷ is used to mean much the same thing.⁹⁸ In other words, there may be no '*juok*' (witchcraft) as what was once called *juok* is now called *Shaitani*. Meyer speaks of much the same thing happening among the Ewe people in Ghana,⁹⁹ and Onyinah of the Akan.¹⁰⁰ Kuhn's discovery that AICs were not engaged in a conscious process of inculturation¹⁰¹ and Ritchie finding Legio Maria claiming to have left all their traditions behind¹⁰² demonstrates how by providing it

⁹⁶ Maranz, *African Friends*. p28.

⁹⁷ The term *Shaitani* in East Africa is used in different, if related ways, to Satan in English. Imperato tells us: "many Luo consider the devil to be simply another form of traditional witchcraft substance" (IMPERATO, P.J., 1966, 'Witchcraft and Traditional Medicine among the Luo of Tanzania.' 193-201 In: *Tanzania Notes and records*. No. 66, December 1966, p201.) Many saved people in East Africa use '*Shaitani*' as a synonym for 'witchcraft'. (Murray, 'Inter-relationships.' p41.) *Jachien* is 'he who haunts', but taken as a synonym for the devil or Satan (*Shaitani*).

⁹⁸ (MURRAY, J., 1970, 'Inter-relationships between Witchcraft Eradication Movements and Christianity in Central Africa.' Dar es Salaam – UCLA Conference on the History of African Religious Systems, University College, Dar es Salaam, June 1970, pp40-41.) So also Omari. (OMARI, C.K., 1993, *Uchawi na Ushirikina*. Mwanza, Tanzania: Inland Publishers Omari, p90.)

⁹⁹ MEYER, BIRGIT, 1999, *Translating the Devil: religion and modernity among the Ewe in Ghana*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

¹⁰⁰ ONYINAH, OPOKU, 2002, *Akan Witchcraft and the Concept of Exorcism in the Church of Pentecost*. PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2002, p2.

¹⁰¹ KUHN, MARKO, 2001, 'From African Consciousness to Subconscious Inculturation: a study into African independent churches (AICs) in Nyanza/Kenya.' Diplomarbeit, University of Frieberg, 2001, p89.

¹⁰² RITCHIE, IAN, 1998, 'The Messiah Whose Nose Knows Or: Survivals of African Religion in Christianised Kenya: the Legio Maria as case study.' Presented to conference 'African Christianity: past,

with a new name people can 'leave their culture behind', and yet continue to run with it.¹⁰³ The self understanding of AICs is that they are adapting themselves to become genuine Christians, and not altering Christianity to suit their cultures.¹⁰⁴

When one asks many Christians in Kenya today to what extent the African religion affects their understanding of the Bible one will frequently get a hurt response or rebuff, to the effect that the pagan religion of Africa's past has now been left behind, and the vast majority are Christians who have nothing to do with such things. This type of response is common amongst all types of Christians, from the evangelicals of the Africa Inland Church, to Roman Catholics. Even many of the African Instituted Churches will tell you that they have departed from paganism and are now delivered into the Kingdom of God, therefore they have nothing to do with African Traditional Religion.¹⁰⁵

Steiner tells us that Western nations have supposed that the function of language is to describe and enable inter-reaction with the physical world.¹⁰⁶ Hence an artificial language, Esperanto, was invented so as to become a universal language. It failed disastrously, and has almost completely disappeared from the world language scene. Steiner reveals that this is because languages are not primarily there to describe the world, but to change or 'create' the world to make it livable.

There is in Gem, as in Kenya at large, a dissatisfaction with the world as perceived by the senses. "Since the senses can no longer determine the 'true' nature of things or

present and future Wycliffe College, Toronto, March 7th 1998,
<http://www3.sympatico.ca/ian.ritchie/Legio.htm> (accessed 21.03.02)

¹⁰³ An ongoing close study of the Scriptures could self-correct misconceptions via the 'hermeneutical circle.' (THISLTON, ANTHONY C., 1986, 'The New Hermeneutic.' 78-107 In: McKim, Donald K., (ed.) *A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: major trends in Biblical Interpretation*. Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, p90.)

¹⁰⁴ "Members of independent churches themselves have no doubt whatever about their claims to authentic Christian status." (Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*. p133.)

¹⁰⁵ Ritchie, 'The Messiah.' WWW.

people, Pentecostals must rely on the Holy Spirit for their insight” shares Blunt.¹⁰⁷ (Ogot reminds us that “The Holy Spirit, ... was equated among the Luo with ancestral spirits.”¹⁰⁸ These are in turn known to be devils, which no doubt adds to the confusion.¹⁰⁹) When the ‘real’ is so unreliable, then on what basis is language founded? Dreams and visions can be seen as more reliable, therefore more ‘real’ than ‘objective evidence’. Hence a pastor in the Yala area on one occasion suspended all his church elders on the basis of what he had learned of their adulterous behaviour in a vision (personal communication). “Nothing being what it seems”¹¹⁰ results in a general distrust,¹¹¹ and reliance on the ‘spiritual’.¹¹²

I suggest that *Dholuo* was never intended to be an accurate means of describing and inter-reacting with an objective world. To assess it on this basis (for example by assuming that its use will follow the rules of the CP or that deviation from modern English demonstrates its inferiority) is like weighing a piece of meat with an hour glass. Then what is it that *Dholuo* is best at? It is most effective and fulfils its natural role in creating meaning and livability for the Luo people, particularly in relation to their departed predecessors.

¹⁰⁶ Steiner, *After Babel*. p214.

¹⁰⁷ (BLUNT, ROBERT, 2004, ‘Satan is an imitator: Kenya’s recent cosmology of corruption’ 294-328 In: Weiss, Brad, (ed) 2004, *Producing African Futures: ritual and reproduction in a new liberal age*. Leiden.Boston: Brill, p318.) Blunt often erroneously writes as if Kenya is a deteriorated version of America, rather than having a culture of its own. Hence I question his inclusion of “*no longer*” (my emphasis) above.

¹⁰⁸ Ogot, *An Autobiography*. p12.

¹⁰⁹ See also Rasmussen. (Rasmussen, *Modern African*. p161.) “African Pentecostalism is in constant interaction with the African spirit world ...”. (ANDERSON, ALLAN, nd, ‘The Pentecostal Gospel, Religion and Culture in African Perspective.’

http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/aanderson/Publications/pentecostal_gospel.htm (accessed 14.03.03) WWW.)

¹¹⁰ Blunt, ‘Satan is an imitator.’ p310.

¹¹¹ See Section 2.7.3.

“At every level ... the linguistic capacity to conceal, misinform, leave ambiguous, hypothesise, and invent is indispensable to the equilibrium of human consciousness and to the development of man in society...”.¹¹³ In wanting language to communicate in straightforward ways, Steiner tells us, “possibly we have got hold of the wrong end of the stick altogether.”¹¹⁴ Instead, by using language “Man has spoken himself free of total organic constraint.”¹¹⁵ What has happened to the Luo on the encroachment of modern life is what is described by Steiner as: “Societies with ancient but eroded epistemologies of ritual and symbol can be knocked off balance and made to lose belief in their own identity under the voracious impact of premature or indigestible assimilation.”¹¹⁶

Am I falsely reifying language? Am I not describing a people’s culture, rather than their language? Indeed it would be correct to say that the Luo people’s use of English or *Kiswahili* would still reflect the same deep-beliefs that determine their use of *Dholuo*. Learning a language does not instantly alter how language is used and does not automatically result in its being used in the same way as its originators may have used it. It results in a substitution of different sounds (phonetics) and symbols for the same uses. In other words, the Luo people’s use of English or other languages will continue to reflect many of the properties of the Luo people’s use of their own language.¹¹⁷

¹¹² On 28th January 2005 YTC students explained that people are quicker to help the dead than the sick, because unlike the dead sick people could be lying and deceiving in order to be assisted.

¹¹³ Steiner, *After Babel*. p239. “Africans find security in ambiguous arrangements, plans and speech.” shares Maranz, emphasising how much they use their language to this end. (Maranz, *African Friends*. p88.)

¹¹⁴ Steiner, *After Babel*. p240.

¹¹⁵ Steiner, *After Babel*. p245.

¹¹⁶ Steiner, *After Babel*. p16.

¹¹⁷ For some thoughts on pragmatic functions of *Dholuo*, see Okombo. (OKOMBO, DUNCAN OKOTH, 1993, *A Functional Grammar of Dholuo*. (Nilo-Saharan Linguistic Analyses and Documentation Vol. 12).

2.3.4. 'Avoid Obscurity of Expression'

The notion of 'obscurity of expression' only exists for those who are unfamiliar with the pragmatic principles in operation in some African societies. In other words, the absence of a clear objective or referential basis for language use means that its expression is generally obscure (given a British use of the word 'obscure'). Rather than being a precise predictor or indicator of what is happening in the world, language as in Gem must be understood as being in *a dynamic formative/creative relationship to the world*. Rules guiding its relationship to the world are not objective. Language speaks of a world of which it is a dynamic part, and not as a descriptive objective 'other' in relation to it. It is just one among many means available to manoeuvre among spiritual forces while aiming to achieve ascendancy, and life in its fullness.¹¹⁸

Köln: Rudiger Köppe Verlag, p109 and following.) In relation to Crystal's proposal that: "...there could be a tri-English world, one in which you could speak a local English-based dialect at home, a national variety at school or work, and international Standard English to talk to foreigners" (Crystal cited in POWER, CARLA, 2005, 'Not the Queen's English: non-native English speakers now outnumber native ones 3 to one. And its changing the way we communicate.' 41-45 In: *Newsweek*. March 7th, 2005, p42.) I ask how someone can keep these three distinct and apart?

¹¹⁸ I was struck by the truth of this while in an indigenous church in which a medium was communicating to us from the ancestors on 23rd October 2004. Every listener was very careful to agree with the spirit, so as not to anger it, and so as to encourage as much revelation as possible apparently regardless of the 'truth' being revealed. See Southall on the Alur. (Section 2.3.)

2.3.5. 'Avoid Ambiguity'

Africans *prefer* ambiguity so as to allow flexibility in the light of changing realities, thus keeping their options open, says Maranz.¹¹⁹ “The definiteness that Westerners consider essential to the expeditious handling of personal or commercial business, seems to be absent in many of the actions of Africans” for whom “leaving plans open so as to allow for last-minute developments are of greater importance...”.¹²⁰ Maranz perhaps did not perceive and so does not explain the rooting of this ambiguity in the avoidance of spirits to whom those with predictable schedules become easy prey,¹²¹ or the hope that by “not keeping accurate or precise financial records”¹²² money would ‘somehow’ go further than if it was all carefully accounted for. He does explain how ambiguity aims at all costs to avoid a “rupture in relationship.”¹²³

2.4. Theories in Pragmatics

Research based on linguistic pragmatics in intercultural studies has only rarely been able to go beyond the case study and anecdotal approaches.¹²⁴ While much in favour of “more investigations into face to face encounters between members of different cultural

¹¹⁹ Maranz, *African Friends*. p88.

¹²⁰ Maranz, *African Friends*. p89.

¹²¹ See footnote 55 in this chapter.

¹²² Maranz, *African Friends*. p88.

¹²³ Maranz, *African Friends*. p88.

¹²⁴ HINNENKAMP, VOLKER, 1995, ‘Intercultural Communication.’ 1-21 In: Verschueren, Jef, Ostman, Jan-Ola and Blommaert, Jan, (eds.) *Handbook of Pragmatics*. 1995, Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, p15.

... groups”¹²⁵ this seems to be a notoriously difficult objective to achieve. It would seem that there are theoretical issues to be dealt with in the meeting of cultures that, despite their importance, are not amenable to conventional research techniques. Wolfson gives an example of planned research in pragmatics that failed flatly, prompting its authors to admit that much more iterative work would still be needed to achieve results that could stand up to the criticism of scientific theory.¹²⁶ There is clearly much still to be learned in the field of pragmatics.¹²⁷

2.4.1. Relevance Theory

Sperber and Wilson¹²⁸ suggest relevance theory as the right development to Grice’s thinking. To them (Sperber and Wilson) the search for relevance is the basic interpretive action engaged in on interpreting a text or utterance. They claim that “the pursuit of relevance is a constant factor in human mental life.”¹²⁹ While admitting that every utterance can be understood in a number of ways, according to Sperber and Wilson the single general criterion used for evaluating utterances is relevance.¹³⁰

Relevance arises through maximising cognitive effect and minimising processing

¹²⁵ Hinnenkamp, ‘Intercultural Communication.’ p16.

¹²⁶ WOLFSON, ‘Problems.’ pp174-195.

¹²⁷ Some issues here considered under pragmatics are sometimes regarded as in the field of discourse analysis. (YULE, GEORGE, 1996, *The Study of Language* (second edition) (Cambridge Low Price Editions). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p139ff.)

¹²⁸ SPERBER, DAN and WILSON, DEIRDRE, 1997, ‘Remarks on Relevance Theory and the Social Sciences.’ 145-151 In: *Multilingua*. 16 (1997) <http://www.dan.sperber.com/ret-soc.htm> (accessed 21-01-03)

¹²⁹ Sperber and Wilson, ‘Remarks.’ WWW.

¹³⁰ (SPERBER, DAN and WILSON, DEIRDRE, 1998, ‘Pragmatics and Time.’ (Published in): Carston, R., and Vchida, S., (eds.) *Relevance Theory: Application and Implications*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins <http://www.da.sperber.com/time.htm> (accessed 21-01-02)) “The justification of any interpretive scheme is that it renders the behaviour of others at least minimally reasonable by our lights.” (Putnam, cited in HASTRUP, KIRSTEN, 1995, *A Passage to Anthropology: between experience and theory*. London: Routledge, p172.)

effort. The more processing effort required, the lower the relevance. The cognitive effect is “...a conclusion deducible from new information and existing assumptions together, but from neither new information nor existing assumptions alone.”¹³¹

While making a lot of use of Leech’s work, I can see some fascinating implications in the application of relevance theory thinking to gaining an understanding of what is happening in Gem in Kenya today. In their account on *Pragmatics and Time* Sperber and Wilson tell us that “a large part of our cognitive life is taken up with consideration of causes and effects.”¹³² If they are here referring to ‘cause and effect’ in the physical psychological and social realm, then they have missed the point in Gem, where people are pre-occupied with the spiritual realm – spirits and spells. How does this affect the overall working of relevance theory?

Because in a holistic society god(s) and spirits are ‘relevant’, relevance theory can go some way to explaining why the scientific content of a text, teaching or instruction may be all but invisible to the people of Gem. “Scientific knowledge ... is [in Africa] often not used in its pure form, but is instead integrated with other types of existing knowledge.”¹³³ So the people of Gem will see the actions of their ancestors or of

¹³¹ (Sperber and Wilson, ‘Pragmatics and Time.’ WWW.) Sperber and Wilson’s theory is comparable to business decision making regarding cost and benefit. ‘Cost’ is effort required to process a text, whereas ‘benefit’ is cognitive effect. The optimal relevance, as the best business, maximises the latter relative to the former.

¹³² Sperber and Wilson, ‘Pragmatics and Time.’ WWW.

¹³³ (SEMALI, L., 1999, ‘Community as Classroom: dilemmas of valuing African Indigenous literacy in education.’ 305-319 In: *International Review of Education*. 1999, 45/3-4, p313.) The holistic African view such as that of Masolo advocates integration of different kinds of knowledge, that in the West would be seen as non-integrateable: “... many African intellectuals, especially in philosophy, need to shed the antiquarian complex that is suffocating progress in many aspects of their thinking. So while we say yes to African personality, we ought also to say yes to technological modernism; yes to the African conscience, but also yes to universal science.” (Masolo, *African Philosophy*. p251.) He fails to realise how saying ‘yes’ to ‘all these

people being bewitched in scientific texts – only now by different names. Spirits are perceived as all, and in all, while ‘rituals’ can be subtly adapted and changed but yet still work, altering procedures based on scientific research may totally negate their intended purpose.

The extent that people are (subconsciously) looking for a best interpretation of an utterance along the lines of relevance, should be a guiding feature in the design of teaching materials for people in Gem and elsewhere in Africa. In simple terms, the message of every sentence should have spiritual relevance. In other words, the people of Gem will be looking for spiritual relevance in any sentence that is uttered. In order to begin to understand how they will interpret one needs to apply this principle of spiritual relevance to an utterance. A sentence that may appear from a British perspective to be scientific or secular, will be understood by the people of Gem in terms of its spiritual impact.¹³⁴

things’ compromises them and means (from a British perspective) that he could be fixed onto one of the ‘antiquarian complexes’ he is trying to dispel. Seeking “intensification of life rather than its transformation” is identified by Spindler as characteristic of Paganism. (SPINDLER, MARC R., 1987, ‘Europe’s Neo-Paganism: a perverse inculturation.’ 8-11 In: Anderson, Gerald H., (ed.) *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. 11:1, January 1987, p9.)

¹³⁴ Much Western ‘Christian’ intervention in Africa does not take account of this. For example ‘Reach Africa Now,’ a Christian liaison between a Nigerian and an American pastor (KROAH, DON, nd. ‘Reach Africa Now!’ <http://www.reachaffricanow.org/story.html> (accessed 6.06.05)) claims to be holistic: “by preaching and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, addressing the moral, economic, educational, health and social needs of the nations of Africa...”. Reach Africa Now “is born out of the conviction that God has blessed the United States and other first-world countries with great resources that must be brought to bear on behalf of this great continent...” adds Kroah. (Kroah, ‘Reach Africa Now!’ WWW.) Kroah has not realized that combining the

2.4.2. Speech-Act Theory

That Austin's revelations on language use have aroused much interest suggests their potential for practical application.¹³⁵ Levinson's prediction that speech-act theory will be replaced by something much more complex further confirms its value.¹³⁶

According to speech-act theory an utterance consists of three 'doings' or 'acts'. The prior locutionary act is the utterance of a sentence. The second 'doing' is the illocutionary act which has a force, such as a threat, praise, criticism, offer etc. The third doing is the perlocutionary act being the impact or response required from the hearer.¹³⁷ Note that the "perlocutionary act is specific to the circumstances or issuance, and is therefore not conventionally achieved just by uttering that particular utterance, and includes all those effects, intended or unintended, often indeterminate, that some particular utterance in a particular situation may cause."¹³⁸ It is also notable in speech-act theory that the intended perlocutionary effect may bear only a very obtuse relationship to the semantic content of the utterance. So 'I am cold' may have the contextual effect of 'give me that blanket'.

Gospel with the distribution of wealth *transforms* it. That is, the contextual impact of words changes when their context ('accompanied by wealth') changes.

¹³⁵ Levinson, *Pragmatics*. p226. I appreciate that I am not presenting the field of pragmatics chronologically as it was discovered, as I consider my case about Gem to be made more clearly in other than such chronological order.

¹³⁶ (Levinson, *Pragmatics*. p276.) Levinson went on to devise the 'theory of preferred interpretations.' (LEVINSON, STEPHEN C., 2000, *Presumptive Meanings: the theory of generalised conversational implicature*. London, England and Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press p xv.)

¹³⁷ KEMPSON, RUTH. M., 1977, *Semantic Theory*. Cambridge Textbooks In Linguistics Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p51.

¹³⁸ Levinson, *Pragmatics*. p237.

It appears that in the course of his writing Austin realised that more and more sentences could actually be performative – until he concluded that it was in fact all sentences.¹³⁹

If so, this means that all sentences consist of a locutionary act, an illocutionary force and a perlocutionary effect, and that the relationship between these three is not primarily semantic but pragmatic.

2.4.3. The Breadth of ‘Context’

The contexts used by Leech to explore the principles of pragmatics were largely the circumstances of conversations. That is, how the impact (and hence meaning) of words is altered according to the actors present and the immediate environments to dialogue or polylogue.¹⁴⁰ The same principles have subsequently been found to be of much wider application. Hence I use the term ‘context’ in a much wider sense to include in effect *everything* in the life and worldview of a person or of persons that affects the use and impact of words.

Every word used by a person in a sense carries the whole social, ideational and historical life of the same person. Hence in the course of normal life words are reported with reference to their source. For example, amongst a group of children “mum says we should...” has a different impact to “little Johnny says we should ...”. The impact of ‘mum says’ will depend on the context of ‘mum’. That is whether the person referred

¹³⁹ Austin, *How to Do*. p52.

¹⁴⁰ Pragmatics can be usefully defined as the study of how utterances have meanings in situations. (Leech, *Principles of Pragmatics*.p x.)

to is educated or illiterate, still alive or already dead, near or far, a loving mother or a callous uncaring mother, old and frail or young and strong, rich or poor *and so on* ad infinitum! That is, all the infinitesimal known qualities of a particular person at a particular time and place are carried in their words. The same words said by different people are (in this sense) of necessity different in their contextual effect. Similar things can be said regarding every other aspect of the context of a word. Saying 'it is cold' on a snowy day in England (the air is cold) has a different contextual impact to saying 'it is cold' swimming in the sea in July (the water is cold) or saying 'it is cold' while near the Equator in Kenya (not cold at all in the British sense). History affects the contextual impact of words, hence 'a cold winter', the climatologists tell us, would once have meant something different to what it does today in the UK (because winters were once colder).

Having said that words do in a sense carry contextual meanings, an important theme in this thesis is of course that they actually do not. Taking the 'mum says we should' spoken by a child about his mother does not in itself reveal very much about the lady concerned. Saying 'it is cold' does not of itself identify which of the above options are intended – that requires a knowledge of the context of the use of the word. The failure to realise this in the supposedly cross-cultural use of language is a key theme to this thesis. That is, many people are strongly inclined to assume that the implicatures of words that they are familiar with in their normal context of use will carry through to strange contexts. Hence a British person hearing a Luo man from Gem speak the English language in the same way that he hears it used in the UK (falsely) assumes that

the same thing is meant as would be meant should the same thing be said in the UK!

Unfortunately words of themselves do not carry contexts.

Chapters 4 to 6 represent an attempt at demonstrating how local social, ideational and (to some extent) historical contexts applied to the understanding of 'bad' (*rach*) help to correct misinformed Western conceptions of the use of this word. Socially, the occurrence of bad implies that an untoward spirit (*jachien*), typically located in another person's heart (*chuny*), is responsible for 'bad'. The forms of people's ideas about 'bad' are shown to affect their responses to it. Historical accounts of the Luo by Ogot, Mboya and others make overt aspects of people's lives little mentioned in formal discourse but very important in guiding them.

2.5. Other Linguistic Considerations

The below are foundational to the development of further arguments in this thesis.

2.5.1. Beyond the 'Age of Reason'

Historians of Western civilisation enjoy explaining the significance of the enlightenment in the 17th and 18th Centuries on European ways of life to date.¹⁴¹ One would expect people from within Western European culture who have been profoundly influenced by the enlightenment to be different from those in the rest of the world.¹⁴² Hence European peoples should not claim to be able to understand what is going on in Africa without considerable interpretation of what they hear.¹⁴³

Pragmatic forces aimed at international unity act contrary to the above. The emphasis in the late twentieth Century has been on the existence of commonness and assumed equality between peoples. Differences between worldviews are dampened out by scholars. History is re-invented for every generation,¹⁴⁴ and the version that is currently fashionable is that it has been a progression from diversity to a more recent state of uniformity. Lerner reminds us how little we can understand the strength of devotion of Christians in Europe of a bygone era, compared with “...diluted modern versions of

¹⁴¹ For example CRAGG, GERALD R., 1960, *The Church and the Age of Reason 1648-1789*. Middlesex: Penguin Books.

¹⁴² “Consequently, we are faced with a reduction of the radius of science and reason, one which needs to be questioned.” (BENEDICT, XVI, 2006. ‘Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections.’ (pdf) Aula Magna of the University of Regensburg, Tuesday 12th September 2006. Lecture of the Holy Father.)

¹⁴³ Appiah found racism arising as a result of European’s experiencing the enlightenment, and then considering as inferior those who had not done so: “Up to about 1650 the general nature of European contact [with Africans] was to encourage a mutually profitable partnership which rested, emphatically, on a mutually accepted equality of power”, but ‘racism’ began *after* this time. (APPIAH, KWAME ANTHONY and GATES, HENRY LOUIS jr. (eds.) *Africana: the encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*. np: Basic Civitas Books (a member of the Perseus Books Group) p56.)

¹⁴⁴ (BENTLEY, MICHAEL (ed.), 1997, *Companion to Historiography*. London and New York: Routledge pp xii-xiv.) “It is a wonder that history is so dull, considering that much of it must be invented.” says Lerner (LARNER, CHRISTINA, 1984, *Witchcraft and Religion: the politics of popular belief*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p113.) quoting Jane Austin.

Christianity...”.¹⁴⁵ If life a few generations back is hard to understand, then how much more the life of a people with a totally different history to our own?

Ogot tells us that the role of Westerners in the Colonial era was to tell Africans that they were different.¹⁴⁶ This was, according to Ogot, hard for the African to swallow. Since independence this position has been revised and Westerners have been telling Africans that they are *not* different. A view opposed by philosophies such as those of negritude which are “meaningful to a large section of the articulate Africans.”¹⁴⁷ African people are nowadays themselves claiming to be different.¹⁴⁸

Ogot denies the existence of a unique ‘African mind’ (see above). Yet claims of uniqueness will continue as long as Europeans set themselves up as ‘normal’, suggesting that there is something wrong with the rest of the world, while history clearly indicates that it is Westerners who are the ‘odd ones out’ due to the ‘unique’ effects of the enlightenment.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ (Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion*. p114.) “If one compares a typical nineteenth-century sermon on the nature of faith with a mid 20th Century sermon on the same topic, one finds the differences to be immense...”. (HEBBLETHWAITE, B.L., 1980, *The Problems of Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p57.)

¹⁴⁶ Ogot, ‘Racial Consciousness.’ pp79-88.

¹⁴⁷ Ogot, ‘Racial Consciousness.’ p87.

¹⁴⁸ Okpewho discusses the difference between “universalism” and “historicism” in comparing cultures. (OKPEWHO, I., 1983, *Myth in Africa: a study of its cultural and aesthetic relevance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p238.) African and Western Englishes having different roots means that even if a culture is not ‘different’, different uses of English would still be needed to explain it.

¹⁴⁹ (LUCE, J.V., 1992, *An Introduction to Greek Philosophy*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., p9.) and (WIERZBICKA, ANNA, 2004, ‘Jewish Cultural Scripts and the Interpretation of the Bible.’ 575-599 In: *Journal of Pragmatics* 36 (2004) (PDF) WWW.elsevier.com/locate/pragma (accessed 21.10.05) p597.)

The struggle of identity is well illustrated in the presentation of African history. Ogot tells us¹⁵⁰ that an anomaly of history in Africa, is it being written for a non-African audience. He quotes: “need African epistles be intelligible to the West?”¹⁵¹ Ogot leaves hanging the question of whether an “... autonomy of African history” is possible.¹⁵² “Our universities are cooking and dishing out teachings that ... have no roots”, and “our way of education overflows with foreign things” said Ogot.¹⁵³ If African history were not to be based on secular, materialist reasoning, then it could fail to benefit from the prestigious recognition of Western academia.

How to escape from this trap? Recognition by the West requiring the use of Western philosophical and other categories means that in challenging these categories in communicating with the West, one has to challenge the very foundations on which one stands, as the proverbial fool who cuts off the branch of the tree which supports him. How can one mathematically prove that mathematics is fallacious to someone who will accept nothing but mathematics? So also with other disciplines. Flaws in paradigms often arise not from inside, but ‘outside’. We need to “overcome the self-imposed limitation of reason to the empirically verifiable ... [so as to] disclose its vast horizons” shares Benedict XVI.¹⁵⁴ Hence field research reported in this thesis arises from the researchers own subconscious cognition developed over long-term exposure to the Luo people. The apparent contradiction entailed in undermining a system on which the

¹⁵⁰ OGOT, BETHWELL A., 1999, ‘Africa: the agenda of historical research and writing.’ 205-221 In: Ogot, Bethwell A., 1999, *Building on the Indigenous: selected essays 1981-1998*. Kisumu: Anyange Press, p218 citing VANSINA, JAN, 1990, *Living with Africa*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, p240.

¹⁵¹ Citing ATIENO-ODHIAMBO, E.S., 1994, ‘Democracy and the Emergent Present in Africa: interrogating the historical assumptions.’ Paper read at CODESRIA Africa Zamani. Workshop on ‘Historical Legacy and the democratisation in Africa,’ April 26-29. 1994, p99.

¹⁵² Ogot, ‘Africa.’ p219.

¹⁵³ MATUNDURA, BITUGI, 2004, ‘Je, Elimu imefanya Maadili Yazorote?’ 9 In: *Taifa Leo*. February 9th 2004, p9. (My translations from *Kiswahili*, Ogot cited by Matundura.)

researcher at the same time remains dependent is inevitable. It is as if the man walking beside me advising me is invisible to my fellow Westerners!¹⁵⁵

2.5.2. How Variety has been done Away With

The West learns about the world beyond its borders through a process of translation of what is foreign into homely terms and idioms. Scientific models of translation in use “purify translation practices and situations of their social and historical variables...”¹⁵⁶ and thus because “translation wields enormous power in constructing representations of foreign cultures”¹⁵⁷ foreign cultures are domesticated. “Ocholla-Ayayo picks English proverbs (where possible) and posits them as alternatives for the Luo ones. His is an easy way out of the problems of translation and meaning” shares Amuka.¹⁵⁸ Writing by Luo scholars (and others) is often in practice a presentation of Luo traditions as if they are European. Ominde’s writing on the Luo girl¹⁵⁹ is an overt example of this, as it was written for ‘educationalists’ in Kenya in the 1950s. Amuka laments that “Scholars of Luo oral tradition and culture translate and define *ngero* mistakenly as the proverb, thus making it lexically and culturally English...”.¹⁶⁰ Khalid explains of studies of *Kiswahili* that “it is the linguist’s own European culture which pervades and guides these studies”, this being the “device by which Europe bans the spirit of non-European

¹⁵⁴ Benedict XVI, ‘Faith, Reason.’ (pdf)

¹⁵⁵ See also Section 7.1.

¹⁵⁶ Venuti, *The Scandals*. p25.

¹⁵⁷ Venuti. *The Scandals*. p67.

¹⁵⁸ (AMUKA, PETER SUMBA OKAYO, 1978, ‘Ngero as a Social Object.’ MA thesis, University of Nairobi, 1978, p29.) of (OCHOLLA-AYAYO, A. B. C., 1975, *Traditional Ideology and Ethics among the Southern Luo*. Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies.)

¹⁵⁹ OMINDE, SIMEON H., 1952, *The Luo Girl*. Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau.

¹⁶⁰ Amuka, ‘Ngero as a Social Object.’ p iii.

cultures ... within the European system of scholarship.”¹⁶¹ Venuti is determined to attack the hegemony of English. He tells us that translators have done so ‘good’ a job as to give the impression that the rest of the world is full of Americans and Brits who just happen to be a bit behind.¹⁶² He further chides the English speaking world by saying that “English is the most translated language worldwide, but one of the least translated into.”¹⁶³

Pym’s consideration of the Spanish word *movida* is particularly revealing of translation trends. The way Pym finds this word to be translated by various Western countries strongly reflects every country’s particular political ideology.¹⁶⁴ According to Venuti translators are desperately needed who when translating into English nevertheless ensure that their reader knows that they are receiving something foreign. Only thus could English people be forced to consider whether their language and culture really is as hegemonic the world over as they have imagined.

An example of such translated-foreignness is the way in which my use of the word ‘bad’ as a translation for *rach* results in some clumsy English grammar. For example

¹⁶¹ KHALID, ABDALLAH, 1977, *The Liberation of Swahili from European Appropriation*. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, p203.

¹⁶² The reverse also happens – that the Luo incorporate European texts into their own worldviews. Hence Onyango–Abuje on reading ‘*The Holy*’ (Otto, 1959.) comments that it is ‘similar’ to the Luo Mumbo cult. (See ONYANGO-ABUJE, J.C., 1971, ‘Mumbo. A Luo Metaphysical Concept.’ Religious Studies Occasional Paper No. 6, 1-10 In: Byaruhanga-Akiiki, A.B.T., (ed.) *Occasional Papers in African Traditional Religion*. Kampala: Makerere University July 1971. Volume 1, p9.)

¹⁶³ (Venuti, *The Scandals*. p10.) citing Venuti. (VENUTI, LAWRENCE, 1995, *The Translator’s Invisibility: a history of translation*. London: Routledge, p14.) The preponderance of texts translated from English to other languages is partly due to the number of technical texts being translated as products from the economically powerful English speaking world spread across the globe.

¹⁶⁴ (PYM, ANTHONY, 1998, no title, <http://www.fut.es/~apym/on-line/tt/entry.html> (accessed 17.08.05)) Schaffer finds that for the Wolof people: “To permit each infant [of twins] to suckle a breast as it likes, when

the title of Chapter 5, ‘where bad comes from’ would more traditionally have been phrased as the ‘origin of *evil*’ or ‘causes of *misfortune*’. The use of these terms would misleadingly indicate to the English reader that he is on familiar territory while in fact both these terms are seriously lacking. ‘Evil’ is a rarely used word in contemporary English.¹⁶⁵ Hence its use implies something that the Luo might have, that ‘we’ don’t. In being rare it is also sinister. Affliction carries implicit undertones of mystery or magnitude that make it other than the every day.¹⁶⁶ Misfortune on the other hand is an outworking of the bad or evil, that the latter terms only carry implicitly. Compare the simple phrase ‘there is a bad smell’ with ‘there is an evil smell’ and ‘there is an unfortunate smell’. The term that is grammatically clumsy, bad, is vastly more accurate in representing that which is here under consideration.¹⁶⁷

2.5.3. The Challenges of Translation

“Thus the view that a message can be communicated to any audience regardless of their cognitive environment is simply false” says Gutt.¹⁶⁸ We cannot agree with the “intertranslatability postulate” that says that “any potential reality represented in one

it likes, that is *demokraasi*.” (SCHAFFER, FREDERICK C., 1998, *Democracy in Translation: understanding politics in an unfamiliar culture*. New York and London: Cornell University Press, p63.)

¹⁶⁵ Macfarlane’s research suggests that the term ‘evil’ was rare or absent in some parish records in Essex between 1380 and 1750. (MACFARLANE, A., 1985, ‘The Root of All Evil.’ 57-76 In: Parkin, D., 1985, *The Anthropology of Evil*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd. pp62/3.) Admittedly current President of the USA George Bush, drawing from the vocabulary of the American fundamentalist right, has recently resurrected the use of ‘evil’ in reference to the ‘evil empire’ in his struggle against terrorism.

¹⁶⁶ This is the term used by Turner. (TURNER V.W., 1981, *The Drums of Affliction: a study of religious processes among the Ndembu of Zambia*. London: International African Institute.)

¹⁶⁷ See Section 2.7.4. for more discussion on the use of the term ‘bad’ in this thesis.

¹⁶⁸ GUTT, ERNST-AUGUST, 1991, *Translation and Relevance: cognition and context*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Inc., p97.

language can be represented in any other one.”¹⁶⁹ Gutt’s application of relevance theory (for more details see below) to translation practice with particular reference to Bible translation emphasises the sheer difficulty of translation. “We cannot necessarily communicate the same thoughts to just anyone ...” he reiterates¹⁷⁰ rather “failure of communication is likely to arise where the translation assumptions about the cognitive environment of the receptor language audience are inaccurate.”¹⁷¹ Oluoch confirms the difficulty of translation between two great East African languages: “Translation of matters concerning traditions from *Dholuo* to *Kiswahili* is very difficult especially when it comes to customs, religion and so on.” (My translation from *Kiswahili*.)¹⁷²

Bouquet examines the possibility of devising the means of reasoning needed to enable an appropriate context to be found so as to enable the correct interpretation of a given text. This would barely have been possible even if a particular context were merely a predictable subset of the global knowledge base, but fails completely if “a local theory is not a partition of a bigger (global) theory, but a full grown theory which represents knowledge about some portion of the world.”¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ GRACE, GEORGE W., 1987, *The Linguistic Construction of Reality*. London: Croom Helm, p140.

¹⁷⁰ Gutt, *Translation and Relevance*. p97.

¹⁷¹ (Gutt, *Translation and Relevance*. p112.) “Accordingly, to understand ways of speaking which belong to a culture alien to us we must learn to ‘hear’ them in their proper cultural context and with some knowledge of this culture’s ready-made speech forms; in other words, we must try to understand the underlying cultural scripts.” (Wierzbicka, ‘Jewish.’ p575.)

¹⁷² (OLUOCH, STEPHEN, 2004, Response to research seminar held at Maseno University entitled ‘*Uvumbuzi wa Isimu Amali – kwa Wajaluo, Kenya uhusiano wa lugha na utamaduni wake.*’ held on 23rd September 2004.)

¹⁷³ (BOUQUET, PAULO, et al. 2003, ‘Theories and Uses of Context in Knowledge Representation and Reasoning.’ 455-484 In: *Journal of Pragmatics*. 35 (2003) (PDF) WWW.elsevier.com/locate/pragma (accessed 13.06.03) p464.) Expectations for a theory of pragmatics include: “(i) it should contain enough information about the conversational situation to determine what is expressed by a context dependent utterance, and (ii) it should contain enough information about the presuppositions, beliefs, and desires of the participants of the conversation to determine whether what is said by the speaker is appropriate or not.”

Gutt makes a helpful distinction between direct translations and interpretations. Direct translations are those assessed according to their correspondence with an original, whereas interpretations are assessed according to some aspect of their function. In the translation of a maintenance manual of a vehicle from English to Japanese, the former approach will concentrate on ensuring that the Japanese version resembles the American one, whereas the latter will focus on the need to be able to maintain the vehicle, regardless of resemblance to the original. According to Gutt, the possibility of creating a helpful direct-translation dwindles as the gap between the contexts of the two languages grows.¹⁷⁴

Pickens points us to the importance of considering oral tradition, being “the collective memory of a society which is explaining itself to itself.”¹⁷⁵ While Pickens considers himself to be providing a piece of ‘oral literature’ to the scholarly community,¹⁷⁶ he seems not to realise sufficiently that a piece of oral literature can only be translated / understood in the light of that people’s ‘oral literature’ as a whole, that in effect sets the parameters of meaning. In other words, oral materials must be interpreted by those with a knowledge of specific oral language uses, being practiced speakers of that language.¹⁷⁷

(VAN ROOY, ROBERT, 2003, ‘Asserting to Resolve Decision Problems.’ 1161-1179 In: *Journal of Pragmatics*. 35 (2003) PDF WWW.elsevier.com/locate/pragma p1173. (accessed 13.06.03))

¹⁷⁴ Gutt, *Translation and Relevance*. pp161-180.

¹⁷⁵ Pickens, *African Christian*. p140.

¹⁷⁶ Pickens, *African Christian*. pp139-140.

¹⁷⁷ Much the same can also be said of written materials.

*Luo Kitgi gi Timbegi*¹⁷⁸ a book that helps Luo people to take pride in their way of life, when translated directly into English may most help an English speaking audience to despise the Luo for their ‘superstitious’ past. An interpretation to have a function in Britain equivalent to that among the Luo (i.e. pride in one’s people) would need a total re-writing. Such re-writing is necessitated because core orientations in life among the Luo people, being seen very differently in the Western world are likely to cause the West to condemn Luo values. For example the focus on *kwe* (‘peace’) in many Luo activities,¹⁷⁹ and what I may describe as a constant or pervasive orientation to death and the dead. Both of these are a type of cleansing, often translated using the English term repentance. None of these terms are really very accurate. For the Luo people the ‘peace’ they seek is that of being in such a harmonious relationship with those around them, the dead as well as the living, that brings material prosperity, good health, long life, laughter, many children and so on. To my understanding of the equivalent aim to achieve in life in the West, ‘peace’ would be only one of many and a relatively minor factor of many to consider. Other key considerations would be managing ones household budget, making provision for a pension, acquiring a TV or video, going to a cinema, using methods to control the birth of children, and so on. If ‘peace’ is mentioned – it is likely to be in terms of the absence of wars, such as world war two or the situation of those living in Iraq in 2003. ‘Peace’ is unlikely to be a key criterion for evaluating even interpersonal relationships. In management theories, attempts at ‘understanding’ human interpersonal dynamics and psychological theses have stolen the limelight in this area.

¹⁷⁸ This title can be translated as: “The Luo, their Customs and Traditions.” (Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*.)

¹⁷⁹ Maranz explains: “Africans believe that they are following an overriding principle, that of putting the welfare of the individual ahead of other considerations. They believe that if all individuals are treated with consideration and respect, then society in the long run will be a peaceful one where good people live together in mutual dependence and solidarity. ... This they believe is the only way society can achieve harmony for all.” (Maranz, *African Friends*. p122.)

The focus on death in Luoland is oriented to chasing or keeping death away. The closest things in the West are perhaps the biomedical health services. The similarities between this and Luo customary orientation to health are often more misleading than helpful.¹⁸⁰

2.5.4. Translations that Corroborate Ignorance

The vast cultural gap between European nations and China renders translation in some respects impossible. Yet, says Steiner, this does not stop people from translating! As a result “each translation in turn appears to corroborate what is fundamentally a ‘Western invention of China’.”¹⁸¹ Others have drawn the same conclusion for Africa, like Hill who has found that “... sufficient generalised nonsense is written about African economic conditions, especially by British and American academics, to ensure the hardening of prevailing economic myths.”¹⁸² The critique that Stephen Neill’s volumes on the history of Christianity in India received illustrate the same point. Despite this work being “of great erudition”,¹⁸³ “received favourably by the Western press”¹⁸⁴ and otherwise praised by Pierard, the *Indian Church History Review* “was extremely

¹⁸⁰ “...it is the prophet [in an African church] not the Western medical practitioner who works within the same frame of reference as the [African] patient.” (WEST, M., 1975, *Bishops and Prophets in a Black City: African independent churches in Soweto*. Johannesburg London: Rex Collins, p118.)

¹⁸¹ (Steiner, *After Babel*. p378.) See also Mudimbe. (MUDIMBE, V.Y., 1988, *The Invention of Africa: gnosis, philosophy and the order of knowledge*. London: James Currey, p67.)

¹⁸² HILL, POLLY, 1970, *Studies in Rural Capitalism in West Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p15.

¹⁸³ PIERARD, RICHARD V., 1995, ‘Stephen Neill.’ 531-550 In: Bauman, Michael and Klauber, Martin, I., *Historians of the Christian Tradition: their methodology and influence on Western thought*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman Publishers, p545.

¹⁸⁴ Pierard, ‘Stephen Neill.’ p546.

critical”,¹⁸⁵ considering Neill’s writing to be in an old paternalistic missionary style, and to lack coherence and direction. What Neill wrote about India for the British could hardly satisfy the Indians themselves.

Gutt recognises this difficulty. He gives examples to show how “...secondary communication situations can give rise to a wide range of misinterpretations.”¹⁸⁶ In other words, an utterance that is interpreted against a different context to the one intended, because of the dependence of meaning on pragmatic (contextual) factors, is bound to be interpreted differently. “... when addressing different audiences we tend to change what we want to convey to them not only how we say it.”¹⁸⁷ “...the same word can be said to another time only by being said differently” says Thistleton.¹⁸⁸ “...all too often we exegete well enough to discover culturally appropriate functional equivalents for our own culture and subculture only to impose these forms on the members of another culture” says Kraft.¹⁸⁹ When the ‘secondary communication situation’ (for example Europeans receiving communications from African people) is consistently similar, then the mis-translations are likely to follow a pattern, leading not only to confused and mixed up texts, but an invention and then regular confirmation of something that does not exist. Kuhn discovered that contextualisation is not a conscious process for AIC leaders in Western Kenya¹⁹⁰ despite Westerners’ advocating avenues

¹⁸⁵ Pierard, ‘Stephen Neill.’ p546.

¹⁸⁶ Gutt, *Translation and Relevance*. p74.

¹⁸⁷ Gutt, *Translation and Relevance*. p97.

¹⁸⁸ Thistleton, ‘The New Hermeneutic.’ p80.

¹⁸⁹ KRAFT, C.H., 1973, ‘Dynamic Equivalence Churches: an ethnological approach to indigeneity.’ 39-58 In: *Missiology, an international review*. Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1973, p50.

¹⁹⁰ Kuhn, ‘From African.’ p89.

for them to follow.¹⁹¹ The African people's own contextualization is going to be different than that proposed by the West. Their search very often, I suggest, is not for 'culturally appropriate expression', but for how to keep the devil away.

Blommaert gives us a good example of such misinterpretations as they arise in a European setting. He investigates Belgian people's views on tolerance and diversity, particularly with respect to a recent influx of Muslim 'guest workers'. He finds a surface rhetoric advocating a welcome and active integration among the Belgium people for them. Yet when taking account of pragmatics in the interpretation of various texts in Belgium, Blommaert finds the opposite to be happening.¹⁹² "An ulterior motive for the writing of this book is to show the importance of linguistic pragmatics for dealing with current social problems" says Blommaert¹⁹³ realising that "all forms of communication are accompanied by more or less hidden meaning systems which determine the interpretation of what is said."¹⁹⁴

Effective translation requires knowledge of 'hidden meaning systems' that exist at both ends of the cultural spectrum being dealt with.¹⁹⁵ This is rarely achieved in the African context, where people translating what happens in Africa to those in Europe usually have their feet very firmly planted in only one of those two environments. Cross-overs

¹⁹¹ MOLYNEUX, K.G., 1988, 'African Christian Theology. A study of contrasting processes of theological reflection in Zaire with special reference to examples selected from Roman Catholic, Kimbanguist, and Protestant Church bodies.' Dphil thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 1988, p64.

¹⁹² BLOMMAERT, JAN AND VERSCHUEREN, JEF, 1998, *Debating Diversity: analysing the discourse of tolerance*. London: Routledge

¹⁹³ Blommaert, *Debating Diversity*. p38.

¹⁹⁴ Blommaert, *Debating Diversity*. p32.

¹⁹⁵ "For a theological educator to be an effective facilitator, he must be in touch with both 'horizons', the contemporary African one and the Biblical one ...". (MOLYNEUX, GORDON, 1993, *African Christian*

rarely result in deep insights at both ends, as those people who cross continents usually enter into distinct and relatively isolated pockets of the people they are visiting. That is, African people visiting European nations typically confine themselves largely either to an academic environment, or an ethnic African community. Similarly Europeans in Africa find themselves confined to urban or mission station and English speaking circles.

2.6. Research Methodology: Style of Life – to Enable Learning as the People Learn

This research methodology fashions the subjective (often sub-conscious) of the researcher through exposure to the culture(s) of those being reached. It represents a means towards vulnerability that enables effective listening and accurate understanding of normal communication, rather than techniques at deriving extra-normal exposure to knowledge. (I have attempted to leave a trace of my personal learning through this process in texts that I have written from 1988 (when I first went to Africa) to date, many of which are available on the internet.¹⁹⁶) The focus in this section is *not* on ‘how to get information’ but rather ‘how to live so as not to prevent or distort incoming information’. I present this in a missiological perspective because:

1. Missionaries need to understand the people who they work with.

Theology: the quest for selfhood.. Lewiston, New York: Mellan University Press, p387.) But Molyneux fails to mention the third ‘horizon’ – the Western one out of which much theological education material emerges.
¹⁹⁶ www.jim-mission.org.uk , see especially ‘Journals’. (accessed 7.03.06)

2. So as to make my own research bias clear. Researchers cannot be neutral. Not to make one's own bias clear can be deceptive. I cannot step out of my Christian skin for the purpose of a thesis.

3. I believe my identity as a 'servant of God' to be a key aid to my achieving of vulnerability, that in turn enables my research. This is because I am not here to promote the interests of any particular man or men,¹⁹⁷ but of God himself, who is God of all.

2.6.1. A Brief Biography

I went to teach in a mission school in Zambia in 1988. While intending to educate the people in agriculture, after two years I had to stop and think, as I seemed to be working against instead of with my Zambian colleagues.¹⁹⁸ It was to me amazing that missionaries and aid workers who saw themselves as coming to 'help' Africa, could be subject to the degree of suspicion and criticism that I was hearing from my Zambian colleagues. I tried to watch and listen more. I carried out a questionnaire survey to explore issues of 'development'. I found that my questions enlivened my fellow Europeans, but seemed to skirt heart-felt issues amongst Zambians. My search for the

¹⁹⁷ I retain the masculine term here in preference to the gender-neutral 'person or people' because the contextual impact of gender-neutral terms is very different.

way forward took me to the University of East Anglia and the School of Development in 1991.¹⁹⁹ I was there introduced to the long running debate between Marx and his opponents regarding causation in history. I found Marx to be very misleading in his denial of the importance of 'religion' in the formation of society. In 1993 I returned to Africa, to Kenya and not to Zambia. My valuation of my agricultural knowledge had declined. My intention was to share God's word with people.

On arrival in Kenya, I began living in the rural home of a Luo bishop.²⁰⁰ I was 29 years old, but behaved as a small boy in accepting what went on around me in this African village. I happily accepted having a small dark room to sleep in. I was sent on errands and ate whatever food was being prepared in grandmother's kitchen. Since moving out 3 ½ years later I have rented various houses in the locality with up to 14 local children under my care. Our home language is usually *Dholuo* sometimes *Kiswahili*, but not English. I continue to be actively involved in visiting local indigenous (and to some extent mission) churches and teach for two or three days weekly at YTC (Yala Theological Centre). This is a grass roots level Bible school in which we travel to classes on foot or by bicycle and then use local languages (*Dholuo* and/or *Kiswahili*) for instruction.²⁰¹ For two days per week I teach at KIST (Kima International School of Theology), that falls under the Church of God (Anderson) – an holiness church originating in America.

¹⁹⁸ This occurred in various respects. On running the school farm, I tried to raise prices so as to give the school what to me was a decent profit to allow development. My fellow teachers were opposed, wanting low prices for products to be affordable.

¹⁹⁹ Where I obtained an MA in Rural Development.

²⁰⁰ James Aweyo of Zion Harvest Mission Church, in Ulumbi village, near Yala.

Multiple participation, conversations, observations and engagements with my African colleagues contributed to a change in my own orientation. Although both European and African peoples share the common end of achieving prosperity for their people, the way that this was to be achieved differed. I realised that although my African colleagues were happy to participate with my fellow Europeans in their missiological and developmental efforts (usually on condition that they received some immediate compensation such as a salary), their own heartfelt orientation was otherwise. Theirs was to achieve this through rituals, words and other means of deterring ancestral spirits with untoward intent. I remained puzzled as to why such orientation was not reflected in African people's use of language, especially English. My explorations into pragmatics provided the missing insight – by using the same language as my fellow Europeans, their ancillary and sometimes radically different orientation was hidden from view.

The principles and rules of thumb that I here outline, which I have followed since 1993 (and to some extent also before that), guide my life among the African people.²⁰² These principles have been essential in enabling me to acquire the kinds of insights that I outline in this thesis.

²⁰¹ Using TEE materials produced by OAIC (Organisation of African Instituted Churches). Since January 2005 I have also been teaching at the newly opened Siaya Theological Centre based in Siaya town in Alego.

²⁰² I make reference to personal strategy and experience so as to be reflexive. (DAVIES, CHARLOTTE AULL, 1999, *Reflexive Ethnography: a guide to researching selves and others*. London: Routledge.)

2.6.2. Learning of Language²⁰³

To learn a living language is to begin to understand another way of looking at the world.

“... the life of words is social ...” says Hastrup.²⁰⁴ Language should be learned from its owners in the way that it is used. “Meaning cannot be reduced to reference” says

Hastrup.²⁰⁵ In Africa in particular language is understood to be a means to power.²⁰⁶

Acquisition of language is vital for many reasons: “To be told the meaning of your life by others, in terms which are not yours, implies that your existence does not matter to them,

except as it is reflected in their own.”²⁰⁷ Failure to know a people’s language, means that

“The interior mental states of converts are not easily accessible by verbal means ... [and this] creates a religion of formal rules of behaviour.”²⁰⁸

The missionary anthropologist Charles H. Kraft was recently asked, ‘How much time should one who goes to serve as a two-month short-term missionary spend in language learning?’ Kraft responded: ‘Two months.’ The questioner continued, ‘What about one who stays six months?’ ‘Then spend six months in language learning.’ ‘And if he stays two years?’ ‘There is nothing he could do that would communicate more effectively than spending those two years in language learning’.²⁰⁹

²⁰³ For more details on language, see especially Chapter 2.

²⁰⁴ Hastrup, *A Passage*. p40. See also Creswell. *Qualitative Inquiry*. p53.

²⁰⁵ Hastrup, *A Passage*. p28.

²⁰⁶ (CHIRAIRO, DUBE LILLIAN, 2003, Course held at Birmingham University, post-graduate department of Theology, entitled *Cosmologies and Independentism*. January to March 2003.)

²⁰⁷ MARRIS, P., 1974, *Loss and Change* (revised edition). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, p155.

²⁰⁸ BEIDELMAN, T.O., 1982, *Colonial Evangelism: a socio-historical study of an East African mission at the grass roots*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p16.

²⁰⁹ (BREWSTER, E. THOMAS, and BREWSTER, ELIZABETH S., 1982, ‘Language Learning is Communication – is Ministry!’ 160-164 In: Anderson, Gerald H., (ed.) *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. 6:4 October 1982. (electronic edition))

2.6.3. Living With

Singleness is a great help if one wants to live closely with a people²¹⁰ in their ‘normal’ way of life: “... the arrival of white women and the automobile drastically reduced informal contact between European colonialists and Africans.”²¹¹ For a single man to live with people who are going to include women and girls requires a very strong commitment to celibacy.²¹² Normal family and marriage commitments make it difficult to achieve proximity to a culture that is very different from one’s own.²¹³ Living with, preferably while participating with the people,²¹⁴ needs to be for an extended period in order to prove the genuineness of one’s intentions. To be accepted as having ‘good will’ and not some untoward motive by one’s host society is no easy process: “The result of individual good-will from within an unjust social system is moral cynicism on the part of the recipients. Much of the opposition to the Christian churches has stemmed from this cause.”²¹⁵ The sacrifices involved in long term commitment are one of the only ways of overcoming this.

²¹⁰ As missionary-monks had to do in a bygone age. (JAMES III, FRANK A., 1995, ‘Venerable Bede.’ 95-116 In: Bauman, Michael and Klauber, Martin, I., *Historians of the Christian Tradition: their methodology and influence on Western thought*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman Publishers, p9.)

²¹¹ Beidelman, *Colonial Evangelism*. p13.

²¹² It is more difficult for single women due to their vulnerability to men. While cross-cultural marriage can confer close relationship with the foreign, mixed couples’ frequently moving towards a Western lifestyle often isolates the Western partner.

²¹³ While different European nationalities may easily learn from each other, greater difficulties arise where cultural barriers are as vast as between European and African people. (See FURNHAM, A., and BOCHNER, S., 1986, *Psychological Reactions to Unfamiliar Environments*. London: Routledge. p247.)

2.6.4. Have no Money

It is important for a ‘foreigner’ who wants to minister the Word of God in Africa, and to work hand in hand with the people in this, to be ‘poor’.²¹⁶ That is, not also to be involved in the handing out of wealth or aid in any significant proportions.²¹⁷ This is because the person who wields power through being a source of funds and thus being able to influence major decisions that impact people’s lives without first having a close understanding of and identity with language and culture can easily put up barriers between himself and the people.²¹⁸ Hence Paul (the apostle) “took no financial help to those to whom he preached ... that it could be so never seems to have suggested itself to his mind”²¹⁹ and “in those [New Testament] days the establishment of the church was a spiritual operation, today it is a financial operation”²²⁰ says Allen. Livingstone’s influence among the Baukena “depended entirely on persuasion” because he “expected them to do what their own sense of right and wrong dictated.”²²¹ “Gift without return

²¹⁴ Furnham and Bochner, *Psychological Reactions*. p257.

²¹⁵ Hebblethwaite, *The Problems of Theology*. p138.

²¹⁶ The term ‘poor’ needs careful use, here indicating the absence of surplus wealth, and not being ‘cursed’. (Malina, *The New*. p84.) “To give the people nothing, literally *nothing*, but the ... gospel” (Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered*. p162.) said Donovan, who while taking ‘nothing’ unfortunately travelled by landrover. (Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered*. p124.)

²¹⁷ Unless in very regulated and controlled ways insignificant to normal life and not requiring the foreigner to make informed decisions.

²¹⁸ Bernstein in concluding his book *Beyond Objectivism* advocates “dialogical communities” (p231) as the way to achieve mutual recognition between cultures. This reliance on dialogue as a sufficient foundation for mutual understanding across cultural boundaries hits the rocks when pragmatics is taken into account. This is because the latter reveals the necessity of sharing in understanding of respective cultures as a foundation for understanding the very words that are to be used in such a dialogue. Those cultural traits are *not* contained within the words of the dialogue itself, but in the environment of their use. (See Section 2.2.)

²¹⁹ ALLEN, R., 1930, *Missionary Methods, St. Paul’s or Ours?* (new edition) London: World Dominion Press pp67 and 69. (See also ALLEN, R., 1927, *Missionary Methods, St. Paul’s or Ours?* London: World Dominion Press, p185.)

²²⁰ PATON, DAVID and LONG, CHARLES, H., 1983, *The Compulsion of the Spirit. A Roland Allen reader*. Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, p111.

²²¹ LIVINGSTONE, DAVID, 1857 *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*. London: Ward, Lock and Co. Ltd. p17.

gift is alienation and paternalism.”²²² “... independence ... segregation and isolation from the poor ... appears to be an almost inevitable consequence of [Western missionary] affluence” says Bonk.²²³

Being poor, is keeping one’s ears open. Distribution of wealth to people in ways which please everyone is impossible. Being a benefactor means gaining some friends but also acquiring jealous enemies. This, on the part of a wealthy foreign island²²⁴ in a ‘poor’ community in practice comes to necessitate security measures, like high fences and guard dogs that cut one off from local people. The role model being communicated (African converts came to understand the Christian way of life as being identical with the norms of conduct set for them by the missionaries ...²²⁵) in this way is one of isolation. The theology implicitly taught is that of prosperity. The association of prosperity with Godly living,²²⁶ has recently become very stark because “the missionary [has become] the apostle of affluence, not sacrifice ...”²²⁷ Foreign initiatives backed by large-scale resources from the outside squash and marginalise local innovations and practices. People living such a lifestyle, easily fail to acquire a close knowledge of the ways of the African people, as the other is “reshaped, at least to

²²² KOLIÉ, CÉCÉ, 2001, ‘Jesus as Healer.’ 128-150 In: SCHREITER, ROBERT, J., (ed) 2001, *Faces of Jesus in Africa*. New York: Orbis Books, p139.

²²³ (BONK, JONATHAN J., 1989, ‘Missions and Mammon: six theses.’ 174-181 In: Anderson, Gerald H., (ed.) *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. 13:4 October 1989. (electronic edition))

²²⁴ That is, a European in Africa.

²²⁵ (MUGAMBI JESSE.NDWIGA.KANYWA, 1992, *Critiques of Christianity in African Literature*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers 1992, p1.) Rieger critiques *short term* ‘relationship’ as resulting in our failure to “given an account of the deeper inequalities and differentials in power.” (My emphasis.) (RIEGER, JOERG, 2004, ‘Theology and Mission between Neocolonialism and Postcolonialism.’ 201-227 In: *Mission Studies: journal of the international association for mission studies*. 21, 2, 2004, p219.)

²²⁶ VAN DE TOORN, K., 1985, *Sin And Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia: a comparative study*. Maastricht: Van Goreum, p88.

²²⁷ NACPIL, EMRITO, P., 1971, ‘Mission but not missionaries.’ 356-362 In: *International Review of Mission*. Volume LX, No. 239, July 1971, p359.

a certain degree, in our own image.”²²⁸ I have argued elsewhere that while a withdrawal of all funding and aid would be extremely difficult, there should be some missionaries who are independent of this benefactory system.²²⁹ That is for there to be a two-prong Western missionary force, the one prong being those who are carefully protected from the destructive implications of close association with Western-oriented power structures.²³⁰

There have been efforts at reducing the paternalism of mission by using the term ‘partnership’. I agree with Rheenan that this has simply “... frequently become a disguised form of paternalism.”²³¹ Helander and Niwagila concede in Tanzania that “fixation in the roles of ‘rich giver’ and ‘poor receiver’ has taken place”²³² and that “there cannot be a partnership in a setting up of dependency and patronage”²³³ acknowledging that “the sharing of material resources is perhaps one of the most difficult matters in the history of partnership.”²³⁴ Unbalanced financial relations are not

²²⁸ As Rieger states for short term workers. (Rieger, ‘Theology and Mission.’ p219.)

²²⁹ HARRIES, JIM, nd. ‘Power and Ignorance on the Mission Field or “The Hazards of Feeding Crowds.”’ <http://www.geocities.com/missionalia/harries.htm> (accessed on 15.01.03)

²³⁰ “The purchase of land and the establishment of foreign missions ... naturally suggest the idea of foreign domination” (ALLEN, R., 1960, *Missionary Methods, St. Paul's or Ours?* London: World Dominion Press. p74.) thus putting up barriers. “Jesus indicates that by the very use of money we are in constant contact with forces of evil.” (PIPER, OTTO A., 1965, *The Christian Meaning of Money*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Incorporated, p60.) See also: (Paton and Long, *The Compulsion*. especially pages 90 and following.)

²³¹ (RHEENEN, GAILYN VAN, 2001, ‘Money and Missions (revisited).’ MMR#13

<http://vlib.anthotech.com/bin/jump.cgi?ID=1077> (accessed 20.03.02) np.) “Frederick S. Daws, ... professor of the history of Christianity, shredded the partnership theory [and] its claims ...”. (COSTENA, ROBERT T., 2000, ‘Finger on the Pulse: fifty years of missionary research.’ 98-105 In: Anderson, Gerald H., (ed.) *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. 24:3, July 2000. (electronic edition)) “I do not believe that our understanding of mission is significantly advanced when it is reduced to partnership.” (SKRESLET, STANLEY H., 1995, ‘The Empty Basket of Presbyterian Mission: limits and possibilities of partnership.’ 98-104 In: Anderson, Gerald H., (ed.) *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. 19:3 July 1995. (electronic edition))

²³² HELANDER, EILA and NIWAGILA, WILSON B., 1996, *The Partnership and Power: a quest for reconstruction in mission*. Usa River, Tanzania: Makumira Publications (number seven.) p74.

²³³ Helender and Niwagila, *The Partnership and Power*. p85.

²³⁴ Helender and Niwagila, *The Partnership and Power*. p125.

cured so easily. African people are very willing to be ‘clients’.²³⁵ Maranz makes this especially clear in his frequent references to clientism as the norm in ‘African’ society.²³⁶ “The Westerners are people who appear to have ample resources that many Africans would like to have them share but lack most other qualifications for meaningful relationships” adds Maranz.²³⁷ Not relating to Africa on the basis of finance challenges a Westerner to be relevant in other ways. That is a difficult, but healthy, challenge.

2.6.5. Judge Not

Neutrality on issues is impossible; for example, silence in respect to an issue implies acceptance of it. Yet an outsider or new-comer is likely to be ill informed, so will make poorly informed judgments. If this person is powerful through being wealthy or influential in the church or community, this can be damaging. Thus in order not to ‘judge’ a newcomer cannot afford to be ‘powerful’. Adding to the ‘problem’ of the power of the European man and his judgmental words is the transformation of meaning that occurs in the process of translation.²³⁸ Without good vernacular knowledge even well thought out ‘judgments’ will go askew in their translation and communication, which is why “disputes ... have to be settled ... from within... ”.²³⁹ Spreading English around the globe results in “a crisis in the organic coherence between language and its

²³⁵ RICHARDS, P., 1986, *Coping with Hunger: hazard and experiment in an African farming system*. The London research series in geography II London: Allen and Unwin, p115.

²³⁶ Maranz, *African Friends*.

²³⁷ Maranz, *African Friends*. pp9-10.

²³⁸ Venuti, *The Scandals*. p67.

cultural content...”²⁴⁰ so easily spreads more confusion than light. Not to understand is to misunderstand, and to misunderstand easily leads to false judgments.²⁴¹ Making a false judgement from a position of power is of course likely to result in creating a wary distance from the people.

Every time a traveller sends a report home about people to whom he is a stranger, is he not judging them? Indeed the level of ignorance of such a traveller must be born in mind, but perhaps this is the best that we have. As long as this traveller is speaking to his own people, he will be understood in what he is saying. Other over-hearers, including the people of whom he is writing will not understand him or her, and need to accept as much.²⁴²

Today I am writing to British people, in so far as I understand them. I hope everyone here will accept that and realise that non-British readers of this thesis are to me to an extent ‘over-hearers’ or ‘bystanders’.²⁴³ This is an important point, often not realised by scholars, for example Magesa quoting Stanley²⁴⁴ and Ogot²⁴⁵ who accused Speke and Burton of ‘strong prejudices’.²⁴⁶ They were not writing to the Luo! ‘Over-hearers’

²³⁹ (WALZER, MICHAEL, 1994, *Thick and Thin: moral argument at home and abroad*. London: University of Notre Dame Press, p49.) Cross-cultural understanding can be ‘thin’ or ‘thick’, the difficulty of acquiring the latter leads Walzer to this conclusion.

²⁴⁰ Steiner, *After Babel*. p491.

²⁴¹ “The status of translation in the Global economy is particularly embarrassing to the major English speaking countries, the United States and the United Kingdom.” (Venuti, *The Scandals*. p159.) Not because these countries are more judgmental, but because their pervasive influence has their texts widely read.

²⁴² See Section 2.2.

²⁴³ Leech, *Principles*. p13.

²⁴⁴ STANLEY, BRIAN, 1990, *The Bible and the Flag*. England: Appollos, p28.

²⁴⁵ Ogot, *History of the Southern Luo*. p15. (Also referred to in Chapter 1.)

²⁴⁶ Magesa’s accusing Europeans of comparing Europe’s *ideal* with Africa’s reality (Magesa, *African Religion*. p22.) while true in part should not allow us to forget the very real shock experienced by Western Europeans on meeting African communities.

are much studied in pragmatics.²⁴⁷ Not being directed at over-hearers a discourse may presuppose things outside of their experience, or not follow the ‘cooperative principle’ in respect to them. An over-hearer’s gaining of understanding may involve much guesswork. (This is often, but decreasingly as I learn more of the people, my position at a public event like a church service in Kenya.) Nangoli has realised these language issues, and turns them on their head by critiquing scholarship in Africa through his blatant use of ‘African English’ in his entertaining and daring book.²⁴⁸ Presumably for this reason, Maranz divides his book into separate sections for African to learn of Western and Western of African.²⁴⁹

Within this category of judging, I would like to add one further specific comment. That is the need to postpone judgment – for one’s natural internal judgments not to affect one’s decisions or be communicated in ‘powerful ways’ to one’s host culture until one has considerable understanding of that culture.²⁵⁰ When living among the Luo people in Kenya I make conscious efforts not to judge the people in what they do, even at times when their practices are to me very unkind and resulting in death. I have to do this if I am ever going to be considered as an insider in the culture (see the section on guilt below). “The real

²⁴⁷ Allan, *Meaning and Speech Acts*. WWW.

²⁴⁸ NANGOLI, CHIEF MUSAMALI, 1986, *No More Lies about Africa*. New Jersey: African Heritage Publishers

²⁴⁹ (Maranz, *African Friends*.) His (African) reviewer realises “Maranz’s observations are mostly on the mark when it comes to how Africans approach interpersonal relationships and finance.” yet critiques “... Maranz [for doing] a poor job of hiding his dim view of Africa’s economic performance, which he shares with many other scholars.” (GONDWE, DERRICK K., 2003 ‘Book Review’ 108-110 In: *Africa Today* 50.2 (2003) WWW http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/africa_today/v050/50.2gondwe.html np.)

²⁵⁰ One’s *thinking* being ‘judgmental’ may be inevitable. Hence avoiding power in favour of poverty is advisable.

challenge of intercultural interaction ... is to come to terms with the differences found in the other culture which one may initially wish to reject” shares O’Dowd.²⁵¹

2.6.6. Don’t Ask Questions

While asking of questions when finding oneself in a strange and unknown environment is very natural, it is also known that the type of questions asked will determine the understanding that a listener will acquire.²⁵² Especially because people may “... profess one set of values but really operate and live by these now hidden traditional cultural norms”²⁵³ knowledge of a person may more accurately be obtained by listening to them express their issues of their own accord than by intensive questioning from one’s own perspective. Hence Francis in her research in Kisumu concentrated on collecting ‘life histories’.²⁵⁴

There are many ways of asking questions. Holding up a Koran in front of me is inviting me to comment on it. Taking me on a walk up a mountain may prompt me to talk on the grandeur of God’s creation, that would perhaps not normally occupy my thinking

²⁵¹ O’DOWD, ROBERT, 2001, ‘In Search of Truly Global Network: the opportunities and challenges of on-line intercultural communication.’ In: *CALL-EJ Online*, Vol. 3, No. 1, June 2001, http://www.clec.ritsumei.ac.jp/english/caljeonline/6-1/o_dowd.html (accessed 12.04.05)

²⁵² For example cooking and eating may not be important to me, but someone questioning me intensely on it could falsely assume that it is my passion. See also Briggs. (BRIGGS, CHARLES L., 1986, *Learning how to Ask: a sociolinguistic appraisal of the role of the interview in social science research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.)

²⁵³ Omondi, ‘Syntax and Semantics.’ p213.

²⁵⁴ (FRANCIS, ELIZABETH, nd. *Qualitative Research: collecting life histories*. http://www.isr.bucknell.edu/Circulation_and_Reserves/Reserves/sample_article2.pdf (accessed 19.02.03)) Despite attempts to overcome research bias, Francis’ short stay in Luoland prevented her from discerning semantic or pragmatic translation issues, and the relationship between how a story is told and ‘reality’ on the ground. She could not have ascertained Luo ideas of historical causation and the reasons for story telling that under laid their accounts.

time at all. Put a European person alongside an African or summon him to study in Newcastle using the English language, and you are inviting him to discuss issues that pertain to his relationship with those people or that place, that may not otherwise be important everyday issues to him. The environment can easily determine the discussion; and in turn limit the discussion. "... dialogue between Christians of the first and third worlds ... has a limited relevance because all of it is conducted in the European languages and therefore within the terms which our modern Western culture provides. No one takes part in them who has not been qualified to do so by a modern-style education in a European language."²⁵⁵ This environment of contact between European and African cultures has been the bread and butter of Western research about Africa and the African writing that makes some sense to Europeans. Hence even Paul Mboya, writing about his own people's ancient customs in the 1930s (most recently published 1997), opens his book (written in *Dholuo*) with a section called *Biro Wazungu* (The coming of Europeans).²⁵⁶ Healey shares of Tanzanians that: "Their beliefs may not fit into Western categories of institutional religions ...".²⁵⁷

Biased methods of learning will bring biased knowledge.²⁵⁸ Hutchinson concedes that "... whenever people asked me for my opinion about some matter or my reaction to some event, I tried to answer their questions as openly and honestly as I could."²⁵⁹ Europeans' knowledge of Africa being based on discussion that centres on comparison means that it is predominantly helpful only in relation to European pre-understanding.

²⁵⁵ NEWBIGIN, LESSLIE, 1987, 'Can the West be Converted.' 2-8 In: Anderson, Gerald H., *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. 11:1 January 1987. (electronic edition)

²⁵⁶ Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p iii. (The term *Wazungu* that is here used by Mboya arises from *Kiswahili*.)

²⁵⁷ Healey, *A Fifth Gospel*. p25.

²⁵⁸ KIRBY, JON P., 1994, 'Cultural Change and Religious Conversion in West Africa.' 57-72 In: Blakely, Thomas D., van Beek, Walter E.A., and Thomson, Dennis L., 1994, *Religion in Africa: experience and expression*. London: James Currey, p66.

Until a relationship goes beyond considering this meeting of cultures²⁶⁰ it remains extremely limited. “... it is quite understandable for generations of African Christians to simply remain silent about the things the ‘white man’ wouldn’t understand, ...” says Kirby.²⁶¹ To learn about the other in a way that can make sense to them one has to be a sufficient part of them so as, ideally, not to be noticed. Then to listen, with eyes, ears, feelings and heart, to situations that arise.²⁶²

2.6.7. Undercutting Presuppositions

On going through ‘missionary training’ some years ago I was implicitly told, with reference to ‘Western life’, that ‘you have something of value to take to the world, here is how to communicate it’. The West sees itself as having a valuable package for the rest of humanity. Nowadays we concentrate on trying to wrap it up to fit in all corners of the Globe.²⁶³ “No other world religion is associated with the modern world system more than [Protestantism]...” shares Hunter.²⁶⁴ While such may be appropriate for someone in a secular NGO or working for government,²⁶⁵ I do not consider it acceptable for a missionary who is sent by the church. The essential orientation for

²⁵⁹ HUTCHINSON, SHARON E., 1996, *Nuer Dilemmas: coping with money, war and the state*. London: University of California Press, p45.

²⁶⁰ Which Hutchinson (Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas*. p45.) apparently failed to achieve.

²⁶¹ Kirby, ‘Cultural Change.’ p66.

²⁶² Briggs suggests that weaknesses in interview-research can be overcome. (Briggs, *Learning how to Ask*. p xiv.) But implicit in this thesis is the suggestion that much use of formal interviews can be counter-productive to research.

²⁶³ Resulting in situations like: “While the health sector is making rapid progress in addressing the disease [HIV/AIDS], culture has a long way to go.” (OLOO, PAMELA, 2004, ‘The Churches Mission: gender and HIV/AIDS among the Luos of East Africa.’ 70-77 In: *transformation: an international dialogue on Mission and Ethics*. Vol. 21, No 1, January 2004, p70.)

²⁶⁴ HUNTER, JAMES D., 1987, *Evangelicalism: the coming generation*. London: University of Chicago Press, p189.

missionary work needs to be to strip oneself of what one has picked up from one's own culture, so as to be able to walk with vulnerability among the people one is trying to reach. "The missionary deliberately empties himself / herself of the power base of the sending church and enters into the process of *kenosis*."²⁶⁶ The missionary does not take cultural packets, be they medical, agricultural, computers or books – but a message from God.²⁶⁷ These Westernising elements are a hindrance to the missionary task,²⁶⁸ and God can work without them. "At the beginning it was not recognised that Africans could be responding to Christianity as a religious faith that appealed to them on its own terms, without the trappings of European civilisation" says Bediako. Surely it is time that this was recognised?²⁶⁹ (See also Section 7.4.3.1. on this issue.)

Livingston's claim that secularism is rooted in Old Testament times (he tells us that "the Canaanite god of skill, *Koshar*, became the Hebrew *kishor*, the word for 'skill'.")²⁷⁰ ignores the difficulty of distinguishing a 'skill' (*nyalo*) from 'good fortune' (*hawi*) and in turn this from god (*nyasaye / juok*) in *Dholuo* and presumably other non-English languages. Suggestions that a move to secularisation is an inherent part of Christianity may arise more from the peculiarity of Western languages than the Bible. A similar

²⁶⁵ Maranz's detailed sharing supports the notion that many development activities in Africa continue only because of the West's ignorance of what is happening on the ground. (Maranz, *African Friends*. pp102 and 104.)

²⁶⁶ REIMER, JOHANNES, 2004, 'Mission as Kenotic Action: understanding Orthodox Theology of Mission.' 68-83 In: *Missionalia*. 32:1 April 2004, p75.

²⁶⁷ McGrath emphasises the urgent need to counter a "long-term threat" to evangelicalism by promoting Biblically controlled spirituality. (MCGRATH, A., 1993, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, p141.)

²⁶⁸ "Enlightenment missionaries could only offer solutions to enlightenment problems." (HAYES, STEPHEN 1995, 'Christian Responses to Witchcraft and Sorcery.' 339-354 In: *Missionalia*. 23:3 November 1995, p345.) "... missionaries ... were insufficiently aware of the equal need for them to be distinctive from the racial and cultural assumptions of their own social background." (Stanley, *The Bible*. p183.)

²⁶⁹ BEDIAKO, K., 1992, *Theology and identity: the impact of culture upon Christian thought in the second century and modern Africa*. Oxford: Regnum books, p251.

²⁷⁰ LIVINGSTON, G. HERBERT, 1974, *The Pentateuch in its Cultural Environment*. Michigan: Baker Bible House, p184.

anachronism could underlie the search for moral²⁷¹ principles underlying the Old Testament law, such as attempted by Wright.²⁷² According to Ziesler, Paul was not prone to do this.²⁷³ An evident weakness in Ocholla-Ayayo's work is its claim that Luo 'ethics' are based on reason,²⁷⁴ hence his writing that "*Chira* actions ... affirm the belief that the happiness of the family group is the proper '*summum bonum*' from a large part of the Luo ethics."²⁷⁵ Suggestions that Christianity, in an indigenous African form, is inherently a route to secularism or modernism, must be treated with caution.

As long as missionary work continues to be seen as the construction of what it is to be Western, it is falling short of its God-given mandate.²⁷⁶ Anthropologists tell us that it is through 'religion'²⁷⁷ that "we find our way to the centre and to the heart of the larger social systems at hand."²⁷⁸ Sheriff's suggestion that "'Theology' refers to the component of the material that carries over with normative effect from the specific cultural and historical setting" of a people²⁷⁹ implies that there is something distinct that is not theology from which theology can somehow be extracted. I suggest instead,

²⁷¹ i.e. ethical, which I take as having "begun among the Greeks as an attempt to find regulation for the conduct of life which should have a rational basis and purpose instead of being derived from custom." (DEWEY, JOHN, 1978, 'Reconstruction in Philosophy.' 429-443 In: Johnson, Oliver A., *Ethics: selections from classical and contemporary writers* (fourth edition). London: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, p431.)

²⁷² WRIGHT, C.J.H., 1983, *An Eye for an Eye: the place of Old Testament ethics today*. Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, p158.

²⁷³ "There are remarkably few signs that the law functioned for [Paul] as a criterion of behaviour, with the exception of the command to love." (ZIESLER, J., 1990, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: TIP New Testament Commentaries*. London: SCM Press, p48.)

²⁷⁴ Which a Western readership will assume to be Western reason.

²⁷⁵ Ocholla-Ayayo, *Traditional*. p222. (Sentence not entirely clear in the original.)

²⁷⁶ I cannot agree that "mutual understanding and cultural and religious exchange" should be the aim of mission (suggested by Troeltsch, cited in Verkuyl. (VERKUYL, J., 1978, *Contemporary Missiology: an introduction*. Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, p171.) because "tested missions defend nothing else than the right to bring the Gospel to all men." (Visser, cited by Verkuyl, *Contemporary*. p174.)

²⁷⁷ Which for the Luo means 'through seeing how he lives' as religion is life and life religion. (Magesa, *African Religion*. p33.)

²⁷⁸ NEUSNER, JACOB, 1985, 'The Contribution of Anthropology: a response to Mary Douglas and Edmund Perry.' <http://theologytoday.ptsem.edu/jan1985/v41-4-article5.htm> (accessed 11.03.02)

²⁷⁹ SHERIFF, D.C.T., 1989, "'A Tale of Two Cities' – nationalism in Zion and Babylon." 19-57 In: *Tyndale Bulletin*. 1989, (39) p40.

that theology must always be seen as a part of what is within people. This is to me confirmed by the transformation that would occur to this ‘component’ in the course of translation from one language to another. Theological language arises from the dynamics of human existence. Theological inputs from the outside will impact what they find in complex ways, not simply replace it.

Healey has made a suggestion that is in my experience widely believed in mission circles, that “only Africans themselves can be the authors of authentic incarnation in their own culture.”²⁸⁰ While intended to encourage the African to engage in this task, this has the unfortunate additional effect of encouraging ‘foreigners’ to ignore it and concentrate on ‘support roles’ that can often be filled by short-termers.²⁸¹ This plus an increase in short as against long term mission means that “these days ... many missionary organisations are quite prepared to leave ‘cultural matters’ to the African churches ...”.²⁸² I see no Biblical support for this whimsical stance that is all too easily used by foreigners to excuse themselves from the need for deep language and cultural learning, and leaves them in powerful positions while ignorant.²⁸³

²⁸⁰ Healey, *A Fifth Gospel*. p175.

²⁸¹ I do not agree that “needs are changing quantitatively and qualitatively” towards short-term mission (WARD, TED, 1999, ‘Repositioning Mission Agencies for the Twenty-First Century.’ 146-153 In: Anderson, Gerald H., (ed.) *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. 23:4 October 1999. (electronic edition)), as such is motivated by the sending, and not the receiving end.

²⁸² Kirby, ‘Cultural Change.’ p68.

²⁸³ Widespread advocating of tolerance in preparation for cross-cultural exposure is sometimes to blame. (For example see O’Dowd, ‘In Search.’ WWW.) ‘Tolerance’ can become an excuse for remaining ignorant,

2.6.8. Loaded Judgments

The academic community is wary of people who make value judgments. Suggesting that the British eat more potatoes than Africans is acceptable, to suggest that they are able to trust one another more than the African people, is not acceptable.²⁸⁴ The latter is obviously hard to define and appears to take a superior position. Making moral evaluations public seems to be taboo in Western academia. Yet Riley asks: “Is it possible to make value-free statements about the differences between two cultures?”²⁸⁵ Could it not then be that there are some enormous differences in standards of value that, in being ignored by the academic community for the sake of political correctness, are rendering its research inaccurate?

What is one to do in a situation in which numerous ‘experts’ may be barking up the wrong tree? To say nothing is impossible, as silence implies that levels of trustworthiness (for example) are identical in Africa and in the West. Why should they be identical? Is it not likely that there be differences in levels of trustworthiness between one society and another? Such differences in trustworthiness would seem to be important.²⁸⁶ Failing to communicate about them can be misleading. I suggest that reluctance to take value positions seriously is an unacceptable compromise of research

especially by those who consider their own cultures to be superior. Communication based on tolerance rather than understanding can bring more shadows than light. See Harries, ‘Power and Ignorance.’

²⁸⁴ “One area of personal interest to me, based on my ten years of work amongst the Meru, [a Kenyan Bantu tribe] is the concept of personal trust. There is anecdotal evidence that integrity or trustworthiness is an important pragmatic issue for African leadership. There is a need to test the effects of trust within the overall leader equation.” (GRANBERG, STANLEY EARL, 1999, ‘A Critical Examination of African Leadership and Leadership Effectiveness among the Churches of Christ in Meru, Kenya.’ PhD thesis, Open University 1999, p289.)

²⁸⁵ RILEY, P., 1989, ‘Well don’t blame me! – on the interpretation of pragmatics errors.’ 231-249 In: Oleksy, W., (ed.) *Contrastive Pragmatics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, p234.

credibility. Value laden characteristics must not be put into a separate ‘taboo’ category.²⁸⁷

This reluctance to make value judgments overt is comparable to Western researchers’ reluctance to consider theology’s interactions with other disciplines.²⁸⁸ This is unacceptable given recent discoveries in pragmatics that reveal how God-language is used to *do things* for people.²⁸⁹ God’s role being ignored is at peril to the truth.²⁹⁰

2.6.9. Cover Ups

The ever-positive analysis of the economic-development fraternity brings another misleading bias to the West’s research on Africa. “Nobody would want to disagree with something that appears as self evidently good and necessary as development.”²⁹¹

Of short-term mission Rieger says: “How could anyone dare to question the work of

²⁸⁶ FUKUYAMA, FRANCIS, 1995, *The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*. London: Penguin.

²⁸⁷ Note my point that judging becomes a problem when someone ignorant has power. (Section 2.6.5.)

²⁸⁸ “... ordinary historical scholarship [has] not permitted reference to God for nearly 200 years”

(BEBBINGTON, DAVID, 1979, *Patterns in History: a Christian perspective on historical thought*.

Leicester: APOLLOS, p186.) yet “the connection between ... theology and anthropology, as ... other social sciences, is critically important...”. (Magesa, *African Religion*. p37.) The research community’s operating from an (unfortunately imaginary) ‘impartial’ objective base can conceal important concerns.

²⁸⁹ For example the use of the names of divinities in so called ‘swear language’ in British English.

²⁹⁰ (ETHERINGTON, NORMAN, 1996, ‘Recent Trends in Historiography of Christianity in Southern Africa.’ 201-221 In: *Journal of Southern African Studies*. Volume 22, Number 2, June 1996, (PDF) <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0305-7070%28199606%2922%3A2%3C201%3ARTITHO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-D> (accessed 01.03.03) p203.), (NUSSBAUM, STAN, 2004, ‘A new academic niche for the study of AICs?’ 49-50 In: Nussbaum, Stan, (ed.) *Final Issue: The Review of AICs: a practitioners journal produced by and for the Network on AICs and Missions*. Volume 15, Numbers 2-3, May-August and September-December 2004, p50.), (Lonsdale, in his foreword to Karanja. (Karanja, *Founding*.)), (Bebbington, *Patterns in History*. p116.), (Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*. p1.), (ANDERSON, STEPHEN, 2005 ‘Can Mythology Save the Miraculous?’ 22-25 In: *Philosophy Now*. (52) August to September 2005. p22.)

²⁹¹ BRAND, COENRAAD, 1991, ‘Understanding Development.’ 74-83 In: *Christian Education in the African Context*. (following African Regional Conference of the International Association for the Promotion

such a well-meaning and compassionate group?”²⁹² “As long as we celebrate our own generosity, nothing can really challenge us” adds Rieger.²⁹³

These people give wealth and material gain the highest rating of importance in life.²⁹⁴ Their Marxist materialist leanings limit the breadth of their perception of human society.²⁹⁵ This makes their “claims to superior insight ... spurious”²⁹⁶ because “to use Western logic in a non-Western culture is a mistake.”²⁹⁷ The “sudden rush to economic concerns ... leaves little room for matching reflection”²⁹⁸ but despite all this some continue “to resist a cultural explanation of [African] problems...”²⁹⁹ and instead declare boldly that “the barriers to development in Africa are not in the mind, but in the soils, the mosquitoes, the vast distances over difficult terrain, the unsteady rainfall.”³⁰⁰ Thus for them a key role for the Scriptures or God and even local people in social change is ruled out in favour of external finance.

of Christian Higher Education) Michigan: Grand Rapids (1992) (Conference held at Harare from 4th to 9th March 1991) p75.

²⁹² Rieger, ‘Theology.’ p213.

²⁹³ Rieger, ‘Theology.’ p214.

²⁹⁴ Discussion on development very soon turns to finance, (AYITTEY, GEORGE B.N., 1998, *Africa in Chaos*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, p30.) and money being a newcomer to SSA adds to the foreignness of the exercise.

²⁹⁵ BOOTH, DAVID, 1994, ‘Rethinking Social Development. An Overview.’ 3-34 In: Booth, David, (ed.) *Rethinking Social Development: theory, research and practice*. Harlow: Longman, p5.

²⁹⁶ Brand, ‘Understanding Development.’ p80.

²⁹⁷ Healey, *A Fifth Gospel*. p177.

²⁹⁸ RWIZA, RICHARD N., 2001, *Formation of Christian Conscience: in modern Africa*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications, Africa, p9.

²⁹⁹ LEONARD, DAVID K., and STRAUS, SCOTT, 2003, *Africa’s Stalled Development: international causes and cures*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p103.

³⁰⁰ SACHS, JEFFREY, 2005, ‘The End of the World As We Know It: the fight against extreme poverty can be won, but only if Bush recognises that military might alone won’t secure the world.’ *Guardian*. Tuesday April 5th 2005, <http://www.commondreams.org/views05/0405-26.htm> (accessed 16.05.05)

Functionalism has similarly been at the root of many failures in research on theological education / mission.³⁰¹ The maintenance of a functionalist stance requires a lot of covering up of what is going on at ground level. Hence these people are always finding the ‘project that works’ and interpreting what is happening in Africa (and elsewhere) alongside an imagined ideal of a developed Western country, as this is necessary to bolster their particular faith.³⁰² To say that ‘Africa is not developing’ (for which read Westernising) is heresy to this group. All this has little to do with the actuality on the ground. The vested interest of the above powerful group is in maintaining an image in the public eye of Africa and other parts of the ‘poor world’ as ‘developing’.³⁰³ We should not be deluded by this false hegemony³⁰⁴ when researching on alternative views on ‘what is good for Africa’.³⁰⁵

One cannot avoid suspecting that Pentecostalism has learned through these ‘development’ oriented people. The latter’s ability at, through Western contacts and reason, achieving incredible transformations through projects is imitated by the more Pentecostal Africans. When European development-people link onto the schemes of

³⁰¹ (WARNER, TIMOTHY M., 1990, ‘Foreword.’, page x In: Moreau, Scott, 1990, *The World of the Spirits: a Biblical study in the African Context*. Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House 1990, p x.) Sociological theories of the Old Testament (MAYES, A., 1989, *The Old Testament in Sociological Perspective*. London: Marshall Pickering.) speak clearly into Africa today, where conditions resemble those of the Old Testament. Whereas development thinking from the West is rooted in structural functionalism (Mayes, *The Old Testament*. p 87.) that “threatens to subvert the liberating potential of the Jesus movement” (HORSLEY, P.A., 1989, *Sociology and the Jesus Movement*. New York: Crossroad, p39.) the conflict tradition (Mayes, *The Old Testament*. p36.) has a lot to teach us. “The impact of functionalism on missiology ... has a built-in bias in favour of what is, and is hostile to cultural change.” (TABER, C.R., 1991, *The World is too much With Us: the modern mission era, 1792-1992. An appraisal. Culture in modern Protestant Missions*. Georgia: Mercer. p147.)

³⁰² In Marxist materialism.

³⁰³ The understanding of people typically presented by this group is mathematically simple – more investment, money, projects, technology etc. are always better.

³⁰⁴ “Technology ... creates and imposes a ruthless logic of its own, a type of mentality which finds it increasingly harder to grasp any other point of view” (Taber, *The World*. p133.)

³⁰⁵ “The big question [regarding aid] ... is ... whether the poor can use it.” (WOLF, MARTIN, 2005, ‘How to Help Africa Escape Poverty Trap.’ (WWW) http://coursenligne.sciences-po.fr/2004_2005/delpla/How%20to%20help%20Africa%20escape%20poverty%20trap%20FT.pdf. (accessed 16.05.05) p2.) Wolf has no alternative to offer to aid, but has he considered all the options?

Pentecostals then this appears to justify their great faith in magical forces. Hence Sato's commenting that in Pentecostal churches in cities around the world people with "outrageous vision[s] ... set goals for themselves that are utterly unattainable by normal human standards [yet] ... they often times attain these goals."³⁰⁶ One person's science has become another's magic. Is this to be encouraged?³⁰⁷

2.6.10. Avoiding Guilt Traps

A Westerner going to the 'poor' world is often *expected* by his own people to be pre-occupied in working against poverty in certain recognised ways. Healey shares that "many [white] visitors challenged us for living the ordinary life of the local people without encouraging the villagers to improve their standard of living."³⁰⁸ "New missionaries and pastors quickly learn the unwritten rules of mission work once they are settled within a mission station, and so they focus mostly on building schools, clinics, churches, and establishing development projects." says Kirby.³⁰⁹ Enormous pressure is applied for Western Christian workers to concentrate on Westernising people or to have a constant preoccupation with handing out wealth. It is the West's assumption that they are obliged to use their resources in constantly 'helping' African

³⁰⁶ (SATO, TIMOTHY, 2002, 'Outrageous Vision: a conversation with Donald Miller about global Pentecostalism.' In: *Christianity Today*. November/December 2002 <http://www.christianitytoday.com/bc/2002/006/18.31.html>) See footnote 335 in Chapter 2 on the modern world's enhancing magical beliefs. This answers what "seems to defy logic" that "the strange contradiction: 'yes *Kiswahili* will improve performance, but it should not be adopted as LOI [language of instruction] because it will be a disadvantage'." (MWINSHEIKHE, HALIMA MUHAMMED, 2003, 'Using *Kiswahili* as a Medium of Instruction in Science Teaching in Tanzanian Secondary Schools.' 129-148 In: Brock-Utne, Birgit and Desai, Zubeida and Qorro, Martha, 2003, *Language of Instruction in Tanzania and South Africa (LOITASA)*. Dar-es-Salaam: E and D Limited, p142.) English in Africa is the language of the new magic.

³⁰⁷ "Pentecostals ... advocate ... a total break from the past" says Meyer, cited in Blunt: (Blunt, 'Satan is an imitator.' p303.) This renders them vulnerable to incredible claims.

³⁰⁸ Healey, *A Fifth Gospel*. p75.

people to achieve a more 'civilised' way of life that has prevented them from drawing closer to the people and being used in other ways.³¹⁰ While Christ himself and his apostles met many needs, they also clearly left many unmet. We who today follow in their footsteps need to be able to do the same.³¹¹

I believe that I have a duty as a Christian and a member of the society I am in to show love and consideration to my neighbour. But I do not believe that I have an obligation to utilise my 'own' people's 'superior' knowledge or financial powers to intervene in such a foreign (to me) situation if this is not sensible according to local conditions.³¹²

This has been, to me, a vital position to have in order to move close to the people. Guilt traps, such as the one I have described above, would otherwise have the effect of forcing me to be different and to set me apart from my hosts.

There are many additional ways of considering this issue. For example, the principle of 'division of labour' can be considered in relation to mission / development work. As on a production line one puts in bolts and another tightens them, so in mission one missionary can have a donor face, and another can strive to avoid it. By this means the

³⁰⁹ Kirby, 'Cultural Change.' p68.

³¹⁰ Wolf in considering the means being proposed to help Africa escape from the poverty trap, comes out in favour of "a 'big [economic] push' that would last some two decades" (Wolf, 'How to.' p1.) because "the option of doing nothing is worse." (Wolf, 'How to.' p2.) For Wolf, it appears, relating to the people on other than an 'aid' basis is not an option even to be considered. It is 'aid or nothing'.

³¹¹ Note that even if someone engaged in research is not personally 'promoting development', association with his/her fellow countrymen in the minds of African people will still result in labeling with the same brush.
³¹² Institutional processes set up by the West to achieve such intervention have "surreptitiously ... replaced dependence on personal good will..." (ILLICH, I., 1974, *Deschooling Society*. London: Marion Moyars. p111.) as "to share is much harder than to give." (Healey, *A Fifth Gospel*. p48.) Functioning through institutions such as schools, hospitals etc. can easily be understood by local people as oriented to profit making. It creates a social distance with the community at large. For the USPG (United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) "... sharing became the primary motif in new initiatives developed in response to partnership principles." (MAISH, COLIN, 2003, 'Partnership in mission: to send or to share?' 370-381 In: *International Review of Mission*. Vol. XCII, No. 366 July 2003, p380.) Whether USPG can implement this principle of sharing, may be another matter.

same amount of resources can still come to be used, but some missionaries (or researchers) can be allowed to keep their ears and eyes open.³¹³

2.6.11. Questioning the Universality of Academia

I do not hold to the view that the dominant current Western academia is internationally the only ladder to a good education and betterment. Otherwise why would academic fashions change so quickly, and what is 'in' during one decade become 'old hat' in another? Vagaries of translation³¹⁴ add to my conviction. that the educational and academic system in Africa need not be a subsidiary of the Western one.³¹⁵ The massive resources that foreign governments and international bodies continue to pour into the Western-based educational system is in danger of squashing out local wisdom and initiatives.³¹⁶ 'Wisdom' in the Luo sense is after all more akin to that of the Scriptures: "a form of Yahwism"³¹⁷ than secular knowledge, says Blocher.³¹⁸

³¹³ The underlying reason for every Westerner working with Africans to be involved in funding, is presumably the widely held wisdom that Africa desperately needs money, but African people are corrupt. But even if we agree with this, it remains possible for a donor community to share the same amount of giving between less people who each have larger budgets. Having all missionaries campaigning for funds can be the less efficient use of human resources.

³¹⁴ Especially from British/Western to African English.

³¹⁵ As illustrated by a 'Colloquium for Blacks' arranged in the UK. (RESEARCH, 2005, Research Colloquium for Black Academics and Practitioners, to be held at London Metropolitan University, North Campus on Thursday 21st July 2005. (information received by internal mail from Birmingham university).) which advocates "...develop[ing] an Afro-centric position rather than a European one...".

³¹⁶ Learning *Kiswahili* may become compulsory in national universities in Kenya. (JOHN, KOBIA, 2003, 'Somo la Kiswahili liwe Lazima Vyuoni.' 8 In: *Taifa Leo*. December 15th, 2003, p8.) Having education in Africa in a language other than English would be one way of creating a gap with Western education.

³¹⁷ BLOCHER, H., 1977, 'The Fear of the Lord as the Principle of Wisdom.' 3-28 In: *Tyndale Bulletin*. 28 1977, p18.

³¹⁸ "The Old Testament ignores our modern tension between faith and thought, reason and revelation; ... wisdom was a 'form of Yahwism' or 'rooted in faith'." (Blocher, 'The Fear.' p18.)

Attempts at cross-cultural research, particularly on the part of the transfer of Western know-how to the non-West, have continued only in a state of blindness to their own findings. That is that knowledge is culturally specific.³¹⁹ Because "... modern science in its victorious march has blotted out the immediate past, and one generation's conscious omissions become the next generation's genuine amnesia"³²⁰ the West no longer knows what it does not know. Western knowledge has been perpetuated because of the world economic imbalance,³²¹ but its effect has been to seriously stultify the growth of indigenous knowledge.³²² That is non-Westerners, instead of being free to express their hearts and minds, are forced to wear a pretentious straitjacket in order to gain recognition. This has the additional effect of creating a veneer of Westernisation over much of SSA. This veneer is sufficiently deceptive to fool much of the world into thinking that Africa is what it is not. Whatever planning is occurring on Africa's behalf is therefore frequently grossly misinformed.³²³

³¹⁹ "... the mind contributes the concepts with the help of which experience is interpreted." (Kant, cited in Gunton (GUNTON, C.E., 1992, 'Knowledge and Culture: towards an epistemology of the concrete.' 84-102 In: Montefiore, H. (ed) *The Gospel and Contemporary Culture*. New York: Mowbray, p90.)) Similarly Morris (MORRIS, B., 1987, *Anthropological Studies of Religion: an introductory text*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p267.) tells us that "cultural facts are the manifestation, at the conscious level, of fundamental structures inherent in the human mind." Akman enlightens us that: "facts do not speak for themselves; [but] only through social agents...". (AKMAN, VAROL and BAZZANELLA, CARLA, 2003, 'The Complexity of Context: guest editors introduction.' 321-329 In: *Journal of Pragmatics*. 35 (2003) [WWW.elsevier.com/locate/pragm](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/pragm) (2003) (PDF) (accessed 3.06.03) p326.)

³²⁰ TAMBIAH, S.J., 1990, *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p28.

³²¹ "... You need two things to succeed: English and computers." (Power, 'Not the Queen's English.' p41.) The economic incentives encouraging an orientation to the West are increasing in the current globalising age.

³²² "Conducting cross cultural research is not new. What is new is the growing acknowledgement of the perils of crossing cultures unconsciously." (SPARKS, BARBARA, 1997, 'Doing Cross Cultural Research in Adult Education: methodological and epistemological considerations.' 1997, *AERC Proceedings*. <http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca/aerc/1997/97sparks.htm> (accessed 4.05.05))

³²³ That 'accommodation' easily looks bad 'back home' in the West is not new. In the 1740s: "The first great attempt at 'accommodation' had failed. ... Roman practice, ... was to be ... the law for the missions ... for the next 200 years" (NEILL, STEPHEN, 1986, *A History of Christian Missions: the penguin history of the church* (second edition). London: Penguin Books, p194.) making the Catholic Church "ostentatiously a foreign body." (Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*. p33.)

I argue in this thesis, that claims to objectivity by Western researchers often covers what is clearly subjective. This especially because there is no cross-culturally valid category called 'objectivity' in Gem or much of Africa. Decisions and choices that are apparently objective, cannot be objective because they have subjective foundations. "The act of knowing includes an appraisal; and this personal co-efficient, which shapes all factual knowledge, bridges in doing so the disjunction between subjectivity and objectivity."³²⁴ For example, I frequently get an *impression* about a book that I am reading. This impression may have me put the book aside, decide just to skim read it, or read it very carefully and make detailed use of all of it or just a particular part of it. My subjective impression may thus alter the course of my research, and it is to an extent dishonest not to acknowledge this.³²⁵

Hence I have written that: "Sparks' writing is incredible, as she desperately seems to be searching for a theology, without considering God. That is, the questions that she is forced to ask by the lack of an objective base that she finds cross culturally, are really none other than questions of – 'well, what does God want ...' except that she does not phrase them in that way."³²⁶ Sparks does not mention God in her article. Even should she totally disagree with me and should someone try to prove me wrong in my supposition, the fact is that this notion has been important in channelling the direction of my thoughts, which in turn affected the direction and content of this thesis as a whole. Not mentioning a direction taken as a result of such an 'impression' that is rooted in the realm of feelings and hunches

³²⁴ (POLANYI, Michael, 1964, *Personal Knowledge: towards a post critical philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p17.) Also quoted in Section 7.3.1.

³²⁵ My particular understanding of pragmatics, which I am here communicating, has been shaped by the books I have read and the order in which I have read them.

³²⁶ See footnote 108 in Chapter 7.

is to hide something that has influenced my understanding, which, especially if this occurs frequently, could be deceptive and in fact according to Meibauer be lying:³²⁷

A captain and his mate have a long-term quarrel. The mate drinks more rum than is good for him, and the captain is determined not to tolerate this behaviour any longer. When the mate is drunk again, the captain writes into the logbook: Today, 11th October, the mate is drunk. When the mate reads this entry during his next watch, he is first getting angry, then, after a short moment of reflection, he writes into the logbook: Today, 14th October, the captain is not drunk.³²⁸

While literally the Mate did not lie, his implicature is such that according to Meibauer he did lie.³²⁹ In the course of reading I have picked up many implicatures (such as the one above from Sharp). In order to be honest as a scholar I need to include a phrase something like: ‘On reading this I felt’ It would be dishonest, and according to Meibauer perhaps would be lying, not to concede this. My being able later to provide evidence to support my hunch does not negate the presumably important epistemological truth – that my new insight(s) arose subjectively.

This links in closely with my further point. It being ‘politically correct’ to say that all people are essentially the same, has made it impossible to adjust to differences. Instead of having education that is meaningful and pertinent to their needs, Kenyan schoolchildren are fed a (‘meaningless’,³³⁰) second hand British-educational diet that only tangentially

³²⁷ Meibauer, ‘Lying.’ p1373.

³²⁸ Meibauer, ‘Lying.’ p1380.

³²⁹ “It is argued that the case of falsely implicating should be included within a general definition of lying.” (Meibauer, ‘Lying.’ p1373.)

³³⁰ Words not in public use have no meaning. (Hastrup, *A Passage*. p164.) Schoolchildren being taught in English, which most rarely hear used outside school, results in it being “primitive magic which gives meaning to existence.” (DOUGLAS, MARY, 1996, ‘Sacred Contagion.’ 86-106 In: Sawyer, John F.A., 1996,

engages their own culture.³³¹ Meanwhile, Western research is stifled as it attempts to engage with invented realities.³³² The often unperceived cruelty of this position is that Western knowledge acts as a placebo in relation to Africa's deep ills, thus preventing her people from progressing on their own accord.³³³ "... Africa's interactions with the international system perpetuate the negative dynamics that are at the heart of the continent's problems – even when as with foreign aid and technical assistance, world actors are trying to be of help."³³⁴ Any attempts at indigenous advance are almost doomed to failure as they operate in the heavy shadow of their Western funded competitors.³³⁵ The way the Western system works remains beyond comprehension (is it a variety of blessing arising from pleasing the dead?) and leaves people stuck on a dead-end road.

Reading Leviticus. A conversation with Mary Douglas. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 227. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, p72.)

³³¹ But does create dependence. For more comments on this see Sections 6.5.3., 7.4.3.3. and 8.3.

³³² "People in other societies carry with them experiences that are alien to our conceptual and emotional frames of reference...". (VAN DE PORT, MATTIJS, 1999, 'It takes a Serb to know a Serb: uncovering the roots of obstinate otherness in Serbia.' 7-30 in *Critique of Anthropology*. Volume 19, (1999) p26.) See also Davies (Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography*. p15.) School-learning enables non-Westerners to express themselves in such a way as to prevent Westerners from perceiving their real alienness. (See also Section 2.5.2.)

³³³ "Economic and social changes have so shattered tribal institutions and moral codes that the result of white contact is in many cases an actual increase in the dread of witchcraft, and therefore in the whole incidence of magic throughout the group." (RICHARDS, AUDREY, I., 1970, 'A Modern Movement of Witchfinders.' 164-177 In: Marwick, Max, (ed.) *Witchcraft and Sorcery*. UK Penguin Education, p175.) "...the missionaries strengthened the belief in witchcraft and sorcery." (ONYINAH, OPOKU, 2004, 'Contemporary "witchdemonology" in Africa.' 330-345 In: *International Review of Mission*. Vol. 93, Nos. 370/371, July / October 2004, p333.) 'Charity' can be counterproductive in occluding alternative courses of action as "... it is easier to be benevolent than to achieve justice." (MULLIN, REDMOND, 1983, *The Wealth of Christians*. Exeter: The Paternoster Press, p216.)

³³⁴ Leonard, *Africa's Stalled*. p104.

³³⁵ YTC (Yala Theological center) furnishes a good example of this – a small locally based theological study programme working within African languages and milieu, easily despised by able ambitious young men with their eyes on wealthy internationally funded colleges with foreign curricula. Hence "the rule of palefaces over the academic world is untroubled." (WALLS, ANDREW F., 1991, 'Structural Problems in Mission Studies.' 146-155 In: Anderson, Gerald H., (ed.) *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. 15:4, October 1991. (electronic edition))

2.6.12. Discerning Muzzled Debates

Lukes explains how expressions of power may or may not show in open conflict.³³⁶ The greater power, according to Lukes, does not win a debate or conflict, but prevents it from ever arising. As an example of this, power interests among Luo elders mean that the views of couples who plan to have a monogamous relationship “are muzzled and so there is no debate” says Parkin.³³⁷ Muzzled debates may be very influential *and* very difficult for a foreign researcher to discover. Gehman wants to ignore such African muzzled debates by claiming that “Scriptural norms, not cultural norms, are the basis for this book.”³³⁸ He proceeds to critique African ways of life with his English language Bible, using European / American norms in language use as foundation. His ‘Scriptural norms’ are none other than Western traditions that he would certainly not find if he were a Luo person reading only a Luo Bible.³³⁹ This kind of ‘muzzling of debate’ by declaring it ‘illegal’ unfortunately runs in the face of other people’s efforts, such as those of Bible translators.³⁴⁰

³³⁶ LUKES, S., 1974, *Power a radical view*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

³³⁷ Parkin, *The Cultural*. p292.

³³⁸ GEHMAN, RICHARD J., 1989, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective*. Kenya: Kesho Publications 1989, p8.

³³⁹ Gehman follows a similar approach in labelling as ‘accurate’ Dickson’s (DICKSON, KWESI, 1974, ‘Towards a Theologia Africana.’ 198-207 In: Glasswell, M., and Fashole-Luke, E., (eds.) *New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World: essays in honour of Harry Sawyer*. London: SPCK see especially p204.) criticizing an apparent over-emphasis on African culture, as if to the African there is anything else that he can go by. (GEHMAN, RICHARD J., 1987, *Doing African Christian Theology: an evangelical perspective*. Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House, p44.) Is Gehman’s ‘true conversion and Bible teaching’ as against the contextualisation of the Gospel even possible? (Gehman, *Doing African*. p110.)

³⁴⁰ Translation of the Scriptures is an attempt at engaging them in local debates. Yet very often theologians prefer English (or European) to local translations. ((MOJOLA, ALOO OSOTSI, 2004, ‘Foreword.’ i-iv In: Yorke, Gosnell L.O.R., & Renju, Peter M., (eds.) 2004, *Bible translation and African Languages*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers p iii.); (YORKE, GOSNELL L.D.R., & RENJU, PETER M., 2004, ‘Introduction.’ 1-4 In: Yorke, Gosnell L.O.R., & Renju, Peter M., (eds.) 2004, *Bible translation and African Languages*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, p3.); (MALULEKE, TANYIKO SAM, 2004, ‘African Christianity, the Bible and Theology.’ 161-176 In: Yorke, Gosnell L.O.R., & Renju, Peter M., (eds.) 2004, *Bible translation and African Languages*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, p164.)

2.7. The Research Process

Section 2.6. explains a research process that enables a general perceptiveness to local conditions. I now deal with the research considerations that pertain particularly to my investigation of the nature, source and ways to get rid of ‘bad’ (*rach*) within the Luo worldview in Gem.

2.7.1. Critiquing Authors’ Writing of their Own People

On what basis can I, as an outsider, come and critique those who have written about their own people? Part of the answer lies in the research methodologies used by scholars. Much of the answer lies in their use of language, be that *Dholuo* or English, and the way this is likely to be read by my target audience – a British readership. Surmising what a local author is trying to say from my own knowledge of Luo language and people, I can attempt to ‘correct’ him/her if he/she is actually saying something different when read through (what I understand to be) a British cultural and linguistic (semantic and pragmatic) filter.³⁴¹

The translation process required for understanding Luo authors will be different from that of my less educated informants. This is for many reasons, including that the former have

³⁴¹ “The details of the conceptual structures reported in a document must be looked at in the larger context of the common assumptions about the world expressed and assumed by the writers.” (KEE, H.C., 1989,

become scholars in an educational system dominated by the West and particularly Britain. They have, to various degrees, attempted to engage the West on its own ground, using tools ‘foreign’ to them. This occurs especially where the English language has been used. But the *writing of* as against *speaking of Dholuo* is also a new (foreign) experience.³⁴² What are the implications of this when reading their materials? They require consideration of factors such as the following:

(a) The vision of the West that is being engaged with. These authors are all responding to various degrees to what they perceive of as the West.³⁴³ How do they perceive it? Colonial exploiters? Well meaning but ignorant philanthropists? Enemy or friend to Africa? The way forward? The oppressor, or the redeemer? The nature of this vision will clearly have a major impact on the kind of writing engaged in by the Luo person.³⁴⁴

(b) The degree of freedom of the scholar to express him or herself. The orientation ‘not to bite the hand that feeds you’ will, to various degrees, be restraining on African authors, who are certainly dependent on Western funding of one form or another. People frequently give the answer that they think is wanted. Authors will write in such a way as to *encourage* and not *discourage* continuation of Western funding.

Knowing the Truth: a sociological approach to New Testament interpretation. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, p105.)

³⁴² Note that standard Luo orthography, does not indicate the tones that are very important in speaking. (TUCKER, A.N., 1994, *A Grammar of Kenya Luo (Dholuo)*. Nilo-Saharan Linguistic Analyses and Documentation, Vol. 8.2 edited by C.A. Creider, with collaboration of T. Okelo Odongo, E.D. Jakeyo Ang’ina, J.N. Olum Oludhe Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, p13.) This despite the tonal system of *Dholuo* being “one of the most complicated in the world.” (Tucker, *A Grammar*. p7.)

³⁴³ I emphasise ‘perception’ and ‘vision’ here as the point at issue is not how the West understands itself or what it is, but how it is perceived by Luo authors. The latter may be very different from the former two.

³⁴⁴ It could be argued that a Luo author may not have the West in mind at all in his writing, yet the evidence points to the contrary.

(c) The semantic and pragmatic content of their language. To what extent are the authors implicitly translating the semantic content or habitual use of Luo words into English equivalents (or in the case of those writing in *Dholuo*, the reverse)? This presumably occurs frequently, thus limiting the degree of understanding of what is written by both Western and Luo readers.³⁴⁵

When a Luo person writes of his own people to his own people in his own language, my experience of living in Luoland helps me to understand him. When he writes in a foreign language to a largely unknown or mixed audience, it is hard to know how to get a grasp on what he is saying. Before sharing my attempts, let me give some examples of the difficulties faced:

Example 1. P'Bitek's negative view of Christians and Westerners is well illustrated by his writing that "We hear echoes of the same battle cry from the fifteenth Century onwards, when hordes upon hordes of barbarians from Europe disguised as Christians leapt from ships, Bible and gun in hand to attack, plunder, murder and enslave the inhabitants of the whole world."³⁴⁶ Can this be an impartial scholarly perspective, or in writing this is P'Bitek doing exactly what he says the central Luo do in telling us that; "When danger threatened, [in this case foreigners coming and dominating the land] ... they [the central

³⁴⁵ Through not being able to know in which sense language is being used, Western or African, at any particular point. Someone like myself with a degree of familiarity with Luo language and lifestyle should be able to hear English as if it is *Dholuo*. That is, to carry out an implicit translation of English into Luo words. But, because of the jurisdiction and autonomy of English in my own mind, I find this extremely difficult to do. I think I tend to interpret English, even when spoken by Africans, as if it is British / American.

Luo] did all they could to avert it and to rid the homestead of it, in this case through the use of words.”³⁴⁷ P’Bitek tells us³⁴⁸ that if this fails, the Luo man becomes resigned to his fate.³⁴⁹ While a man may have to accept losing his son, P’Bitek tells us, this does not mean that this man is happy for his son to have died. We need to ask ourselves whether this is the category into which those Luo scholars following P’Bitek are falling— having seen P’Bitek’s failure to overturn ‘the beast’ (the West), are they now pragmatically but reluctantly resigned to it?³⁵⁰

Example 2. Ayany³⁵¹ heaps a lot of praise onto Europeans and missionaries, while disparaging his own people’s beliefs, yet he is writing (in *Dholuo*) supposedly to his own people. The reasons that made the Luo move back out of missionary villages where they had gathered. “...*pod gintie ndalogi kendo gimiyu dongo Luo bedo matek ahinya*” (are still there in these days and make it very difficult for the Luo to advance).³⁵² Referring to *kweche* (taboos) Ayany tells us that “*To duto gin weche manono*” (but all those are useless matters.).³⁵³ Why is Ayany writing in this way? Is he totally convinced of the folly of his

³⁴⁶ P’BITEK, OKOT, 1971, *Religion of the Central Luo*. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau 1970, p264. (P’Bitek is a Luo from Uganda.)

³⁴⁷ P’Bitek, *Religion*. p160.

³⁴⁸ P’Bitek, *Religion*. p160.

³⁴⁹ P’Bitek here says “... to face the facts of life coolly and realistically.” This being his chapter on ‘fate’, I suggest that ‘fatefully’ would more accurately than ‘realistically’. The Kenyan Luo term *hap* (*hawi*) can be translated into the English ‘fate’, but ‘fate’ to the Luo always depends on the dead.

³⁵⁰ P’Bitek (P’Bitek, *Religion*.) reveals an underlying cynical, negative and biting critique of the West in general and Western Christians in particular, that stretches academic license beyond its limits, but does reflect a cultural trait discussed in this thesis of seeing the world as foundationally bad. His writings reveal a distinctly African (or Luo) heart. “We must reject all forms of subjectivity...” says P’Bitek (P’BITEK, OKOT, 1970, *African Religions in Western Scholarship*. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, p108.) illustrating a philosophical weakness (assuming the existence of objectivity) in his attack on Western scholarship and Christianity. Despite being written in English interpretation of P’Bitek’s writings require a profound knowledge of Luo ways. Ogot makes a profound critique of P’Bitek. (OGOT, BETHWELL A., 1999, ‘Intellectual Smugglers in Africa.’ 134-138 In: Ogot, Bethwell A., 1999, *Re-introducing Man into the African World: selected essays 1961 – 1980*. Kisumu: Anyange Press Ltd.)

³⁵¹ Ayany, *Kar Chakruok*.

³⁵² Ayany, *Kar Chakruok*. p35.

³⁵³ Ayany, *Kar Chakruok*. p41.

own people? Is he seeking favour with missionaries? Are the words he writes from his heart, or those put into his mouth by foreigners?

2.7.2. Research Timetable and Procedure

My preference for qualitative over quantitative research methodologies should be clear from the above. Yet, questions of quantity still arise when research is qualitative. For example it could be asked “*How many* open-ended interviews did you do?” or “How *frequently* is one to observe a particular event in order to be familiar with it?” or “How *many* people raised a particular issue and how often?” and so on.

An archetype of qualitative research is interpretation of poetry, in which a few lines of text can be commented on at enormous length. Readers of such commentary will want to know something of the background of commentators. How familiar are they with the language, author, and era in which the poem was written, have they studied other poetry by the same author, etc. In other words – how long has this scholar studied the poem and its background so as to be qualified to so expound at such length on merely a few lines? There would seem to be a play-off situation. After studying a great poet for ten years someone may be excused for writing ten thousand words of commentary on one line. A novice considering the same poet’s work could be expected to comment on a much larger quantity of poetry in order to gain the same credit.

The same argument can be put in linguistic terms. That is, it takes time to learn local uses of language.³⁵⁴ This could mean learning a new language, such as *Dholuo*, or relearning local uses of language that a researcher may already know – such as English. The one-year anthropologist will throughout be in the preliminary stages of language learning, so only have a limited amount to report, i.e. that he/she will be able to translate accurately into the research language such as British English, within that time. The researcher with ten years of experience will already be familiar with differences in language usage, so will be able to move much more quickly to the stage of perceiving differences in contextual effect (meaning) arising from language use and general behaviour. Coordinate bilingualism, explains Mazrui³⁵⁵ is that in which the bilingual person in switching languages can operate in two worldviews. Such bilingualism only occurs through long exposure to language that is learned from within a culture. A short-term researcher is more likely to operate with compound bilingualism; processing the second language through the worldview-grid of the first.

So a researcher who has spent ten years in the field would be expected to be able to have much more profound insights from short observation periods, as interpretation will be based on that longer period.³⁵⁶ Davis tells us that: “Over time, ... the fieldworker’s subjectivity becomes the medium in which ethnographic understanding develops.”³⁵⁷ This is the interpretive framework on the basis of which subsequent data is processed, and

³⁵⁴ Truth sought by an anthropologist can be “... what comes to be believed in the course of free and open encounter.” (Hastrup, *A Passage*. p177.)

³⁵⁵ MAZRUI, ALAMIN, 1993, ‘Language and the Quest for Liberation in Africa: the legacy of Frantz Fanon.’ *Third World Quarterly*. 1993, Vol. 14, Issue 2, (WWW) <http://weblinks2.epnet.com/citation.asp?>

³⁵⁶ See also Mudimbe (MUDIMBE, V.Y., 1988, *The Invention of Africa Gnosis, philosophy and the order of knowledge*. London: James Currey, p65.) “Contrary to most anthropologists ten months, or at best, two or three years of field research, many missionaries spent almost their whole lives among Africans.”

³⁵⁷ Davis, *Death in Abeyance*. p11.

without which any data would have to be processed by drawing on a foreign and therefore inappropriate framework.³⁵⁸

It is also said that qualitative research has a danger of being anecdotal. This is the object of heavy critique from quantitativists. This risk is multiplied *the longer the period on which observations are based*. Let me explain by example. If your friend complained that her husband rejects her food, then your observing this when making a random visit one day will be much more convincing to you of it being an issue than your observing it only once in the course of thirty visits. Yet both thirty visits and the one visit will provide you with anecdotal evidence of this refusal. Qualitative research based on observation therefore, I suggest, requires long periods of time for language and culture learning followed by short periods of time that are randomly selected for recorded observation. A long-recorded observation reported qualitatively (anecdotally) enables the researcher to report almost anything.

This research is rooted in a particular *interpretation* of data (the principles of which I refer to elsewhere in this thesis), and not the data alone shorn of context. Because words and events can only be correctly understood by a cultural insider, it is only in so far that my understanding has become that of an ‘insider’ that I can claim to have understood correctly. That is, if “the meaning of a word is its use in the language”³⁵⁹ then altering the

³⁵⁸ “It is perfectly true that an experienced anthropologist, visiting a ‘new’ primitive society for the first time and working with the aid of competent interpreters, may be able, after a stay of only a few days, to develop in his own mind a fairly comprehensive ‘model’ of how the social system works, but it is also true that if he stays for 6 months and learns to speak the local language very little of that original ‘model’ will remain.” (LEACH, EDMUND, 1970, *Lévi Strauss*. London: Wm. Collins and Co. Ltd. p19.)

³⁵⁹ Wittgenstein cited in Hanfling, *Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy*. p42. (This quote has already been given in footnote 9 in Chapter 2.)

context of use alters the meaning. This means in turn that a reader without ‘insider insights’, especially those that assist in distinguishing a magical/monistic worldview from a scientific one, may not fully comprehend how I have drawn the conclusions that I have.

The reader will appreciate that the process of learning semantic and especially pragmatic rules is too complex to be described in its entirety in a thesis such as this. That would need another thesis on ‘language learning styles’.³⁶⁰ Suffice it to say that learning is largely semi-conscious or sub-conscious, and only occurs with long observant participation with a people and in a culture. It could be argued that my culture / language was other than natural in so far as I have been communicating, especially by letter, with people in the UK and reading widely and researching a great deal using English even when living in rural Kenya. I consider the latter to have been helpful and even necessary as it is only theoretical study that has enabled me to unpack and remove some of my own people’s presuppositions³⁶¹ that would otherwise have continued to provide interference to my appropriation of what I have found in Gem.³⁶²

I made a conscious decision not to carry a notebook with me in the course of my time in Luoland (except during a short period in 2000).³⁶³ Hence many learning processes that

³⁶⁰ Much of the debate on pragmatics concerns language learning, for example see Pohl. (POHL, GABRIELA, 2004, ‘Cross-cultural pragmatic failure and implications for language teaching.’ In: *SLLT*, Vol. 4, 2004, <http://www.usq.edu.au/opacs/sllt/4/Pohl04.html> (accessed 12.4.05).)

³⁶¹ ‘My own people’ here referring to British people in particular, and Western people in general.

³⁶² “... forms of life may be so radically different from each other that in order to understand and interpret alien or primitive societies we not only have to bracket our prejudices and biases but have to suspend our own Western standards and criteria of rationality” (Winch, 1958, cited in Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism*. p27.)

³⁶³ This was in a short research project subsequently written up as Harries ‘Ghosts and Cleansing.’ which I conducted under the supervision of Stan Nussbaum of GMI (Global Mapping International). Anthropology “is not a matter of methods ... selecting informants, transcribing texts ... keeping a diary and so on [but]

would have been usefully recorded are lost from retrievable memory. One reason why this does not concern me over much, is because my means of language (and culture) learning has not been artificial. It has rather been ‘natural’.³⁶⁴ The only time I took notes (on papers that I carried in my Bible)³⁶⁵ was when listening to a formal message such as a sermon at a church or at a funeral. The length of my detailed observation is a ‘randomly selected’ period of 72 days (the days I found myself living at my home in Luoland between April and July 2003). Most of the examples that I give to illustrate my points in Chapters 4-6 are selected *at random* from all the events that I listed under the point concerned in that period.³⁶⁶ (I then carried out two further random research periods, each also of seventy days, as a cross-check to verify the above results.)

In the focused research period of 72 days I attended eight funerals and 23 church services, and I recorded 34 messages by taking notes while the messages were presented.³⁶⁷ Three funerals were conducted by Pentecostal churches, two by Roho (spiritual AIC) type churches, one by an Ethiopian type (CCA)³⁶⁸ and two by mission churches. Church services that I attended included one Anglican church, one Ethiopian style, six Roho churches, seven Pentecostal churches and eight times my home church which is also Pentecostal – Zion Harvest Mission. The language used by far the most frequently in the above was *Dholuo*, with some *Kiswahili* and occasionally some Kenyan English. The frequency of my attendance at such events will have surprised no one. This has been my

constructing a reading of what happens.” (GEERTZ, CLIFFORD, 1973, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books pp6 and 18.)

³⁶⁴ That is, I have to a large extent learned the Luo people’s language and culture as a ‘normal Luo person’ would, not through written notes or in a classroom.

³⁶⁵ In addition to that period in 2000, described above.

³⁶⁶ That which is not from this period is clearly indicated.

³⁶⁷ See Map 2 on page 6.

³⁶⁸ I use the term ‘Ethiopian’ for AICs that are not classed among the ‘spiritual’ churches. In Gem this is primarily CCA (Church of Christ in Africa) also known as *Johera*, and the split offs that have arisen from it.

habit for many years as I have sought to promote our Bible teaching programme, get to know local people and their languages, and show my love for people in this community. I estimate that in eleven years I have attended four hundred funeral services, 1,150 church services, listening to 1700 messages being taught or preached in Gem and its environs.³⁶⁹ Outside of formal meetings, my research was carried on in the course of my normal daily interactions with people. These included conversations while waiting for the rain to stop, other conversations overheard while I am drinking a cup of tea in a *migahawa* (café), discussions in our YTC classes, being stopped on the road and asked a question, someone's spontaneously telling me what they did and experienced on that day, my surmising assumptions that people were making that determined their behaviour and so on.

Not carrying a notebook, I would try and register these observations in my memory, so as to be able to note them down in a research journal on returning home later on the same day. I would include some reflective comments in this journal, and added explanations to the notes I took on preachers to help me to understand them sufficiently at a later date. I later went through this journal in a very subjective fashion marking the instances at which something bad was identified, the sources of that bad, and how the bad was to be done away with, using pens of different colours. These are the instances (events / examples) that I then listed and drew on as mentioned below.

The reader should not be surprised to find the same event being referred to repeatedly in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. The difference between the chapters is in what I draw from the data, and because my choice from limited examples is random, the same ones may reappear

³⁶⁹ The way that is frequently cited as showing love by people in this community, is attending funerals.

many times.³⁷⁰ My use of random methods for selecting examples to focus on is not a claim for overcoming subjectivity, as the categories and examples that I randomly select from are clearly subjectively obtained. Yet choosing a random selection of examples to demonstrate my point is a way of being honest and not selecting for those events that in their clarity would give a false sense of certainty to this research. That is, I have chosen not to take instances that illustrate my points particularly clearly to make my case in this research. This methodology underlines my heavy dependence on interpretation (or hermeneutics, see Chapter 7) and I hope makes clear that the examples illustrate rather than prove the points that I am making. I have identified ‘bad things’, their source, and the ways that they are done away with by reading through my research journal, recalling in the process the original events, and applying what I understand to be a Luo cognition (subconscious) to the events and words recorded. The categories I have used and numbers of examples found in each are listed in the tables and guide subsequent discussion, found in Chapters 4 to 6.

Table 2.2 gives an indication of the environments in which the ‘bad things’ recorded in the 72 day period arose. 46% of my observations of bad things alluded to were in the 34 messages that I recorded (see above). 54% were in what I call below ‘discussion’, being any kind of verbal engagement outside of the formal messages. I recorded 20% of ‘discussion’ as being in a specifically church or funeral environment. This must be understood only loosely, as in reality because my life and work are in Bible and church teaching, this was actually much more frequently the background.

³⁷⁰ In Chapter 4 I am seeking to answer the question of what bad is for the Luo people. In Chapter 5, where it comes from. In Chapter 6, how to get rid of it.

Table 2.2. Environment in which bad things were mentioned³⁷¹

Environment	Number of 'bad things' identified in this environment	Percentage of 'bad things' identified in this environment
General discussion	197	43
Discussion in Ethiopian church environment	4	1
Discussion in funeral environment	8	2
Message given at a funeral	52	11
Discussion in mission church environment	7	2
Message given at a mission church	21	5
Discussion in a Pentecostal church environment	6	1
Message given in a Pentecostal church	49	11
Discussion in a Roho church environment	9	2
Message given at a Roho church	29	6
Discussion in a Zion Harvest (my home) church environment	14	3
Message given at a Zion Harvest church	58	13
Total	454	100

It would be tempting at this stage to carry out some number crunching to ascertain the correlation between the category of bad things identified and the denominational

³⁷¹ I attended 2 messages by one preacher who is a Luyia but working with the Luo in Gem. This man's messages being unconventional and a strong protest against the *status quo*, are not included in this analysis.

environment in which they arose. Given the strongly qualitative nature of this research I think that would be a misleading reification of a non-existent objectivity and is best avoided. The statistically un-assisted human mind is here a better gauge of reality.³⁷²

Differences found between churches could be artificial for various reasons. Pentecostals reveal things via testimonies, Roho churches share their dreams, while the saved in some mission churches express themselves in fellowships oriented to the confessing of sins. Finding an issue only in a particular church is more likely to be a reflection of accepted types of communication than of differences in issues faced by or in the fundamental orientation of members. It may be common in a fellowship of the saved (*lalruok* or *wuotho e chieng'*) in the Anglican church to say that one was a drunkard, adulterer and thief before being saved. Does this mean that Anglicans were worse sinners than members of Roho churches who do not trouble to state such every time that they stand up to speak?

2.7.3. Verification Procedures³⁷³

Verification procedures engaged in during the research include:³⁷⁴

³⁷² I here follow the phenomenological tradition of research, in which the “Reality of an object ... is inextricably related to one’s consciousness of it.” (Creswell. *Qualitative Inquiry*. p53.)

³⁷³ References to different verification procedures scattered throughout this thesis are summarised here.

³⁷⁴ I have been guided by Creswell. (*Qualitative Inquiry*. pp207-212.) in my structuring of the procedures. I have had to make additions, adjustments and allowances to take account of the fact that Creswell is *not* considering cross-cultural research.

1. Sharing drafts of research results and conclusions with well informed local people for their comment and reflection. These included Omayya, our Yala Theological Centre director, who sometimes made corrections in detail that I then followed, and who confirmed the overall accuracy of my accounts.³⁷⁵ Odaga's feedback was especially helpful, indicating that I had 'stumbled upon' (as it seemed to her) aspects of Luo culture that she had not previously considered but that were both evidently true and important.³⁷⁶

2. Assessing whether the patterns found were logical, and whether alternative explanations could be just as accurate. It was my observation that alternative explanations for activities and responses fell far short of being logically sufficient to explain observed behaviour. For example, frequent reference to people travelling on 'things made by the hands of men' (bicycles, vehicles etc.) demonstrate a foundational belief in the evil heart of men, and not simply a lack of faith in technology (in the Western sense).³⁷⁷ I carried out three separate periods of research (each of about 70 days) so as to be able to triangulate my results, and found similar patterns of results emerging from the three sets of data. Data acquired from other sources also 'fit' with my own data. Triangulation was a constant part of my investigations.³⁷⁸ Further triangulation has occurred by presenting data in both paradigmatic and narrated story form.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁵ Omayya. Omayya's Reflections.

³⁷⁶ This is my own conclusion regarding Odaga's feedback given at a meeting in Kisumu. (ODAGA, ASENATH BOLE, Feedback Given to Thesis in Kisumu on 9th October 2004.)

³⁷⁷ See also Section 4.3.2.

³⁷⁸ See also Section 2.7.1. in which I consider the critiquing of Africans' writing of their own people.

³⁷⁹ WENGRAF, TOM, 2001, *Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London: Sage. p317. There are various reasons for my not having used much "Synchronic (spatial-visual) gestalt." Particularly because people did not explain them to me. That is, I should say that the Gem community is not very 'visual'.

3. My living in the Luo-Gem community throughout the period of research and write-up meant that I was constantly testing my understanding through many different interactions with different people. This was to me a very important means of verification, and often startling in its clarity. Further interactions allowed me to confirm and hone or adjust what I was supposing.³⁸⁰ It would be very different if I was writing up in a British university, as the very different culture there would be constantly challenging my discoveries here in Kenya.

4. Results obtained were consistently effective in predicting further structural connections. For example, the importance attached to funeral attendance for the Luo of Gem seems only to be sufficiently justified in the light of the deep fear of ghosts (*jochiende*) that I found the people to be living under.

5. Observations made by different researchers, particularly the Luo themselves such as Mboya and Raringo, took on surprisingly clarity and fell into place in the course of my research in Gem. Hence I realised increasingly that a people's 'traditional beliefs' that sound like strange appended vestiges when one first hears of them, are an integral part of who they are. My observations frequently provided more profound understandings of traditions of which I had already been aware in outline.

³⁸⁰ See also Section 2.7.2.

6. My reading of the pragmatics literature contributed to my realising that my British cultural background would have me draw different conclusions in different ways to many African (Luo) researchers.

The cross-cultural nature of this research has made it difficult to remain open to external verification. Wengraf advises researchers that “*Your* descriptions and explanations need to be distinguished from *their* descriptions and explanations” referring to the people being researched.³⁸¹ Hence according to Wengraf a researcher should preserve the original words spoken in reporting their research. But this is not possible if the researched language (or culture) is other than that of the community of the researcher (or evaluator of the research), as the researcher’s understanding of the words used by a speaker will determine the translation into that language (in this case British English). The cross-cultural nature of the research here presented limits the possibilities of separation between data and theory, making it difficult (if not impossible) for a mono-cultural English reader legitimately “to come to a different theoretical conclusion” to that of the researcher.³⁸²

Learning about a foreign people and culture is best achieved through a combination of listening, reading, talking, participating and observing in the course of day to day life. There is a cycle to be followed of forming hypotheses and then repeatedly testing them on the evidence. There are three different ways of confirming a hypothesis about a community (here shown by the example of trust):

³⁸¹ Wengraf. *Qualitative*. p320.

³⁸² As had been suggested ought to be the case by Wengraf. *Qualitative*. p336.

- A. People say it is the case. I have heard many people in the African communities in which I have lived say that either they don't trust other people (who may be fellow church leaders), or that members of their communities in general do not trust one another.
- B. You observe it to be the case. The frequent splitting of the church in Africa, plus the fact that power comes to be in the hands of old men,³⁸³ are ways which have demonstrated that indeed mutual trust is limited.³⁸⁴
- C. It has predictive power. In many instances people have behaved predictably according to this hypothesis of lack of trust.³⁸⁵

These three means of discovering and investigating hypotheses can be allowed to triangulate repeatedly in a kind of 'hermeneutical circle'³⁸⁶ or spiral.³⁸⁷ Should this triangulation not result in agreement and if there are clear reasons to explain this disagreement, then evidence from only one or two may have to be relied upon.

³⁸³ Whose power comes from their association with the dead.

³⁸⁴ Failure of people who are not old men to trust each other forces them to fall back on the help of old men, and 'diviners'.

³⁸⁵ Thought of trust and the possibility of its absence is rooted in Western English. Saying 'people do not seem to trust one another in Africa' is clearly comparative. It could be expressed: "people in Africa *seem to* trust one another less than do people in Europe." This is not an accusation but an observation.

³⁸⁶ Thiselton, 'The New.' p90.

³⁸⁷ Creswell. *Qualitative*. p143.

2.7.4. Analysis of ‘Bad’³⁸⁸

Life’s activities include those aimed at bringing good, and those oriented at deterring bad. My research³⁸⁹ demonstrated that much of the life of the Luo is oriented to the latter. In the classic debate as to whether ‘bad’ is merely the absence of good, or something in itself³⁹⁰ the Luo people clearly fall on the latter side. Bad (*rach*), to us in Luoland, is something substantial, and good the absence of it.³⁹¹ Here in Luoland we struggle to do away with, that is to cleanse ourselves of, bad.

I prefer to use the term ‘bad’ instead of ‘evil’ in discussion of spirits and witchcraft in Africa. ‘Bad’ more accurately represents an every-day presence that must be dealt with in the normal course of life,³⁹² whereas evil sounds sinister, mysterious and occasional. The term evil is nowadays rarely used in British English and in *Dholuo* ‘bad’ and ‘evil’ are anyway not distinguished.³⁹³ (See Section 2.5.2. for a more detailed explanation of why I choose to use the term ‘bad’.)

³⁸⁸ More specific notes on data analysis can be found in subsequent chapters.

³⁸⁹ HARRIES, JIM, 2001, ‘Ghosts and Cleansing amongst the Luo People of Kenya in 2000.’ http://WWW.jim-mission.org.uk/articles/ghosts_and_cleansing.htm (accessed 1.06.05)

³⁹⁰ e.g. see Brown. (BROWN, C.E., 1958, *The meaning of Sanctification*. Anderson, Indiana; Warner Press, p99.) cited in (JONES, KENNETH E, 1985, *The Commitment to Holiness*. Anderson, Indiana: Warner Press.)

³⁹¹ HARRIES, JIM, 2006, ‘Good-by-Default and Evil in Africa.’ 151-164 In: *Missiology: an international review*. Vol. XXXIV, no. 2, April 2006.

³⁹² POCOCK, D., 1985, ‘Unruly Evil.’ 42-56 In: Parkin, D., (ed.) *The Anthropology of Evil*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd. 1985, p42.

³⁹³ No word in *Dholuo* distinguishes ‘evil’ from ‘bad’. *Rach* is used for both. The term translated ‘evil’ in the Old Testament *Ra* is evil in the weak sense, with the contextual effect of ‘bad’ (Taylor, ‘Theological Thoughts.’ p26, and see also LIVINGSTON, G.H., 1980, “2191 *rá’a*” 854-856 In: Harris, R. Laird, 1980, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament Volume 2*. Chicago: Moody Press, p856.)

Dominant British society attempts to counter bad, such as a bad economy, via calculated British rationality, whereas in Luoland people are more likely to evoke spiritual powers or God in order to maintain an economy or solve problems.³⁹⁴ Experience has a role to play in both cases. In the British rational system, rational rules are calculated according to supposed cause and effect relationships rooted in a perceived objectivity. Experience is important in Luo rationality: the observation by elders that recently bereaved widows are distressed is what, according to one old man here in Luoland³⁹⁵ resulted in their concluding that there is something called *chola*, which will trouble widows for as long as they remain un-inherited. This *chola* (or *okola*) is a bad spiritual presence. Ogutu tell us that: “The ancestors had discovered that certain activities or levels of behaviour disturbed interpersonal relations. To protect their descendants from behaving or acting in such ways, they enacted prohibitions and whoever violated the interdictions was cursed.”³⁹⁶

Foundational to this study is the question of whether the origin of bad things is entirely spiritual (due to the activities of undesirable spirits), or to some extent *natural*. The evidence suggests that even when not overtly referred to the action of what we could in English call a ‘spiritual being’ is presupposed. Sometimes this is made overt and a speaker will talk of the *jachien* (spirit) of a cold; of a worn out shoe; of rotting meat etc. In fact in

³⁹⁴ “At the present time, all these peoples import economic rationalism as the most important product of the occident” says Weber (WEBER, MAX, 1922, *The Sociology of Religion*. London: Methuen, p269.) of Eastern parts of the world. In Africa their importation has perhaps been less successful. See also Brueggemann (BRUEGGEMANN, WALTER, 1987, ‘Land Fertility and Justice’ 42-62 In: Weber, Leonard. (et. al.) (eds.) *Theology of the Land*. Minnesota: The Liturgical Press 1987, p50.) saying that before the 18th Century “economic transactions were regarded as part of a larger social network.” To Grundmann current ‘paneconomism’ is a cause for concern. Is there no alternative, he asks? (GRUNDMANN, CHRISTOPHER, 2001, ‘Paneconomism as a Missiological Concern.’ 115-125 In: *Mission Studies. Journal for the International Association for Mission Studies*. Vol. XVIII, No. 2-36, 2001.) Taber tells us that Missionaries’ orientation to rationality “was [to] widen yet further the gulf between missionaries and local people that already existed because of social distance.” (Taber, *The World*. p85.)

³⁹⁵ Told to me by a local man in Gem on 29th July 2003.

³⁹⁶ OGUTU, GILBERT EDWIN MESHACK, 1975, ‘An Historical Analysis of the Luo Idea of God c. 1500-1900.’ MA thesis, University of Nairobi, 1975, p112.

traditional life in this part of the world there is no alternative way of thinking. Hence I was told by a Luyia man from a region bordering Gem that “...*hatuna neno kama hilo la nature*” (*Kiswahili*) (we do not have a word to translate the English word nature).³⁹⁷ For the Luo as the Luyia, there is no understanding of natural causation, because there is no concept of ‘nature’. This after all came even to Western Christian theology relatively recently via Thomas Aquinas.³⁹⁸

The *Dholuo* (Luo language) term that I am most frequently translating as bad is the word *rach* (plural: *richo*). The *-ach* is pronounced as in the English word match, while the *r* is conventional. *Richo* is pronounced like ‘rich oh’. The Luo-English dictionary by Capen gives three alternative ‘contextual effects’ for *rach* being 1. evil 2. sin, wrong 3. impropriety.³⁹⁹ I have been informed⁴⁰⁰ that *richo* is a newly invented term used by Christians for bad things done to God, i.e. sin. This is supported by Stafford.⁴⁰¹ Hence *richo* is a rarely used word in Paul Mboya’s 1938 book⁴⁰² *Luo Kitgi gi Timbegi* but then is in the title of his later 1978 book *Richo ema kelo Chira*. (This title can be translated as: “It is sin that brings the curse.”)

³⁹⁷ Reported to me on 19th July 2003 in the course of a discussion at Kima International School of Theology.

³⁹⁸ (SCHAEFFER, F.A., 1968, *Escape From Reason*. London: IVP p5.) Shaeffer tells us that Byzantine thought forms extant prior to the time of Aquinas, depicted religious entities symbolically and not as if they are natural.

³⁹⁹ (CAPEN, CAROLE A., 1998, *Bilingual Dholuo-English Dictionary: Kenya*. Tucson, Arizona: Carole A. Capen 1998, p133.) Capen’s dictionary being produced through research on Luo speaking people in the USA (page iv) typically gives anglicised versions of words. This is certainly a case in point.

⁴⁰⁰ On 12th April 2003 in discussion with a colleague who is a Luo from Gem, when walking home from a funeral in Ahono village.

⁴⁰¹ STAFFORD, ROY, 2003, ‘Richo.’ Email received on 14th August 2003. Roy was part of the team responsible for the 1976 translation of the Bible into *Dholuo*.

⁴⁰² This has been reprinted a number of times, more recently in 1983 and 1997.

Despite the above evidence that the term specially designated *richo* was to translate the English word sin, its use commonly follows the widespread African practice in being recognised only when and if it brings something bad – i.e. *rach*.⁴⁰³ This obviously further confirms the link between *richo* and *rach*.⁴⁰⁴ Examples abound in Luo customary law, such as the belief that adultery on the part of a parent can result in the sudden death of a child.⁴⁰⁵ *Rach* is singular for bad. *Richo* is the plural of bad. Ironically, taking the plural of *bad* (*richo*) and defining it as sin has further complicated all these issues. In its use in Luoland *rach* strongly implies the activity of *jochiende* – the ghosts of the departed, usually provoked by the breaking of some *kwer* (customary taboo).⁴⁰⁶ The term *richo* is sufficiently closely related to *rach* as frequently to be used interchangeably with it.⁴⁰⁷

An incident that occurred⁴⁰⁸ illustrates how an action is only considered ‘bad’ if its outcome is bad. A fourteen year old girl left a one year old baby sitting on a table. Her failure to attend to the baby resulted in his falling. Her grandmother was angry, scolded the girl, and then said that any further punishment would depend on whether or not the baby was hurt. The baby was unharmed, so no further action was taken.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰³ “Something is evil because it is punished, it is not punished because it is evil.” (Mbiti, *African Religions*. p207.) Ogotu tells us that violation of *kweche* (taboos) “was a sin (*richo*) which brought misfortune.” (Ogotu, ‘An Historical.’ pp112-113.)

⁴⁰⁴ For example on 3rd May 2003 at a funeral near Dudi in Gem the speaker proclaimed that “*gima kelo tho en richo*.” (“what brings death is sin / bad things.”)

⁴⁰⁵ (Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p20.) Such belief that adultery brings danger to the family is also found in other Nilotic people. “It is considered dangerous for a man to sleep with his wife after she has had intercourse with another man. She is in a state of impurity and a return to conjugal relations will bring misfortune to them both unless expiation is made by the guilty party.” (HOWELL, P.P., 1954, *A Manual of Nuer Law: being an account of customary law, its evolution and development in the courts established by the Sudan Government*. London: Oxford University Press. p156.)

⁴⁰⁶ See Chapter 5 for details.

⁴⁰⁷ In conversation on asking about something *rach* or something *richo* a respondent frequently uses the alternative term in their reply.

⁴⁰⁸ On 7th April 2003.

⁴⁰⁹ The same principle, according to which redressive action arises because of damage sustained rather than wrong motive or intent, was found to exist in customary law in Zambia. (EPSTEIN, A.L., 1969, ‘Injury and

2.8. Conclusion

Consideration of linguistic and translation issues such as those above opens doors to the acquisition of insights about Africa that could be obtained in no other way.

Examining the translation process reveals that translation is not a simple transfer of meaning, but rather every translation is a creation of something that had not hitherto existed. What is being received in the West about Africa is not what is in Africa, but a particular interpretation of Africa. This interpretation has developed and grown over the years. It contains some truth but much error and omission. The latter arise particularly because of the stance typically taken by the West in its explorations of the African people and their ways of life. That is a relatively distant stance, looking in from the outside, often using translation into English and not understanding the ways in which language use in Africa differs from that in Western nations. The current level of understanding is far too inadequate given the level of involvement that the West has on the African continent.

The reverse also applies. It is incredible how frequently the debate on Africa revolves around 'understanding the African', on the false assumption that the Westerner is transparent as glass. Africa, I suggest, does not 'understand' the West, and as Lumumba (quoting Alexander Pope) tells us: "... *ustaarabu nusu ni janga kuu*"

Liability in African Customary Law in Zambia.' 292-304 In: Gluckman, M., (ed.) *Ideas and Procedures in African Customary Law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p300.)

(*Kiswahili*).⁴¹⁰ “Half understanding is a big desert” ... and may be no help at all, or even a major hindrance.

Principles of lifestyle learned and practiced over a long period of mission work in Africa are here explained as being a prerequisite for the type of research engaged in this thesis. Vulnerability and perseverance are found to be key requirements to enable free participation in day to day life amongst a foreign people. Such enables a ‘seeing through’ of cover-ups and traps that the hurried and insufficiently careful researcher easily falls foul of. The need for understanding obscure and non-literal language is unfolded. While valuable sources, written and oral texts arising from Africa are here seen as needing interpretation for Western audiences. Language learning in its broadest sense (pragmatic as well as syntactic and semantic) requiring long-term exposure is given as a vital prerequisite to understanding as a people themselves understand. The period of recorded research specifically underlying this thesis is not a claim to statistical proof in favour of the arguments presented, but a snapshot that illustrates a complex reality.

⁴¹⁰ LUMUMBA, P.L.O., 2003 *Mhhh Afrika*. Nairobi: P.L.O. Lumumba, p13.

CHAPTER 3. SETTING THE SCENE: THE PEOPLE OF GEM

3.1. Introduction

Difficulties involved in describing the culture and environment of Gem and its inhabitants are discussed elsewhere in this thesis. Certainly there are as many views of Gem as there are residents of Gem, plus more from the outside by people who are variously knowledgeable. Statistics can be misleading. The life of the people of Gem has evolved with little or no contact with Europe over many centuries. Recent interventions from Europe (the West) have been of a particular nature allowing the people of Gem to observe only certain aspects of European cultures and from only certain vantage points. This limits the possibilities of accurate representation to the international scene of the nature of life in this part of Western Kenya known as Gem.

I do not claim in any way to be comprehensive or conclusive in my descriptions or assertions about Gem. I hope that readers will not find that this chapter reveals all that they have wanted to know. I would rather that it stimulate them to want to learn more, and to do so by sharing with Gem's people in their life and language. I ask for the forgiveness of those residents of Gem, Nyanza, Kenya or Africa who consider that I am inaccurate in any

representation of them. My aim in this chapter is to give the reader, who I assume to be a Westerner with an interest in but limited knowledge of Africa, a background with which to better understand the rest of this thesis.

The somewhat 'piecemeal' miscellany of data and insights in this chapter are selected and put together subjectively to give an impression of life in Gem that it is hoped reflects the interests and orientation of a European readership, in a limited space. The collage of information included is intended to leave the reader with a flavour of the character of Gem as they might find it on paying a visit with a helpful informer. There are of course no 'objective' alternative options for describing Gem that do not arise from particular predispositions.

3.2. Physical and social statistics for Gem and Siaya

Gem is one of three constituencies in Siaya District. Siaya is one of 12 Districts that makes up Nyanza Province in the West of Kenya. Gem can be divided into the Yala and Wagai administrative divisions. Wagai has an area of 193.3 km² and includes 5 locations and 18 sub-locations. Yala has an area of 209.8 km² and has 4 locations and 19 sub-locations. The average population density of Wagai division is 289 per km² and of Yala 410 per km² giving an overall population density for Gem of 352 people per km² and an overall population of about 142,000 over a total area of 403.1 km².¹ Siaya district as a whole has an area of 1520 km² lying between 1140 and 1400m above sea level. It is dissected by the

equator. The Nzoia and Yala rivers cut through Siaya District and “enter lake Victoria through the Yala Swamp.”² (See maps on pages 5-7.)

According to *Millennium villages* describing Sauri village in Gem:

“The area is classified as the sub-humid tropics with an average temperature of 24°C, ranging from 18 to 27°C with an annual rainfall of 1800 mm. Rainfall is bimodal, divided into the long rainy season from March to June (1120 mm) and the short rainy season from September to December (710 mm). The short rains are extremely variable but highly predictable due to strong influence of the El Nino Southern Oscillation.”³

The prognosis on the economic and development prospects for Siaya district as a whole given in its 2002-2008 plan are not very optimistic. (New developments giving optimism include the selecting of Yala as a target area for the achievement of Millennium Development Goals beginning in 2006 (Sauri village in Gem has been targeted since 2005.⁴), and the commercial farming activities of Dominion farms near Siaya town.⁵) “Poverty levels have generally been increasing ... from 41 per cent in 1994 to reach 58.02 per cent”⁶ and “the district is far from rapid industrialisation for sustained industrial development at this point in time” says the report.⁷ This is not aided by an estimated AIDs

¹ *Siaya District*, pp4-7

² *Siaya District*, p4.

³ MILLENNIUM VILLAGES PROJECT, 2005, *Annual Report: millennium research villages* http://www.earthinstitute.columbia.edu/mvp/documents/MVP_Annual_Report_05_000.pdf (accessed 2.03.06) p1.

⁴ NATION CORRESPONDENT, 2006, ‘Kenyan Village to Gain from UN anti-poverty Plan.’ 22 In: *Daily Nation*, Friday, January 13th 2006.

⁵ VETCH, GRAHAM, 2006, ‘Our Project has Reduced the Level of Poverty in Community.’ WWW <http://allafrica.com/stories/200602270651.html> (accessed 02.03.06)

⁶ *Siaya District*. p7.

⁷ *Siaya District*. p15.

infection rate of 38.4%⁸ which is thought to have contributed to a decline in fertility rate “from 7.8 in 1989 to 4.3 in 1999.”⁹ 76% of the Siaya population is said to be rural. The life expectancy is given as 52.6 years.¹⁰ (Alternative data report 37 for men and 43 for women.¹¹) Infant mortality is given as 113 in 1000 births, and then under five mortality 102 in 1000 live births. There is 17% wage employment within the District and an average farm size of 1.05 hectares. There are 430 protected springs in Siaya District, with an average distance to the nearest portable water point of 4 km.¹² Average years of school attended is 4.5 for boys and 3.8 for girls. There are 381 primary and 56 secondary schools in the District, with a pupil to teacher ratio of 1:36. There is one college in the district; the Siaya Institute of Technology.

The Kenyan population nationally is said to be 30 – 40% Protestant and 20-30% Catholic.¹³ The small percentage of Muslims are mostly in the East of Kenya with Gem having very few. Yala (Gem’s major township) having been a major centre for early Catholic activity means that Gem is likely to have an above average proportion of Catholics.¹⁴ More accurate statistics are difficult to come by and of limited value due to the difficulty of defining categories and then knowing just who falls within them. The tenets of the Christian faith are clearly understood differently in Africa than in the Western world.¹⁵

⁸ *Siaya District*. p22.

⁹ *Siaya District*. p18.

¹⁰ *Siaya District*. p8.

¹¹ (*Annual Report*. p6.) The statistics reported in the Millennium Villages Project give the infant mortality at 369 in 1000 and a life expectancy of 37 for men and 43 for women. This massive difference between official reports questions the reliability of the data.

¹² *Siaya District*. p10.

¹³ KENYALOGY, nd. ‘Population and Culture: religions.’ WWW <http://www.kenyalogy.com/eng/info/pobla2.html> (accessed 2.03.06)

¹⁴ Although I have received some statistics of denominational affiliation in Gem, I have decided not to include them in this thesis for reasons of reliability and so as not to be seen to be partial. The vast majority of Gem’s residents consider themselves to be Christian.

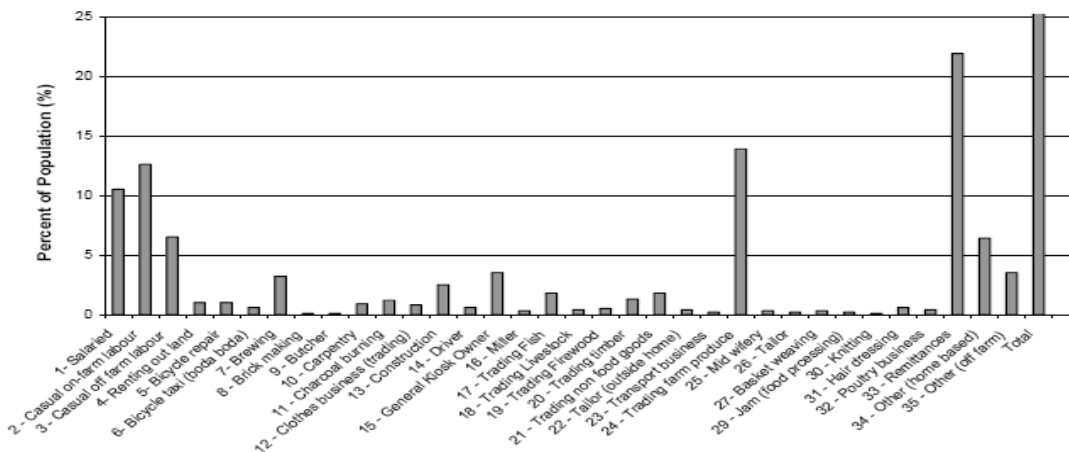
¹⁵ According to the precepts of pragmatic theory.

There are numerous churches variously growing, shrinking, splitting, changing and of different sizes vying for members in Gem.¹⁶

Figure 3.1. below indicates income strategies found for Sauri village by researchers in the Millennium Villages Project.¹⁷ Sauri has a slightly above average population density¹⁸ and altitude (and therefore rainfall), but is in many ways typical of Gem as a whole.

“Remittances (money received from family members usually living in urban areas) rank highest followed by trading of farm produce, casual on-farm labor, and salaried employment” says this report.¹⁹

Figure 3.1. Income Strategies for Sauri Sub-location in Gem, 2004.²⁰



¹⁶ For example Legio Maria, *Roho Fweny, Roho Mowal, Roho Singruok, Roho Msalaba*, African *Roho Msalaba*, Ruwe Holy Ghost (ST), African Divine Church, Musanda Holy Ghost, Musanda Christian Church of Kenya (MCCK), *Roho na Kweli* (Spirit and Truth), African Israel Nineveh, Christian Israel Church, Israel 42, *Nomiya* church (and branches that have split from it), *Luong Mogik* (at least two denominations due to a recent split), St. Michael Miracle Centre, Zion Harvest Mission, Revival, Outreach, Redeemed, BALL (Bible and Literacy League) Pentecostal, Pentecostal Fellowship of Africa (PEFA), Kenya Assemblies of God (KAOG), New Hope, Assemblies of God (AOG), African Word Ministries, New Apostolic (and churches that have split from it), Church of Christ in Africa (CCA) (and a recent split from it), Trinity, *Ngwono*, Roman Catholic, Church of God, Church of God (reformed), Episcopal, Reformed Baptist, Bible Baptist, Anglican (ACK), *Lalruok* (an almost independent movement within the Anglican church), Coptic Orthodox, Coptic Holy Ghost, and others. The above list includes primarily the churches around Ahono, Yala, which is my home area. (I am constantly being told, and often forgetting, the names of churches that I have not heard of before.)

¹⁷ Millennium Villages Project, *Annual Report*. P1.

¹⁸ The population density given by MUTUA, PATRICK, 2006, ‘Millennium Development Goals Brief.’ Lecture given at Kima International School of Theology on 25th May 2006

The question of the degree of acculturation of the people of Gem to ‘modern ways’ is a fraught one that is repeatedly in focus in the course of this thesis. People’s use of English can be a misleading guide to this. Changes in lifestyle in Gem include ‘shallow’ imitations of what is foreign as well as heart-felt re-evaluation of ancestral directives. Cultural change is especially hard to gauge through the absence of historical records in oral communities like that of Gem. Perhaps the best that a scholar can do is to live in doubt of his early impressions. Scholars should be wary of subjective measures of acculturation that are very vulnerable to bias.

3.3. Beliefs and Practices in Gem

Luo traditional beliefs could be expressed in infinitely different ways depending on the particular objectives and angle of approach of the author of any synopsis. I attempt to give an indigenous view by drawing on two books written by Luo men in their own language about their own people to their own people.

3.3.1. *Luo Kitgi gi Timbegi*²¹ (The Luo, their Customs and Traditions)

¹⁹ Millennium Villages Project, *Annual Report*. P3.

²⁰ Millennium Villages Project, *Annual Report*. P4. (The original was entitled ‘Livelihood Strategies for ...’.)

²¹ Mboya. *Luo Kitgi*.

This book, sometimes considered as ‘the’ manual of Luo traditions, was originally written in the 1930s. I will comment on the content of the longest chapters.

Table 3.1. The Contents of Mboya’s book indicating the length of the Longest Chapters in Number of Pages.²²

Chapter Title (in English – my translation)	Position in terms of the longest to the shortest.	Number of pages in this chapter
To Move your Homestead and Build your House	1st	32
Mothers and Children	2nd	24
Matters of Marrying	3rd	23
A Senior Elder Dies	4th	19
Community Pleasure	4th	19
The Council of the Elders	6th	12
Fishing	7th	11
Magical Practitioners	7th	11
Other Bad Ways to Die	7th	11

3.3.1.1. To Move your Homestead and Build your House The longest chapter by far is about moving and building a new home. Mboya opens this chapter by saying that: “It is a *Jaduong*’ [senior man or more literally big man] who *goyo ligala* [starts a new home]. When he wants to move he first goes to the specialist on *juok* [witchcraft powers or ‘the force’] ...” for approval.²³ This important stage in the life of a Luo man needs to be

²² Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. chapters sorted according to length, with the longest first.

²³ Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p45.

approached cautiously through the risk of mishap (problems brought by *jochiende* (ghosts)) should it be done incorrectly. The move should be made by a *jaduong*’ accompanied by his senior wife carrying fire, the first-born son carrying an ax, and a man who he calls his ‘father’ (i.e. a member of the clan in his father’s generation). Numerous rituals must subsequently be performed in a particular order to ensure that the home be successful, i.e. have many offspring, much food, many animals and peace.

Concerns regarding this moving into a new home are very real today. Moving without proper attention to taboos is known to be hazardous. The lessons of experience verify the same – calamity is especially likely to strike a family around this time. Incorrect following of *kweche* (taboos) can result in difficult situations such as a prohibition on certain family members from entering a homestead on fear of death. For example, should a wife be absent when her husband starts his new homestead then she will never be allowed to enter it. Some homesteads can therefore be found in which some houses for wives are built outside of the main compound.

3.3.1.2. Mothers and Children The second largest chapter focuses on the following concerns:

1. Taboos regarding girls in pregnancy who keep spirits related to wall geckos.
2. Tattooing a pregnant woman.
3. Taboos associated with the day of birth.
4. Rituals that need to be performed if twins are born, up to and including their marriage.
5. Irregular births – such as breech and children whose teeth develop in the wrong order.

6. Appropriate rituals associated with the rearing of children.

7. The death of children and curses that affect the family.

8. Naming children in such a way as to please the dead.

The concern with geckos is (to my knowledge) unknown in Gem.²⁴ Tattooing to my knowledge is no longer practiced. While the rituals have changed and become much less pronounced, there can be considerable concern when twins are born, and taboos that constrain them for the rest of their lives. It is not easy for me to know what goes on in these family issues, that are largely the concern of women. *Roho* (spiritual) churches are very involved in this area, and the ritual of *golo nyathi* (presenting the child) at a public ceremony some days after birth involving the slaughter of an animal is common amongst them.

3.3.1.3. Matters of Marrying *Kend* (marriage) in Luo tradition was a very drawn out and complex affair hemmed in by taboos and revolving around a gradual process of the transfer of a girl from her home to that of a boy in exchange for cattle and gifts. Go-betweeners made the bulk of the arrangements. The girl was given the option to accept or refuse, and then was carried by force by her husband-to-be and his brothers (and cousins) with her brothers trying to prevent this from happening. The couple remained under the authority of the boy's parents until they started their own home (see above), which would occur years later.

Many observers would agree that much of the ceremony and many of the rituals surrounding 'marriage' are these days not practiced. There is a strong tension between

²⁴ Mboya was from Karachuonyo, another part of Luoland.

Western and African ways of marrying and preparing for marriage. The question of paying bride-wealth is a very important one that is often discussed on death, particularly of the husband or wife. Couples these days often begin by living together. The husband will seek to pay bride-wealth in due course to seal the marriage, ensure that the children belong to him²⁵ and that the wife be buried at his home.

3.3.1.4. A Senior Elder Dies This chapter describes what should happen starting from the death of a senior man, to his burial and subsequently the inheritance of his wives. Many rituals that must be carefully followed so as to ensure the future prosperity of the home are described in detail.

There is no doubt that the funeral of a senior man is a major and important event. Rituals concerning a subsequent returning to the grave or ‘drinking tea’ on behalf of the dead are much debated. Some churches, particularly AICs (African Indigenous Churches) specialise in performing rituals said to *chir* (resurrect) or otherwise enable the spirit of the late. Mission churches are increasingly doing the same so as to avoid losing their members. The whole area of the inheritance of widows is also very widely debated. It is rare for a widow not to be inherited. *Joter* (widow inheritors) are many, and much in demand.

3.3.1.5. Community Pleasure The chapter on *Mor mar Piny* (‘community pleasure’) starts by outlining details of the dances that occur after funerals. Further descriptions include details on: smoking pot, smoking a pipe, playing *ajua*,²⁶ playing a game loosely related to hockey between rival villages, playing a game to assist accuracy in spear throwing,

²⁵ Note that the Luo word for ‘father’ is the same word that is used for ‘owner’. *Wuon* is the name of a ‘father’ and to be *wuon* something is also to be its owner.

²⁶ “Board game with twelve holes and which uses the seeds of this tree or pebbles as counters.” (Capen, *Bilingual Dholuo*. p7.)

wrestling, singing and playing instruments, having girlfriends, drinking beer, playing an instrument called the *bu* and the play of children.

The Luo in their tradition love dancing. The games that are played these days are primarily those learned from the West such as football, although *ajua* remains popular. Beer drinking continues to be popular. Home-brew is illegal in Kenya, but widely consumed with culprits being periodically apprehended by the police.

3.3.1.6. Fishing, Magical Practitioners, other Bad Ways to Die The chapter on fishing describes various fishing methods and the taboos required to be carried out for them to be successful. The magical practitioners mentioned include the *jandagla* (who plants magic that can kill others), the *ajuoga* (specialist in handling *juok*, which are closely related to *jochiende* or ancestral spirits), *jajuog wang'* (evil eye), *jajuog otieno* (night runner), *janawi* (sorcerer), *jadil* (exorcist) and *jamrieri* (smeller of bad magic). Eighteen bad ways of dying and what to do about them are listed, including the death of a virgin girl, a girl whose marriage ceremony is incomplete, a married daughter while visiting her parents, a barren woman, a hunchback, a man whose wife is pregnant, a man who has not yet acquired his own homestead, suicide and death in water.

My living far from the lake makes it difficult to know the fishing rituals that are these days practiced. Many of the roles of the traditional medical practitioners have been appropriated by churches – especially AICs. Solutions to evil eye, being troubled by ancestors and pierced with medicines (by *janawi*) are often sought in churches. Traditional practitioners are no doubt active, but largely without my overt knowledge. People remain very concerned about the kinds of 'bad ways of dying' that Mboya describes.

The pragmatics theme running through this thesis suggests that the descriptions that I have given above presuppose a context for their correct in-depth understanding. My conjectures about this context have already guided the way in which I have translated Mboya's book into English, summarized it and commented on it. I have indicated elsewhere in this thesis that an important part of this context in my mind is the prevalence of the respect (or fear) given by Luo people to their dead (*jochiende*). My reasoning in drawing this conclusion is outlined in part in previous research²⁷ as well as in this thesis. This conclusion and my wider observations indicate that the Luo way of life, while open to comparison with that of other people around the world, can in many respects not be clearly understood by a British readership. Hence my implicit conclusion that experience of the life of such a foreign people is a vital pre-requisite to gaining such understanding of them that enables intelligent and helpful mutual interaction.

3.3.2. *Chike Jaduong' e Dalane*²⁸ (Traditional Rules for the Keeper of a Homestead)

The second book that I will use to illustrate Luo customs (this book is undated) is by Raringo. It being 150x100mm in size, 5mm thick and for sale for just Ksh.100.00 (£0.85) suggests that it is intended for use as a pocketbook. The front and back of the book are decorated with words lamenting the frequency of funerals of people with modern titles like professor, engineer etc. The book contains 331 numbered laws with an index showing the

²⁷ See articles at <http://www.jim-mission.org.uk/articles/index.html>.

²⁸ RARINGO, JACKTONE KEYA, nd, *Chike Jaduong e Dalane*. Ugunja, Kenya: Geranya Agencies

same in alphabetical order. The Table below indicates the contents according to title and length of chapter.

Table 3.2. Contents of Raringo’s Book indicating the Length of the Longest Chapters in
Number of Pages

Chapter Title (in English – my translation.)	Position in terms of the Longest to the Shortest.	Number of Pages in this chapter
Laws of the Homestead	1st	40
(No title.)	2nd	7
Matters in the Homestead	3rd	3
A Senior Elder who has his own Homestead Dies	3rd	3
Burial	3rd	3
Laws Regarding Boy and Girl Children	3rd	3
Laws Regarding Marriage / Bridewealth	3rd	3

My conversations with people about the contents of this book indicate that many know it as a part of the oral tradition. Throughout it are warnings – what to do to avoid death. What to do to avoid being troubled by, and more specifically killed by, the dead i.e. *jochiende*. I have taken four of these laws *at random* to consider here (in numerical order).

Law number 152. A boy inherits a sister-in-law while he is still living in the homestead of his father and his father also is still alive. If there is a boy whose

father is still alive and he inherits a woman in the homestead of another father and he has completed the *dhoch* there then when he comes back to his father's homestead he must make a hole in the fence of the homestead behind his house to use to enter the homestead. He must never again use the main gate, which his father uses. Should he not follow this instruction then death will be the end of the matter. If *chira* takes hold of the father then there is no treatment for it. (My translation.)

The sister-in-law is here assumed to have been widowed. A 'father' could be anyone in the same clan and of the same generation as the biological father. Completing the *dhoch* is completing the necessary rituals, including sexual rituals, that would render the person clean and 'safe'. Note that sons' houses are in Luo tradition lined up on both sides of the homestead, backing up to its edge. *Chira* is a slow debilitating disease resulting from the breaking of taboo that ends in death.

The use of the main entrance to a home is very important for the Luo. Other examples in this thesis illustrate the same.²⁹ By inheriting a widow elsewhere while his father is still alive this son has performed a dangerous act rendering him ritually incompatible with his father. Hence although he is still allowed to live in his father's homestead, he is not permitted to leave or enter it using the main gate, or he will bring death or *chira* (a slow wasting disease that ends in death) to the home.

²⁹ See Sections 5.3.3. and 6.3.5.

Law Number 154 **A young man approaches an in-law who is a widow who wants to leave and welcomes her into his home.** A young man who wants to prevent his in-law from leaving, if that in-law has already been inherited then that is no problem, he can welcome her into his man's house or into a kitchen in which children have not yet slept and then later he can build a house for her. Once he has stayed with her for a time and they have even given birth to some more children then with the children that her husband left her with that man can go to a new home with the in-law on the land of her late husband with all the children. (My translation.)

'Inherited' as here referred to, would mean that she had already co-habited with a man subsequent to her husband's death for the purpose of cleansing. The man's house is called a *duol*. Polygamous men usually have their own house, the other houses being of particular wives. Kitchens are here assumed to be separate houses, which is normal. It would be taboo to have a new wife to share a house with an existing wife. Going to a new home, would be starting a new homestead for her.

Law number 194. **If there is a young bastard in a homestead then can an older brother stand-for-him as he starts his new home?** A boy who is known to be a bastard, an older son of the home may not stand for him when he goes to begin his new home because the father of the home has already refused him permission and also the day on which he moves his home he won't be coming from the homestead of that son. (My translation.)

The ‘older brother’ referred to is another son to the homestead in which the bastard lives. (Every homestead is headed by one man who may have a number of wives.) ‘Stand for him’ refers to taking the place of the father in fulfilling the ritual requirements for starting a new home. This law can be understood with reference to the rule mentioned in my look at Mboya³⁰ on moving one’s home. For a man to move to begin his new home he must be accompanied by someone who he can call father, says Mboya. The question here asked is about a boy who has been brought up in a homestead the head of which is known not to be his biological father and whose father is not known. Is it permitted for someone other than the father of that homestead to officially accompany this bastard son on the day of his moving? The answer is no, and the reason given is (assuming that this alternative son already has his own homestead) that the bastard boy has not lived in that other homestead and so shouldn’t be emerging from it as he goes to start his own home.

Law Number 279. Ochola, Opiyo, Odongo, Okumu also are permitted to inherit the wife of a brother should the brother die? For those whose names are written above there is none which the laws of the home allow to inherit a wife to his brother, this is because their *dhoch* is not very good. (My translation.)

Ochola is a name given to a boy born after the death of his father. Opiyo and Odongo are the names given respectively to the first and second born of twins. Okumu is the name given to a boy who was conceived before his mother had a period, while still suckling her

³⁰ See Section 3.4.2.1.

previous child. *Dhoch* is in this context a mysterious force that someone carries in their body. *Lako* is the name used in Ugenya for what we in Gem call *ter*, which is the inheritance of widows. This rule clearly states that possessors of the above names, as a result of the peculiar circumstances of their birth, have a mysterious force in their bodies that makes it inadvisable for them to inherit widows. Their doing so is thought likely to bring death. (This mysterious force would in modern parlance be known as *jachien*, that is a devil or ghost.)

The situation of the homestead and all that concerns it are clearly very important to the Luo. Much commentary could clearly be added in an attempt to explain these and other laws. This would go beyond the intended boundaries of this thesis. The examples illustrate the Luo people's respect for magical forces, which are closely related to *jochiende* (ancestral spirits).

3.3.3. A Subjective Description of 'Real Life' in Gem

Tall trees obscure the view of the more distant homesteads to various degrees in rural Gem, giving the misleading impression in some areas especially of Eastern Gem that the landscape is wooded, when in fact nearly all the land is cultivated or occupied by homes. Many of the trees are planted for firewood or building timbers. Rain falling almost all year around, means that the vegetation in Gem is usually lush. Mud paths criss-cross the villages, connecting homesteads to one another and to larger tracks or roads. The rural population is thinly spread because people build their homesteads (*mier*) roughly in the

middle of their farmland. Hence 'villages' are not gatherings of houses in one place, but defined by the spread of the family of the original ancestor of a clan. Boundaries being based on people's ancestry means that they are invisible to uninformed observers.

Homesteads are often fenced, and consist of the house(s) of the senior man and his wife(s) facing down the hill or towards a road, while the sons build below the main house(s) facing into the middle. Variations on this theme reveal family characteristics. For example, two or more similar houses facing down indicates a polygynous³¹ household, and the number of houses facing each other on both sides of the homestead suggests the number of sons. Many houses these days are semi-permanent and roofed with corrugated iron. Others are mud and thatched. Brick houses suggest a wealthy family, dilapidated houses are typically occupied by widows, the occupants of fallen houses are usually dead. Cemented graves are frequently very visible in the wealthier homesteads.³²

The Luo people are typically very black in complexion. With the exception of the occasional drunkard, they are gentle, friendly and warm, as are many East African peoples. They are known for maintaining a strong ethnic identity. Western dress is most commonly worn, the exceptions including some women's clothing and those wearing prayer-attire. Women frequently walk carrying loads, men typically not. On meeting those known to them people will exchange news, often of recent deaths, funerals and memorial services and other concerns affecting the community. Common greetings include comments regarding the time of day (such as 'good morning/afternoon'³³) and questions as to

³¹ The number of houses indicating the number of wives.

³² Poorer homes leave graves uncemented.

³³ *Oyawore* (good-morning, or literally 'it has opened up') or '*oemore*' (good-afternoon, or literally 'it is closing in').

whether someone is alive.³⁴ As mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, conversation may be oriented more to maintaining rapport than to providing accurate information. Handshaking is widespread, excepting by a few Roho churches' members whose rules do not allow it. Old men use walking sticks that are bent over, whereas old women long straight sticks for support. Young men tend to hang out in groups. Many men of working age being in towns means that there is a predominance of women in a largely rural area such as Gem. Remittance income from these men is important to the economy of the area.

Farming is mostly by hand labour, except for some ploughing done by oxen, and is the principal economic occupation. Craftsmen such as bicycle repairers and carpenters or fish or tomato salespeople are almost invariably also farmers. Women often do most of the farm work as they are based at home. Water supplies are known to be relatively widespread and clean in Gem by comparison to elsewhere in Luoland. White people such as tourists, missionaries and aid workers are seen as potential sources of material advancement. Children frequently run towards visitors who are not ethnically African joyously shouting '*Mzungu, Mzungu*'³⁵ or 'how are you' (what they know of English greetings) while trying to touch visitor's skin. The government hierarchy in Gem consists of a Divisional Officer heading the Yala and Wagai divisions of Gem. Under him are the Chiefs, Assistant Chiefs and then Village Headmen. The presence of various governmental and non-government agencies is increasingly apparent. Since 2005 the Millennium Development Project is making its presence felt in Yala Division.³⁶ Numerous other

³⁴ *Ingima* (are you alive)? See footnote 66 of Chapter 7.

³⁵ See Section 7.4.3.2. for the meaning of '*Mzungu*'.

³⁶ Nation Correspondent. 'Kenyan Village.'

organisations such as Compassion International and local NGOs such as *yaw pachi*,³⁷ are operating with more or less visibility.

Polygyny is common. Open shows of sexual affection between men and women are strongly taboo. Men rarely walk anywhere with their wives. Weddings are rare. Most 'marriages' begin with a couple staying together with arrangements being made later (or much later, or even not at all) to pay bride-wealth. Pregnancy and the birth of children are private confidential affairs for which attention is not sought through fear of witchcraft. Schools are widespread and scenes of masses of uniformed children walking to and from them are common. School teaching is predominantly in English. Church buildings of many shapes and sizes are many and sometimes close together. Denominations are many.³⁸ Of these, many have carefully treasured links with various overseas funding bodies, so are places for getting as well as giving. Being a Christian with affiliation to a particular denomination is almost universal in Gem. Burial and post-burial rituals are key roles of churches.

Burial services may be on any day of the week, but typically on Saturdays. They are held in the homestead (*dala*) of the deceased. The night before is an 'all night' service of singing, testimonies, preaching and sometimes drum beating and dancing. It takes time for visitors to wash and eat on the morning of the burial, as seats and (frequently) PA systems are set up, so that the formal service typically begins between 10.30 am and 12.00 noon.

The church of the deceased or of a close family member will begin and end the service, the

³⁷ ROGO, JANE, 2005. 'GENDER: Yaw Pachi Womens Group showing the way.' WWW (accessed 5.10.06) http://sagam.blogspot.com/2005_09_25_sagam_archive.html

middle time-slot being given over to various testimonies about the departed. This is an important time for learning about the departed individual, and at the same time about the physical and spiritual circumstances surrounding the death. (In Gem as elsewhere in Africa, death is invariably considered to have a spiritual cause, such as bewitchment or an evil spirit.) After testimonies a collection is followed by a procession to the graveside – the grave having been dug in an appropriate location following customary guidelines overnight. The actual burial and covering of the coffin is accompanied by much singing. By this time many people are already being given food and preparing to leave. Certain relatives (the families of wives to the home) are not permitted to observe the actual burial.

Walking is the most common means of travel, followed by cycling. Bicycle taxis are common at junctions, in which a traveller sits on an improvised seat behind the cyclist and pays to be taken to his preferred destination. *Matatus* (small buses) ply the main routes – some of which are along all-weather or tar roads. Market days at different locations are an important part of the informal economy. Vast numbers of people are variously engaged in buying and selling at these open air markets, sometimes spreading their produce on the ground and sometimes on wooden stalls. Livestock markets in which animals are bought and sold on an individual basis (not through auction), most keenly attended by men, are associated with the general markets. Major centres are known for the locations and times/days of their markets. These markets, together with funerals, are important locations for meeting friends and relatives and catching up with news. Varieties of shops with different specialties are found at trading centres and road junctions.

³⁸ See also footnote 16 in Chapter 3.

It is very important to welcome visitors into a house and not to talk to them outside or in the doorway. In a homestead this house should be of the senior wife of the owner of the home. Visitors move to the right on entering the door, the left being for the members of the home. Christians will often pray while standing before exchanging formal greetings and sitting down. Names are not shared initially but often near the end of a visit with careful pauses emphasising the importance of this information. Refreshments will not be offered verbally, but a visitor will know that they are being prepared when the lady of the house quietly slips out or gives discreet instructions to a child. Informal conversation should be engaged in initially. The purpose of one's visit may not be disclosed until after some time, after refreshments or even after walking out of the door. Goodbyes are not said at the door, but visitors are accompanied on their way for a greater or lesser distance.

3.4. Example Contexts for Language Use Analysed in Chapters 4 – 6.

The contexts given to incidents recorded in Chapters 4 to 6 are often minimal so as to:

1. Avoid revealing personal information in this public document.
2. Avoid the bias arising from choosing between the infinity of available contexts for every event.
3. Maintain the intended focus of this research on the understanding of 'bad'.

4. Enable the presentation of sufficiently frequent examples to make my case, in a limited space.

Nevertheless I here provide three more detailed contexts. Note that all the information is by observation or was volunteered in the course of normal day to day conversations and at no time in any formal interview environment. Some details have been changed in the accounts below to protect the individuals concerned, in case this thesis become known in Gem.

3.4.1. A Death in Setini Village³⁹

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³⁹ Names of some people and places changed. Every paragraph represents a different event or occasion on which I was given an account.

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3.4.2. A Discussion with a church leader following a service in a Roho church⁴⁰

A friend and I left a service at his Roho church together on our bicycles. He is also one of the leaders at this church, and we were both going in the same direction as his home is near to mine.

While cycling I shared my observation that it was often more difficult for me to understand everything that is said in their church compared to other churches. David (false name)

⁴⁰ Names are changed to conceal the identity of people and places.

thought this was probably because they have a spiritual language called *Dhoroho* that they mix in with *Dholuo*. He began to explain some *Dhoroho* phrases to me.⁴¹

We stopped and sat outside a shop in Yala enjoying fizzy drinks. David told me that the members of this Roho church prefer to speak in *Dhoroho* when dealing with *jochiende* (ghosts). My thinking initially that that this was to fool the *jachien* (ghost) was proved wrong, as I was told that the *jachien* that wants a chicken gets it. Because the *jachien* cannot eat itself, people gather to eat on its behalf so as to appease it.⁴² Angry spirits are made happy when others eat on their behalf, I was told. (This was perhaps the only time in the course of this 72 days of research that *jochiende* were referred to in almost positive appreciative terms.) It became clear that *Dhoroho* ('language of spirit') was especially able to communicate with ancestral spirits (*jochiende*). David explained that one of their church members once disappeared for a month under water. On emerging he knew *Dhoroho*, which has since been an official language in the church.⁴³

I asked David whether there were any *Roho* churches before the formal founding of *Roho* on the death of Alfayo Odongo Mango.⁴⁴ He said that yes there were. He told me they were dispersed by the British to fight in the First World War and that these early movements were insufficiently disciplined (the latter word was given in English) so that

⁴¹ *Dhoroho* is a language of the spirit. (Hoehler-Fatton, *Women of Fire*. p xx.)

⁴² *Dholuo* does not distinguish 'he' and 'it' in this context.

⁴³ See alternative explanation for the origin of *Dhoroho* in Hoehler-Fatton, *Women of Fire*. p xx. Many people in this church do not know *Dhoroho* well despite periodic efforts at teaching it.

⁴⁴ Mango and nine others were burnt to death for their faith in 1934. This mass martyrdom is considered to be the beginning of the Roho movement amongst the Luo, and Alfayo Odongo Mango as the principle founder. (Ogot, 'Reverend Alfayo.' p125.)

many of them replaced *Roho* with *juogi* (traditional Luo spirits) in their worship. The latter, he told me, had much less power than *Roho*, and were somehow confused.

David explained that the practice of eating on behalf of the dead kept African people poor. When someone could not eat (referring to a dead man), then he liked others to eat on his behalf, he said. A *jachien* (ghost) who is angry (*iye wang'* – his insides are burning) is most effectively placated by eating on his behalf as he will enjoy having people being happy and having fun around him. (David did not agree with my suggestion that perhaps the dead man would be jealous of those who could enjoy good food, which he no longer could.)

David went on to recount something that had been reported in a church gathering a few years previously. Two *ondiegi* (hyenas or 'beasts') went into a man's house, causing him to run away. A Bishop in due course went to this home where the *ondiegi* were. While not actually speaking, the spirits in the beasts communicated with the Holy Spirit in the Bishop that they wanted people to eat on their behalf. The Bishop agreed and arranged a memorial service (*rapar*) at the grave of the man's late father. The *ondiegi* did not attend this event, but were clearly placated as they did not come back to trouble this man again thereafter.

3.4.3. A Sermon Preached at a home Meeting in a ‘Power’ church⁴⁵

I was taking notes on a piece of paper that I had in my Bible during this message addressed to about 15 people, mostly women, in a home. This is a description of only a small part of the message from memory and a few notes and not a transcript of the whole message because the scene was not very amenable to note-taking. I did not take any notes either before the message began, or after people had recovered from their crying and wailing. The whole message was in *Dholuo*. The preacher wore a suit. He is a tall man and stood erectly and confidently with his legs apart and one hand behind his back. He spoke loudly, authoritatively and self-assuredly while gesticulating aggressively with his right hand. A member of the congregation did the Bible reading on his request.

“*Nyasaye timo madongo.*” (God does amazing things) said the preacher repeatedly. Isaiah 5:3 was read.⁴⁶ “*Tuo onge*” (there is no disease) repeated the preacher frequently. “*Ng’a ma thuol okayo nochangi*” (the person who has been bitten by the snake will be healed) he said.

The preacher told us to say “*aseketho, an jaricho, war chunya*” (I have sinned, I am a sinner, save my soul). He then said that it is difficult for people to say that. There is no truth, he went on to say. Those who stand on the truth are not to be found, he emphasised. Isaiah 5:3 was read again. “Salvation and the Holy Spirit, why don’t we do these things”

⁴⁵ Some details changed to conceal the identity of some people and places.

⁴⁶ “Now you people of Jerusalem and of Judah, decide the case between me and my vineyard.” (Translated from Bible, *Muma Maler*. Isaiah 5:3.)

asked the preacher? Instead it is “jealousy, lies and many other things” that we do, he shared. “If you do what *people* want you to do”, said the preacher, “then you will harvest the bitter fruit.”

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 was read.⁴⁷ “*Litne Nyasaye kibaro*” he said loudly (it is painful for God if you refuse to follow him). The preacher spoke to one of the male members in the congregation personally. Then he said repeatedly “*ketho*” (destruction). He continued to say this repeatedly, until everyone (excluding myself and a colleague) was crying out loudly while sobbing and spitting bowed down on their knees in front of him. He and a fellow preacher went outside for a few minutes while the crying and sobbing was the most intense.

3.5. Conclusion

Gem has an area of about 400km² and a population of 142,000. It is part of Siaya District near Lake Victoria in Western Kenya. Siaya District is known for its poverty and high mortality rates. The Luo people of Gem variously follow an extremely complex legal system passed to them by prior generations, concerned especially with issues of death.

⁴⁷ “But surely you know that those who destroy (sinners) will not obtain the blessing of the Kingdom of God? Don’t deceive yourselves. You must know that fornicators, those who worship empty gods, and those who commit adultery, including the homosexuals, or thieves, or the greedy, or drunkards, or those who slander

Some aspects of daily life in Gem as well as a brief church history have been outlined.

Some situations contributing to the analysis in Chapters 4 to 6 have been given in detail.

others, or robbers will not receive the blessing of the Kingdom of God.” (Bible. *Muma Maler*. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. My translation from *Dholuo*.)

CHAPTER 4. WHAT BAD (*RACH*) IS.

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I consider what is ‘bad’ in the eyes of the people of Gem. This necessitates dividing the range of bad things into categories. I believe that the categories that I have used are not arbitrary, but are also held by the people of Gem. For example, to take a category of bad things as those associated with what is ‘modern’ or introduced to Gem from outside, is to my understanding a locally recognised category. ‘Bad’ can sometimes be assumed as the opposite of good. If life is good, death can be assumed to be bad. This is the basis of only very few of the ‘bad’ things here identified.

Ironically in a sense, things that are bad are often close to being good, and vice versa. Hence a preacher in a Roho church commented that when the father ran towards the prodigal son, whom we in the congregation had clearly been told was us, as he saw him returning¹ *neko nomake* (madness took hold of him).² *Neko* (madness) is a bad thing, yet here it has become a good thing as it demonstrates the extremity of his love.³ Something

¹ Bible, *Muma Maler*. Luke 15:20.

² Sermon preached in a Roho church, the Musanda Christian Church of Kenya, on 26th April 2003.

³ This is madness as the father’s action is ritually risky. To avoid *gak* (uncleanness) the father should have avoided such intimate contact with his renegade son. *Neko* or madness being implicitly associated with the

that may be considered generically as bad such as polygamy, is good for the husband and new wife, at least at the time of its inception.⁴ “Could they [the Bantu] conceive a world that is only bad...” Tempels asks?⁵ This possibility should be borne in mind of the Luo when considering the categories below.

4.2. Means Used to Identify the Bad

In the course of 72 days I identified a ‘bad thing’ being addressed in various contexts 454 times. I divided these into 24 categories that are listed with the frequency of their occurrence in Table 4.1 below.

activity of the dead means that the *Kiswahili* word with a comparable contextual impact to the English ‘mad’ is ‘*wazimu*’, (people of *zimu*) where *zimu* is the root word for dead predecessors.

⁴ The goodness and badness of polygamy is often ambiguous amongst Luo people. Many consider it to be foundationally bad, others foundationally good, and others a ‘necessary evil’. It is bad in that it adds problems to a household.

⁵ Tempels, *Bantu*. p140.

Table 4.1. ‘Bad things’ in their categories as identified according to frequency

Luo language name for category of bad thing	Possible English translation of the Luo bad thing	Number of times referred to over research period	Number of times referred to as percentage
1. <i>Kindi kod Nyasaya</i>	Your walk with God	57	13
2. <i>Gik ma ndalogi</i>	Modern things	49	11
3. <i>Jochiende / Shaitani</i>	Ghosts / devil	41	9
4. <i>Kit ng’ato</i>	Someone’s character	36	8
5. <i>Kit gi timbe joluo</i>	Traditions of the Luo	26	6
6. <i>Kweche</i>	Taboos	21	5
7. <i>Tho</i>	Death	21	5
8. <i>Kaka itiyo kod ji</i>	How you interact with people	20	4
9. <i>Ng’ato moro</i>	Someone else	19	4
10. <i>Richo</i>	Sin	17	4
11. <i>Ajuoga / yath</i>	Witchdoctor / medicine	16	4
12. <i>Tuo</i>	Illness	16	4
13. <i>Yany</i>	Verbal abuse	15	3
14. <i>Gak</i>	Uncleanness	14	3
15. <i>Siasa</i>	‘Politics’	13	3
16. <i>Chira / kuong’</i>	Curses	9	2
17. <i>Chandruok</i>	Troubles	8	2
18. <i>Dhier</i>	Poverty	6	1
19. <i>Piny</i>	The world	6	1

20. <i>Timbe rawere</i>	Behaviour of youth	6	1
21. <i>Ketho sa</i>	Wasting time	5	1
22. <i>Ok idhi e liel</i>	Not attending funerals	5	1
23. <i>Wichkuot</i>	Shame	4	1
24. <i>Ranyisi moa e Muma</i>	Biblical examples ...	2	0
25. <i>Moko</i>	<i>Miscellaneous</i>	22	5
Total		454	101
			(discrepancy due to rounding error)

There are levels of bad things. Illness, infertility and death are seen to be the root of bad as perceived by the Luo of Gem. This does not in itself mean that they will be the most frequently mentioned, as their existence and their badness is presupposed. Debates and teaching in churches and funerals pertain to these and how they are acquired or avoided. I will here focus on the bad things as if they are bad in and of themselves without unduly emphasising how they arise or their identity in relation to primary 'bad'.⁶

As I concluded in my article,⁷ good is here often seen as arising by default. Hence Luo people put their efforts into countering the bad rather than welcoming the good.⁸ The basic

⁶ This will be considered in detail in subsequent chapters.

tenets of good that I am presupposing here are *ngima* (life) and *lony* (something like wealth, development and sophistication), the latter often being an imitation of Western ways of life – wearing clothing, having glass windows, speaking English, washing with soap and so on.⁹ Lumumba describes the Luo as highly educated then says that “Our people, the time has come for us to ask ourselves as to why it is that despite having so many educated people, we end up so poor?” (My translation.)¹⁰ In true Kenyan (or Luo) fashion Lumumba lists the weaknesses and faults of the Luo,¹¹ that, in his view, keep them in poverty, one by one. His view of development is hitting these bad things, and presuming that good will then come by default.¹² Lumumba quotes his predecessor Ayany¹³ who had similar arguments. Both of these authors have taken a break with Luo tradition in choosing to focus in their writing on countering bad actions, rather than the malign spirits that cause them.

⁷ Harries, *Good-by-Default*. p162.

⁸ Bonnke teaches that all people are totally evil, that sin abounds, that African culture has nothing good in it but only witchcraft, and such talk draws the crowds. (GIFFORD, PAUL, 1992, ‘Reinhard Bonnke’s Mission to Africa, and his 1991 Nairobi Crusade.’ 157-182 In: Gifford, Paul, (ed.) *New Dimensions in African Christianity*. Nairobi: All African Conference of Churches, pp162-163.) Such orientation to doing away with bad is not confined to the Luo people, but is sometimes hidden. So the content of Magesa’s Chapter 6 entitled: “Restoring the Force of Life” clearly to me refers to the deterring of bad. (Magesa, *African Religion*. pp175-215.)

⁹ The same extends to national politics. Odinga (ODINGA, OGINGA, 1967, *Not yet Uhuru*. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.) uses his knowledge of British ideology as ammunition against his political opponents. “*It is my firm conviction that the answer in this struggle in settling our landless Africans without endangering the agricultural production is cooperative farming*” (p67.) is not Luo reasoning but a borrowed phrase from the West.

¹⁰ Lumumba, *Ang’o Marach?* p13.

¹¹ That he considers to be many. (Lumumba, *Ang’o Marach?* p16.)

¹² Harries, *Good-by-Default*. p162.

¹³ Ayany, *Kar Chakruok*. 1989.

4.3. Discussion of Bad Things

I focus below on five major categories in detail, and the others more briefly.

4.3.1. *Kindi kod Nyasaye* (Between You and God)

That a poor relationship with God is considered to be ‘bad’ may not be surprising given the strongly Christian context in which this research was carried out. It also reflects the Luo people’s concern to be right with God so as to obtain good fortune¹⁴ and in case death were suddenly to overtake them. Many points made regarding people’s relationship to God and hence to the church, worship, prayer etc. are similar to those one might expect elsewhere in the world, including in Britain. This does not mean that the same thing is being alluded to, even if the language is the same, as the semantic and pragmatic rules are different.¹⁵ Hence reference such as that by Pentecostal preacher Samuel Odhiambo Oloo¹⁶ that *din rach* (religion is bad) must be understood in its local context. (Although ‘religion’ can be deprecated in evangelical and Pentecostal circles etc. in Britain, the apparent parallels are limited as the British would not be concerned at the lack of attention to the removal of *jochiende*. The implication in Luoland of saying that a church is ‘*din*’ is that it remains *gak* (unclean) because *jochiende* have not been removed.)

¹⁴ Ogutu, ‘An Historical.’ p96.

¹⁵ See Chapter 2.

¹⁶ On 18th May 2003.

Din is a borrowing from *Kiswahili* that could be translated ‘religion’. Pentecostal and *Roho* churches frequently use *din* to describe mission churches – in this area particularly Anglican and to some extent Church of God (that predominates in the neighbouring Bantu region of Bunyore). A great failing ascribed to these churches is not acknowledging certain kinds of spiritual favour, this often being associated with *warruok* (often translated in English as salvation). Hence within the Anglican Church there is a major subgroup called *jolalruok* (people of fellowship) who are saved. Movements of salvation have also emerged from the Church of God.

Warruok (salvation) is a certain state of immunity to bad spiritual influences. It is linked with what is modern as it makes modern things available to the saved. That is, it is a weakening or removal of barriers (at least in theory) to modern things, such as the requirement to follow the strictures of Luo *chike* (laws) that are seen as especially onerous to life today. (Modern life is here understood as various discernable aspects of European ways of life.)¹⁷ *Warruok* is a new dispensation – hence the comment¹⁸ referring to the hegemony of Luo law as *kapok wachopo e kinde mar warruok* (before we enter the dispensation of salvation).¹⁹ That *warruok* has broken the hegemony of Luo customary law

¹⁷ Some believe that Jesus has in Luoland become the ‘great *ajuoga*’ (diviner) heralding modernity. “The pressure is now definitely in the direction of a generalised modern culture through which political unity can be propagated and economic schemes implemented.” (SCHOFFELEERS, M., 1982, ‘Christ as the Medicine man and the Medicine Man as Christ.’ 11-28 In: *Man and Life*. (Calcutta Institute of Social Research and Applied Anthropology.) 8(1-2) 1982, p12.) “Born again Christianity opens onto the modern world” says Martin. (MARTIN, DAVID, 2002, ‘Africa: a mission accomplished? Where Christianity is Thriving’ *Christianity Today*. November-December 2002, Volume 8, No. 6, p11, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/bc/2002/006/3.11.html> (accessed 06.11.02).) But ‘the modern world’ being appropriated would not be familiar to the West. “...the various modernity’s of African colonies contrasted markedly with modernity at the metropole and with each other ...”. (Comaroff and Comaroff, ‘Notes on Afro-modernity.’ p332.) Is this a “wash of mimicry” (Steiner, *After Babel*. p315.) or understanding ‘modern’ through an African cultural perspective as a type of witchcraft power or vital force.

¹⁸ Comment made by an old Luo man on observing that women were using *warruok* as an excuse to engage in immorality because it freed them from the strictures of Luo customary law, on 8th July 2003.

¹⁹ *Warruok* has many features indicating that the ‘... kingdom of heaven is near.’ (Bible, *New International*. Matthew 4:17.)

is widely recognised, including by Mboya²⁰ who tells us that “*Nitie moko ma joma oyie Yesu Kristo ok nyal tiyogo nikech Yesu Kristo ema osechungo kar manyasi mahosogi.*”

(There are others [*chira*, curses] that those who believe in Jesus Christ cannot use because Jesus has already stood in the place of the *manyasi* [purifying medicine] to purify them) (my translation). People will usually be vulnerable to *chira* (a debilitating curse) if they break *chik* (a customary law), that is do things that *kwero* (are forbidden).²¹

A funeral speaker²² referred to *din* (‘religion’) as *onget* (a blanket). She went on to explain that while a blanket will cover over a problem and make it look nice, it will not solve it. *Warruok* (salvation) on the other hand will deal with it face to face. We were told that the thirty-year-old woman being buried on this occasion would not have died if the speaker had been around to pray for her. Hence she described her church as ‘*wa lit e chang*’ (we are fearsomely good at healing people).²³ The link with European people’s culture, in this case Britain, was made clear on this occasion through frequent references to this lady’s recent travel to England. The deceased had apparently also frequently expressed her desire to travel to England, here referred to as *loka*, having the contextual effect of ‘over there’. “... *loka ma nodhie en polo*” shared our speaker. (The ‘over there’ that she has reached is heaven (‘the sky’).)²⁴

²⁰ MBOYA, PAUL, 1978, *Richo ema kelo Chira*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, p VI.

²¹ In Africa “Faults are not transgressions of a ‘law’ but factual contradictions of established order.” (SHORTER, AYLWARD W.F., 1973, *African Culture and the Christian Church: an introduction to social and pastoral anthropology*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, p62.)

²² On 26th July 2003. The speaker was the wife to Bishop Silas Owiti of the *Duond Warruok* (Voice of Salvation) church.

²³ *Lit* as used here would often be understood as sore, yet it resembles *lich*, which is fearsome in the sense of amazing, so using *lit* here adds to fearsomeness in a way that is resistant to opposition, as a sore spot can refuse to heal.

²⁴ *Loka* (Europe / White people’s land) should be understood as having evident parallels with heaven as this is where good things, money etc., come from. Travel to Europe is to many a lifetime’s ambition. Hence “Nnzokayaphe was a young [Tanzanian] man who wanted to go far; Makerere college, then Europe itself!” (My translation.) (RUHUMBIKA, GABRIEL, 1992, *Miradi Bubū ya Wazalendo*. Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House Ltd., p90.) So Mojola says that P’Bitek “*grabbed* the opportunity ...” to study there [in

Any compromise on *warruok* (salvation) is seen as bad. *Din* ('religion') caricatures this. Someone practicing *din* is assumed by those under *warruok* not to be receiving necessary cleansing (*puodhruok*), so remaining as dependent on the *ajuoga* (specialist in handling ritual force and *juok*, commonly referred to in English as witchdoctor or diviner) as before the Gospel came to Gem.²⁵

Many of the bad things associated with someone's relationship to God are directly related to their state of *warruok* (salvation). Not going to prayers²⁶ was mentioned as bad because it seemed to be a way of avoiding hearing God's word so that at the final judgement someone could say 'no one ever told me' about the Gospel.²⁷ *Warruok* requires constant attentiveness to spiritual dangers. Hence a possible reason given to me as to why Mr. X (*ma noware*, who was saved) died as a result of handling branches of a particular tree (*murembe*) laid across a path, may be because he failed to pray first.²⁸ This was suggested

Britain.] (my emphasis). (MOJOLA, ALOO OSOTSI, 2005, 'Translating and Christianising African Deities: Okot P'Bitek's Challenge.' 30-39 In: Loba-Mkole, Jean-Claude, and Wendland, Ernst R., (eds.) 2005, *Interacting with Scriptures in Africa*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, p30.) Economic conditions in Africa result in "African leaders ... orient[ing] their attentions externally to the international system rather than internally to the productivity and welfare of their own populations." (Leonard, *Africa's Stalled*. p105.)

²⁵ Perhaps efforts made by missionaries, or the great emphasis on imitation by mission churches in Gem, result in their failing to realise that "the role of the medicine man" (*Dholuo – Ajuoga*) is a "Christological paradigm." (SCHOFFELEERS, M., 1989, 'Folk Christology in Africa: the dialectics of the nganga paradigm.' 157-183 In: *Journal of Religion in Africa*. XIX, 2, (1989) p158.) Therefore Christ should replace the *ajuoga* and not leave his role intact.

²⁶ The Luo term for prayer, *lamo*, incorporates 'worship' and to some extent service and rituals for remission of sins.

²⁷ On 5th July 2003.

²⁸ As explained to me on 2nd June 2003. *Murembe* is *Erythrina abyssinica*. (KOKWARO, JOHN O., and JOHNS, TIMOTHY, 1998, *Luo Biological Dictionary*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, p60.) "It is believed that anyone who cuts one of these [*murembe*] trees will die on the spot." (AYUGI, TOM OGADA, nd. 'Reconciling the Luo Animist to Christ.'

<http://www.missiology.org/animism/Articles/ogada.htm> (accessed 6.06.05)). A man's getting sick then dying within days of handling *murembe* was thought to be due to his removing of the *murembe*, placed by someone else across a path to close it.

because the lady who subsequently removed these *murembe* branches had explained that she prayed first, and she seemed to remain unharmed by the experience.²⁹

It appears that hunger³⁰ was resulting in people not going to church meetings at a certain church in Yala in Gem. The badness of this was explained by the person giving the announcements, by saying that if this person had gone to church they may have found money that someone else had discarded and that this could have been sufficient to alleviate their hunger for a couple of days or more.³¹ This is just one example of a major theme running through Luo church practice, known in scholarly English as ‘prosperity Gospel’, a “cynical manipulation of myriads of Christians” according to Cotterell.³² Although nodding assent may be given to a critique of this when expounded in English, it is extremely difficult to translate into *Dholuo* or *Kiswahili* in such a way as to convince people that it is ‘bad’.³³ ‘Good things’ like prosperity Gospel, cannot be bad! Those who try to counter prosperity are bad.³⁴ The regulation of one’s life on the basis of promises that come not to be visibly fulfilled is not new to Biblical faith,³⁵ but does the Old

²⁹ See also Section 3.4.1.

³⁰ April to July coincides with the worst hungry season of the year.

³¹ Church service, Bible and Literacy League Pentecostal Church on 11th May 2003. This was obviously a way of encouraging people to be consistent in going to church.

³² (COTTERELL, PETER, 1993, *Prosperity Theology*. Leicester: Religious and Theological Studies Fellowship, p2.) and is “a carnal accommodation to the crass materialism of American culture” (MCCONNELL, D., 1990, *The Promise of Health and Wealth: a historical and biblical analysis of the modern faith movement*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, p180.) that continues despite African rejection of materialist teachings. (ITEYO, CRISPINOUS, 2002, ‘An Analytical Study of the Doctrine of Materialism, with Reference to Selected African Conceptions of Reality.’ PhD thesis, Maseno University, 2002, p150.)

³³ A colleague of mine who was preaching against prosperity Gospel in a Ugandan church, had the congregation thinking that he was trying to deny them of blessing. A Bishop: “compare[ed] the Christian life to food ...” (Healey, *A Fifth Gospel*. p29.) without apparently realising the prosperity implications of this.

³⁴ I was told on 27th April 2003. This was made clear on our being told that a mother’s displeasure with her daughter’s preference for prayer over medicine was misguided. The mother should, according to this Pentecostal preacher, should have respected the girl’s refusal to take medicine because indeed God is the greatest healer.

³⁵ Thus was Abraham’s faith according to Paul (‘Abraham accepted God, and that acceptance of his was taken as being a good thing.’ Romans 4:3b translated from Bible, *Muma Manyien*. 1968.) “So much did these [Old Testament] promises mean to them that they regulated the whole course of their lives in their light.”

Testament principle of trusting God rightly transfer to today to trust in the West and its provision? Have Westerners become gods? One of the most problematic effects of the widespread knowledge of English in East Africa is the access that this gives to prosperity oriented teaching from the West. The way this is understood, especially when it has a “façade of orthodoxy created by ... biblical proof-texting and evangelical jargon”³⁶ is such as greatly to promote magical beliefs.

But there are things in church practice, which have a badness that is ambiguous. Hence a recent graduate of a Life Ministries nine-months Christian training course shared a message that was clearly derived from his time in class.³⁷ His message emphasised the importance of purposefulness in Christian ministry, and having a plan and direction in life.³⁸ “*Weche ma apoya nono*” (things that arise unexpectedly) was the translation for the opposite of purposefulness. These things were therefore according to our speaker, bad. This was hard for us in Gem to swallow, as God’s unexpected intervention in events is very much desired by believers here.

I came across such ambiguity many times in the course of my research. Teachings from abroad, particularly England, are generally highly valued and hence ‘good’. Yet often they contradict indigenous notions of good and bad. The indigenous category I guess wins the day in the end, but in the meantime an interesting dynamic develops. A classic case of this

(BRUCE, F.F., 1964, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: the New London commentary on the New Testament*. London: Marshall Morgan and Scott, p277.)

³⁶ McConnell, *The Promise*. p50.

³⁷ This message was shared on 4th May 2003.

³⁸ This message clearly originated from Warren. (WARREN, RICK, 2003, *The Purpose Driven Life*. Michigan: Zondervan.), which book has been called a “runaway success.” (DAYS, 2003, ‘40 Days of Purpose.’ 20-21 In: *Idea*. September/October 2003, (Evangelical Alliance UK bi-monthly magazine) p20.)

occurred³⁹ when a whole message in a church was presented based on a text from abroad (i.e. the message seemed almost certainly to have been copied from a Western source). The translator (from English to *Dholuo*) struggled enormously, and the whole message while clearly good (on the spiritual / magical plane, especially for a Pentecostal church) as it was coming from *uzunguni* (a prosperous place known for its white people (*Kiswahili*)), was at the same time bad as it made almost no sense.⁴⁰

The advisability of making a din (*goyo nduru*) when praying, is another instance that can be taken in more ways than one. Hence a speaker explained⁴¹ that *nduru* is not necessary, before saying that you could go into another room or into the bush to pray (exactly so that you can make a din and not disturb anyone). The confusion seems to arise according to who one is praying to. Prayer often being directed against *Shaitani* or *jochiende* (ghosts) noise is needed, as from the Luo people's tradition we know that these 'spirits' respond to noise. The necessity of *jochiende* being able to hear and understand prayers was underscored to me.⁴² This particular church's spiritual language (*Dhoroho*)⁴³ I was told was especially valuable because the spirits of the dead (*jochiende*) could understand it, and therefore easily be pacified. The importance of a loud noise is further illustrated by Pentecostal churches' (especially) love for PA systems. People would rather spend money on having Christian services heard by the whole community, than helping the poor, I was

³⁹ On 1st June 2003 at the Nyamminia Complex near Yala.

⁴⁰ When it did make sense it appeared to contradict indigenous notions of good and bad.

⁴¹ On 20th April 2003 in a teaching on prayer presented in Kiswahili to the youth service of Zion Harvest Mission, Ulumbi. Much of the message showed a confusion between sharing what was correct (English) teaching, and what local Luo people actually believe about prayer.

⁴² On 19th July 2003 by a member of the Ruwe Holy Ghost church.

⁴³ For an explanation about the nature and derivation of *Dhoroho* see Hoehler-Fatton. (Hoehler-Fatton, *Women of Fire*. p xx-xxii.)

told.⁴⁴ Transmitting God's word using a PA system removes malicious spirits and so can cleanse a whole area.

A much loved metaphor to describe the Christian life in this area is that of *lweny* (battle or war). Hence a devoted Christian is a *jalweny* (soldier). The battle is with bad things, such as sin, death, illness, poverty. Then one would think that victory would be better than the battle. Yet terms describing the victorious state such as *chamo raha* (eating the pleasures of life) and *starehe* (*Kiswahili* – a state of rest within accomplishment) are not seen as good but bad. Engaging in the battle (*lweny*) in which these things are aspired to is good, yet once they arrive jealousy and suspicion sets in and the achieved state is ambiguous in terms of its goodness and badness. This takes us to the category of bad that I have referred to as 'modern things'.

4.3.2. *Gik ma Ndalogi* (Things of Today or Modern Things)

The love-hate relationship of the people of Gem with modern life is a constant drama. The desire for it is unquenchable and powerful. The modern offers "a lifestyle too attractive to be denied",⁴⁵ while its effects are at the same time constantly repulsive.⁴⁶ It is like

⁴⁴ In conversation with a young man on 20th June 2003. This must be understood in the light of the corruption often caused by projects that are supposedly 'helping the poor'.

⁴⁵ BALCOMB, ANTHONY O., 1996, 'Modernity and the African Experience.' In: *Bulletin for Contextual Theology African Theology*. Volume Three, No.2, 1996, <http://www.hs.unp.ac.za/theology/mod.htm> (accessed 29.09.04)

⁴⁶ I think the Luo would agree that "The 'paradoxes' of Christianity are truer to what we are than the manifest existential contradictions of modern ideology", (GUNTUN, C.E., 1993, 'The Spirit as Lord: Christianity, modernity and freedom.' 74-85 In: Walker, A., *Different Gospels*. London: SPCK, p85.) except that they are usually do not separate the two as "the ability to disengage from a particular situation and think 'objectively' about it" is often lacking in Africa. (Balcomb, 'Modernity.' WWW.)

someone who is cold and wet as a result of being rained on, who then repeatedly gets so close to a fire as to be burnt all over his body.⁴⁷

There is a tendency to blame many bad things on what is happening in the modern world.⁴⁸ ‘Modern’ here referring to that which is dominated by European people and their way of life or technology. A classic line frequently heard when praying for a traveller is that “*obiro wuotho e gima olos gi luet dhano*” (he is to travel in something made by the hands of men); typically referring to a bicycle or bus, and strongly implying that such means put the traveller into particular danger.

A man being buried at one funeral clearly had had close links with NCKK (the National Council of Churches of Kenya).⁴⁹ His widow expressed her hope that NCKK, which is known to have many funds from the West for helping and supporting Christians, would come to her help in her widow’s distress. Subsequent speakers told her in effect that NCKK would not come to her help and that she should depend on God alone (a widow’s situation is often very difficult in this part of the world) hence NCKK came to be portrayed as a false mirage of hope to this lady.

⁴⁷ Maadili (MAADILI, 2002, *Maadili ya Kikristo kwa Vijana: Kitabu cha Mwalimu*. Tabora: Christian EYE. p143.) says similarly: “A moth is drawn to the light of a candle or lamp ... suddenly it discovers that it is in the fire, but by that time it has already been burnt up and maybe died. This is just how it is with a young person who is drawn by town life.” (*Kiswahili*, my translation.) Money has a “tendency to subvert the higher purposes of any thing it touches.” (Blunt, ‘Satan is an imitator.’ p322.) “Potentially any monetised transaction is fraught with moral ambiguity ... Kenyans diabolize signs like money or deeds, yet these signs are also ironically deemed necessary.” (Blunt, ‘Satan is an imitator.’ p324.)

⁴⁸ As is also known to happen in the West as we these days see the ‘evil one’ work through “the processes and ideologies of the modern world itself.” (WALKER, A., 1987, *Enemy Territory: the Christian struggle for the modern world*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, p64.)

⁴⁹ This funeral was held on 3rd May 2003.

At a funeral⁵⁰ the English word ‘society’ was used in a *Dholuo* discourse, depicting something like *din* (‘religion’) in its lack of heart and soul, being the target of the efforts of *pate* (i.e. church leaders) in *din* Christianity. In the same funeral high standards of (Western) education were portrayed as red-herrings that lead nowhere in life’s essentially spiritual quest. These condemnations of the modern are however not all that they appear, as to my understanding both of the condemning speakers also aspire to much of modern life!⁵¹ The speaker at another funeral⁵² gave a contradictory example of a person who has many clothes yet who does not distribute them to others as being a ‘bad’ person. This property of badness is only brought about through the unequal access to great wealth that modern life brings, to which in another sense all aspire.⁵³

Pesa (money) is a recurring issue in the discussion of modern life. “These children believe that all money in Kenya comes from Britain”, I was told recently by a lady referring to the children I have at home.⁵⁴ Money can be ‘bitter’.⁵⁵ That is especially money arising from the sale of land,⁵⁶ but opens the possibility that ‘all’ money may be bad.⁵⁷ No equivalent understanding seems to have developed over money from countries populated by whites. A

⁵⁰ On 26th July 2003. This funeral was held at Sinaga village, and the speakers were predominantly from Pentecostal churches in Kisumu.

⁵¹ Green (GREEN, MARIA, 1995, ‘Why Christianity is the “religion of business”’: perceptions of the church among Pogoro Catholics in Southern Tanzania.’ In: *Journal of Religion in Africa*. Vol. XXV, Fasc.-1, Feb. 1995.) points out that Christianity is in Tanzania conceived of as a business than an alternative to traditional religious practices. Atigo explains that: “The white person’s religions are like a company that someone opens in which he employs people and they get to ‘eat’ a salary.” (My translation.) (ATIGO, AJOS, nd. ‘Dinde Joratenge.’ <http://www.jaluo.com/dinde210402.htm> (accessed 8.01.03)) “Christianity was never presented as having its own special solution to any of traditional Arufo religious problems and thus was never perceived by them as religious” writes Kirby of the Arufo in West Africa. (Kirby, ‘Cultural Change.’ p63.)

⁵² Held on 5th July 2003. The speaker was a teacher in a local Roman Catholic church.

⁵³ If having wealth is ‘bad’, then why does everyone aspire to it? See also Section 4.3.4.

⁵⁴ I stay with 13 children, mostly orphans, in my home in Gem.

⁵⁵ SHIPTON, PARKER, 1989, *Bitter Money: cultural economy and some African meanings of forbidden commodities*. American Ethnological Society Monograph Series, Number 1, Washington: American Anthropological Association.

⁵⁶ According to Luo customary law land should not be sold.

speaker at a funeral⁵⁸ mentioned that it was the offerings of sinners that supported the churches of *din* (ritually rather than spiritually led churches such as Anglican and Church of God), but did not consider the possibility that the same problem may be there in money received by their church or project from churches in the UK. Hence foreign funding is considered 'clean', but local finance may be bitter, or dirty, i.e. may bring problems.

Chamo pesa (i.e. eating money or misappropriation of funds) is widely condemned, and considered to be widely practiced. This possibility has obviously only arisen recently with the coming of the colonial era. A direct association between money, sin and AIDs was made in a Roho church.⁵⁹ The incident of Jesus chasing traders out of the Temple reminded a lady⁶⁰ of those pastors who arrange fundraising events and then consume all the money themselves. Money is a particularly difficult issue to discuss. Time and time again if one hears discussions in committees,⁶¹ money is the sticky issue. A fellow bystander in Yala told me:⁶² "*kikete e agenda e chakruok oketho sa te. To kikete e giko imiyo ji a ka gineno marach*" which can be translated as "if you put money issues at the top of the agenda of a meeting, then these issues will use up all your time. But if you put them at the end then people will leave feeling bad." In a long sit down discussion awaiting

⁵⁷ Once this category of 'bitter money' has been recognised, then money other than that from the sale of land could also be identified as 'bitter'. That is, the occurrence of something 'bad' could be blamed on the source of funds used. African "people resent money itself." (Maranz, *African Friends*. 39.)

⁵⁸ Held on 26th July 2003.

⁵⁹ At a sermon preached 26th April 2003.

⁶⁰ On 14th May 2003. This lady, herself an active church member, had personal experience of being fleeced by church leaders who turned out to be corrupt.

⁶¹ A pastor's house in Yala is directly alongside a small hall frequently used by various committees, so that conversations going on can easily be overheard. The committees always seem to get stuck on money issues. Difficulty in budgeting and suspicion that someone has or is abusing funds are almost universal.

⁶² On 31st July 2003.

a rain shower to pass⁶³ a pastor told me how ‘bad’ project money from overseas is, as it always comes to be abused and turns honest men into liars.

Theft often has a modern association, where the items concerned are saleable or wealth is such as to be of a modern scale.⁶⁴ People who go to the European’s lands come back with money, and then end up despising their colleagues who are without it.⁶⁵ Another colleague stopped me on my way to use his toilet at his home.⁶⁶ His understanding of the modern life of Europeans is that their expectations of toilet cleanliness are such that his toilet by comparison became bad by being dirty. Children who get jobs far away from home in an urban economy, leave behind mothers with troubled hearts longing to see them.⁶⁷ A modern phenomenon that continually shakes churches to their foundations is having their young men learn theology that comes from overseas, who must then be handled carefully to minimise the damage they do on their return to ministry.⁶⁸

I suggest that an explanation for the problematic impact of modern life can be found in the failure to provide translation for the African context. That is, aspects of modern life are being forced onto Africa at such a pace (often backed by charitable as well as commercial pressures) with no consideration of pragmatics – i.e. of how they are received. Conclusions

⁶³ This was on 21st April 2003. For example, he shared that should a project provide grade cattle (i.e. friesians or black and white’s) at a cut down price of KSh10,000 each, then whoever received them would invariably sell them on again for KSh20,000.

⁶⁴ Theft of cattle is not considered to be ‘stealing’ in the normal sense. In *Dholuo* ‘theft’ of cattle (*peyo dhok*) is a unique term not used to refer to stealing anything else.

⁶⁵ So I was told by a colleague who was an elder of a Kenya Assemblies of God church as we were walking on route to a meeting on 13th May 2003.

⁶⁶ On 11th May 2003 in Jina village near Yala.

⁶⁷ According to a woman testifying at a Pentecostal church on 25th May 2003.

⁶⁸ As explained to me on 27th April 2003. I had been asked to introduce a young man who had just come from a course of (Western) theological study, in the hope that such may encourage him to stay at his local church.

as to the desirability of the modern are drawn at the point of their origin prior to any consideration of their impact.

4.3.3. *Jochiende* / *Shaitani* (Ghosts and the Devil)

The terms *jochiende* and *Shaitani* are in this area used interchangeably.⁶⁹ Note, as mentioned above, that the frequency of reference to ghosts / *jochiende* may be a very poor indication of the degree of belief in the ‘bad’ that these bring. The term *jachien* (or *Shaitani*) is almost a synonym for *rach* (bad) itself.⁷⁰ The frequency of conversations or messages in which the activity of *jochiende* or *juok* is denied when something bad happens, are an indication of just how much people do believe in them. For example, at a funeral⁷¹ speakers laid great emphasis on saying that “*Nyasaye nokawe*” (God took him) and “*ndalone ochopo luwore kod chanruok mar Nyasaye*” (his days have come to a close according to God’s plan) when this was said exactly because many people were assuming the deceased to have been bewitched (*iro*) or killed by the placing of killing medicine (*ndagla*). According to a comment made to me,⁷² it is people who are not yet saved (*pok owarogi*) who will continue to work together with *jachien*.

The problem was that the unwillingness of the church to bend to his (unreasonable) expectations arising from his study may have had him decide to leave.

⁶⁹ See Harries (Harries, ‘Ghosts and Cleansing.’) for the confusion between these terms in *Dholuo*.

⁷⁰ Whereas in the past the dead were prayed to for blessing. (Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p56.) Consideration of the dead as only bad is parallel to changes that have occurred in the contextual effect of the New Testament term *δαιμόνιον* which “has a favourable associative value in classical and most Hellenistic Greek, since it was used to refer to deities, personal destiny, and semi-divine beings, but in the New Testament *δαιμόνιον* become ‘demons’ and ‘evil spirits’.” (Nida and Louw, *Lexical Semantics*. p33.) Only once in the New Testament, does *δαιμόνιον* refer to a god who is not necessarily ‘evil’ – Acts 17:18. (WOODS, GUY N., 1951, *How to Use the Greek New Testament*. Tennessee: Guy N. Woods, p90.)

The prevalence of *jochiende* is further illustrated by the policy of assuming people to be ‘guilty until proven innocent.’⁷³ The most trusted friendships, be they inter or intra-sexual, seem to arise from the necessity of association or mutual satisfaction of needs, rather than genuine respect for a good person.⁷⁴ After all, *jachien* rules people.⁷⁵

4.3.4. *Kit Ng’ato* (the Character of a Person)

It is very common to refer to the bad characters of people. Laziness and not caring for others are bad characteristics identified in some people. This was pointed out as being unlike Paul the Apostle, who was a tent maker and therefore active in making a living.⁷⁶ Abigail, wife to Nabal and then David, was given as an example of a strong woman worthy of imitation by a speaker at an Anglican fellowship.⁷⁷ At a funeral⁷⁸ it was pointed out that those who have wealth (such as an abundance of clothes) that they do not share are also bad.⁷⁹ There is an assumption that the Luo are more secretive of dark sins here than people

⁷¹ Held on 24th May 2003. The man to be buried had been hit by a passing car.

⁷² That I received on 22nd July 2003.

⁷³ As mentioned in Section 4.3.7.

⁷⁴ That true friendship is not based on material dependence is a Western notion. (Maranz, *African Friends*. p25.) I have known Westerners frustrated by the African use of ‘friend’ for ‘patron’ (or potential patron). Here we again see a pragmatic difference – while the meaning of ‘friend’ seems to translate into African languages, its use is different. To avoid constant confusion, and to allow an African scholarship to develop would require the use of an African language that did not carry pragmatic (and semantic) associations from European languages.

⁷⁵ Odaga in *Kisera* describes the relationship of Europeans with a Luo girl: “*jogo nogeno Limbe miwuoro.*” (they really had great faith in Limbe), (ODAGA, ASENATH BOLE, 2002, *Kisera*. Kisumu: Lake Publishers and Enterprises Ltd. p144.) Clearly more so than would be found between the Luo people.

⁷⁶ Sermon preached by Paul Otieno Agoro on 20th April 2003 at Zion Harvest Mission church in Ulumbi, Yala.

⁷⁷ Sermon preached on 5th April 2003 at a Lalruok (fellowship of the saved) meeting at the Rawa Anglican Church.

⁷⁸ Sermon preached at funeral in Ahono village conducted by the Catholic church on 5th July 2003.

⁷⁹ The implications of the necessity to share were apparently not considered – that idle people would thus all get clothes for free, which could further encourage them in their idleness.

from the UK.⁸⁰ The implication is that there is more evil festering in Luo people's hearts than in the hearts of European men. The Section on *siasa* below implies the same. The implication that the human heart is essentially evil is very clear.

Pride and the unwillingness to *tur* (be broken) is another bad thing. Hence a pastor was very complimentary to a girl who, despite being a visitor, took it upon herself to sweep the church one Sunday morning.⁸¹ The fault of the couple of whom the wife was buried⁸² was identified as being the failure on the part of either of them to *tur*, i.e. to allow the other to take a lead, in this case having led to the couple living apart for years. At the same time it was also said that “*Jakuo okwalo hera e dier dichwo gi dhako*” (a thief stole the love between man and wife) where the thief was clearly implied as being *Shaitani*. Other bad character traits identified included womanising, an inclination to sin in general, fearfulness that could cause someone to run away from a situation, jealousy and anger. *Nyiego* (jealousy) came up a number of times, and is often recognised in conversations etc. as a weakness of African people. Public expressions of anger are very much looked down upon.

⁸⁰ According to a pastor friend with whom I shared in a personal conversation on 16th July 2003.

⁸¹ This was on 18th May 2003. The girl may have had an ulterior motive, being an interest in one of the young men who was a member of this church, but this did not deter the pastor from complimenting her.

4.3.5. *Kit gi Timbe Joluo* (the Nature and Customs of the Luo)

There is often ambiguity as to the goodness and badness of handed – down Luo traditions. The Luo people are renowned for the respect and adoration that they give to pythons⁸³ so the report that a certain church member was attacked by and wrestled with a python for a couple of hours before managing to free himself⁸⁴ was major news.⁸⁵

Taboos encircling the family prevented⁸⁶ the relatives of the man killed through handling the *murembe* bush from engaging in certain activities in preparation for his burial.⁸⁷ Hence it was left to the church people to build a new home for his wife as his brothers looked on. This family's holding to the belief that “*ok inyal goyo dala kod maiti*” (you can't move to a new home with a corpse) (the latter word, *maiti* for corpse, is *Kiswahili*)⁸⁸ meant that the house built for the woman had to be in the original father's homestead so as to comply with Luo customary law, and could not be on the actual land of the deceased even if this would in other ways have been very sensible. Hence taboos result in people not being free to respond to a family calamity. Perhaps on the good side for them: the brothers were

⁸² On 26th July 2003. This marriage seems to have had difficulties from very early on and had particularly disappointed people because the couple had a wedding which had been a particularly joyful affair.

⁸³ Ogutu, 'An Historical.' p86.

⁸⁴ This report was shared with me on 4th June 2003. Someone at a funeral had been telling people of his recent life and death struggle with a python.

⁸⁵ As people considered such as 'wrestling with the gods'.

⁸⁶ As reported to me on 27th May 2003 as I asked why it was church people who had to perform these duties. This was primarily the building of a new house.

⁸⁷ This bush was recognised as bearing a curse. See also Section 3.4.1.

⁸⁸ An important stage in a man's life according to the Luo tradition is that of *goyo ligala*. (Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. pp53-6.) Once his elder brother(s) have done the same, and his oldest son is capable of carrying an axe, a man can leave his father's homestead and begin his own. This adds considerably to his and his family's status. Because the man must be present for the move to happen there is often much debate as to whether a dead man who is not yet buried (thus who is in many respects in the Luo way of thinking still alive) can still accompany a woman in leaving her old home and starting a new one. In the case considered here this was not considered acceptable, so the new house with an iron sheet roof that the church people built for the wife had to be within the original father's homestead.

relieved of all responsibility for building for the deceased, and the control of the wife remained with the father-in-law. The outcome of adhering to this law can variously be considered good or bad.⁸⁹

Another example of this ambiguity was given.⁹⁰ Those who are saved (who have *warruok*) are technically excused from having to follow customary practices. Here, however, the preacher warned us not to allow such freedom to make us behave irresponsibly, and for others later to despise us for neglect of our responsibilities. The lack of respect by the community for someone who fails to fulfil customary requirements may be so detrimental to their Christian testimony in general, as to enforce allegiance.

The above examples illustrate the dynamic interaction that exists between incoming Christianity, so called modern ways, and the Luo customary law. It is very common to find a group of people discussing the old laws, and concluding that they have no relevance today. Yet the very fact that this discussion is as common as it is illustrates something about the ongoing importance of the very laws. In reality many of them are simply followed by default – for example houses here are built according to a certain pattern, unless there would be very good reason to do otherwise. Neglecting to follow the strictures of the law brings the danger of death in its wake, even if sometimes some years later. Hence the kind of tense nervousness observable at the funeral⁹¹ at which the wife of a failed marriage to a son of the home was being buried. Such nervousness was especially

⁸⁹ See also Section 3.4.1.

⁹⁰ Sermon preached on 6th April 2003. The young man preaching announced during the same service that he had just learned that references in the Bible to ‘the law’ did not actually refer to Luo laws, but to the Mosaic law-code.

⁹¹ Held on 26th July 2003 in Sinaga village, Gem.

evident on the part of an illegitimate son to a daughter of the same home who was living there as if it was his home, strictly contrary to the stipulations of custom.

Customary laws are often seen as ‘bad’ through their being restrictive. Hence I was told⁹² that the reason African people consistently fail to develop is because tradition dictates requirements that when someone gets to a state (of illness or death) at which they, themselves, cannot eat, others must gather to eat on their behalf. Failure to eat on their behalf will anger their spirit. For example, on one occasion I was told that a spirit (*jachien*) took the form of two *ondiegi* (hyenas, but also beasts) that entered the home of the son of a recently deceased father and refused to go until a bishop had been called to talk to them (using *Dhoroho* – a spiritual language) and had convinced the son to arrange a feast in honour of the deceased father.⁹³

The ‘bad old days’ were those before someone was saved. Hence a Ugandan speaker at KIST⁹⁴ explained that before he was saved he was ‘zero’. A male church teacher was⁹⁵ preparing to make lunch for his children as his wife was visiting her home for a funeral, and conceded that had he not been saved he would not have been free to enter the kitchen in this way. Certainly it is not possible to go back to the old ways any more, according to a comment from an old man⁹⁶ that “*koro modong’ kende en Nyasaye*” (now all that is left is God) in a discussion regarding the ways in which the Luo used to keep themselves via their

⁹² On 19th July 2003 by a member of the Ruwe Holy Ghost church as a part of a long discussion.

⁹³ See also Section 3.4.2.

⁹⁴ On 15th May 2003. This was a student at Kima International School of Theology speaking at a Chapel service.

⁹⁵ This occurred on 22nd July 2003 in Bar Kalali village when myself and a colleague made an unexpected visit to the man, and perhaps embarrassed him by finding him cooking in his kitchen.

laws. The same person commented⁹⁷ that “*yore Luo nengo tek, to mag Nyasaye yot*” (the ways of the Luo are costly but those of God are easy).

What is said is not always what happens⁹⁸ which means that the very people vocally denying the power of the Luo laws over their lives may be the most subject to them. There are other ways in which the old laws are now described as bad. So I was told⁹⁹ that the reason many people did not like Roho (AIC) churches was because they followed the customary practice¹⁰⁰ of seeking to solve someone’s problem by removing magical substances that had (supposedly) been buried in the walls of their houses so as to make them unwell.¹⁰¹ The association of mother tongue with customary laws discourages some people from liking their mother tongue, such as one young man I spoke to.¹⁰²

⁹⁶ Made on 11th April 2003 as a way of saying that the way forward for the Luo people is to learn from outsiders.

⁹⁷ On the 29th April 2003.

⁹⁸ See Section 2.2.2.

⁹⁹ On 7th June 2003. This comment is made very frequently.

¹⁰⁰ This is often mentioned as the practice which marks out churches of Roho denominations from churches of other denominations. (Comment made by a Luo man during a YTC class on 23rd May 2005 in Yala Township.)

¹⁰¹ I find Mijoga to have used very poor research methodology leading to his conclusion that “in matters of preparation, content, and relationship to African culture, there is no difference between AICs and mainstream churches.” (MIJOGA, HILARY B.P., 2001, *Preaching and the Bible in African Churches*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, p4.) Although similarities are clearly there, on the basis of my experience in Gem where relationship with the dead is prominent in churches, I suspect that Mijoga collected very biased material.

4.3.6. *Kweche* (Taboos)

Kweche (single *kwer*) are bad, and breaking them is also bad.¹⁰³ They can be called taboos. They are bad because of their restrictiveness, but breaking them is bad because this will bring problems like disease or death. There are numerous *kweche*. I have at times been told that they are endless, as they are continually being invented for new circumstances.

A preacher¹⁰⁴ gave an example of bad behaviour, being that of a young man who was able to talk freely, lie down and generally make himself feel at home in his in-law's house, when he was going there to arrange the payment of dowry. This was breaking *kwer*, because he should have been quiet and respectful and let his colleagues who went with him do the talking on this occasion.

Kwer is a favourite topic of conversation, especially for older people. Hence one day¹⁰⁵ as I sat in a small *migahawa* (café in *Kiswahili*) drinking tea, three men were there busy discussing various deaths that had occurred, and then how to *goyo ligala* (open a new homestead) without breaking a lot of *kweche*. In the course of a general discussion¹⁰⁶ a

¹⁰² On 28th April 2003. This young man was particularly keen to escape from 'custom' as he was born illegitimately, and so by custom was somewhat 'cursed'.

¹⁰³ *Kweche* are rules to keep to ensure prosperity. Oryare presents the keeping of taboos as 'bad' and illustrates a Christian response to *kweche* which gives little thought as to what should take the taboos' place. (ORYARE, OWLAR, nd. *Luo Traditions and Christian Warfare: Dancing with Devils*. Kuiria, Kenya: Ofra Christian Publications.) Christian living is portrayed as resisting taboos for good to come by default. Being a schoolteacher, Oryare's salary comes from overseas aid. Hence the 'good' arises from the European source of that aid.

¹⁰⁴ At a church on 6th April 2003.

¹⁰⁵ On 14th July 2003 in Muhanda alongside the main Kisumu to Busia road.

¹⁰⁶ On 2nd May 2003. The colleague had accompanied us on this visit to students of Yala Theological Centre, and decided to share his concern with us as we ate lunch at the end of the visits at my home in Ahono village.

colleague was clearly troubled and shared his situation with us. What was someone to do if he had married a daughter to the brother of his elder brother's wife, should his wife's father die? Suffice it to say that two brothers marrying women who are from the same home (i.e. a man's sister and his daughter) is *kwero* (taboo). If it happens many problems may arise, particularly should someone die. On the same day we visited a very sick man. He had apparently very recently *goyo ligala* (started his own homestead). This is an activity that is fraught with dangers, I was told by my colleagues. There are so many rules (*kweche*) involved, that many men in Gem are likely to leave the move for as long as possible, through fear that breaking one or more of the *kweche* of this significant event would result in their illness or death.¹⁰⁷ Such had clearly happened in this case.

The relationship between *richo* (sin) and *rach* (bad) in *Dholuo* has already been discussed.¹⁰⁸ It is known that *richo* brings *rach*. Sometimes this is mentioned in teaching, talking etc. *Richo ema kelo Chira* (sin brings problems) is the title of a book by Mboya.¹⁰⁹ A preacher said “*gima kelo tho en richo*” (what brings death is sin).¹¹⁰ A man who kidnapped a schoolgirl and held her captive in his house as he raped her repeatedly for four days, was¹¹¹ described as *rach*. Sexual immorality is known to be *richo*, and results in illegitimate children being in difficult ambiguous situations.¹¹² A number of other things are bad. *Wichkuot* (shame) is one. ‘Today’s youth’ and what they are doing, is another.

¹⁰⁷ See also Section 3.4.2.1.

¹⁰⁸ *Rochruok* for sin (as in Parkin, *The Cultural*. p152.) is very rarely heard in Gem.

¹⁰⁹ Mboya, *Richo ema kelo Chira*.

¹¹⁰ At a funeral on 3rd May 2003. This was the funeral of the brother of a member of Zion Harvest Mission held at Muhanda, and the comment was made by the speaker who introduced the main preacher.

¹¹¹ On 9th June 2003. I was told of this having happened by a number of people in Ahono village.

¹¹² Such as the one recounted on 12th May 2003. Illegitimate children face many difficulties. The inheritance of land by an illegitimate boy may be contested by the true sons of his mother's husband. Girls may be sexually abused if unrelated to the boys living in the same homestead, and so on. (Illegitimacy is usually considered to be more problematic if the child born is a boy than if a girl as a boy will seek to inherit land where he is living, whereas a girl will obtain hers through marriage.)

Piny (the world) is another. Then *ketho sa* (wasting time) was often given as a bad thing. Some bad things were illustrated from the Bible, e.g. Nabal (husband to Abigail in 1 Samuel 25) was described as bad by a preacher.¹¹³ *Duk* (nakedness), people who are not known at their rural homes, unboiled water,¹¹⁴ lying to say that someone has not yet died when they have – are some of the things that have been described as *rach* (bad).

4.3.7. *Siasa* (Complex Loaded Relationships), *Kaka Itiyo kod Ji* (How you Interact with People) and ‘Relational Bad’ in General¹¹⁵

Siasa is a *Kiswahili* word that is frequently borrowed by Luo speakers. It is often translated into English as ‘politics’, which hardly does justice to the breadth and power of the term.¹¹⁶ It is almost invariably negative, so implicitly refers to human relationships that are exploitative of one another, in such a way that the net outcome is destructive.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ On 5th April 2003 at a fellowship of the saved at the Rawa Anglican church. The account read describes how Nabal refused to welcome the hero of the story, David.

¹¹⁴ According to a Roho pastor on 17th May 2003. Many *Roho* people boil their drinking water.

¹¹⁵ I have grouped these three categories together under Section 4.3.7. as they are closely related and important.

¹¹⁶ “... a thriving religious life in sub-Saharan Africa threatens to make the sub-continent politics incomprehensible to outsiders.” (ENGLUND, HARRI, 2000, ‘The Dead Hand of Human Rights: contrasting Christianities in post-transition Malawi.’ 579-603 In: *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. 38, 4, (2000) (PDF)

<http://www.jstor.org/view/00113204/dm991430/99p0008u/0?frame=noframe&userID=93bc8075@bham.ac.uk/01cc99339700504825&dpi=3&config=jstor> p581. (accessed 3.02.03) Jenkins realises that “... the critical political frontiers around the world are not decided by attitude towards class or dialectical materialism, but by rival concepts of God.” (Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*. p163.)

¹¹⁷ Adeyemo’s writing that “any attempt to treat politics as a worldly affair ... to be avoided by the people of God is the devil’s lie” (ADEYEMO, TOKUNBOH, 1997, *Is Africa Cursed?* Nairobi: Christian Learning Materials Centre 1997, p80.) clearly does not easily translate into *Kiswahili*.

I was stopped by an old lady I know as I was cycling along the road.¹¹⁸ She invited me to the fundraising in her home village for the building of an Anglican church. “But there is already an Anglican Church in that village” I told her “so why build another”? The problem that she identified in response to my question was *siasa*, and because they did not want *siasa* they decided to just build another church. Often the only solution to *siasa* is to go away. Eight days later I went to another village, and found two Anglican churches within close proximity. I was told that they were not on good terms – *siasa* had struck there already. A man¹¹⁹ on whose land a church had been built created *siasa* by insisting that he leave his denomination to join another because people were threatening to leave the church building on his land and worship elsewhere.

Local councillors are particularly likely to be accused of bad *siasa*; that is, abusing their positions of authority in their personal interest. One day¹²⁰ something little short of disaster struck a small collection of roadside businesses. The government had sent a gang of young men with iron bars with instructions to begin tearing down these shacks that were built on the roadside reserve. After (I estimate) about an hour of this, the local councillor finally appeared, called these demolition workers, and managed to negotiate for a week’s grace for people to carefully dismantle their own property themselves before the demolition gang would return. I was sat thirty yards away drinking a cup of tea, and then overheard two ladies talking about the event. There was no appreciation from them for the councillor. Their disparaging tone was condemning and disgusted at his show of power that they

¹¹⁸ This occurred on 14th July 2003. The old lady is an Anglican church member, and stopped me as I was cycling up the hill through Yala town.

¹¹⁹ On 2nd June 2003. This man seems to be in the habit of periodically changing his denominational affiliation.

¹²⁰ It was 7th July 2003. The main road from Kisumu to Busia was being repaired and widened.

interpreted as being entirely selfish, just to boost his chances of being re-elected and thus to make more money for himself by corrupt means. So negative is the view of *siasa*.

On one occasion¹²¹ I found a high ranking government worker in his office, with a deputy. The office mood was extremely jovial. People were talking. No business seemed to be getting done. The government officer told me that it was impossible to please both the people he was serving and the government he was under. I got another clue as to the nature of *siasa*. Demands made on people by members of their community were sufficiently at odds with officially designated assignments as to create irresolvable tensions. Hence the joviality as a coping mechanism, and hence the destructiveness of *siasa*. *Siasa* can arise from *luoro*. This word can be translated as 'respect' and describes the taboos that exist in terms of freedom of relationship between various people in a community. It is related to another use of the same word having the contextual effect of 'fear'. To an extent at least the person respected is the one feared. This fear is often more important than the necessity for clear communication. It means that certain things are not said to certain people in certain ways regardless of what is true or untrue or requiring to be said in a functional sense.

A church leader¹²² once arranged for a visitor to come to his church on the following day so as to spend two days teaching the young people of that and neighbouring churches. The concern was now that there be enough food to feed the young people together with the visitor who would come. Other churches had already promised to provide various amounts

¹²¹ On 22nd July 2003. I was visiting a friend who introduced me to this government officer, who was a member of his church.

of food. The church leader advised his junior colleagues not to rely in the slightest on the promises made by other churches, as they were likely to be empty. It is his church that must ensure that provision is made, as his church (alone) would be shamed if visitors came and then were not looked after. The respectful and correct response of leaders of other churches to help with food was 'yes', even though they may either have had no intention of actually doing so or whatever intention they had was not going to be fulfilled.

Another example comes from a home about four miles from the border of Gem in Bunyore. I am sure the same thing would apply in Luoland. An old woman was very unwell, and could only eat *ugali* (maize porridge – the staple food in this area) with meat. The husband wanted to provide this for her for the sake of her good health. She was the only one who was ill and it would have been quite cheap to provide for her. But a lot of grandchildren were also staying with them, and it is contrary to custom for only one person in a homestead to eat meat while others have a more regular (lower standard) diet. Hence the old man had very soon used up all his money on meat for his wife and all the grandchildren every day, such that he could no longer provide it for his wife. Such rules of respect easily create extremely difficult situations of *siasa*. This is another case in which rules of 'respect' that are widely acclaimed can be extremely 'bad' in their effect.

Bad can arise in the course of relating to people, leading to the tendency to blame another for your troubles and to the receiving of different kinds of verbal abuse. The funeral

¹²² On 19th April 2003 in Kisumu town.

preacher¹²³ gave an example of poor interpersonal behaviour as the act of not greeting people who you live with. Not having friends and not knowing your relatives was clearly made out to be bad by another funeral preacher.¹²⁴ Yet another comment by a preacher¹²⁵ indicates that people tend to abuse their servants – for example by giving them used tea bags with which to make their tea. A testimony given at a church¹²⁶ indicates that your son marrying a woman who dominates him is bad. A bad characteristic of Luo life is that the Luo people do not cooperate.¹²⁷ Various events resulted in people concluding that *riaso* (lying) is bad.¹²⁸

It is a pretty universal human trait to see bad in others. This applies to the people of Gem in Kenya. I visited a widow about two miles from home,¹²⁹ and asked if I could stay in her house and read to kill time as I had two hours to wait and her house was on route to where I was going. I sat at her table and read as she went to her field. I got tired and dozed for ten minutes with my head laid on the table. She returned just as I was dozing, so instead of coming in she left me alone. She did not enter the house again for the remaining hour that I was there, but I overheard her speaking to another lady explaining in an accusing tone that I had said I wanted to stop and read but now instead was dozing, as if this proved that I was guilty of some crime. On this occasion I had become the ‘bad one’.

¹²³ On 11th April 2003. The person being buried was known to have been an *ajuoga* (witchdoctor) who had poor relationship skills.

¹²⁴ On 26th July 2003. This preacher excelled in having vast numbers of friends and knowing many distant relatives, and cited the names of those present so as to enhance his reputation in their eyes.

¹²⁵ On 5th April 2003. I was surprised at this comment on re-using tea bags, as I had never previously associated it with African people. This preacher’s comment however seemed to be very genuine.

¹²⁶ On 25th May 2003. The comment was made by a mother regarding her son.

¹²⁷ According to a preacher on 20th April 2003. The preacher pointed out that Wahindi (people of Indian origin of whom there are many in Kisumu) will help each other by setting up businesses for each other, but that the Luo will not do this.

¹²⁸ On 5th July 2003. The lies in question were those of a lady who re-married suddenly and secretly to an already married man.

¹²⁹ On 15th July 2003. This lady lived in Mindhine village.

Amongst the people described as ‘bad’ were Pharisees and tax collectors.¹³⁰ I discovered that the only way to get children to do something was to order them to do it. Asking for volunteers would generally draw a blank. Many people would do very little (here referred to as *onge* or ‘nothing’) if left to their own devices. The human heart is seen as bad, and it is accepted that to do nothing is normal. Asking someone what they have been doing is like accusing them of doing something bad, indicating that action engaged in by someone is easily thought to be oriented to some ‘bad’, and that guilt is assumed unless or until innocence is proved.¹³¹

Verbal abuse is considered bad in Gem. So the funeral preacher¹³² made humorous reference to the home in which relationships have deteriorated to the degree that a woman refers to her husband as a dog, and a husband to his wife as a frog.¹³³ A preacher shared¹³⁴ how he once heard the wife of a pastor say something bad, and then five minutes later she

¹³⁰ On 26th April 2003 by a preacher at the Musanda Christian Church of Kenya, in Marenyo village.

¹³¹ An assumption of guilt until innocence is proved (the reverse of course to the Western ‘innocent unless proven guilty’) is characteristic of the people of Gem, and in my experience elsewhere in Africa. “Every one is judged corrupt in a society notorious for its corruption, and consequently nobody has anything to lose by behaving corruptly.” (RIMMER, DOUGLAS, 2000, ‘Review Article: aid and corruption.’ 121-128 In: *African Affairs*. (2000), 99. p128.) As a result of witchcraft “... everyone lives in fear and suspicion of everyone else” (ATIENO-ODHIAMBO, E.S., 1971, ‘Legio Maria: a study in the dynamics of separatism.’ Occasional paper No 17. 1-11 In: Byaruhanga-Akiiki, A.B.T., (ed.) *Occasional Papers in African Traditional Religion*. Kampala: Makerere University, 1971, p4.) presumably because “in a society which believes in witchcraft misfortune is ascribed to someone who harbours ill feeling against a person...”. (OOSTHUIZEN, G.C., 1992, *The Healer Prophet in Afro-Christian Churches*. Leiden: E.J. Brill p xxiv.) In Nigeria the wealthy: “are typically thought to have garnered their riches by conning foreigners and wealthy Nigerians in elaborate scams ...”. (Smith, ‘The Arrow.’ p596.) In South Africa “life must be lived in terms of a presumption of malice.” (ASHFORTH, ADAM, 2002, ‘An Epidemic of Witchcraft? The implications of AIDs for the Post-Apartheid State’ 121-143 In: *African Studies*. 61, 1, 2002, (PDF) <http://docserver.ingentaconnect.com/deliver/cw/routledg/00020184/v61n1/s7/p121.pdf?fmt=dirpdf&tt=592&cl=113&ini=connect&bini=&wis=connect&ac=0&acs=32629,75000325,2&expires=1131544821&checksum=AAE3C140E4546B721A3B16D4B51FA1FE&cookie=1564366464> (accessed 9.11.05) p136.) Contrast all this with Socrates’ teaching that: “no one does wrong willingly.” (Luce, *Introduction*. p91.)

¹³² On 11th April 2003 at the funeral of an *ajuoga* (witchdoctor).

¹³³ Note that these two words do not rhyme in *Dholuo*.

¹³⁴ On 1st May 2003. This was a young man preaching in my home in Ahono village wanting to emphasise the serious consequences of sin.

was hit and killed by a car. He shared that God is not happy with people's use of their tongue. Words expressed in anger may not be taken seriously in themselves, such as an angry letter written to me,¹³⁵ the content of which I was told to ignore because it was written under emotional pressure, (i.e. under the influence of a bad spirit of anger).

4.3.8. Other Categories of Bad Things.

Space will not allow me to relate and explain all the categories of 'bad things' that I came across in my years of exploring the Luo way of life. I will however now pass quickly through some of the remaining ones under two sub headings.

4.3.8.1. Primary Level Bad *Chandruok* (troubles), *dhier* (poverty) *tuo* (illness) and *tho* (death) are primary level 'bad things'. The understanding of these things differs significantly from the dominant British one in some of the ways briefly outlined below.

'Troubles' here in Luoland are implicitly associated with the activity of troublesome spirits (*jochiende*). 'Poverty' is a product of colonising and modernising forces that have come from outside, without which the possibility of the kind of wealth that is around today was not even known. Illness, regardless of its physical or biological cause, has also another level of cause on the spiritual/relational plane. 'Death' should, according to the Luo, not

¹³⁵ On 16th July 2003. This letter had been written to me about a particularly sensitive family matter in which I had become involved.

occur.¹³⁶ When it does it is a passage into another form, and not the termination of existence. Hence it is not death itself¹³⁷ but how someone is to die that is feared.¹³⁸ So Mboya has a chapter in his book entitled ‘bad ways of dying.’¹³⁹

4.3.8.2. Bad of Spiritual Origin. This is not an indigenous category, but one that I am discussing for purposes of clarity for my British readership as these are the bad things that may in Britain be considered to be due to ‘spiritual causes’.

The Luo term *gak* is used to translate the New Testament English word ‘unclean’ (Greek *akathartos*).¹⁴⁰ It is bad to be less than clean. A woman during her period or for a certain time after childbirth is considered to be *mo gak*.¹⁴¹ There are genuine states of being less-than-complete, which may or may not be rightly considered as *gak*. On one occasion¹⁴² it was made clear in a church that if you had not been baptised correctly you were *gak* or in some way still ritually unclean. A church which kept a register of members was in a sense

¹³⁶ (OBONDI, BONIFACE, 2000, ‘Immortality in the African Context.’ *Maarifa Lecture* given at Kima International School of Theology on 24th May 2000. Unpublished.) Bailey tells us that primitive cultures understand human beings as essentially immortal. (BAILEY, LLOYD R., 1979, *Biblical Perspectives on Death*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, p2.)

¹³⁷ Healey, *A Fifth Gospel*. p30.

¹³⁸ Kolié, ‘Jesus as Healer.’ p139.

¹³⁹ ‘*Tho moko maricho*.’ (Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. pp150-160.) ref.ch3

¹⁴⁰ YOUNG, ROBERT, 1982, *Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible*. London: Thomas Nelson Publishers, p1013.

¹⁴¹ Luo understanding resembles that of the Old Testament: “From the standpoint of the Biblical text, the fact of ritual uncleanness or impurity was even more important than the physical malady.” (LOUW, J.P., AND NIDA, E.A., 1988, 1989, *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament: based in semantic domains. Volume 1. Introduction and Domains* (second edition). New York: United Bible Societies 1988, 1989, p272.) Neusner shows the importance of purity for ancient Judaism (NEUSNER, JACOB, 1973, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Israel*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.) and Parker (PARKER, ROBERT 1983, *Miasma: pollution and purification in early greek religion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.) for early Greek religion. The ancient Greek practice of purifying an army by having it march between the two halves of a sacrificed dog (Parker, *Miasma*. p22.) has a remarkable parallel to *ngado guok*, the ancient Luo practice of cutting a dog into two to mark the end of battle hostilities. (Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p15.)

¹⁴² On 13th July 2003. This was a Pentecostal church that meets in Yala town.

*gak*¹⁴³ as this practice implied membership of a church in this world, and not the universal heavenly church. People's love of TV preachers and miracle workers was made clear to me while in a *migahawa* (small café in *Kiswahili*) on one occasion.¹⁴⁴ A young man turned up the volume of the television, and then two minutes later the political commentary that had been on ended, and on came a miracle-working-preacher show. Whereas no one seemed to have been paying any attention to the political commentary, now everyone (five or so people) was glued to the box.¹⁴⁵ These people were clearly seeking a cleansing of something inside them, and this TV preacher was to do that for them if they listened in.¹⁴⁶ Hence Pius Miuru's TV and radio programmes are enormously popular throughout Kenya and Tanzania.¹⁴⁷

Physical dirt is seen as similar to spiritual uncleanness.¹⁴⁸ Hence on sitting in someone's home¹⁴⁹ and being approached by the children I was discouraged from touching them by being told "*ok gi ler*" (they aren't clean). I was told¹⁵⁰ that a man who had just died probably succumbed to hunger and thirst because his wife, not liking to clean up after him, would only give him very little to eat or drink whenever he got sick. A visiting speaker to a

¹⁴³ As reported to me on 13th July 2003 at the same church as above.

¹⁴⁴ On 26th July 2003. This was in Luanda, in Bunyore about 2 miles from the boundary of Gem.

¹⁴⁵ For the Luo "the political realm [is subsumed] under the supernatural order." (OGOT, BETHWELL A., 1999, 'From Chief to President' 13-23 In: Ogot, Bethwell A., *Re-introducing Man into the African World: selected essays 1961 – 1980*. Kisumu: Anyange Press Ltd. p14.)

¹⁴⁶ The Scriptures transform uncleanness: "By a brilliant stroke the revulsion against uncleanness was graphically redirected to the protection of the covenant." (Douglas, 'Sacred Contagion.' p99.) Such seems to have been only partly effected in Luoland today.

¹⁴⁷ I have been amazed at how many people love Miuru's radio and television broadcasts, both in Kenya including Luoland, and Tanzania. He is renowned for his telling people to put their hands onto their radio as he prays. Many report receiving healing by this means. (MIURU, PIUS, 2003, Miuru's preaching is broadcast widely over TV and radio through much (or all) of Kenya and Tanzania, and is very much loved.)

¹⁴⁸ Similar only in certain respects and not in others.

¹⁴⁹ Having just come to visit this home and been welcomed in to sit down. On 24th April 2003.

¹⁵⁰ On 24th May 2003. The same term *ler* also translates the English word 'holy'.

Roho church¹⁵¹ stopped at a rather scrawny baby being held by its mother and told the mother that the baby has *chira*, warning the mother to be wary and prayerful. She emphasised the need for the mother to pray and fast, explaining that God did not accept the use of *manyasi*.¹⁵² A teaching given¹⁵³ explained at some length how the Luo people live in fear of family curses (*kuong' moa e anyuola*), and how they expect problems of previous generations, such as the presence of family members who are infertile, to be repeated in subsequent generations. The teacher explained that this was not biblical, and that everyone should live their life in such a way as to succeed. Family (*anyuola*) curses seem to be greatly feared!

4.4. Conclusion

Bad things are those that pose a threat to the well being of the family or clan. For the people in the Christian communities that I investigated, they are curtailed by appropriate worship, prayer and repentance (*lamo*). 'Modern life' is considered responsible for many of the great difficulties besetting the Luo people today. Otherwise it is people's characters and behaviour, particularly in relation to Luo customary law, that are continually scrutinised so as to avoid that combination of circumstances in the spirit world that constantly threaten disaster.

¹⁵¹ On 5th April 2003. This is a church called 'Luong' Mogik', a break away from the SDA (Seventh Day Adventist) church.

¹⁵² Name given to medicines traditionally used as cures for *chira* (a debilitating curse).

¹⁵³ Sermon preached on 18th May 2003.

This account of bad has been largely descriptive rather than analytical. This has been intentional as this chapter forms the basis for subsequent discussion. Yet we have clearly found that many of the ‘bad’ things identified could be said not to be found in dominant British culture; for example the witchdoctor and his medicine, curses, *siasa*, *jochiende* or ghosts. This points to the existence of a fundamentally different worldview, the understanding of which will need to go beyond the normal limits of Western language use.

CHAPTER 5. KA MA RACH OAE (WHERE BAD COMES FROM)

We ask first, ... how the attribution of a concrete 'effect' to a particular 'cause' is possible as a matter of principle, and how it can be achieved in view of the fact that in reality an infinity of causal factors have influenced the occurrence of the particular 'event', and that for the event to occur in its concrete form, absolutely all these causal factors were necessary. ... The possibility of selecting one from among the infinity of determinants arises primarily from the nature of our historical interest.¹

5.1. Introduction

Agreeing with Weber (above) does not relieve us of the necessity to make decisions on the basis of presumed causes. Weber's profound critique has not stopped historians from writing books. 'Causal factors' are presumed, history is written and future strategies planned following the understanding derived. It is all too easy for a researcher from the West to assume that a people's conceptions on causation are the same as of those which he has left at home. My time living in Luoland has demonstrated to me that this is generally not the case.

¹ Max Weber cited in Runciman. (RUNCIMAN, W.G., (ed.) 1978, *Max Weber: selections in translation*. (translated by E. Matthews) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p115.)

Answering the question of where bad comes from is vitally important as it will direct us to the decisions that people make at key points in their lives: "... frequently the 'world images' that have been created by 'ideas' have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest. 'From what' and 'for what' one wishes to be redeemed and, let us not forget, 'could be' redeemed, depended upon one's image of the world."² Presuppositions on causation can, I suggest, only begin to be accurately ascertained after a long period of time living closely with a people. Understanding people's ideas as to the source of 'bad', will point us to how they want to deal with it, and thus be a key to understanding their way of life.

5.2. Means Used to Locate the Source of the Bad

Research for this chapter has been based on the same material as that already utilised for Chapter 4. It very soon became apparent that every bad thing originated from *Shaitani* or *jochiende* (these two words being used interchangeably) and also from *chuny*. The latter is 'a person's liver', but is taken by the Luo as the seat of emotions, and can in this metaphorical sense be understood as equivalent to the English term 'heart'. I ceased to record these two things in my research notes because of their universality.³ On continuing

² Weber, Max cited in Warner. (WARNER, R.S., 1973, 'Weber's Sociology of Non-Western Religions' In: Green, R.W. (ed) *Protestantism, Capitalism and Social Science: the Weber thesis controversy* (second edition). London: D.C. Heath and Co., p38.)

³ I find myself agreeing with Tempels who recognising that 'lower beings' in the Bantu worldview have their own forces, says they "do not exercise their influence of themselves, but through the vital energy of a higher force acting as cause." (Tempels, *Bantu*. p69.) So forces associated with things such as stones, mountains,

to investigate, I found that 363 bad things that arise from *jachien* and *chuny* also have another identifiable origin. I discovered that another very comprehensive but not universal category in the derivation of bad, is *ketho kwer* (breaking taboo).

I have used very subjective means for ascertaining the origin of the bad. Going to people and asking them ‘where has this bad come from’, would have introduced a multitude of biases into this research. Instead I had to sit and put to work those world-view assumptions that I have acquired over my years in Luoland in ascertaining what was in people’s minds regarding these bad things. I came up with categories that seem to me to be genuinely indigenous⁴ and designated the bad things accordingly to these categories of origin, i.e. categories of where bad things come from.

This process required following a bad thing to its source. When the person whom I observed identified the bad thing as coming from *jachien* (ghost) or *chuny* (heart) then I did not consider an alternative source. For example a funeral speaker sharing a message from 1 Samuel 30⁵ which describes how the Amalekites attacked David’s camp, told us that David being attacked by the Amalekites is the same as our being attacked by *Shaitani*. The speaker did not elaborate on another source of this action on the part of the Amalekites, so neither have I considered that this ‘bad thing’ has come from anywhere

ivers, birds etc. are invariably directed by human hearts, dead or alive. Juma supports this position on referring to a situation in Marenyo village, Yala, by remarking that “at least *the devil in his heart* may feel sympathy...” (my emphasis). (JUMA, JOHN OTIENO, 2003, ‘Man Beaten by his Wife.’ In: Sewe, Benson Erick (ed.) 2003, *Marenyo (RSA) Community Newsletter*. Issue Number 2, August 2003, http://www.developmentgateway.org/node/166897/dg-contribute/item-detail?item_id=343244 (accessed 13.06.05))

⁴ In most cases. In deriving one or two of the categories I have drawn on my knowledge of English or *Kiswahili* as an aid to the reader to make comparisons with other literature.

⁵ On 3rd May 2003.

other than directly from *Shaitani* himself. A speaker in a church⁶ had to tell us emphatically that Jesus' power is not only in removing *jochiende* (ghosts) from us, thus implying that many people believe that this is the case. There were many instances when a bad thing appeared to originate from *Shaitani* or *jochiende* directly.

A Roman Catholic preacher at a funeral of an old lady⁷ told us that '*chuny jogo mabeyo ni e lwet Nyasaye*'⁸ (the heart of good people is in God's hand). The clear implication is that the heart of bad people is in *Shaitani*'s hand.⁹ This is universally assumed. In deriving a source of bad from outside *jachien* and *chuny* I have followed it as closely to these two sources as possible. Someone told me¹⁰ that his sister wanted to study medicine *oko* (i.e. outside – not in Kenya but in Europe). Studying outside of the country, and the continent, is much desired. There seems to be something bad about studying in Kenya. Where does that bad come from? The clear answers are *jachien* and / or *chuny mar ji* (the hearts of people). These two are universal. The additional source of bad that I have here identified is *kia* (ignorance). It is the belief that bad comes from *kia* that has resulted in the popularity of Western education.¹¹ This can be illustrated diagrammatically as:

⁶ Sermon preached on 18th May 2003. The preacher emphasised that if we only have sufficient faith, Jesus can do a lot more than remove *jochiende*.

⁷ On 5th July 2003.

⁸ While I here write *Nyasaye* / God with a capital letter, spoken language of course does not indicate whether capitals should be used or not.

⁹ The notion that 'Satanism' is inherently different from witchcraft ("Satanism as a universal theory posits a different source for illicit power (the devil) than the more parochial discourse of witchcraft, where individual witches were ultimately held accountable for their alleged antisocial behaviour." (Blunt, 'Satan is an imitator.' p305.)) is disqualified if Satan works through people's hearts, as found in this study. A distinct theory of 'satanism', may not apply in Kenya.

¹⁰ It was a shopkeeper who I know who told me this as I went to purchase items from his shop in rural Gem on 25th April 2003.

¹¹ Western educated people getting better paid jobs, confirms people's suspicions that there is something missing in the African schooling system.

Jachien → *Chuny* → ***kia*** → person

That is, the bad thing comes from *jachien* via the *chuny* through ignorance (*kia*) to afflict the person, the assumption being that overseas education will finish the bad thing by doing away with *kia*. On one occasion¹² I was told in (Kenyan) English that some-one having ‘spots’, meant that he could not work with him in Christian ministry. This person clearly had not overcome *Shaitani* in *chunye* (his heart). The ‘spots’ indicate the presence of something less than clean, so that part of the source of bad in this case is *gak* (ritual uncleanness).

Jachien → *Chuny* → ***gak*** → person

In another example the person concerned was accused of sexual immorality. Hence I could have said that a source of ‘bad’ is sexual immorality. This arises from desire (*gombo*), so again I could have given *gombo* as the source. A more complete diagram would be:

Jachien → *Chuny* → ***gak*** → desire → sexual immorality → person

Desire (*gombo*) is one of the categories that I am using as an origin of bad that is in addition to *jachien* and *chuny*, yet in this case the ‘spots’ indicated that the bad coming

from heart was not *gombo* itself, but a state of uncleanness which then allowed *gombo* free reign. In such a case it is *gak* (uncleanness) and not *gombo* that I have taken as being ‘where bad comes from’. I could have taken both, or in fact all three, but have instead chosen on each occasion only to take the prior quality, i.e. the immediate one coming from *Shaitani* via the heart (*chuny*).

By way of another example, I sat watching men sent by the government to demolish roadside kiosks¹³ in preparation for the widening of a road. Sitting drinking tea in a *migahawa* (small café in *Kiswahili*), a fellow customer said to me that it is jealousy (*wivu* – he was using *Kiswahili*) that was behind the men’s actions. According to him, they had come to destroy these people’s business properties because they were jealous of their success. Hence I could have had:

Jachien → *chuny* → **jealousy** → person

On considering the category of jealousy however, I concluded that it was not connected directly to *chuny* (heart), but that there was an intermediary term which is desire (*gombo*). Hence I have no category of ‘jealousy’, but have considered it as a subcategory of *gombo*.

Jachien → *chuny* → **gombo** → jealousy → person

¹² On 7th June 2003. The speaker was a pastor and the person having these ‘spots’ was a fellow church leader.

One more example, occurred when I went to visit a home near a certain church¹⁴ and found a widow there living alone. Her loneliness clearly troubled her. She said that there was no need for me to be concerned, as she had no more to do in this world and was simply looking forward to the Lord taking her. Where does the badness of her state come from? One may suppose that it could come from any of the afflictions that tend to trouble widows, such as their tendency to be bitter and jealous, the fear other women have that they may steal their husbands, the poverty they live in through not having a man to care for them etc. The Luo in Gem understand the widow's state differently. As also for many African people, they consider them (before they are inherited) to have *okola*, which is a state of uncleanness. Hence I have concluded that the bad for this widow, in local understanding, comes from *gak*:

Jachien → *chuny* → ***gak*** → loneliness → bitterness → person

Through reasoning such as the above, I was able to come up with fourteen categories of 'where bad comes from' in addition to *jachien* and *chuny*. These are listed in Table 5.1 below, with the frequency with which they have arisen:

¹³ On 7th July 2003. The comment from this fellow customer was spontaneous and not provoked by a question from me.

¹⁴ On 23rd July 2003. I was looking for the leader of the Anglican church so as to tell him (or her) about the Yala Theological Centre class that we were having in the same area, when I came across this widowed lady.

Table 5.1. Where the bad comes from (in addition to *chuny* and *jachien*) (in order of frequency)

Where bad comes from – <i>Dholuo</i> (Kiswahili)	Where bad comes from – English	Frequency	% of total
1. <i>Ketho kwer</i>	Breaking taboo	76	21
2. <i>Gombo</i>	Desire / lust	49	13
3. <i>Gak</i>	Unclean	37	10
4. <i>Juok</i>	Witchcraft	29	8
5. <i>Yie matin</i>	Lack of faith	22	6
6. <i>Kuong' mar Anyuola</i>	Family curse	22	6
7. <i>Loka</i> (<i>Ulaya Kiswahili</i>)	The West (abroad, the other side)	21	6
8. <i>Jarachar wacho kama</i>	Europeans say so	18	5
9. <i>Luor</i> (<i>heshima Kiswahili</i>)	Respect	14	4
10. <i>Achayi / achaye</i>	'Despising'	9	2
11. <i>Luor</i> (<i>uoga Kiswahili</i>)	Fear	5	1
12. <i>Samuoyo</i>	Laziness	4	1
13. <i>Buch Nyasaye</i>	God's judgment	1	0
<i>Kia</i>	'Not know'	36	10
<i>Gik moko</i>	Other things	10	3
	Total	363	100

5.3. The Universal Causes

Chuny (the heart), *jochiende* (ghosts or demons) and in some ways *ketho kwere* (breaking taboo) are universally associated with any bad that arises.

5.3.1. *Shaitani / Jochiende*

A particular Roho church (African Israel Nineveh Church in Yala) habitually lists one bad thing after another, gives all those things the label of *jochiende*, and chases them away.¹⁵

Such consideration of sin as synonymous with ghosts (*jochiende*) in Luoland questions the widespread Western assumption that the Bible teaches the contrary: “while for other peoples it was typically demons that ‘couched’ at the door, in Genesis 4:7 it is sin.”¹⁶ The key to holiness according to the Roho movement, we were told at KIST, is confession of sins. After confessing your sins (*richo*), you chase them away.¹⁷ Hence once confessed sins acquire a form in which they are subject to rebuke and can leave. These are *jochiende*.

It was only through attending a Christian course arranged and funded by a Western

¹⁵ Observed on 26th December 2003.

¹⁶ (FERDINANDO, K., 1992, ‘Biblical Concepts of Redemption and African Perspectives of the Demonic.’ PhD thesis, Council for National Academic Awards, 1992, p128.) “Instead of maintaining [that] impurity [for which for our purposes read *jochiende*] is like gossip or fornication, or gossip or fornication is like impurity, the rabbis [in ancient Judaism] held [that] gossip or fornication *produces* impurity.” (NEUSNER, JACOB, 1973, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism: The Haskell Lectures*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, p117.) See also Gifford. (GIFFORD, PAUL, 1994, ‘Ghana’s Charismatic Churches.’ 241-265 In: *Journal of Religion in Africa*. Vol. XXIV – fasc 3 August 1994, p255.) Milingo states: “The devil ...[is sometimes] known as laziness, dumbness, epilepsy, sloth, lust, alcoholism pride or lies.” (MILINGO, E., 1984, *The World Inbetween. Christian Healing and the struggle for spiritual survival*. London: C. Hurst and Co., p50.)

¹⁷ OMAVA, ABRAHAM, 2003, ‘Holiness and the Holy Spirit.’ Lecture given at Kima International School of Theology on 4th October 2003.

organisation, a pastor friend of mine told me¹⁸ that he learned that it was possible to be saved without *jochiende* being cast out in the process. The Luo Bible translates demons (Greek *daimon*) as *jochiende*.¹⁹ Satan (*Satan*)²⁰ and the devil (*diabolos*)²¹ are translated as *Satan*, yet in popular usage in and outside of churches *satan* and *jachien* (the singular for *jochiende*) are taken as synonyms. For example, the song below was sung:²²

<i>Awuoro sigu, awuoro nyiego,</i>	I am amazed at the enmity, I am amazed at the jealousy
<i>Awuoro sigu mar Jachien okelo e piny</i>	I am amazed at the enmity that <i>Jachien</i> brings into the world.
<i>Ji laro mwandu, gi laro telo</i>	People fight over wealth, they fight over leadership position
<i>Awuoro sigu ma Satan okelo</i>	I am amazed at the enmity that <i>Satan</i> brings.

An old man who is very knowledgeable on Luo history told me²³ that a letter addressed to him by important government officials, inviting him to address them on local history, was ‘lost’ by the person who was to pass it to him. ‘*Nyiego*’ (jealousy) he said immediately. To him there was no doubt that the ‘losing’ of the letter was intentional, and even the tone of his voice indicated that *nyiego* was animate – something that can be rebuked and chased away. The assumption that the dead (i.e. *jochiende*) are responsible for all ills is not new

¹⁸ On 30th April 2003. This friend had attended a 9 months Life Ministries course in Kisumu.

¹⁹ e.g. see Matthew 7:22. That such translation can cause controversy despite its being deeply rooted is shown by Maluleke. (MALULEKE, TINYIKO, S., 2005. ‘The Next Phase in the Vernacular Bible Discourse: echoes from Hammerskraal.’ 355-374 In: *Missionalia*. 33:2. (August 2005.))

²⁰ e.g. see Matthew 4:10.

²¹ e.g. see Luke Chapter 4.

²² On 21st September 2003.

²³ On 8th June 2003. This man had an incredible memory for names of ancestors of the Luo of Gem going back many generations.

for the Luo people. Mboya's book was first published in 1938, and describes how a newborn child of a mother whose children habitually die is taken and abandoned in the bush for a short period, so as to convince the spirit of death that the baby is already dead, causing it²⁴ to go elsewhere and to leave the baby alone.²⁵ Mboya tells us:

If there is someone in a home whose life was sinful, someone who had a difficult time at home, or who died before being married, or who got sick and then died elsewhere, or who committed suicide because of a difficult matter that occurred, and now the people of that home find themselves having troubles and problems, they will think that it is he (or she) who is haunting their homestead.²⁶

Mboya then explains how to deal with “*Ng’at mothoni*” (that person who has died).²⁷ In Luo tradition spirits took many forms – such as *sepe*, *juogi*, *olele*²⁸ and *mumbo*. Of these *juogi* are the most frequently talked about in Gem today, but *juogi* are often simply subsumed under the category of *jochiende*. It should be very clear that to the Luo in Gem,²⁹ every bad thing is a *jachien* (ghost) or is brought by a *jachien*. The ultimate origin of bad is in *jochiende*, which are also the devil and devils, and are also the dead.³⁰ Hence, as we will see in Chapter 6, the great emphasis that is put into the correct handling of dead bodies.³¹

²⁴ In *Dholuo* there would be no distinction between him/her and it.

²⁵ Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p107.

²⁶ (Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p176.) My translation.

²⁷ For example a *jadil* (particular ritual specialist) can be called upon to re-open the grave, burn the bones and spear the grave. (Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p177.) See also Parkin. (Parkin, *The Cultural*. p146.)

²⁸ Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p88.

²⁹ And beyond Gem: “the traditional African has an intuitive grasp of the spirit realm.” (Moreau, *The World*. p123.)

³⁰ Someone becomes a *jachien* “... when the circumstances of his death and burial were not honourable.” (OKOTH, DENNIS, nd. *Luo Animistic Beliefs and Religious Practitioners and How to Reconcile Them to Christ*. <http://www.missiology.org/animism/articles/okoth.htm> (accessed 21.03.02))

³¹ The Zinza people, neighbours to the Luo in Tanzania, believe “often enough that they would be able to manage better in the world if there were no spirits at all.” (BJERKE, SVEIN, 1981, *Religion and Misfortune: the Bacwezi Complex and the other spirit cults of the Zinza of Northwestern Tanzania*. Oslo: Universit ts forlaget, p293.)

I have not found evidence to support Ogutu's view that God "is both good and evil."³²

Rather, for the Luo of Gem: God (*Nyasaye*) is considered as only good. Ogutu tells us that the Luo say *Nyasache ber*³³ and explains that as having the contextual effect of "he is lucky." Odaga tells us that god and 'luck' are interchangeable terms.³⁴ Contrary to the above it would be my understanding that 'lucky' is a particularly untranslatable English term.³⁵ I suggest that such reference to *nyasaye* refers to a *jachien* (ghost), who is a *nyasaye* (god) to you in terms of the power that he has over your life.³⁶ That is not to say that every Luo in Gem will concede that all bad comes from *jochiende*. Someone can claim not to fear lions, but put him alongside one and he'll run like the wind. So it is with the dead. We also have some scholars, such as Butt,³⁷ who separate magic from ancestral spirits: "Sickness is thought to be due either to the malevolence of a ghost or, more frequently, to magic worked by some envious person who wishes to bring misfortune on his victim."³⁸ Butt has failed to realise that it is the very 'ghosts' that stand behind the magic!

³² Ogutu, 'An Historical.' p78.

³³ Ogutu, 'An Historical.' p71.

³⁴ ODAGA, ASENATH BOLE, 2004, 'Christianity and the African Customary Practices.' *Maarifa Lecture* given to Kima International School of Theology 23rd June 2004. Unpublished. p2.

³⁵ 'Luck' in England being associated with the enlightenment, implies the absence of spiritual causation as "science' and 'chance' have largely replaced personalised explanation" in Europe of today. (Macfarlane, 'The Root.' p60.) 'Good fortune' arising unexpectedly implies to the Luo that G(g)od (*Nyasaye / juok*) has caused it. So regarding the Loe people "... bad luck was a disease ... [such as] uncleanness to be washed away." (DE ROSNY, ERIC, 1985, *Healers in the Night: a French Priests account of his immersion in the world of an African Healer*. New York: Orbis Books, p82.)

³⁶ *Daimon* (Greek), translated in the *Dholuo* New Testament as *jochiende* (plural), are also personal gods. (BURKERT, WALTER, 1985, *Greek Religion*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press pp180-181.) The question of the contextual impact of 'god' in English is also a wide one.

³⁷ BUTT, AUDREY, 1964, (1952) *The Nilotes of the Sudan and Uganda*. East Central Africa. Part IV, London: International African Institute

5.3.2. *Chuny* (Heart)

Chuny is a wide and flexible term. *Jochiende* themselves can be referred to as *chunje* (the plural for *chuny*). The Holy Spirit can be referred to as *Chuny Maler* (heart – holy).

According to Capen³⁹ *chuny* is liver, soul, spirit, conscience, disposition and mind. Then under *chuny* as heart she has the following terms listed:⁴⁰

<i>Chuny lwedo</i>	(palm of hand)
<i>Chunya lewa</i>	(my insides are nauseating me)
<i>Chuny odhi mabor</i>	(heart has gone far away – i.e. he has almost fainted).
<i>Chunye chot</i>	(his heart has been cutoff – he has died)
<i>Chunye osea</i>	(his heart has gone out of that matter i.e. he has lost interest)
<i>Chunye otho</i>	(his heart has died, i.e. he has lost heart)
<i>Chunye pek</i>	(his heart is heavy – he is heavy of heart)
<i>Chunye tek</i>	(his heart is hard – he is hard to move)
<i>Duogo chuny</i>	(return heart – encourage, revive)
<i>Jiwo chuny</i>	(encourage heart – encourage)
<i>Omo chuny</i>	(collect heart – sigh or moan)
<i>Ter chunyi mos</i>	(take your heart slowly – be patient / go slowly)

³⁸ Butt, *The Nilotes*. p117.

³⁹ Capen, *Bilingual Dholuo-English Dictionary*.

⁴⁰ While I have taken the list of terms from Capen, the translations into English are my own.

Others could be added, such as *chunye tin* (his heart is small i.e. he is easily upset), *chunye chidore* (his heart has been made dirty i.e. he is upset) and *chunye wang'* – he is angry.

This entry (*chunye*) has a greater range of possible uses listed than do all others but one in Capen's dictionary.⁴¹

Chunye is the core of someone. It is widely known in Africa that witchcraft power emerges from a person's core. Evans-Pritchard, when explaining how socially damaging it could be for him to make friends with a particular Azande man, describes witchcraft as coming from the breast: "... and any ill luck which befell him would be attributed to the jealousy my friendship had aroused in the breasts of his neighbours."⁴² He explains how for the Azande and many other African peoples, the inside of a witch is thought to contain a 'substance' from which witchcraft power emerges.⁴³ A mere bearing of "ill will" is considered sufficient to cause injury.⁴⁴ Oosthuizen agrees with Evans-Pritchard on this point: "in a society which believes in witchcraft misfortune is ascribed to someone who harbours ill-feeling against a person, his family, another near him"⁴⁵

A heart can also be described in many ways in the English language – good hearted, hard hearted, kind hearted etc. A difference being that in English usage bad is often externalised,⁴⁶ whereas for the Luo bad resides in everyone's heart.⁴⁷ The Luo person in

⁴¹ With the exception of *goyo* (hit). I had someone check right through the dictionary to validate this. Ocholla-Ayayo has about 30 different uses of *chunye* listed (Ocholla-Ayayo, *Traditional*. pp53-54.)

⁴² Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles*. 1976. p46.

⁴³ Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles*. 1976. p1.

⁴⁴ EVANS-PRITCHARD, E.E., 1937, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p170.

⁴⁵ Oosthuizen, *The Healer*. p xxiv.

⁴⁶ i.e. people are assumed innocent unless proven guilty, and bad events are often blamed on some physical or rational cause rather than bad hearts.

Gem has a problem: His heart is the home of *jochiende*. A heart (*chuny*) of someone in Gem, as also it appears for the Azande and many other African peoples, is the source of evil witchcraft powers.⁴⁸ Hence I have at times come across this incredible song:

(1)	<i>Ka anyiero gi ji Giparo namor To kara chunya Opong' gi richo</i>	If I laugh with people they think I am happy but truly my heart is full of sin
Chorus	<i>Ahombi Ruodha bi mondo iresa aonge kamoro ma daring adhiye</i>	I beseech you my Lord come so as to help me I have no where else where I can run to
(2)	<i>King'iyolepa igalo ni aler to kara chunya ok dwar ng'ato</i>	If you look at my clothes you'd think that I am holy (clean) but truly my heart doesn't want anyone.
(3)	<i>Ka adhi e lemo gi galoni aler to kara e chunya agombo chode</i>	When I go to pray/worship they take me as holy (clean) but truly in my heart I want sex.

Below I take a random sample from all sources of the bad things listed in the sample period of April to July 2003 (Table 5.1) that demonstrate the role of the heart as the source of bad.

⁴⁷ This inherent badness of people's hearts is seen in '*Moyo wa Binadamu*' (the heart of mankind), said to be very popular in Africa, showing the bad in a human heart before salvation in Christ (MOYO, 1996, *Moyo wa Binadamu*. Arusha: Kituo cha Maandiko Habari Maalum – Kimahama pp5-6.) and again if salvation is lost. (Moyo, *Moyo*. pp21-22.)

⁴⁸ The *chuny* is technically the liver, but in many ways equivalent to the English term heart, in being considered as the seat of emotions, feelings etc.

Death is frequently talked of.⁴⁹ This is universally attributed to some cause. If a person has been bewitched then the *chuny* (heart) of the witch is responsible for the death. If he has broken a taboo, then his own heart has caused him to die. In this instance it was clear to me that the person talking about death was communicating that there was something the people still did not know – that I probably did – that was resulting in so many people dying at this time. Hence I recorded *kia* as the source of this bad thing:

Jachien → *Chuny* → *kia* → person.

A pastor was very conservative with the truth when testifying on⁵⁰ some issues of adultery he had been involved in. Telling the whole truth would have been shameful, so he only revealed so-much and left people guessing on the rest. He convinced himself in his heart that he should be conservative with the truth so that people should not see him as un-holy (*mo-gak*).

Jachien → *Chuny* → *gak* → person

By way of a final example, on one occasion⁵¹ the talk turned to *goyo dala* (moving to a new home). This was explained as being dangerous – the danger arising from the risk that in the process taboos would unwittingly be broken, that would lead to death and disease.

⁴⁹ For example, on the 4th of April 2003. Deaths and funerals are frequent conversation topics.

⁵⁰ On the 20th April 2003. I was aware of the details, but most of the church members presumably were not.

This 'bad' clearly arises from *jochiende*, who are there to punish those who break with tradition. It arises from the heart of a man who at some point in history devised the rules that the current activity is in danger of breaking. That man is now passed away and could be a *jachien*, or other *jochiende* could be looking for a slip through which to take revenge. The thing that results in the provoking of *chuny* and *jachien* is of course *ketho kwer* (breaking of taboo). Hence we have:

Jachien → *chuny* → *jachien* → ***ketho kwer*** → person

5.3.3. *Ketho Kwer* (Breaking Taboo)

Life for the Luo has long been a process of avoiding the breaking of taboos (*ketho kweche*).⁵² This can also be expressed as *rito chike* (keeping laws) or 'kiki's' (dont's).⁵³ Here in Luoland people live in fear of *chira*. This is a kind of curse that comes to breakers of taboo and results in their gradually sickening, wasting away, and eventually dying. Its symptoms are similar to those of AIDS, so AIDs and *chira* are often confused. *Chira* has been known to come to those who *ketho kwer*. For example those who have sexual relations with their father's wife while the father is alive.⁵⁴ Adultery on the part of a mother who has given birth if the true parents of the baby are not the first to have sexual

⁵¹ On 2nd May 2003. This was as a group of us were visiting YTC (Yala Theological Centre) students in the Sagam area near Yala.

⁵² "There exist, therefore, many laws, customs, set forms of behaviour, regulations, rules, observances and taboos, constituting the moral code and ethics of a given community or society." (Mbiti, *African Religions*. p205.) "Some illnesses are believed to be caused by the breach of a ritual prohibition." (TURNER, V.W., 1967, *The Forest of Symbols*. London: Cornell University Press Turner, p302.)

⁵³ *Kiki's* is a Kiswahilicised anglicised version of the Luo term *kik* – do not.

⁵⁴ Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. pp19-20.

relations after the birth⁵⁵ is also thought to bring *chira*. “*Chira* can trouble a person, a homestead, a family or a village that have the means to progress, but cannot because the people in that village are full of *chira* and the *chira* keeps them down” says Mboya.⁵⁶

While in the past *chira* was thought to arise through *ketho kwer*, Mboya’s 1978 book is titled “*Richo ema Kelo Chira*” (*richo* brings *chira*). Reading the latter book, in which he recalls many of the ancient Luo taboos, one realises that pastor Paul Mboya (as well as being a renowned author he was also active in the Seventh Day Adventist Church) and many Luo have taken the term *richo* to incorporate the old *ketho kwer*.

Thus *richo* frequently (i) contains many of the old taboos (*kweche*) (ii) has a taboo-character. That is new “sins” such as for example the prohibition of drinking and smoking of cannabis are taken as rules to be followed for their own sake and through fear of divine retribution, and not necessarily because of some ‘Western rational’⁵⁷ calculation of the harm caused for example by drink. As *ketho kwer* would to various degrees isolate a member of a traditional community from his colleagues, so also *richo* for a Christian. *Ketho kwer* is rectified by the shedding of the blood of an animal and preparation of *manyasi* (something that is to be prepared to be drunk or eaten to cleanse someone from *ketho kwer*), whereas the main ‘medicine’ for *richo* in Christian circles is confession and repentance. It need not be surprising that *ketho kwer* is almost universally associated with bad in some form, given that this has been the case in Luo tradition, and that *richo* which is plural for *rach* (bad) is used virtually synonymously with it.

⁵⁵ Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p92.

⁵⁶ Mboya, *Richo ema kelo Chira*. p v. (My translation.)

⁵⁷ In terms of British or Western rationality.

In these days of Christianity, *ketho kwer* can cut in two ways. That is, keeping a Luo tradition can be taken by Christians as being a violation of Christian rules. Because Christians say that traditional taboos should not be followed, following a taboo itself can become taboo. Hence we heard⁵⁸ how a man's new wife left her husband ostensibly because he had shown an un-Christian character by following a Luo tradition that required him to open a new gateway into his homestead should he replace his original (deceased) wife with a new one.⁵⁹ Avoiding a traditional taboo resulted in his being caught in a Christian taboo of taboos, that cost him his wife!

A sample of instances will illustrate these 'bad things' that arise from *ketho kwer*. One day⁶⁰ I visited a homestead in which a son had suddenly and very unexpectedly died. Anyone familiar with Luo traditions would have known that "*ka nyathi ng'ato omworore gi wacho ni oterore gi chi ng'ato kata gi nyako moro*"⁶¹ (If someone's child should die suddenly and un-expectedly, then they say that he (i.e. the father) had committed adultery with someone's wife or with another girl). The question of the morality of this young man's parents was high in the mind of the mourners.⁶² A young Luo man from Gem told me⁶³ how he really liked English. *Dholuo*, his mother tongue, was to him less desirable.

⁵⁸ On 29th September 2003.

⁵⁹ The man moved the entry point to his homestead by about 16 metres thus reversing the homestead layout – the entry that had been on the right bottom hand corner of the homestead was now in the left bottom hand corner.

⁶⁰ On 26th April 2003. This home was in Ahono village, my home village.

⁶¹ Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. pp20-21.

⁶² I state that this was in people's minds not because anyone told me that this was the case in this instance. Rather, I suspected it to be the case given the way the circumstances of the death were described to me and my knowledge of Luo traditional beliefs. I did not ask anyone to confirm this to me as such would have been inappropriate given that this was a home with which I was not particularly closely linked and despite my having lived in the village for many years my identity as a stranger, aggravated by my peculiar skin colour (white) still set me apart. The hedged way in which people were talking to me about the cause of the death I interpreted as to some extent verifying my suspicions.

⁶³ On 28th April 2003.

Many taboos and laws are articulated in mother tongue. His mother tongue being in a sense a ‘taboo trap’ may have been why the young man preferred English.⁶⁴

I overheard some ladies passing my home⁶⁵ saying that these days many young people are dying and somewhat sarcastically commenting that they will continue dying until they are finished! The most frequent reason I hear for young people dying, is because they do not follow the old taboos. For example, should a young person lose their spouse but then go to bars in town to look for sexual partners without first satisfying taboo requirements,⁶⁶ then many (or all) of their sexual partners will die.

A lady in a church told us⁶⁷ that she went to visit a fellow *laktar*⁶⁸ after coming from a big meeting at which a new archbishop had been installed. On reaching the place, she almost died there. I am not certain of the details of this case, but it was clearly a clash of taboos that almost killed her. A young man explained⁶⁹ that three things result in the minds of sick people being troubled. 1/ They fear that they have eaten *poison*⁷⁰ (i.e. been bewitched). 2/ Someone is trying to kill them (by witchcraft). 3/ the illness is coming because they have broken some taboo.

⁶⁴ This young man not knowing his father was left him living with his maternal grandmother on the death of his mother – contrary to many taboos. If his Luo forefathers were correct, then he was cursed.

⁶⁵ On 3rd June 2003. About three ladies were walking past, but speaking loudly to each other in *Dholuo*, as I was working (lighting a fire to burn rubbish) outside my house.

⁶⁶ Satisfying these taboo requirements, sometimes referred to as *tieko dhoch*, for a woman requires having an in-law sleep with her to break her *okola*. (Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p123.) The same for a man to dream that he has intercourse with his late wife. (Oryare, *Luo Traditions*. p32.)

⁶⁷ On 19th July 2003. The church was the Ruwe Holy Ghost church in Bar Sauri.

⁶⁸ This term used for many post-menopausal women in Roho churches is clearly a corruption of the English ‘doctor’. The role of the *laktache* (plural) is somewhat like that of traditional *Nyamrerwa* – midwifery, handling dead bodies, counselling young women and so on.

⁶⁹ On 23rd July 2003. This was in the course of a YTC (Yala Theological Centre) discussion.

⁷⁰ *Poison* here referred to is a substance placed under the guidance of a witchdoctor, and not a poison in the Western bio-medical sense.

There is no end to *kweche*, they continue to be invented, according to Odaga.⁷¹ Such is illustrated by the production of a small book called *Chike jaduong e Dalane*, in which 331 laws are listed for the head of a home to follow to avoid problems.⁷² The author concedes that he cannot have remembered all the laws, so promises us that he will produce a second book with the remaining laws, which I have yet to see. The introduction to this book tells us: “These rules were given to our forefathers by God to be followed in order for people to live good lives. As... on leaving our land the white man said that we must follow our ancestral laws ... anyone who doesn’t agree with these 331 laws should wait and see with their own eyes as the funerals come.”⁷³ The names of ten senior Luo men and women who have contributed to the laws (i.e. *kweche* / taboos) are listed in this book. Failure to adhere to these *kweche* is invariably linked to the likelihood of death.

5.4. Specific Causes of Bad in the Life of the Luo People

In addition to the origins above, more specific sources of bad can often be identified.

5.4.1. Ritual Origins

⁷¹ ODAGA, ASENATH BOLE, 2002, Personal communication. (Odaga, whose home is in Gem, is a well known writer of books in *Dholuo* and other languages.)

⁷² See also Section 3.3.2.

⁷³ Raringo, *Chike Jaduong*. np. (My translation.)

This category refers to those sources of bad that are connected to ritual or ‘religious’ practices.

5.4.1.1. *Kia* (Don’t Know) *Kia* can be translated as ignorance. It appears to be ‘...don’t know’ as it follows any personal pronoun such as *a* (I), *gi* (they), *wa* (we) to show that these person(s) don’t know. E.g. *akia* – I don’t know, *gikia* – they don’t know etc. I have identified *kia* as the source of bad in those instances in which there was an implication that more complete knowledge would have averted the bad thing in question.⁷⁴ Such a situation is elaborated upon by Turner who tells us that African people who see a wealthy missionary coming may try to imitate him, but when despite this they still fail to become rich, they suspect that some secret knowledge pertaining to the white people’s prosperity is being held from them.⁷⁵

I examine a random sample of the bad things that result from ignorance below: A man testified in church that on a particular evening there had been a heavy thunderstorm at a location uphill from their home. When his wife went to ‘help herself’ at night she did not realise that a ditch outside the house was filled with fast-flowing water, so ended up being

⁷⁴ Such thinking clearly underlies K’aoko’s concern that the Luo people not lose the knowledge of their circumcision rites. (K’AOKO, DAN OMONDI, 1986, *The Re-introduction of Luo Circumcision Rite*. Nairobi: np.)

⁷⁵ (TURNER, N.W., 1979, *Religious Innovation in Africa: collected essays on new religious movements*. Boston, Massachusetts: G.K. Hall & Co.) Kane’s stating that following colonialism the national church’s “leaders are now on a basis of absolute equality with the Missionaries” ignores the European missionary’s cultural characteristics and connections. (KANE, J.H., 1982, *A Concise History of the Christian World Mission: a panoramic view of missions from the Pentecost to the present day* (revised edition). Michigan: Baker Book House, p104.) Few African people achieve Western standards of wealth and many remain ‘ignorant’, although like South Americans they may believe that if you “adopt USA style religion, ... you’ll become rich like the USA.” (HUNTBACH, MATTHEW, 2005, ‘Benedict XVI.’ *Missiology Discussion forum*. Email received on 21st April 2005.)

carried away by the current and almost drowned. This calamity⁷⁶ clearly arose due to the ignorance of the lady. A young fellow preaching⁷⁷ explained that he needed to ‘weyo richo rawere’ (leave the sins of youth) in order for God to be able to hear his prayers. The sins of youth were implied as occurring due to the ignorance of youth, both in their lack of years, and these days because of the few opportunities that they have to listen to wisdom from their elders because of pressures of schooling. There is clearly a fine line between the category of ignorance (*kia*) and desire (*gombo*) in this case.

The youth in a church were⁷⁸ castigated by their preacher for consistently coming late, and thus foregoing the opportunity to learn valuable things at the youth service that was programmed to begin in advance of the general service. Timekeeping is known to be the preserve especially of Europeans. This castigation of the youths strongly suggested that they did not know something that they, as *modern* youths, ought to have known.⁷⁹ A preacher presented a message in English⁸⁰ that was almost certainly a close following of an English-language text from overseas.⁸¹ The attempt at translating this into *Dholuo* was horrific, yet there was no apparent realisation that a message that is valued and useable in one context may not be so in another. It was assumed that the Luo language (and people) had a deficiency in understanding.

⁷⁶ That was reported to us in a church meeting on 25th May 2003.

⁷⁷ On 1st May 2003 in a Pentecostal church meeting.

⁷⁸ On 20th April 2003. This was the Zion Harvest Mission church in Ulumbi village.

⁷⁹ Where ‘*modern*’ has the contextual impact of approximately ‘those things that Europeans do’.

⁸⁰ On 1st June 2003. The linkage of this message with the particular structure of the English language was overt. He was considering the term ‘re-’ as in repent, return, realisation, reconciliation etc.

⁸¹ See Section 4.3.1. for a previous reference to this message.

We spoke to a young man⁸² who was out-rightly refusing a good opportunity that he had been offered to improve his prospects for a career in the church. He seemed to have no meaningful alternative prospect, especially as he was born illegitimately, and now his mother had died. I was told that young people here are not like those in the UK. Here to get a young person to do something you have to force him, as young people do not know how to motivate themselves.

The preacher⁸³ stated repeatedly “*tuoche onge*” (there is no illness) in a confident, loud declarative voice to the small group of mostly women gathered in this sitting room. This teaching is based on various biblical passages, yet the woman of this house had lost her husband (who was active in the same church) to a slow wasting disease just a year or two before this. The answer as to why people were continuing to suffer illness, was their lack of faith. Their crying, wailing, and weeping on their knees after the preacher had finished suggested also something more. The preachers in this church almost invariably wear (western) suits — there is some hidden knowledge from the West on how to overcome illness that they are desperately seeking.⁸⁴

Ignorance can result in bad, as well as lost opportunities for good. Someone passing an exam is said in *Dholuo* to have *puodhore*, that is to have cleansed or sanctified himself.

Ignorance (*kia*) is considered to be something impure, which is cleansed by education.

Education is clearly a contributing factor to the receipt of wealth in Kenya, as well as in the

⁸² On 19th May 2003. This was an offer of a scholarship to study at post-secondary level in theology.

⁸³ Sermon preached on 30th April 2003. See Section 3.4.3.

⁸⁴ When the child of a member of this church died, the church members refused to bury, so the Roman Catholic church performed the burial. Previously a son of the very speaker of 30th April 2003 became ill. His

West. People desperately want it so as to chase away the bad that constantly arises from ignorance.

5.4.1.2. *Gak* (State of Being Unclean) Other ‘bad’ things here arise from a state of *gak*. I consider *gak* to be the origin of bad in those cases where no obvious alternative origin for the bad thing can be seen yet someone’s state is particularly receptive of ‘bad’. This can best be demonstrated using examples.

On one occasion prayers were held for the sick in a church.⁸⁵ Those suffering were asked to attend on a weekly basis for a prescribed set of incantations from the Scriptures alongside the laying-on of hands and prayer. It was clearly considered bad for people not to attend those sessions. Non-attendance would slow the healing process as some *gak* (uncleanness) would not *puodhore* (be cleansed). A woman preaching⁸⁶ said “*Nyasach ng’ato en dhano wadgi, jachiend ng’ato en dhano wadgi*” (someone’s god is his fellow human, someone’s devil is his fellow human). The negative side of this is – look out, as he who you think is your colleague can be to you as the devil. Hence your colleague who you take as a friend, has something bad in him – which makes him/her *gak*.⁸⁷ ‘God’ in this context is the source of blessing, so to say that your colleague is god, is to say that blessings came from your colleague(s).⁸⁸

father refused to acknowledge his son’s being unwell, not allowing him any treatment. As I recall, someone else eventually treated the wound on the son’s leg. (See also Section 3.4.3.)

⁸⁵ This was on 23rd July 2003 at the Kenya Assemblies of God church in Yala at a gathering especially for healing of the sick.

⁸⁶ On 19th July 2003 at the Ruwe Holy Ghost church in Bar Sauri.

⁸⁷ This bad is clearly *jochiende* in this person’s heart.

⁸⁸ The Luo believe that *Nyasaye* (God) moves or crawls in people’s bodies. (Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p25.) (Odaga, ‘Christianity.’ p2.) So this could be interpreted as the person being a god, or doing what he does as G(g)od is in him.

Before beginning his message a preacher at a church⁸⁹ remarked on the church drum, that was badly misshapen and torn. He said a larger drum must be acquired, and a new skin purchased and fitted to the existing one, before going on to his message. For a prosperity Gospel preacher this is a good way to show one's power over physical items like a drum, whether or not his words would actually come to pass. The miserable looking broken drum lying on the floor of the church spoiled the general aura of progress and success that was being cultivated. It was like an unclean (*gak*) thing in an otherwise clean church.

The visiting preacher⁹⁰ seemed to be troubled by accusations that he had a less than desirable character. He defended himself against such perceived accusations by saying that he was not one of those preachers who only did it for money: explained by his being a salary-earning police officer. From what he said clearly such money-oriented preachers are around, and they are less than pure in their Godly service. Drifting in the middle of lake Victoria in a boat, was a past experience related to us by another preacher.⁹¹ He and his colleagues had to be rescued by a motor boat. I am not certain whether they were immobilised because the wind dropped, or they lost an oar or what actually happened, but this was clearly a 'bad' state, place and time when people shouldn't be where they were.

Prayer and fasting were what a certain lady related as being the means of her escape from some major problems that she had. This, and also many other churches, believe deeply in the power of prayer and fasting combined with confession and repentance to remove their

⁸⁹ On 1st June 2003.

problems. Such unspecified – problems are described as if they are an uncleanness or *gak*.⁹²

5.4.1.3. *Kuong' mar Anyuola (Curse of the Family)*⁹³ This term is frequently used as the epitome of 'where *Shaitani* reigns'. There are things that follow family lines that are very troublesome to people, from which they need to be set free. The (extended) family traditionally has an enormous hold over an individual, placing great demands on his time, energy and life in general. There is therefore a category of bad things associated with this, that arise from this supposed 'curse', of being linked with a particular family with all its weaknesses.

An old lady who was suffering a recent bereavement,⁹⁴ recalled the prior death of two of her sons. It seemed that her family were dying at a greater rate than they ought to be. It is as if she was under a particular family curse. A young man⁹⁵ taught about 'what people fear the most'. Included in this category were dead ancestors and *kuong' mar anyuola*. According to him, people habitually feared that *kuong' mar anyuola* would bring them calamities that had already afflicted previous members of their family, such as infertility. Death again seems to have run in the family of a man we visited, who complained that

⁹⁰ On 13th July 2003 at Zion Harvest Mission church in Yala township.

⁹¹ On 17th May 2003 at the Ruwe Holy Ghost church in Sinaga.

⁹² As explained to me on 5th April 2003 by a speaker at the Luong' Mogik church in Ahono.

⁹³ Odaga (ODAGA, ASENATH BOLE, 2003, *Dholuo-English Dictionary*. Kisumu: Lake Publishers and Enterprises Ltd. p36.) gives *anyuola* as "kinship, descendant, family, lineage." I will use family in preference to lineage, because the latter is not in widespread English usage. Note that the Luo have various names that could loosely be translated family or 'clan'. *Dhoot* can also refer to door ('mouth to the house'), and suggests a common female ancestor. *Libamba* is more of a 'group' that is related. *Anyuola* describes something like 'birth-group', so is perhaps the closest to the English notion of family in the sense of being 'born together', although a family such as a nuclear family in English could be referred to as *ot*, ('house'). See Wilson (Wilson, *Luo Customary*. p5.) for details. People in practice use the various terms somewhat interchangeably.

⁹⁴ On 27th May 2003.

three people in his close family had recently become very ill, two of whom had already died.⁹⁶ On observing a discussion over a funeral⁹⁷ one man got very heated over some issue regarding the handling of money by a particular clan. The response to him indicated that the others in the room identified this behaviour with a particular *kuong*' (curse) associated with his family (i.e. *anyuola*). Something like the pride alluded to as a bad thing⁹⁸ could also easily arise from a family curse (*kuong*' *mar anyuola*). Some Christian songs mention such a curse overtly as something from which to be saved. It is certainly hard to hear good things said in Christian circles about one's *anyuola*.⁹⁹

5.4.1.4. Juok (Witchcraft) The category of 'witchcraft' is not easy to isolate in Luo language and thinking. *Juok* is generally used to translate witchcraft (*uchawi* in *Kiswahili*), but this root has contextual effects that are broad and wide. If *juok* is witchcraft then *jajuok* (a person of *juok*) ought to be a 'witch', but is actually a night runner.¹⁰⁰ *Juok* is the singular for *juogi*, which are a particular widespread and powerful type of Luo spirit – that are often confused with *jochiende*. *Jojuogi* are people who collect tax from passers by. *Jok*, which seems to be of the same root as *juok* is given by Ogot as meaning 'vital force' to many Luo peoples – especially those in Uganda, Congo and Sudan.¹⁰¹ The term *ajuoga*, that can loosely be translated as witchdoctor or diviner, also contains the root *juok*, implying someone who cures *juok* or cures using *juok*.

⁹⁵ This was Samuel Odhiambo Oloo speaking at Ulumbi Zion Harvest Mission church on 18th May 2003.

⁹⁶ Reported to me on 28th April 2003.

⁹⁷ On 27th May 2003. See Section 3.4.1.

⁹⁸ Mentioned as part of a message given on 6th April 2003 at Zion Harvest Mission church Ulumbi.

⁹⁹ This should be striking to someone from the West, where family is generally looked upon very positively.

¹⁰⁰ Runs around naked at night scaring people by rattling doors and windows and flashing lights – especially at homes where there are no men present.

¹⁰¹ Ogot, 'The Concept of Jok.' p10.

The terms *ido* and *iro* are used to describe the process of sending bad magic to someone. *Sihoho* is sickness acquired via evil-eye, but this term seems to be of Bantu origin, the original Luo term being *jajuog wang*'.¹⁰² *Janawi* can pierce someone with bad magic. Mboya¹⁰³ lists a number of *jojuogi* (people of *juok*) such as *jandagla*, *ajuoga*, *jajuog wang*', *jajuog otieno*, *janawi*, *jadil*, *jamrieri*. For the Luo, witchcraft is closely linked with the ancestral spirits called *juogi*, in a way that is linguistically less apparent among some neighbouring Bantu peoples. The constant strongly implicit link with *jochiende* should thus be clear: 'witchcraft' is the directing of *juogi* (*jochiende*) to harm someone else for one's own ends.

This brought about the concern¹⁰⁴ when we visited a young woman sitting alone in her hut alongside her baby who had died earlier the same day. Not visiting if one was a close neighbour could certainly arouse suspicions as to one's guilt in such a death. Although we had no money to give, our group concluded that it was better to go with nothing rather than not to go at all.¹⁰⁵ A native Luo man who was the crusade speaker in Gem¹⁰⁶ blamed a great deal of people's problems on *uchawi*. He used *Kiswahili* and the P.A. system was so poor as to make the Luo translation almost indiscernible.¹⁰⁷ The problems being focused on by this speaker were singleness, infertility, barrenness etc.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p172.

¹⁰³ Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. pp170-180.

¹⁰⁴ Expressed by a member of our group of about five or six people on 2nd May 2003.

¹⁰⁵ Note – the baby died during the hunger season.

¹⁰⁶ On 3rd May 2003 in the late afternoon in the grounds of Sagam secondary school.

¹⁰⁷ I presume that the translation for *uchawi* would have been *juok* but was not able to hear the translation so as to discern this.

¹⁰⁸ "Any woman who turns out to be barren is [in Kenya] considered to have practiced witchcraft." (MBUGGUSS, MARTHA, 1992, 'How Cultural Practices Hamper Family Planning.' In: *Daily Nation*. Wednesday February 12th 1992, p vii.)

I was told¹⁰⁹ that it was flies swarming to the vomit of the deceased on the day that he died that made people suspect that he had been *poisoned*.¹¹⁰ His being reported to have said “... they are killing me, they are killing me” in the last hours before his death further convinced people that he had been bewitched.¹¹¹ An old lady told me¹¹² how well the wedding plans for her grand-daughter were progressing. Knowing this lady well, I could tell that she was bursting with pride – her grand-daughter being extremely intelligent and her suitor being a very wealthy man – yet she was suppressing this pride and joy as best she could, as there is nothing like open exuberant joy in one’s success or in that of one’s family, to invite bewitchment by the jealous.¹¹³

5.4.2. Will-Based Origins

These are bad things that seem to arise from the failure of someone to control their will.

5.4.2.1. *Gombo* (Desire) Many of the bad things with an identifiable origin other than only *jochiende* and *chuny* arise from *gombo* (desire, want or lust). I will illustrate this category by looking at some instances, again selected at random from those that I noted (see Table 5.1).

¹⁰⁹ On 27th May 2003. See Section 3.4.1.

¹¹⁰ ‘*Poisoning*’ here refers to potions or spells rather than poison in the scientific chemical sense.

¹¹¹ Reported to me on 27th May 2003. See also Section 3.4.1.

¹¹² On 25th April 2003.

¹¹³ Hence the paranoia about success, mentioned of the Ugandan Luo people in Southall. (SOUTHALL, AIDAN W., 1995, ‘History and the Discourse of Underdevelopment among the Alur of Uganda.’ 45-57 In:

A preacher mentioned¹¹⁴ the fact that *ubatiso* (baptism) is a word that originates from Greek. He then said that he doesn't like referring to the Greek language in the course of his teaching and preaching. The clear implication of this statement is that frequent reference to Greek is in some way 'bad'. Knowledge of Greek being associated with advanced theological education, this suggests that he despises such education. My experience tells me that there are very few preachers here in Luoland who would actually turn down such education if they were offered it, if only for the prestige that it confers. This is therefore an instance of jealousy, something known to be very widespread in Africa. It is this man's desire (*gombo*) for higher education that has made him jealous of those who understand much Greek, such that he considers the use of Greek in presenting a message to be bad. There is a fine line here between this and an alternative interpretation of the source of this 'bad'. Reference to Greek terms being associated with 'stuffy' theology in the West, means that he may have picked up this 'bad' thing from *loka*.¹¹⁵ My own judgment is that it belongs in the *gombo* category.

A pastor of a non-*Roho* denomination pointed out to me that what was bad about *Roho* leaders was their habit of finding things buried in people's houses / walls that had to be removed to restore healing and holiness.¹¹⁶ They also attach importance to external signifiers of powerful prayer, such as the burning of candles and wearing of robes. Such things would make people aware that the prayer service they are getting is effective, hence making it easier for them to part with payment,¹¹⁷ hence it would appear that these 'bad' qualities of *Roho* arise at least in part from their *gombo* (desire) for wealth. It was our state

James, Wendy. (ed.) 1995, *The Pursuit of Certainty: Religious and Cultural Formulations*. London: Routledge, p54.)

¹¹⁴ At a church service at a Pentecostal church in Yala on 13th July 2003.

¹¹⁵ See Table 5.1.

before we were saved that was described as ‘bad’ by a preacher.¹¹⁸ It is common in many church circles in Gem, to point out ‘how bad I was’, so as to emphasise what Jesus has saved us from. The ‘bad’ things identified are typically drunkenness, sexual immorality, stealing etc. – being things that satisfy the desires (*gombo*) of the world.

A preacher¹¹⁹ described tax collectors as being those people who typify what is ‘bad’, then told us that Jesus nevertheless drew alongside them. Leaders in government, church and business are known in Kenya as ‘big men’. (The adjective ‘big’ not referring to body size, but someone’s power, influence or wealth). They frequently maintain themselves and their many dependants by means tainted by corruption. This bad quality arises through their being desirous (*gombo*) of things that their legal pay salary cannot afford, and results in their being antagonistic towards anything that may threaten their supply of funds. A colleague of mine remarked on this ‘bad’ quality of big men.¹²⁰

An old lady labelled as ‘bad’ people who pray for others, and then should the outcome of their prayers be positive, demand huge sums of money.¹²¹ For example, a family member with whom contact has been lost over a long period since he or she has gone to town, may be prayed for. Should this family member return, then those who have prayed may come and demand a sum equivalent to forty to ninety pounds sterling. (In this area a labourer can work for a day for forty pence.) The same lady on this occasion mentioned that the only

¹¹⁶ Comment made at a YTC class on 23rd May 2005, and on other occasions that I have not recorded.

¹¹⁷ As was described to a group of us on 30th September 2003.

¹¹⁸ This was a preacher from Uganda preaching at KIST (Kima International School of Theology) on 15th May 2003.

¹¹⁹ In the Musanda Christian Church of Kenya in Marenyo on 26th April 2003.

¹²⁰ On 7th April 2003.

¹²¹ On 14th May 2003.

thing that prevents church leaders from becoming thieves and con men – is that the *sadaka* (offering) that they receive tends to be small. A lady preacher shared¹²² how, in contrast to Abigail as referred to in 1 Samuel 25, women tend to abuse and insult one another verbally. I understand this is because they are inclined to be jealous of what their fellow women do or have, as they also desire (*gombo*) the same.

5.4.2.2. Kionge yie Moromo (Lack of Faith) In a broader sense categories like *gombo* (desire) *kuong' mar anyuola* (family curse) *juok* (witchcraft) etc. could all be averted by a having sufficient faith. So 'lack of faith' is seen here in a narrower sense, as illustrated by the examples below. The logic was clear¹²³ that if someone had enough faith in God, then they wouldn't hesitate to come to a certain prayer meeting. Instead, lack of faith means that the sick stay at home, and so die for nothing.

A preacher¹²⁴ told us that it was especially important to pray in times of hunger. He explained that people erred in not praying even when they realised that the rains were delayed. Should they have sufficient faith to pray, then it would rain. Nathanael was taken by a preacher as a man who loved '*weche mag din*' (matters of religion). We were¹²⁵ told that his great failing was that he did not have the faith to put into practice what he was hearing. It was when he met with Jesus that he applied faith to the things that he knew (from *Bible*, John 1:45).

¹²² In a sermon on 5th April 2003 at a fellowship meeting of the saved in the Anglican church in Rawa.

¹²³ On 9th July 2003 at a Kenya Assemblies of God church near Yala.

¹²⁴ at the Ruwe Holy Ghost church in Sinaga on 17th May 2003.

¹²⁵ At Zion Harvest Mission church in Ulumbi on 18th May 2003.

5.4.3. 'Modern' Origins

Some origins of bad things seem to arise from modern times and the introduction of 'Western' life into Luoland.

5.4.3.1. *Loka* (Overseas / Globalisation) These are bad things that have come from the impinging of the European people's culture onto this part of Africa.¹²⁶ Kiosks were being knocked down on the side of a road to make room for a new road expansion project.¹²⁷ Such a project could not have been funded locally, but had clearly been funded and almost certainly initiated from outside of Kenya. I am not saying that the people consider the road expansion as a whole to be bad, yet clearly the source of the 'bad' that was destroying their businesses on the roadside, was beyond the boundaries of Kenya. I walked some of the way back towards home with a preacher.¹²⁸ While walking he tried to impress me with his theological expertise, perhaps looking for favour from me. This resulted in him commenting, on the basis of previous theological education that he had received from a Western source somewhere, that his preaching had been good because he had kept to one topic, whereas many people do not preach effectively as they wonder from topic to topic. Some people's preaching had been labelled as 'bad' based on a Western source.

¹²⁶ Atigo perceives as 'bad' the white person who messed up the African's religion(s). He appeals for a return to the original and unadulterated life of the Luo. (Atigo, 'Dinde Joratenge.' WWW.)

¹²⁷ On the 7th July 2003, as already mentioned above.

¹²⁸ Who had preached on 20th April 2003.

A woman was complimented for her humility in having taken it upon herself to sweep the church despite being a visitor.¹²⁹ Implicit in this compliment was the implication that many women these days would not do this. The reason that is often discussed, is the influence of Western teachings on Africa, especially those promoting equality between the sexes and feminism that results in women being proud. Discussion on one occasion¹³⁰ centred around the recent closure of Nairobi university due to student unrest. A visitor from Nairobi explained how full the buses were coming West in the prior few days as hoards of students were having to return to their rural homes. She then explained how one student on the bus was fondling his girlfriend who was sat on his lap. An old man's complaints that this was disrespectful behaviour in such a public environment were returned by abuse to the old man. This kind of sexual freedom clearly arises from images and texts from the West.¹³¹

5.4.3.2. *Jorachare ok Dwar* (Not Wanted by Europeans) Some things come to be considered bad by people, not because of their own way of understanding, but because that is the view of Europeans about such things. A preacher¹³² spoke disparagingly of his previous status by saying that '*I was a typical peasant*' (East African English). This despite the fact that the peasant life is very much the norm in much of East Africa, especially for women. As I understood this comment, it arose out of his reading or hearing things in English from the West in which peasants were looked down upon. Similar to this is the

¹²⁹ On 18th May 2003. (As already mentioned in Chapter 4.)

¹³⁰ On 27th April 2003. This discussion was between about 5 of us sitting in a house after the church service.

¹³¹ "I would say that the reason is that higher education is indeed the hotline that links all the dirt of the traditions of the West, from the place of its origin, to here. We are indeed the rubbish pits into which that dirt is dumped." (My translation.) (MBATIAH, MWENDA, 1999, *Upotevu*. Nairobi: Standard Textbooks, Graphics and Publishing. pp52/53.) Debate rages over the source of the current sexual immorality amongst the Luo and African people. Frantz Fanon considers the African man's reputation as primarily oriented to sex as foreign: "... the negro is eclipsed. He is turned into a penis. He is a penis." (HANSEN, EMMANUEL, 1978, *Frantz Fanon: social and political thought*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press, p78.) Yet the common name for 'man' in Kiswahili (*mwanaume*) can be literally translated as 'person of penis'. In *Dholuo* man, (*dichwo*) strongly implies 'he would pierce'.

frequently heard comment ‘*ok abiro ketho sa*’ (I will not waste time).¹³³ People’s own world-view is event oriented and not time oriented,¹³⁴ so where has the badness of wasting time come from? Clearly from the West and the Western way of life that they are trying to imitate.

There was some discussion in a church, which concluded that for a church only to use the people’s mother tongue in a service was bad.¹³⁵ Although this ‘badness’ could be examined in various ways, there is a clear sense in which it arises from the European people’s efforts at unifying peoples in East Africa, even when this has meant denying them their own language. On one occasion when visiting a home, some children came running to me to greet me, but then the lady of the home discouraged them from doing this saying that they were dirty.¹³⁶ As I understand this instance, she called the children dirty in my presence because of a pre-understanding of European people’s standards of cleanliness that could result in their keeping children away. In discussion¹³⁷ a youth leading a service at a Pentecostal church told us that prayers which come from a book cannot help anyone. This youth was a member of a church that broke away from the Anglicans and had linked up with missionaries who considered the prayer book to be dry and meaningless; hence he was echoing their words. Such disrespect for a book would otherwise be unlikely to arise in this (Luo) culture .

¹³² On 15th May 2003. This was a preacher from Uganda preaching at Kima International School of Theology.

¹³³ On 27th April 2003. This phrase is frequently used in many different contexts.

¹³⁴ Mbiti, *African Religions*. p19.

¹³⁵ On 20th April 2003. A comment made by the pastor of Zion Harvest Church in Ulumbi, Paul Otieno Agoro.

¹³⁶ On 25th April 2003. (As already referred to in Chapter 4.)

¹³⁷ On 27th April 2003.

5.4.4. *Kuonde Moko ma Rach ae* (Other Sources of Bad)

Other sources of bad were less frequent (Table 5.1). An example of *achaye*¹³⁸ (despising someone) (already referred to previously) is a young man who we were told went to pay dowry for his wife, but instead of being polite and silent in his in-law's home as we were told he should have been, he showed that he despised his father-in-law by speaking freely, falling asleep in his sitting room etc. In one case when the bad was laziness at a funeral, the time when the Amalekites attacked David's camp in his absence was described (1 Samuel 30). It was pointed out that crying (*yuak*) did not help David's men to regain their lost people and property, and so the widow being comforted at this funeral was also encouraged to do more than cry and to get on with finding a means to help herself.¹³⁹

In my records, a source of bad was rarely explained on the basis of an apparently Western rationality. One occasion when this did happen was when¹⁴⁰ a lay church leader gave one reason for the ongoing poverty in Kenya as being because of the great importance attached to eating on behalf of those who, themselves, could not eat, i.e. the very sick or the dead. The rational link between a lot of eating resulting in fast depletion of food reserves seemed here to be in view.¹⁴¹ Another occasion was¹⁴² when a church leader blamed a lack of planning for the fact that there seemed to have been no provision of food for the visitors expected on the following day. Fear was

¹³⁸ This term is hard to translate into English. It is something like 'despisement'.

¹³⁹ This message was given on 3rd May 2003 at a funeral at Muhanda.

¹⁴⁰ On 19th July 2003. See Section 3.4.2.

¹⁴¹ Such self-depreciation is hard to understand. The likelihood of bad arising from failing to eat on behalf of the sick or dead is presumably considered higher than the bad of depleting food reserves.

¹⁴² On 19th April 2003. This was a church leader in Kisumu.

occasionally the source of a bad thing. For example: an issue had arisen¹⁴³ which made a certain colleague of mine feel that he may have offended me. This resulted in him limiting his communication, as a result of which some issues became confused and turned out badly. The cause of this ‘bad’ I take as being his fear as to how I would react to what he had done.

5.4.5. Effect of Environment

Results attained do not appear to differ according to ‘where bad comes from’ by denominational affiliation or event.¹⁴⁴

5.5. Conclusion on Where Bad comes From

From the research outlined in this chapter we discover that in many respects someone’s impact on their community is that bad which emerges from them. Good is not a thing of itself except in its manifestation as *gueth* or ‘blessing’,¹⁴⁵ but a default position achieved by the minimisation of bad.¹⁴⁶ All bad things emerging from people originate with the *jochiende* (ghosts or ancestral spirits) that reside in people’s hearts.¹⁴⁷ A

¹⁴³ On 15th July 2003. This colleague assumed that I was coming to reprimand him for his having inappropriately beaten a certain child.

¹⁴⁴ This is from an impressional point of view. I have not applied any statistical formula to test the data.

¹⁴⁵ Themselves means of deterring bad.

¹⁴⁶ (Harries, ‘Good-by-Default.’ p162.) Tempels suggests that for the Bantu anything that is not ‘bad’ is utopian in nature. (Tempels, *Bantu*. p140.)

¹⁴⁷ Cohen and Odhiambo’s book, while co-authored with a Luo person, reveals much of Cohen’s Western thinking. (Cohen and Odhiambo, *Siaya*. 1989.) So on page 70 he tells us that “The Epizootics devastated the

human heart (i.e. will, emotion, desire, feeling, longing etc.) is responsible for every bad occurrence. Most bad things arise through a connection to the heart, by such as desire/lust, uncleanness, a family curse, lack of faith etc. Bad emerges directly onto a community from the heart in some cases of witchcraft. Other cases are effectual by the breaking of taboo.¹⁴⁸

Jochiende can only work through the means of a *chuny* (heart). This can be someone's own heart, by feeling some anger etc., or else the heart of someone who is bewitching him. Once a *jachien* has entered, more may quickly follow. They are removed by various rituals. In the past these typically involved the shedding of animal blood, nowadays repentance, prayer and reference to the blood of Christ are typical. This is the topic of Chapter 6. I have not observed any correlation between the source of a 'bad thing' and its environment, that is the circumstances in which it was mentioned.¹⁴⁹ Yet I would suggest that there is a pattern, on the basis of subjective evaluation. *Roho* (spiritual) churches are interacting with the *jochiende* found in the core of *chuny* (the heart). Pentecostal churches are one step further removed and seek to bring the heart to expel the *jochiende* that are in it, and to deal with the more spiritual causes such as *kuong' mar anyuola* (the family curse). Then we have the mission churches who concentrate on correction in the outer ring – lack of faith, ignorance, desire and lust etc. as the means of putting someone right with God.

herds of Western Kenya ...” with no mention of the likelihood that this was brought about by angry ancestors. Cohen and Othiambo's stated aim, to be writing for the Luo in terms of their own debates (Cohen and Odhiambo, *Siaya*. p3.) in English that can be appreciated internationally, is attempting the impossible.

¹⁴⁸ “Evil is personalised and comes from the hearts of evil people and angry ancestors.” (KIRWEN, MICHAEL, C., 2004, *African Cultural Knowledge: its fifteen foundational themes and underpinning religious beliefs*. A publication of the Maryknoll Institute of African Studies Nairobi: Maryknoll Institute of African Studies, p227.)

¹⁴⁹ This is impressional without application of any statistical formula.

CHAPTER 6. *GOLO RACH* (GETTING RID OF BAD)

*“Emomiyo wasiko asika wapuodhore apuodha ...
en puodhruok mak rum
... en konyruok”*

So we continue and continue to cleanse ourselves...
in a cleansing that has no end ...
this is how we help ourselves.¹

6.1. Introduction

Chapter 4 has explored those things that are known by the Luo of Gem as being ‘bad’. Chapter 5 has outlined where these things are seen to originate. In this chapter I now explore how, in the understanding of the Luo people, they are eliminated.

6.2. Methodology and Results Table

This chapter is based on the same period of observations as the two previous chapters. In going through my notes taken over that period, I found four hundred occasions on which

¹ A lady preacher in Gem on 5th April 2003.

particular means seemed to be oriented towards the defeating or removal of bad. I have listed these in the categories shown in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1. Categories of Removal of Bad Things

Major Category		Sub-categories	Number of times	%
<i>Dholuo</i>	English			
<i>Nyasay-e</i>	God	Worship, church leadership, church membership.	65	16
<i>Wach motiyo go</i>	Words used	Crying out, naming a problem, humility, secrecy, lies, preaching, singing, loud voice, encouragement, testimony, incantations, laughter.	63	16
<i>Luwo chike mar kwerew-a</i>	Keepin- g custom ary laws	Animal sacrifice, medicines, diviner, post-menopausal women, cleansing, polygamy, processions, cleanliness, visitors, threat of bewitchment, priestly clothing.	56	14
<i>Liete kod rapach-e</i>	Funeral -s and Memori- -al services		51	12
<i>Lamo</i>	Prayer	Fasting, all night prayer, holy communion, prayer mats.	43	11
<i>Warruo-k</i>	Salvati- on	Christian walk, forgiveness, faith, welcoming visitors, carrying a cross, love.	28	7
<i>Weche mag ndaloni</i>	Modern things	Education, white person, keeping time, English, building a church, outside contacts, job.	23	6
<i>Riembo jochien-de</i>	Chasin- g away bad spirits	Not wanting to chase bad, removing medicine from wall of house, beating drums.	19	5
<i>Losochenru-</i>	Plannin- -g	Working hard.	17	4

<i>ok</i>				
<i>Pesa</i>	Money	<i>Harambee</i> , handing out money.	16	4
<i>Chokru</i> <i>-oke</i>	Gatheri -ngs	Eating together, agreeing together, committee, being together as Christians.	16	4
<i>Miche</i> <i>mag</i> <i>Roho</i> <i>Maler</i>	Gifts of the Holy Spirit	Prophecy, generating wealth.	3	1
		Total:	400	100

The sub-categories column above contains those actions that while not fitting exactly into a major category, have been placed where they are as being the closest fit possible. Underlying this research is the assumption that much of life for the Luo people is oriented to doing away with bad. This I have argued in my unpublished paper.² The good position is considered to be the default one, once the bad has been done away with.³

Two ways of doing away with bad recognised in the West are prevention and treatment. I have not considered these two separately here.⁴ I have not here discussed or recorded day-to-day household organisation. Some conversations in a household are of course concerned with things such as planting beans, washing babies, stoking fires. Luo society

² Harries, 'Ghosts and Cleansing.' WWW.

³ Harries, 'Good by Default.' p162.

is not among those that considers such activities to be consequential.⁵ All that is described in this chapter falls under the broad category of *puodhruok* that could be translated as ‘cleansing’. I have not recorded instances where this term alone has been used, as it is too general. Neither have I included instances of ‘*we richo*’ (leave sin) for the same reason.

While repentance is considered a key step in doing away with bad, the actual contextual effect of this word and its *Dholuo* and *Kiswahili* equivalents varies greatly. Whereas the Greek *metanoëô* (which translates to the English ‘repent’) refers to having “a change of mind”⁶ the popular understanding of this term is ‘confess your sins’, the clear implication being that their being confessed can result in their going away or being left behind.⁷ As discussed in Section 5.3.1, confessed sins take on an animated character and become *jochiende*. Hence whereas in Acts 2:38 Peter says *lokuru chunyu* (turn your hearts around”⁸) and in *Kiswahili* we are told *tubuni*⁹ the latter part of the verse saying that this is done *mondo richou owenu*¹⁰ can easily be mistranslated as “so that your sins leave you” thus bringing the focus to the latter, particularly for people for whom cleansing from the influence of ghosts (*jochiende*) is already so important.¹¹ *Fulo richo*

⁴ “The same methods that were used for protection are also applied in order to be successful.” (ADAMO, 2001, *Reading and Interpreting the Bible in African Indigenous Churches*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, p86.) The same seems to apply to the distinction between prevention and treatment.

⁵ Weber considers Protestant religion unique in giving mundane activities religious significance. (SAYER, D., 1991, *Capitalism and Modernity: an excursus on Marx and Weber*. London: Routledge, p119.)

⁶ Young, *Young’s Analytical*. p808.

⁷ With reference to Roho Christians in neighbouring Luyia land Padwick tells us that: “acts of repentance and exorcism ... are almost indistinguishable.” (PADWICK, JOHN, 2003, ‘Spirit, Desire and the World: roho churches of Western Kenya in the era of globalisation.’ PhD thesis, 2003, University of Birmingham, p114.)

⁸ Bible, *Muma Maler*. 1968.

⁹ Bible, *Biblia*. (“Repent” (plural))

¹⁰ Bible, *Muma Maler*. 1968.

¹¹ This is different to English because the Luo language has no word for *forgiveness* as such. The two alternative terms are *weyo* (leaving off) or *ngwono* (showing of grace or mercy). The term used in Acts 2:38 being *weyo*, can more easily be translated into English as ‘your sins leave you’ than ‘you are forgiven’. Such a ‘metaphor’ supports the belief that sins are *jochiende* to be driven away. Both old and new *Dholuo* Bible

(confess your sins) is more widely recognised as a prerequisite for *warruok* (salvation) than *lok chunyi* (change your heart/mind around).¹²

6.3. Major Categories

While I am considering the information below under separate headings for the sake of clear explanation, I need to emphasise that these categories are not perceived of as being separate in practice. Rather, each are all and all are in each. So prayer, which happens at funerals, is to God, using words, with customary laws in mind, aimed at chasing away bad spirits etc.

6.3.1. *Luong Nying' Nyasaye* (Calling on God)

On some of the occasions during which 'bad' was being done away with, God was called upon directly. In these references to God I have included appeals to the Holy Spirit (*Roho Maler*, that can be translated as 'Spirit who is clean') and to Jesus. The identification of *Nyasaye* (God) with the God of the Bible is not universal here in

translations here have *weyo* to translate the Greek *aphesin*. The Greek New Testament term *aphiemi* (translated as 'forgive' in much of the New Testament) is "to send or let off or away", (YOUNG, ROBERT, 1982, *Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible*. London: Thomas Nelson Publishers, p367.) more similar to *Dholuo* than to English.

¹² A difficulty of *Dholuo* but not *Kiswahili* is that the term for repent, *lokruok*, is widely used for 'turn around' or 'change'. To have to say *lokori e chunyi* (turn around in your heart) is cumbersome, but just to say *lokori* (turn around) could just as well imply that someone should physically turn on the spot where they are standing.

Gem.¹³ Someone's referring to *Nyasaye*, even in this apparently very Christianised part of Africa, does not necessarily indicate a strong Christian faith. Mboya, in describing pre-colonial Luo tradition writes “*Ka ng’ato oyudo gimoro maber giwacho ni ‘Nyasache ber’*” (If someone receives anything good then they say ‘his God is good’).¹⁴ To support this view I was told by a Luo man in Gem¹⁵ that while many people in his village call upon God, very few call on the name of Jesus. The Luo people have known of God (god) for much longer than they have known of Jesus.

There are many indications that *Nyasaye* does not always refer to a high God,¹⁶ but rather to one of many gods (*nyiseche*) or even personal gods, rather like guardian spirits or to life-force.¹⁷ Some Luo *ngero* (‘proverbs’) suggest that the Luo consider themselves divine.¹⁸ The Luo can say *N(n)yasache ber* being translatable as ‘his G(g)od is good.’ “The personal god/luck¹⁹ and the Omnipresent, the Supreme Being, *Nyasaye* or *Nyakalaga* are interchangeable” according to Odaga.²⁰ Mboya²¹ tells us that “*Giluongo*

¹³ According to Ogot this is attributable to “the failure to reconcile the Old Testament in these societies with the new faith by either Christianising the old practices or by Africanising Christ, or both.” (OGOT, BETHWELL A., 1999, ‘On the making of a Sanctuary.’ 149-165 In: Ogot, Bethwell A., *Re-introducing Man into the African World: selected essays 1961 – 1980*. Kisumu: Anyange Press Ltd. p162.)

¹⁴ Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p25.

¹⁵ On 10th December 2003.

¹⁶ “The [wrong] assumption is that because the Zande invoke *Mbori* in a way that resembles our prayers to God he has a deistic doctrine similar to our own.” (EVANS-PRITCHARD, E.E., 1936, ‘Zande Theology.’ 5-46 In: *Sudan Notes and Records*. 19, p39.) “That [the Luo] use the word *chieng’* indifferently for sun and Deity.” (HOBLEY, C.W., 1903, ‘British East Africa: anthropological studies in Kavirondo and Nandi.’ 325-359 In: *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*. Vol. 33 (July to December 1903) (PDF) <http://www.jstor.org/view/09595295/dm995326/99p0489s/0?frame=noframe&userID=93bc8075@bham.ac.uk/01cc99339700504825&dpi=3&config=jstor> (accessed 26.02.03) p358.) Healey was told that the “Washubi [of Tanzania] use the word *miungu* (literally ‘gods’) for people who have died in a persons clan.” (Healey, *A Fifth Gospel*. p146.)

¹⁷ “*Nyasaye* was ... the creator and life force present in all things.” (Whisson, ‘The Will.’ p3.)

¹⁸ Amuka, ‘*Ngero* as a Social Object.’ p352.

¹⁹ For a discussion on ‘luck’ see Section 5.2.1.

²⁰ (Odaga, ‘Christianity and.’ p2.) Miruka explains: “In fact it is believed that God lives in a person’s bloodstream and is an alienable part of one’s being. That is why the Luo talk of *nyasach ng’ato* (one’s god) so that if good fortune comes your way, it is said that your god is good.” (Miruka, *Oral Literature*. p3.)

²¹ Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p191.

wendo juogi; ka wendo ok wendi ionge juogi maber. Juogi tiende Nyasaye; ok ng'ato nyalo riembo Nyasaye; tiende, wendo ng'at Nyasaye." This can be translated as "Visitors are called *juogi*; so that if you do not get visitors they say that you do not have good *juogi*. *Juogi*, that means God; someone cannot chase God away, meaning that a visitor is a person of God."²² *Juogi* are "domestic spirits" that live in wall geckos, according to Owuor.²³ "... the relationship between *Nyasaye* and *Juok* is difficult to explain, because both of them are supernatural beings and supreme spiritual powers" says Ocholla-Ayayo.²⁴ Hoehler-Fatton points out that for the Luo "Indigenous charismatic Christianity developed alongside and borrowed heavily from *juogi* spirit possession."²⁵ *Roho* is then to an extent a new translation for *juok* (plural *juogi*), which is also "an ancestral name for a kinship group."²⁶ *Roho* is also translated as 'Holy Spirit'. It is not always easy to identify one high God in Luo religion.²⁷

The word *Nyasaye* for God is shared by the Luo with neighbouring Bantu tribes the Kisii and Luyia. Its derivation when considered in *Dholuo* could be *nya-saye* where *nya*

²² Nyarwath concludes on reading Mboya (Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*) that "the term *Nyasaye* is used in a way that does not necessarily imply the supreme being or dominant deity." (NYARWATH, ORIARE, 1994, 'Philosophy and Rationality in Taboos with some reference to the Kenyan Luo Culture.' Mphil thesis, University of Nairobi, 1994. p141.)

²³ (OWUOR, HENRY A., nd, *Spirit Possession amongst the Luo of Central Nyanza, Kenya*. Unpublished, p2.) Mboya's (Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p88.) reference to *olele* (geckos) seems to support this.

²⁴ Ocholla-Ayayo, *Traditional*. p219.

²⁵ Hoehler-Fatton, *Women of Fire*. p206.

²⁶ Amuka, 'Ngero as a Social Object.' p133.

²⁷ This despite scholars, having argued profusely to "... conclude that the concept of God as the Supreme God is fundamental to African traditional religion." (UKA, E.M., 1991, 'The Concept of God in African Traditional Religion.' 39-52 In: Uka, E.M., (ed.) *Readings in African Traditional Religion: structure, meaning, relevance, future*. Bern, Berlin, Frankfurt a.M. New York, Paris, Wien: Peter Lang, p51.) Could a supreme God's name happen to be the same as that of 'gods' (rather as in English)? Some Luo Christians prefer to use *Nyasaye Nyakalaga* or Yehowah (or Jehovah) rather than only *Nyasaye* to avoid such difficulty. Mojola points out that using Western terminology 'Hellenises' African gods, so Mbiti's *Concepts of God in Africa*, "... reads like a Christian text of systematic theology." (Mojola, 'Translating.' p36.) Being forced to accept that *Nyasaye* is as much a force as a person takes us towards paganism which "makes no distinction between cosmic forces and God, between God and nature, between nature and humankind." (Spindler, 'Europe's Neo-Paganism.' (electronic version))

can indicate a diminutive, something young or small²⁸ but also “a strong sense of sacredness”²⁹ and *saye* is to ‘ask’, ‘plead to’ or ‘pray’. Thus diachronically *Nyasaye* seems to be the sacred one to be pleaded to (for help). An African author from Tanzania Kalugila makes this interesting statement in his study of the Old Testament: “*Ufahamike kuwa mababu walipomwona malaika waliamini kuwa wamemwona Mungu mwenyewe*” (Please understand that when the forefathers saw an angel, they believed themselves to have seen God himself.)³⁰ There is a logical problem with monotheism in Luoland that while related to the classic problem of theodicy, is also subtly different. If God is one, over America as well as Africa, then why do African people remain poor while Americans prosper? Different gods seem to be involved.

Taking a random selection of references to God from the research period, first we have the speaker at the funeral of a witchdoctor.³¹ He referred to fighting that often occurs between parents, but said that “*ka nyathi nitie e Yesu, kwe nitie*” implying that in a home in which children are brought up in Jesus, there will be peace. That is, adverse spirits will be held at bay.

A speaker at a youth service³² gave being filled with the *Roho Mtakatifu* (Holy Spirit, *Kiswahili*) as preferable to prayers from a book (*maombi ya kitabu – Kiswahili*). This is because prayers from a book may not cause us to repent of³³ a particular sin. The clearly

²⁸ STAFFORD, ROY 1967, *Elementary Luo Grammar: Dholuo spoken in Kenya*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p121.

²⁹ Ogutu, ‘An Historical.’ p68.

³⁰ KALUGILA, LEONIDAS, 1998, *Historia ya Israeli*. Dodoma: Central Tanganyika Press, p24.

³¹ Who spoke on 11th April 2003.

³² On 27th April 2003 at Ulumbi village.

³³ i.e. confess, see above.

implied role of the Holy Spirit is here to cleanse us of sins, through causing us to repent (confess) of them. A funeral speaker³⁴ referring to the events in 1 Samuel 30 said that David *jiwore kuom Nyasaye* (encouraged himself in God). The link with cleansing is given in the context, in which David and his men *ywak* (cried out, verse four) on seeing what had happened. *Ywak* is closely associated with confession so the fact that David's men were *ywak* suggests, to the Luo listener, that they were confessing their sins and that this was likely to have contributed to God's intervention on their behalf.

A preacher who had recently completed a Western-based theological course of study was preaching a sermon based on Warren: *The Purpose Driven Life*.³⁵ This book is deeply rooted in American culture. The preacher used predominantly *Kiswahili* and was translated into *Dholuo*. This process resulted in a loss of many of the specific contextual effects intended by Warren and considerable confusion about just what a 'purpose driven life' (translated into *Dholuo* as *ok en apoya nono* – not just appeared suddenly and without reason) was intended to bring. We were told that *kila mtu anaye Mungu wake* (everyone has his own God – *Kiswahili*).³⁶ Then in the battles that come, God will lift us up ("*tingonwa malo*"). This, especially given the fact that this man had just come from European-sponsored study, was interpreted in terms of prosperity. Here God (or god) was to lift us to a position of material prosperity, implying that he will totally defeat the source of all bad; the devil.

³⁴ On 3rd May 2003 at a funeral at Muhanda.

³⁵ Warren, *The Purpose*. 2003.

³⁶ The speaker was obviously not able to indicate whether *Mungu* / God should here be written with a capital or a small letter.

A preacher³⁷ encouraged us to *luw Yesu kawuono* (follow Jesus today) and then emphasised that thus we would *wuokuru e kuong' mar anyuola* (leave (pl.) the curse of our family).³⁸ Here instead of removing bad from us, God (Jesus) is removing us from the bad, represented by the family.³⁹ I was surprised⁴⁰ to find a preacher from a Nomiya Church (that does not on principle accept Jesus to be God)⁴¹ to have emphasised the vital importance of believing in Jesus, at the funeral of a well known *ajuoga* (diviner – healer) at Sagam in Gem. The Nomiya men, brightly dressed in robes and gowns of a variety of colours including many pinks and yellows, were gathered at the head while a mass of their women, all dressed in white, were parading and singing among the funeral throng. On completion of the burial itself, the Nomiya bishop emphasised that they would be returning to the same site some weeks later in order to carry out another ritual (*baro liel*) on behalf of the dead, for which a sheep would need to be slaughtered. Calling on the name of Jesus certainly does not do away with the need for sacrifice on behalf of the dead for the Nomiya church.⁴²

³⁷ This was Samuel Odhiambo Oloo on 18th May 2003.

³⁸ See Section 5.3.1.3. for discussion on the contextual effect of *anyuola*.

³⁹ Or lineage. Note the difficulty in translating *anyuola* which does not only refer to 'family' in the British nuclear family sense, but includes the extended family.

⁴⁰ On 20th July 2003.

⁴¹ MCVEIGH, MALCOLM, J., 1973, 'Theological Issues Related to Kenyan Religious Independency.' 135-143 In: BARRETT, DAVID B., MAMBO, GEORGE K., MCLAUGHLIN, JANICE, MCVEIGH, MALCOLM J., (eds.) *Kenya Churches Handbook: the development of Kenyan Christianity, 1498-1973*. Kisumu: Evangel Publishing House, p136.

⁴² While technically not acknowledging the divinity of Christ, it is my impression that Nomiya's theologians are increasingly challenged to take him seriously.

6.3.2. *Weche Mitiyogo* (Words Used)

“... words are power and can be used for good or for evil”.⁴³ Words are used to remove ‘bad’. On sixteen percent of occasions, particular words used in particular ways during the period of research were assumed to be responsible for removing bad.⁴⁴ This Section, as all others in this chapter, overlaps with others. How does one distinguish the power of a word itself in doing away with bad, as against that which a word performs? The words ‘please make me a cup of tea’ satisfy my thirst through what they prompt someone to do, and not in and of themselves. What could be an example of the latter?

A particular church that had all the usual desperate needs for money – hungry people, poor widows, building project, many church members without Bibles, etc., put first priority on use of funds to acquiring a PA system costing three times a local year’s salary (four years of weekly offerings), even though a sister church had the same that they could have borrowed.⁴⁵ As the printing press in literate Europe, so PA systems in oral Africa are considered as revolutionary, as God’s words broadcast loudly using a PA system can startle and remove *jochiende* from a wide region. Shouting (preaching / teaching with a raised voice) is considered critical to success in many Pentecostal churches for a similar reason. While sometimes explained as being to prevent people from falling asleep, using a raised voice even to a small group in a confined building, indicates the presence of the effective power of God in overcoming bad. Singing should

⁴³ Adamo, *Reading and Interpreting*. p70.

⁴⁴ We can see a clear parallel between this Luo respect for the word and that of Biblical times: “Among the [ancient] Semitic peoples there was no sharp distinction between the thing said and the thing accomplished.” (Livingston, *The Pentateuch*. p169.)

⁴⁵ I was told on 20th April 2003.

also be *moto moto* (“hot hot”, *Kiswahili*, for example at a Pentecostal church)⁴⁶ so as to be effective against bad powers.⁴⁷ Hot songs are those that are effective in countering witches, through a building up of spiritual power.

It is widely assumed that prayer needs to be loud in order to be effective. Hence on one occasion⁴⁸ praying for a sick child at a home in which YTC’s credibility was under question because of our failure to participate actively in the burial arrangements of a deceased student, those praying for the (remaining) sick child used particularly loud raised voices in the hope of redeeming our reputation. This could be because of the obviously larger effort needed with a loud as against a quiet prayer, or in the quick healing of the boy being prayed for.⁴⁹ An appropriate response to loud preaching can be noisy *ywak* (crying) and repentance on the part of the congregation, such as that which I witnessed.⁵⁰

The power of the word can make someone cautious before they speak out against bad. So following the closing of Kenyan universities, we were told⁵¹ that one of the students who left had his girlfriend on his lap on the bus and was fondling her. An old man who told him to desist was verbally abused for the rest of the journey. This incident of verbal abuse was described so as to indicate clearly the great offense that it will have caused.

⁴⁶ On 11th May 2003 at the Bible and Literacy League Pentecostal Church in Yala.

⁴⁷ Note that heat is also a euphemism for witchcraft. (TURNER, V.W., 1969, *The Ritual Process: structure and antistructure*. Middlesex: Penguin Books, p40.)

⁴⁸ On 3rd April 2003.

⁴⁹ A raised voice is considered authoritative in removing *jochiende* (ghosts), much as a loud command would evoke a surer response from a person who is being ordered to move away. Unfortunately ongoing difficult *siasa* constantly threatens to kill this class. The volume and power of the prayer did not compensate for our lack of attentiveness at the death, so suspicion of guilt in causing the death continued to hang over us.

⁵⁰ On 30th April 2003. (See also Section 3.4.3.)

⁵¹ On 27th April 2003. (As already referred to in Chapter 4.)

Such abuse could even have killed the old man. Serious offenders, such as witches and murderers⁵² are given the death sentence in much of Africa.⁵³ Leaving them alive would enable them to continue their verbal damage no matter how tightly confined they were.⁵⁴ Words are powerful in any society. That naming a problem can help to solve it is widely recognised. Encouragement is important in fulfilling a task anywhere in the world. So singing and laughter would be said to ‘lift one’s spirits’ in conventional English⁵⁵ and singing especially to chase away evil and invite the presence of God in Luo land.⁵⁶

Keeping a matter secret can help to prevent bad. For example, not revealing when one is carrying a lot of money avoids tempting robbers. There is much institutionalised secrecy among the Luo of Gem. Hence a pregnant woman will not announce her pregnancy. The fewer the people who know about it, the lower the chance that someone will attack (by witchcraft) her unborn child. A lady could hardly contain her joy and pride at the intelligence and success of her children and grandchildren.⁵⁷ But contain it she must, as two of her five sons have according to her own reckoning, already been killed by witchcraft by her jealous neighbours. Elopement is a very common form of marriage, as considerable spiritual fortitude is needed to face the barrage of negative comment that is likely to follow a prior public announcement.⁵⁸ (Secrecy can be used to deceive and thus prevent total domination by *jochiende*.)⁵⁹ That the ‘preached’ word has great power, is

⁵² Witchcraft is in the same category as ‘murder’ as it is often used to kill.

⁵³ Mbiti, *African Religions*. p211.

⁵⁴ i.e. in prison.

⁵⁵ See Harries. (HARRIES, JIM, 2000, ‘The Magical Worldview in the African Church: What Is Going On?’ 487-502 In: *Missiology: an international review*. Vol. XXIV, No. 4, October 2000, p488.)

⁵⁶ Livingstone believes that the way the power of a word is understood in the Old Testament is different from that by pagans: “... the pagan believed that the word and deed had power in themselves, whereas the Hebrew prophet held that power was within God who fulfilled his word.” (Livingstone, *The Pentateuch*. p170.) This may not extend to the Luo.

⁵⁷ On 25th April 2003.

⁵⁸ “Once engaged, the forces that work against her engagement are let loose.” (Ominde, *The Luo Girl*. p45.)

⁵⁹ See also Section 2.2.1.

illustrated by a popular *Dholuo* song that constantly repeats ‘*Injili nyaka yal*’ (the Gospel must be preached):

Chorus: <i>Injili nyaka yal</i> <i>Injili nyaka yal</i> <i>Injili nyaka yal</i> <i>Injili nyaka yal ayala</i>	Chorus: The Gospel must be preached The Gospel must be preached The Gospel must be preached The Gospel must just be preached
1. <i>Kata nyimine gipingo</i> <i>Kata owete gipingo</i> <i>Injili nyaka yal</i> <i>Injili nyaka yal ayala</i>	1. Even if sisters refuse it Even if brothers refuse it The Gospel must be preached The Gospel must just be preached
2. <i>Kata ajuoke gipingo</i> <i>Kata nyithiwa gipingo</i> <i>Injili nyaka yal</i> <i>Injili nyaka yal ayala</i>	2. Even if witchdoctors refuse it Even if our siblings refuse it The Gospel must be preached The Gospel must just be preached
3. <i>Kata jopinje gipingo</i> <i>Kata anyuola gipingo</i> <i>Injili nyaka yal</i> <i>Injili nyaka yal ayala</i>	3. Even if foreigners refuse it Even if our family refuse it The Gospel must be preached The Gospel must just be preached

Injili here comes to *Dholuo* from the Arabic via *Kiswahili*. *Yal* is what is commonly considered to be ‘preach’ in English, but is also what goes on in a court to decide a case. The preached word is considered to have power greatly exceeding that of its mere meaning. Testimonies, especially those of *honini* (amazing events) are greatly valued.⁶⁰ I only came across one case of the use of incantations as such in the 72 day research period; of Psalms being used in prayer for the sick.⁶¹ *Logos* (Greek) is translated into English as ‘word’ and into *Dholuo* as *wach* (plural *weche*). Yet the range of contextual effects of *wach* is very different from that of word. *Wach* is implicitly negative, so that if someone says ‘*nitie wach*’, i.e. “there is a word”, this is taken as a problem, and *oonge kod wach* (he doesn’t have a *wach*) as he is a peaceable person who does not bring

⁶⁰ A *hono* in Christian circles is something that demonstrates the power of God, or god, for example a healing.

⁶¹ On 23rd July 2003 in a special weekly meeting for prayer at the Kenya Assemblies of God church in Yala.

problems or difficulties. “*Wach en gi teko*” (a word has power) is therefore also generally taken in the negative sense, where words may be used to harm.

6.3.3. *Rito Chike* (Keeping Customary Laws)

It is not always easy to distinguish the extent to which a certain action that is considered to do away with bad is rooted in Luo custom, and / or the Bible and Christianity. In practice, those Luo traditions that are also found in the Bible are thereby supported, and Biblical teachings are especially valued in so far as they rhyme with the Luo way of life. While this ‘customary’ character is here examined as if it is a particular category in life, it is actually much more inclusive. All that people do today clearly arises from their existing knowledge and language, both of which are integrally linked to their customs.⁶² The sheer multitude of laws that exist⁶³ clearly indicates that they must be chosen selectively and with a reason. People seek to flout laws that others are subject to and to turn to their advantage laws that may otherwise not be applied. Being subject to laws, whether rational or not, gives a sense of meaning, belonging, unity and oneness with others under the same system.

The celebration for the receiving of cattle to mark the marriage of this girl⁶⁴ could not be at her mother’s home, as Luo customary law states that cattle cannot be received into a grandparent’s homestead, in which her mother’s house was still located. Customary law

⁶² Although this is often not appreciated. See Chapter 2.

⁶³ According to Odaga in a personal conversation in 2002, these are endless.

⁶⁴ Mentioned to me on 25th April 2003.

prevented the family from helping with the building of the girl's deceased father's home.⁶⁵ It was important for a clan member to know that 'their wife' on having been inherited by someone from another clan, now ceases to be their responsibility.⁶⁶ Thus any claim to the land that she might have had ceases. In the latter case the 'bad' avoided was a reduced acreage of land, whereas in the former it is revenge that would arise from *jochiende* should they have helped with the building.

The power of animal blood in cleansing was⁶⁷ described with reference to Exodus 12:21-24, the original Passover event.⁶⁸ An example of human sacrifice shared with me was of a factory owner in Nairobi who sent a worker to bring a picture of his younger brother.⁶⁹ The latter died (i.e. was killed by witchcraft) soon thereafter while using the toilet.⁷⁰ I was told⁷¹ that 'dirty diseases' (English was used) were treated by the killing of 'dirty animals'. A preacher stating⁷² that "*huwezi sogelea kwa Mungu pasipo damu kumwagikwa*" (*Kiswahili* – "you can't draw near to God without the shedding of blood") while said in the context of Hebrews 9, was clearly also rooted in Luo tradition.

⁶⁵ I was told on 27th May 2003. Whoever was to build this home for the widow, would be assumed to have inherited her.

⁶⁶ A wife in Luo custom, having been acquired in exchange for communal cattle, belongs to a clan and not an individual. Hence a woman is called 'our wife' and legally (according to custom) remains under her husband's family after his death.

⁶⁷ A point made by Paul Otieno Agoro in preaching at Ulumbi Zion Harvest church on 20th April 2003.

⁶⁸ The nature of the reference indicated that there was a link here with customary belief in the efficacy of blood.

⁶⁹ This was on 3rd June 2003. This was an example given in a YTC (Yala Theological Centre) class as to how the actions of wealthy people are 'crooked', a discussion prompted by a look at Proverbs 28:6.

⁷⁰ The factory owner had a problem to solve that needed human blood. *Juok* (witchcraft) was used in order to kill the younger brother as a blood sacrifice so as to solve the problem in Nairobi.

⁷¹ On 4th July 2003. A lady who was doing some social research told me that Luo people in Siaya had told her this.

⁷² On 13th July 2003.

In saying *manyasi Nyasaye odagi* (God does not want [Christians] to use *manyasi*) the preacher⁷³ was referring to a particular mixture of herbs, typically including blood or animal parts, that are used to cure or prevent *chira*. The coming of Christianity is said to be responsible for making the use of these means for deterring bad to be themselves bad, hence the saved lady⁷⁴ who I found plucking branches from a tree in a place where she did not expect to be seen said defensively “*Nyasaye oyie gi yien mar kienyeji*” (God accepts the use of indigenous medicines / trees).⁷⁵

There is considerable confusion as to why missionaries condemn people’s own medicine, while recommending theirs.⁷⁶ This must be understood in holistic⁷⁷ terms – in which an explanation such as that of ‘but it is scientific’ is no defense.⁷⁸ ‘Scientific’ medicines are invariably understood in indigenous terms – hence the love of

⁷³ Of 5th April 2003. This comment was made in the *Luong’ mogik* church in Ahono village when a woman preacher noticed a child that was apparently suffering from *Chira* (slow wasting disease resulting from breaking of taboo) so encouraging the mother to pray rather than use *manyasi*.

⁷⁴ Lady who habitually attends *lalruok* (fellowship) meetings in the Anglican church that were for *jomowar* – people who are saved.

⁷⁵ I startled this lady, who knows me as a fellow saved person, in following a path that had been closed. Her defensiveness demonstrates that her status in salvation meant what she was doing was wrong. Note that in *Dholuo* ‘tree’ and ‘medicine’ is the same word; *yath*. (Plural *yien*.)

⁷⁶ Hence efforts are made to incorporate African herbs into Western medical services, for example see Makokha (MAKOKHA, BYRUM AKHAHENDA, 1996, *A History of the Church of God in Kenya, East Africa: an indigenous perspective 1905-1992*. Maseno, Kenya: Church of God, p207.) and Onunwa (ONUNWA, UDOBATA, 1991, ‘Healing in African Traditional Society: an aspect of the religion.’ 269-283 In: Uka, E.M., (ed.) 1991, *Readings in African Traditional Religion: structure, meaning, relevance, future*. Bern, Berlin, Frankfurt a.M. New York, Paris, Wien: Peter Lang, p282.) quoting Lambo.

⁷⁷ The term, holistic is open to abuse. Saying “salvation in Christ is holistic” (Adeyemo, *Is Africa Cursed*. p88.) can mean everything being considered scientific, or everything being spiritual. Its use by African people frequently implies that their magic covers the whole of life, whereas its use by European peoples implies that science has a valid role to play within mission and church.

⁷⁸ “It is believed by most educationalists that ‘proper scientific education will help considerably in destroying the prevalence of magic and witchcraft among the [Tanzanian] natives’” says Raum rather skeptically. (RAUM, O.F., 1996, *Chaga Childhood: a description of indigenous education in an East African tribe*. (1939, reprinted 1952, 1961.) Hamburg: Lit Verlag, p399.) ‘Science’ being redefined in Africa, means that “Herbal medicine is scientific since it is based on observation and experimentation.” (African English) (LUKHOBBA, CATHERINE, 2001, ‘The role and future of tropical medicinal plants’ 129-134 In: Bahemuka, Judith Mbula and Brockington, Joseph L., (eds.) *East African in Transition: communities, cultures and change*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, p134.)

injections,⁷⁹ regardless of medical advice as to the means of administering a drug. I will not here go into what actually is the understanding of medicine, except to say that it is to do away with bad, and that I agree with Gelfand who makes an important point in saying that: “No witchdoctor has ever shown me that he has any idea of function.”⁸⁰

The *ajuoga* (specialist user of forces or witchdoctor) is somewhat of a straw-man in Christian circles. While in a sense the epitome of what the church is not, his power in healing and hence his positive contribution to society is also acknowledged. The behaviour of pastors and church leaders tends towards that of the *ajuoga*,⁸¹ as they are dealing with people who understand their problems and solutions to those problems in particular ways. An important part of spiritual or holistic healing is of course convincing the patient that their problems, as they understand them, have been resolved. That is, witchcraft problems require anti-witchcraft solutions, in which the witchdoctor specialises, even if you are a pastor!⁸²

Post-menopausal women, particularly widows, are traditionally (and today) used to perform ritually dangerous tasks. For example Paul Mboya tells us that *dhako moti* (an old woman) is given the responsibility of taking a man to have ritual sex with the corpse of a woman who had not been inherited following the death of her husband.⁸³ Many

⁷⁹ Which I find to be very common in Africa, such as that which I found on 8th July 2003.

⁸⁰ (GELFAND, M., 1964, *Medicine and Custom in Africa*. London: E. & S. Livingstone Ltd., p28.) ‘Function’ here referring to biological and not magical function.

⁸¹ Although such do not welcome this title. (Schoffeleers, ‘Christ in African.’ p81.)

⁸² “One frequently comes across implicit as well as explicit equations of the Christian minister with the *nganga* [witchdoctor].” (Schoffeleers, ‘Christ in African.’ p80.)

⁸³ (Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p125.) A woman must be cleansed through sexual intercourse after being widowed. Should she die before this has happened, then this intercourse will be performed either ritually or actually (my sources disagree on this) before she is buried. If the woman dies immediately after the death of her husband she need not be cleansed if she is buried first.

Roho churches call their post-menopausal women *laktache* and assign key responsibilities to them, such as looking after dead bodies, as these are ritually unsafe and could be harmful to someone who can still give birth.⁸⁴ Hence I was told⁸⁵ that it was an old woman who successfully removed the *murembe* bush that had killed a younger man.⁸⁶

Polygamy can be said to do away with bad because it satisfies the sexual desires of single women, that would otherwise tempt them into fornication or adultery. I suspect that the cleansing effect of processions is a demonstration of orderliness, that it is hoped will extend also into the spiritual world.⁸⁷ Physical cleanliness is considered to be next to holiness, perhaps in much the same way as this much-criticised English adage.

Welcoming of *welo* (visitors, guests, strangers) is strongly advocated to avoid calamity that might otherwise arise. Likely in the back of people's minds is the story of Simbi Nyaima.⁸⁸ There is also a positive side to this, as visitors are said to *kelo gueth* (bring blessing).⁸⁹

A preacher⁹⁰ who took a long time praying for people did not want the power inherent in the gathered assembly to be reduced by having people leave before he had finished, so

⁸⁴ Old men cannot of course be given such responsibilities because they can still reproduce up to old age.

⁸⁵ On 2nd June 2003. See Section 3.4.1.

⁸⁶ See Section 4.3.1.

⁸⁷ Processions, such as that held on 20th July 2003, often carrying flags and / or the coffin are common at funerals.

⁸⁸ (Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p202-204.) Villagers' refusal to welcome an old woman results in them being drowned and their whole village submerged. "This old woman allowed the water to finish the people because they refused to welcome her and laughed at her state of old age." (My translation.)

⁸⁹ This blessing may be a translation of what Tempels refers to as 'vital force'. (Tempels, *Bantu*.)

⁹⁰ On 13th July 2003 at a church in Yala. This preacher was taking a lot of time after having finished his message calling people to the front with various ailments, then praying for them, as a result of which a lot of them would fall down on their backs.

warned them that should they leave early they would not reach their homes alive. Here a threat of witchcraft revenge was used to support the extended church service. Articles worn on the body are considered powerful in chasing away bad. Hence the Bishops (of the Nomiya church) at the funeral⁹¹ were brightly adorned in pinks, yellows and whites. A YTC (Yala Theological Centre) discussion⁹² acknowledged that the kind of respect given to priestly garb in Ezekiel 44 is also still very common in Gem.⁹³ Hence the great importance of *kanzu* (gowns in *Kiswahili*) and how, where and when they are worn in many indigenous churches.⁹⁴

6.3.4. *Liete kod rapache* (Funerals and Memorial services)

Jochiende (ghosts) being responsible for all bad⁹⁵ the pre-occupation with pleasing the dead to ensure that they do not become troublesome ghosts, is constant.⁹⁶ Family pressure ensures that all funeral rites are performed.⁹⁷

⁹¹ On 27th July 2003. This was at the funeral of the witchdoctor.

⁹² On 6th October 2003.

⁹³ Ezekiel 44:19 points out the importance for Priests of removing their priestly clothing before mixing with people so as not to 'hurt' (*hinyo*) anyone. The same applies to the *kanzu* (*Kiswahili* – gowns) of Roho believers today. They consider their priestly garb to have inherent powers to harm should they be touched or used in the wrong context.

⁹⁴ That this extends far beyond Luoland was illustrated to me when the leader of an indigenous church among the Pokot referred to their wearing of their religious gowns as their 'being armed' on 3rd December 2003. The same importance in Bunyore (a Bantu area neighbouring on Gem.) was shown by our being told that church pastors refused to wear their ministerial colours in burying someone who was out of favour with the church. (AKHAMETE, CLYDE, 2001, 'Customary Law and the Church.' Interview with local church leaders as part of *Elders' Counsel* course at Kima International School of Theology on 29th June 2001. Clyde Akhemete was the overseer of Bunyore West to the Church of God East Africa (Kenya).)

⁹⁵ See Section 5.2.1.

⁹⁶ Padwick refers to the memorial service that occurs 40 days after a burial as "the *Roho* (i.e. spiritual churches) service *par excellence*" (emphasis in original). (Padwick, 'Spirit, Desire.' p162.)

⁹⁷ Owuor, 'The Impact.' p3.

Dongruok could be translated as ‘bigness’ and is often understood as referring to ‘development’. Much of *dongruok* in Luoland is of foreign / Western origin. *Dongruok* can also refer to the progress that is achieved by pleasing the dead. Hence a student committee for Yala Theological Centre met and out of concern for *dongruok mar* (development of) YTC considered it vital that YTC adopt the structure and procedures to ensure attendance at all funerals of students and family members of students of YTC. In the back of their minds were perhaps the events which occurred at one of our centres when failure to attend sufficiently to the death of a student has left us with ongoing difficulties. Hence *dongruok* (development) of YTC is dependent on the pleasing of the dead.⁹⁸ The degree of communion and interaction with the dead here in Luoland is vast and according to Ogot its significance cannot be over-emphasised.⁹⁹ That the dead have an ongoing vital role among the living is “preserving the right relationship between the forces.”¹⁰⁰

‘Development’ is one example of a term whose appropriated contextual effect in *Dholuo* is very different from the English one.¹⁰¹ ‘Welfare societies’ is another. Such are extremely widespread among Luo people living in urban areas. In British English one would presume that they are concerned with the welfare of the living. In fact their concern is with the dead and the primary role of these societies is to transport bodies to

⁹⁸ KIST students visiting a Roho church in Gem on 29th May 2004 asked the assistant Bishop what his church did for *maendeleo* (*Kiswahili* for development / *dongruok*.) He told us that they pay for coffins, and announce deaths to ensure that the whole family can attend burials.

⁹⁹ Ogot, ‘The Concept of Jok.’ p7.

¹⁰⁰ (Ogot, ‘The Concept of Jok.’ p10.) As well as being necessary, a knowledge of the spiritual world is desirable to satisfy inquisitiveness and interest. Onyinah writing on *abisa* of the Akan of West Africa says that “All of religion and life revolve around the indissoluble link between the living family and the ancestors.” (Onyinah, ‘Akan Witchcraft.’ p2.)

¹⁰¹ Regarding development projects; “This desire for direct financial support rather than assistance in developing their own resources and institutions is characteristic of many Africans.” (Maranz, *African Friends*. p114.) But Westerners, from their understanding of ‘project success’ and ‘development’ will hold

(often distant) homelands, and contribute as far as possible to funeral costs such as coffins, cattle to slaughter, transport etc.¹⁰²

On hearing of a death in our landlady's neighbouring home my children¹⁰³ rushed to visit her. I was told later that they rushed over so quickly because they thought that there was a corpse in the house itself. I often find myself under pressure to attend funerals – such as in Ulumbi village after already having attended two funerals in one day I was also strongly encouraged to attend a third.¹⁰⁴ Then a few weeks later¹⁰⁵ all Israel Nineveh churches around Yala cancelled their worship because of a funeral. The next day a Roho church did the same.¹⁰⁶ Then people failed to visit students of YTC because of a funeral a few days later.¹⁰⁷ On the same day a student said he had failed to attend classes because of funerals. The next month¹⁰⁸ a Roho church cancelled their regular meeting due to a memorial service, and so it goes on. The above is just a brief illustration of the dominance of funeral activities over life in general.

that "... if people do not learn to help themselves with things they can do themselves, their development will be limited in the long term." (Maranz, *African Friends*. p104.)

¹⁰² LUMUMBA, P.L.O., 2003, *Watim Ang'o?* Nairobi: P.L.O. Lumumba Foundation, p4. "The monies for these special events are hidden somewhere and are kept secret from family (including a spouse) and friends." (Maranz, *African Friends*. p50.)

¹⁰³ I stay with up to 14 Luo children, most of them orphans, in my home in Gem.

¹⁰⁴ On 10th April 2003.

¹⁰⁵ On 25th April 2003.

¹⁰⁶ I had been planning to visit a Roho church at Migosi in Gem on the 26th April, but met one of the members and was told that there was not going to be a gathering in the church as all the members would be at a memorial service at a nearby homestead.

¹⁰⁷ This was on 28th April 2003. Some members of the Singruok Roho church had told us that they would accompany us, but none of them turned up as they had a funeral on the same day.

¹⁰⁸ This is the Luong' Mogik church of Ahono who had cancelled their midweek (Wednesday morning) meeting due to a funeral on 7th May 2003.

In discussions people are often very interested in knowing how the dead are handled in other parts of the world¹⁰⁹ and a frequently used icebreaker cum conversation opener is to comment as to how many funerals there are these days, then to recall some of the details. Many church leaders are almost constantly pre-occupied with the care of the dead, alternative programmes being forced to fall by the wayside. Vast amounts of money go into funerals – transporting and feeding typically hundreds (sometimes thousands) of people. Not only are these people incurring costs associated with the funerals and risking their health in staying for days and nights in rural areas with minimal facilities, but they have in the meantime, of course, also neglected their gardens and places of work.

All this activity and expense is rooted in the fear that the spirit of the dead who is around, observing people, until the body is buried, will be made unhappy by people's failure to attend his funeral, and will then *chieno* (haunt) them.¹¹⁰ Enormous problems can arise if all is not done correctly for him or her. In other words, all this activity is oriented to deterring 'bad'.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ For example, such questions were asked on 20th July 2003 in informal discussion following a service with a church which had broken away from CCA (Church of Christ in Africa). There were only five members plus the pastor in this church, but the discussion after the service was lively.

¹¹⁰ This belief was found to be strong among the Luo by Evans-Pritchard as early as the 1940s. (EVANS-PRITCHARD, E. E., 1950, 'Ghostly Vengeance among the Luo of Kenya.' 86-87 In: *Man*, July 1950, numbers 132, 133 (PDF) <http://www.jstor.org/view/00251496/dm993690/99p38154/0?frame=noframe&userID=93bc8075@bham.ac.uk/01cc99339700504825&dpi=3&config=jstor> (accessed 10.03.02) p86.) Neighbouring tribes consider Luoland to have exceptionally large numbers of unclean spirits: "*Hii maroho machafu imekuwa sana sana nyingi upande wa Ujaluoni*" (*Kiswahili*. This can be translated as: "these unclean spirits are found a lot a lot many on the side of the Luo people." The original is very poor *Kiswahili*.) (Padwick, 'Spirit, Desire.' p390.)

¹¹¹ During the night at funerals "is when the struggle between good and evil on the border with death is most intense." (PRESLER, TITUS, 1999, *Transfigured Night: mission and culture in Zimbabwe's vigil movement*. Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, p258.)

6.3.5. *Lamo* (Prayer)

The term ‘prayer’, in its various East African translations, is used for many things and in many contexts. The *Kiswahili* root frequently used is ‘-omba’ which is to “beg, ask for, request.”¹¹² The Luo do have a word whose contextual effect seems to be much closer to -omba of *Kiswahili*. This is *sayo*. While this word is very rarely used, the dominance of *Kiswahili* (and other Bantu languages that use the same root term) in East Africa is sufficient to affect the use of the ‘equivalent’ Luo term *lamo*. Capen gives *lamo* as “worship, pray.”¹¹³ Evans Pritchard, looking at the same term among the Nuer of Sudan (a Nilotic people as are the Kenya Luo), considers *lam* as the invocation made at an animal sacrifice.¹¹⁴ What should be clear, is that we should be careful in simply translating *lamo* as ‘prayer’.¹¹⁵

Lamo can be a means of chasing away *jochiende*. It is also the means of self-empowering in preparation for an encounter with evil forces. It is a means of honing the forces found inside a person, (especially the Holy Spirit) to ensure their maximal effectiveness in the anticipated confrontation with bad. Prayer needs to precede a visit at which an exorcism is to be carried out. Sometimes greeting, especially by body contact with anyone, is strongly discouraged before the actual confrontation in case such should result in a leakage of power. Some examples of traditional Luo prayers are given to us

¹¹² TUKI (Taasisi ya Uchunguzi wa Kiswahili) 2001, *Kamusi ya Kiswahili-Kiingereza: Swahili-English Dictionary Chuo*. Kikuu cha Dar es Salaam: Taasisi ya Uchunguzi wa Kiswahili, p252.

¹¹³ Capen, *Bilingual Dholuo-English Dictionary*. p74.

¹¹⁴ EVANS-PRITCHARD, E.E., 1956, *Nuer Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p208.

¹¹⁵ Our African teaching faculty at KIST agreed that we should pray more, but when given opportunity to lead in a time of prayer consistently led us into a message, singing and sharing – the time of actual ‘prayer’

by Mboya. I have translated one below, said at the time of the erection of a gate into a new homestead:

Our fathers call your fathers to hear us. We are gathered for the building of the gate. Protect this homestead, so that people who pass through this gate will have peace. If you allow a person to pass into this homestead and to spoil it then the head of this community will blame you. Let the sheep, goats, and cattle that pass through this gate increase. May the children born here be many. Things from outside should enter this gate. God bring us a good wind (*okudhnwa koyo*) so that we may have peace in this homestead.¹¹⁶

Lamo (prayer) is vitally important in cleansing the one who prays, and thus chasing away that which is bad.¹¹⁷ So we were told in a Roho church¹¹⁸ that we should stand and stamp on a bad dream while saying ‘go, go, go’, gesticulating and clapping. *Lamo* is also used for someone to acquire what they want, according to a preacher¹¹⁹ and will bring healing¹²⁰ and assistance or *kony* (help) in general. Emphasis on fasting (*riyo kech* – going with hunger or *tweyo* – tying) vary from church to church. It raises levels of spiritual sensitivity, so enabling someone to discern problems or pray particularly powerfully.

remaining unchanged. The ‘term’ prayer in East Africa English is often taken as incorporating all the elements of worship services.

¹¹⁶ Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p59. This prayer being addressed to forefathers, can be considered a prayer to ‘spirits’, being sought as the means for help and guidance. (GOODING, DAVID, 1990, *True to the Faith: a fresh approach to the Acts of the Apostles*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, p276.)

¹¹⁷ Odaga gives an example of a more recent prayer to ancestors: “My parents who I do not see, I ask you, give me courage. I am in a difficult situation, but I am hoping for victory in this battle.” (My translation.) (Odaga, *Kisera*. p106.)

¹¹⁸ On 8th June 2003. This newly founded Roho church was meeting in Kisa, about 1 mile from the boundary with Gem, but the pastor is a Luo from Gem.

¹¹⁹ In preaching to the youth of Ulumbi Zion Harvest Mission church on 27th April 2003.

¹²⁰ We were told on 30th April 2003 – see Section 3.4.3.

All night prayers are valued, particularly at a funeral on the night before the burial, but also whenever power is especially desired. Night time gives an opportunity for an extended period of prayer without interruption, and the time of day (i.e. in the dark) enables one to tackle the powers of darkness.¹²¹ Other things can add power to prayer, such as the Roman Catholic (and Legio Maria) practice of having mass in their services. On visiting people one finds that many have put aside a place in a room especially for prayer with or without artifacts such as crosses, pictures of Jesus and very often in *Roho* (spiritual or heart oriented as well as Legio Maria) churches pictures of Ondeto and Maria – the founders of the Legio Maria church. A Bishop said¹²² that a *mkeka* (grass mat – *Kiswahili*) should be acquired to be laid on the floor at the place in the church where people are generally prayed for. The presence of this mat, once blessed, will ensure that people who kneel on it will begin to be healed even before they start praying, he assured us.

Corporate prayer in which all contribute simultaneously and often noisily is frequently preferred to having an individual leading others in a prayer to which they only contribute an ‘Amen’. While sometimes appearing unruly to those not used to it, this kind of prayer is seen as much more effective in engaging the hearts of its participants in their struggle against *Shaitani*.

¹²¹ “Big fish are caught in the dark” said a Roman Catholic to sum up one of the values of all night vigils. (Presler, *Transfigured*. p99.) Big men who would not normally and publicly like to be identified with spiritual churches, will come at night. Powerful devils also become liable to capture, defeat or removal at night. In a way that seems very similar to that of the Luo: “The spiritual sensitivity of the time after a person dies makes all night vigils imperative for followers of SSR [Shona Spirit Religion] as they sit beside the body and spend the time in song and discourse.” (Presler, *Transfigured*. pp46/7.)

¹²² On 12th May 2003. The Bishop of this church mentioned this as the service was progressing, apparently as a way of encouraging people to take prayer even more seriously.

6.4. Other Categories

Means used to remove ‘bad’ that do not fit into the above categories include:

6.4.1. *Warruok* (Salvation)

“*Ka ok dobedo warruok, weche dowuok mopogore*” (if it wasn’t for salvation, things wouldn’t have gone so smoothly) said the father of the deceased to the Bishop, according to a report given to me of a funeral.¹²³ It was *warruok* of the people that allowed the funeral to run smoothly despite numerous accusations that the deceased had been killed intentionally through *juok* (witchcraft).¹²⁴ *Warruok* is like a new dispensation in which a victory over the bad is expected. It is clearly associated with modern life¹²⁵ with England and with white people and it frees people (at least in theory) from oppressive ancient laws. It is often portrayed as a continuous process of self-empowerment, through Christ Jesus, although the degree of focus on it varies from one denomination to another.

¹²³ On 7th June 2003. See also Section 3.4.1.

¹²⁴ See also Section 3.4.1.

¹²⁵ According to the funeral speaker of 26th July 2003. The young lady being buried on this occasion had close links with an orphan project that was heavily subsidised from the UK.

The saved person walks with Jesus. As in the case of the lady who decided not to take action against the man who broke into her house at night,¹²⁶ the saved prefer allowing God to take revenge over legal action.¹²⁷ *Warruok* enables people to escape from difficulties through faith.¹²⁸ It requires us to carry the cross of Jesus¹²⁹ and takes us into the dispensation of *hera* (love). While *hera* is a Christian alternative to the traditional *luoro* (respect) in guiding relationships under *warruok* (salvation), its takeover is far from complete. The term *hera* is so complex that its use by the Kenya Luo is worthy of a study of its own.

6.4.2. Riembo Jochiende (Chasing away Bad Spirits)

It should be clear that the overt and physically visible chasing away of ghosts forms only a small, but particularly visible and important, fraction of the total activity considered to be against them. It is frequently a key part of the conversion experience.¹³⁰ Overtly chasing away *jochiende* is usually from a person, but can also be from churches and

¹²⁶ On 7th April 2003. The watchman had wrestled with one of the thieves who entered through a window, and managed to remove him before he opened the door to his colleagues. The owner of the home explained how in a public meeting nearby no-one had admitted recognising the hat left by the thief. In her view, people must have recognised the hat, and so had a reason for not revealing the identity of the thief. If no one else in the community was ready to try to ensure that the thieves were captured, neither was she.

¹²⁷ The traditional means of ‘taking action’ was of course frequently the use of cursing, which is closer in nature to allowing God to take revenge.

¹²⁸ As explained on 29th April 2003. This close and implicit comprehension of the Luo that *warruok* is spiritual seems to run contrary to Hamon’s understanding that Christianity was required for the “transmutation of *soteria* (from the political to the spiritual)” by Luke. (HAMON, MICHAEL DENNIS 1975, ‘This Sign of Healing, Acts 3:1-10: a study in Lucan theology.’ PhD thesis, St. Louise University 1975, p270.) Perhaps the Greek *soteria* has a more spiritual root than we may have imagined.

¹²⁹ It was explained on 17th May 2003 by the preacher of Ruwe Holy Ghost church in Sinaga.

¹³⁰ This is also more widely the case in Africa, hence Cross reports of the Watchtower sect in Zambia from 1908-1945: “the desire to be publicly exorcised was the compelling initial attraction of the Watch Tower.” (CROSS, S., 1973, ‘The Watchtower Movement in South Central Africa, 1908-1945.’ DPhil thesis, Oxford University, 1973, p322.) “Deliverance has become one of the principal modes through which Kenyans hope to restore tangible truth to the world, to construct a morally viable modernity.” (Blunt, ‘Satan is an imitator.’ p325.)

other things / places. It is associated with shouting words like *toka* (leave – *Kiswahili*) *riswa* (powers of darkness to leave – *Kiluyia*),¹³¹ stamping feet and clapping hands.¹³²

Individuals will chase away their sins at the flagpole of *Roho* churches before entering the church building.¹³³

This overt sending-away of spiritual adversaries reduces people's inclination to assist the poor, such as widows, in material ways. The latter is treating the symptoms, whereas chasing away demons is preferred as it is bringing a deeper solution to the problem.

Hence the reluctance to 'get involved' that I heard about.¹³⁴ It was explained to me¹³⁵ that the *Roho* church practice of removing harmful medicine from walls of people's houses, was objected to by non-*Roho* churches. Drum beating is another practice, especially by *Roho* churches,¹³⁶ designed to deter or remove evil spirits.

6.4.3. *Chokruok* (Meeting Together)

“The idea of society is the soul of religion.”¹³⁷ The Luo, as many other people, love to attend gatherings. Something done in the presence of a crowd, such as the crowning of a

¹³¹ I have heard many different derivations of the widely used term *riswa*, and cannot be sure which is the correct one.

¹³² This is often justified with reference to Ezekiel 6:11: “The Lord God says that ‘clap your hands and stamp your feet down as you cry out painfully because of the taboo acts and all the other things that the Israelites have already done.’” (My translation.) (Bible, *Muma Maler*.)

¹³³ They can be asked to return to the flag to expel other sins / *jochiende* that come to be identified in the course of the service.

¹³⁴ On 25th May 2003.

¹³⁵ On 5th June 2003. This practice has often been given to me as the thing that is wrong with *Roho* believers.

¹³⁶ Others are more inclined to use PA systems with or without cassette tapes, presumably because of the historical dislike of missionaries for drums that caused them to be banned in many mission churches.

new archbishop, is the more effective the more people there are in attendance.¹³⁸

Collective-presence is a key part of a successful funeral service, and memorial services.

As I was told,¹³⁹ troublesome *jochiende* are pacified by large groups of people who gather to eat on their behalf. Eating together, being together and agreeing together are all things that curtail the activities of bad spirits – although of course when the gathering is in the name of the Holy God then this may arouse their anger.

6.5. Recent Innovations

The following appear to be the means of removing bad that have arisen during the Colonial era and beyond.

6.5.1. *Gik ma Ndaloni* (Modern things)

The Luo people have appropriated many aspects of what may be termed ‘modern life’ to assist them in their battle against ‘bad’.¹⁴⁰ A headmaster of a secondary school explained clearly¹⁴¹ that having young people occupied in secondary school was a way of preventing them from falling into sinful ways like smoking cannabis, drunkenness,

¹³⁷ DURKHEIM, EMILE, 1976, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (second edition). London: George Allen & Unwin, p419.

¹³⁸ As I was told on 19th July 2003. The number of people who attended at the crowning of a new Archbishop of the Ruwe Holy Ghost church was said to be many, to emphasise the success of the ceremony. This needed to be emphasised as two competing factions were recognising competing Archbishops.

¹³⁹ On 19th July 2003. (See Section 3.4.2.)

¹⁴⁰ “... African occult beliefs have kept pace with Africa’s particular forms of modernity.” (Blunt, ‘Satan is an imitator.’ p304.)

etc. Apart from this time-consuming aspect, and its potentially giving access into the wealthy formal sector of the economy, formal education holds out little promise for countering the bad.¹⁴²

As for the education that he has brought, the helpful role of a white person is seen as being that of forming links with the wealthy world of *Ulaya* (Europe / America) and not in solving people's ancient problems or otherwise being of great relevance. This was explained clearly to me a few times.¹⁴³ The account of the orphan programme¹⁴⁴ seemed to measure its success by the degree of its contact with England. It is of little value against the traditional ills of the Luo. The constant but often not very effective efforts at keeping time represent another way of aligning with modern ways as are the use of English, gaining of contacts abroad, and even *yudo tich* (getting a job).

6.5.2. Chanruok Maber (Good Planning)

Many aspects of 'planning', as it is known in British English, seem to be new and rare in Luo society. There is a preference for *hononi* (amazing occurrences, sometimes translated into English as miracles) to carefully planned results. Planning and thought are seen as contrary to *Roho* (the Spirit) and are often resisted. Church buildings tend to

¹⁴¹ On 4th April 2003.

¹⁴² The main reason for the low standard of the Kenyan government schools is "*uzembe wa walimu*" (*Kiswahili*) (the lack of diligence of teachers), many of whom do not value 'education' apart from the salary that it gives them. (SAMUEL, KAZUNGU, 2004, 'Badhi ya Sababu Zinazochangia Elimu Kuzorota.' 8 In: *Taifa Leo*. February 20th 2004, p8.)

¹⁴³ On 25th April 2003, 20th May 2003, and 28th May 2003. "This white person will help us to develop relationships with people in his homeland." (My translation.) my fellow bystanders were told in my hearing.

¹⁴⁴ Described at a funeral on 29th July 2003.

be erected as far as the money reaches, and then they remain in that particular state of construction until more money is found, rather than being built from scratch to completion once sufficient funds are known to be in hand. Teaching based on *The Purpose Driven Life*¹⁴⁵ tends to confuse, because of people's innate love of spontaneity as a means to surprising success in defeating the bad. Translation of 'purposeful terms' of definite intention into *Dholuo* (or Kenyan English) is difficult, if not impossible.

Yet, planning has made inroads. Many church buildings have a calendar hung in a prominent place to help members arrange the planning of days of future gatherings. A church stamp was put into a 'patient's' book at a healing meeting I attended¹⁴⁶ in imitation of Western medical practice. Sometimes things apparently not working through lack of planning prompts an emphasis on its importance, such as happened on another occasion.¹⁴⁷ On just one occasion,¹⁴⁸ was 'hard work' advocated as a means to overcome bad. Such instances of 'Western rational' means of overcoming bad must be interpreted very carefully. They are often a borrowing of language from English usage (whether in English or through translation), which may seem to imply one thing to people from places where English is the mother tongue, but can easily have a very different contextual impact in Luoland.

¹⁴⁵ Warren, *The Purpose*. 2003.

¹⁴⁶ On 9th July 2003 at a Kenya Assemblies of God church in Yala.

¹⁴⁷ On 19th April 2003 young men were encouraged to plan very carefully for an event to be held shortly in a Kisumu church, because in the past relying on others instead of planning to make provision oneself had proved that people were inclined not to keep their promises if they were not going to be personally embarrassed as a result.

6.5.3. *Pesa* (Money)

Money needs to be understood here as being:

1. Foreign. It comes from abroad.
2. An alternative to cattle, as a means of keeping and displaying wealth.
3. An equivalent to *juok* or vital force, as a means to power and blessing.¹⁴⁹

Because it comes from abroad, it has links from abroad, via foreigners or through the formal sector of the economy, that are seen as its major sources. The differences between money and cattle are not always fully appreciated.¹⁵⁰ Blessings of wealth are shown as indicating the blessing of God; as was the case in the past with *juok* force. Many people's interest in me as a foreigner is in order to get money, for example the man who stopped me on the road¹⁵¹ in order to ask me to provide money to feed his children. The great interest in me on the part of churches in Yala in 1994 was in hindsight clearly because they hoped to get money from me.

¹⁴⁸ 20th April 2003. Paul Otieno Agoro taught on this occasion in Ulumbi that we don't get something for nothing, but that we should work hard

¹⁴⁹ For Africans, says Haynes, "power, whether spiritual, political or economic, brings profit." (HAYNES, JEFF, 1995, 'Popular Religion and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa' *Third World Quarterly*. Volume 16, no. 1, 1995, p27.)

¹⁵⁰ For example, a person can spend vast amounts of money just on himself, whereas a slaughtered cow (in the absence of refrigeration technology) must be shared with many others. Also, cattle are visible but money easily hidden.

¹⁵¹ On 14th July 2003. I did not know this man, though he may have known me. He simply waved me down on my bicycle as I was riding up the hill in Yala, and asked me for money to feed his children. Being asked forthrightly like this for money, even from strangers, is a frequent occurrence.

Hence money is seen as a means to overcome bad. That this is a problematic relationship is realised, although it is hard to know what to do about it. 'Dependence' on foreign funding is not here perceived as a problem, as this is little different from dependence on *juok* that also comes from ancestors who are as unpredictable as 'foreigners'. It is however recognised that because of people's innate orientation to bad (see Chapter 5) and the destructive effects of *nyiego* (jealousy) giving church leaders¹⁵² as also fishermen¹⁵³ a lot of money, has deleterious consequences. Money is a very complex and often suspect but widely used way of doing away with bad.¹⁵⁴

Fund raising events organised for people to gather together so as to donate money are called *harambee* – (*Kiswahili*). Money is contributed such that all can see it, in much the same way as would have to happen if livestock were being given. Taking time to elicit funds from people, is thought to increase the total amount that would be obtained, rather as might be the case with *juok* power.¹⁵⁵ People employed in the formal sector are the preferred guests – as they are known to have access to the largest amounts of money,

¹⁵² As I was told on 14th May 2003 by an old lady.

¹⁵³ Related to me on 22nd July 2003 by Eric Ouma from Bar Kalali, whose two brothers are fishermen.

¹⁵⁴ (Shipton, *Bitter Money*.) This orientation to money is linked to the notion of 'limited good,' in which "... any apparent relative improvement in someone's position with respect to any good in life is viewed as a threat to the entire community." (Malina, *The New*. pp75-76.) In 'traditional societies' "one person's gain with respect to any gain must be another's loss." (FOSTER, G.M., 1973, *Traditional Societies and Technological Change* (second edition). London: Harper and Row, p35.) When living in Zambia I was told that any African who owned a car clearly acquired it by immoral means. "Theft and robbery are the foundations of wealth" and "learn from the Europeans and you will never be short" wrote Thiong'o showing a low valuation of the morality of European people (THIONG'O, NGÚGÍ WA, 1982, *Shetani Msalabani*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, p105.) who Phalana considers guilty for causing moral breakdown in Africa. (PHALANA, VICTOR, 1999, 'An African Philosopher Today: a custodian of African culture or catalyst of African reconstruction?' 5-11 In: *African cultures and religion: field research papers of the Maryknoll Institute of African Studies*. Nairobi, Kenya August 1999, Volume 1, Number 3, p5.) Western moral philosophers such as Poole could agree with Phalana: "... the modern world calls into existence certain conceptions of morality, but also destroys the grounds for taking them seriously. Modernity both needs morality, and makes it impossible." (POOLE, R., 1991, *Morality and Modernity*. London: Routledge p ix.)

even if by corrupt means.¹⁵⁶ Pentecostal churches specialise in the generation of money. *Harambee* is only one of the means used. Money can also be made to seem more by passing it from person to person. The Congregation at an open air crusade were encouraged to put their hands in their pockets, as the preacher prayed for those pockets to be filled with silver and gold.¹⁵⁷ People are told repeatedly, that they will receive multiple blessings for whatever moneys they contribute to the church, in this life and the next. The poorest congregation may be encouraged to buy their pastor a new Mercedes. Such is the power of the word, as applied to money.

6.6. Conclusion

It should not be difficult for the British reader of this chapter to perceive that problem-solving or the removal of bad in Gem occurs primarily in the spiritual realm. Herein lies the basic difference from the West, and herein lies the source of many difficulties in communication with and receiving aid from the West. It is here also that great attention is needed for an indigenous Christianity and an indigenous theology to develop.¹⁵⁸ That, in detail, will be the issue of the following chapters. The five main means identified as used by the Luo of Gem to defeat 'bad' include calling on God, using words in

¹⁵⁵ Someone can be asked for money repeatedly, even ten or twenty plus times at exactly the same event, which therefore takes a long time to complete.

¹⁵⁶ President Kibaki of Kenya is quoted in the *Taifa Leo* newspaper on November 4th 2003 as saying: "We want to finish the rule of those swindlers who are invited as special guests [to fundraising events] so as to use the money that they have swindled from government to pay for the building of churches and hospitals." (My translation from *Kiswahili*.) (MUGONYI, DAVID, 2003, 'Ufisadi, mambo bado: Kibaki aonya kampeini itaangazia wengine pia.' 3 In: *Taifa Leo*. Tuesday, November 4th, 2003.)

¹⁵⁷ On 3rd May 2003 at a crusade in the grounds of Sagam secondary school in Gem.

¹⁵⁸ McGrath, *Evangelicalism*. p58.

particular ways, maintaining or keeping customary laws, funerals / memorial services and prayer.

What might be termed ‘modern’ means of defeating bad are best understood as falling within the above categories. Instead of calling upon God, people may call upon the white person, who comes to have an identity akin to that of a god.¹⁵⁹ Words are used, especially in Pentecostal churches, to attract those ‘modern’ things that are good and possess signs of having overcome evil, for example PA systems, vehicles, language knowledge, jobs in the formal sector etc. While the customary laws specifically being followed may change and some laws are abandoned, the principle remains effective – that it is through particular practices that ‘blessings’ are attracted and bad things repelled.¹⁶⁰ The pre-occupation with funerals and memorial services reflects the deeply held belief that the most important thing to do in order to achieve a peaceful and prosperous life is to keep the dead happy, so that they do not come back to haunt the living. Prayer must be understood in the broad sense of *lamo* as incorporating concepts of corporateness, self-cleansing and worship as well as the equivalent to the English word ‘prayer’ itself.

¹⁵⁹ “We have educated our converts to put us in the place of Christ.” (ALLEN, R., 1927, *Missionary Methods, St. Paul's or Ours?* London: World Dominion Press. p187.) “The God who once was conceived of as supporting them is now seen either as having unreasonably turned against them in favour of the white people and their customs or as having been defeated and displaced by another God – the God of the whites.” (KRAFT, C.H., 1980, *Christianity in Culture. A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross Cultural Perspective*. New York: Orbis Books 1980, p363.) “The hidden power of the whites: the secret religion withheld from the primal peoples.” (Turner, *Religious*. p271.)

¹⁶⁰ Many people in the community emphasise the importance of keeping to the true Luo laws and customs, says Mboya, (*Richo ema*.) contrary to the view of many in the West. Speaking of Nigerians in the 19th Century: “For these people believed not only that they were civilised, but that their customs and institutions were the best for themselves.” (AYANDELE, E.A., 1966, *The missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914. A political and social analysis*. New York: Humanities Press, p112.) Westerners easily fail to grasp the attachment people have to their traditional customs because 1. People stay quiet on this so as not to be laughed at. 2. These customs often cannot be understood until one has learned a people’s language, which relatively few Westerners do.

The strong focus in the life of the Luo on chasing away bad reflects in part at least recent teaching that has come in from the West. That is, there is a degree to which the Luo have accepted the Westerners condemnation of their own culture, such that their own ancient customs have become 'bad things' to be chased away. The replacement on offer is 'Western life', interpreted by the people as an alternative set of rituals and taboos. These rituals and taboos are particularly hard to make sense of, but are evidentially powerful and point to the answer to the African people's question regarding the real hidden source of the white-people's power.

CHAPTER 7. PRAGMATICS, HERMENEUTICS AND MISSION

*To translate a theory or worldview into ones own language is not to make it ones own. For that one must go native, discover that one is thinking and working in, not simply translating out of, a language that was previously foreign.*¹

7.1. Introduction

Careful consideration of pragmatics, while startling in outcome, is yet invisible to many scholars. The hegemony over interpretation is these days held by hermeneutics. Unfortunately over precise diagnostic tools can blinker one to wider perceptions. Focusing on hermeneutics all too easily occludes pragmatics from view. It is such occlusion that I attempt to point to and to rectify in this chapter, in the context of mission to Africa. I draw for this on the ramifications of the African conception of *vital force*. The latter is the label given in English to the power in the universe, belief in which I argue, as have others, forms the basis of African religion.² The constant struggle

¹ Kuhn quoted in van Huysteen. (VAN HUUYSTEEN, WENTZEL, 1989, *Theology and the Justification of Faith: constructing theories in systematic theology*. Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, p47.)

² As a comprehension of vital force has often proved illusive to outside observers, so also African religion in general. (CHEPKWONY, ADAM ARAP, 2004, 'Teaching African Religions in Tertiary Institutions in East Africa.' 51-71 In: Mugambi, J.N.K., and Getui, Mary N., 2004, *Religions in East Africa Under Globalisation*. Nairobi: Acton, p52.)

against ‘bad’ that I have identified in Gem in Kenya is in effect a countering of powers that would otherwise interfere with ‘vital force’.³

Kuhn (see the opening of this chapter) demonstrates a theoretical recognition in academia of very real barriers faced by Westerners communicating with non-Westerners. This is widespread in the literature. What is harder to find in the missions arena, is evidence of such theory put into practice. “We seem to conceive the significance of inculturation but not its urgency in modern Africa.” shares Rwiza.⁴ The penetration and depth of pragmatics needs careful consideration in these contexts. Westerners accustomed to interacting with people as free agents ready to enter into impartial discussion on an ‘objective’ foundation are set up for failure when their correspondent has an invisible man standing next to him/her holding a gun to his/her head saying “agree with whatever he says!” Such an illustration is not as ridiculous as it may seem given the hold that ‘ghosts’ (*jochiende*) can have over people in, for example, the Luo way of life. Nyamiti told us as recently as in 1989, that the “whole of Christology from the Bible and the church tradition must be rethought from the African viewpoint.”⁵ But “none of the existing African Christologies has had any appreciable influence in the life of African churches [because] white theology still dominates Africa, and in most seminaries and other theological institutes African theologies are unknown or simply ignored.”⁶ While the theological and hermeneutical / Biblical literature

³ Bad is that which compromises vital force, see below.

⁴ Rwiza, *Formation*. p109.

⁵ NYAMITI, CHARLES, 1994, 'Contemporary African Christologies: assessment and practical suggestions.' 62-77 In: Gibellini, Rosino, (ed.) 1994, *Paths of African Theology*. London: SCM Press Ltd. p73.

⁶ (NYAMITI, CHARLES, 1998, 'African Christologies Today.' 17-39 In: Mugambi, J.N.K., and Magesa Laurenti, (eds.) *Jesus in African Christianity: experimentation and diversity in African Christology*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, p34.) “Most of African biblical and theological scholarship is implicitly prescriptive, saying what ought to be rather than what is” observes West. (West, ‘African Biblical.’ p3.) This despite the fact that “Africans have initiated a process of theological renewal in Africa – a new theological beginning

recognises the context–dependence of language;⁷ it goes little further. Pragmatics as a discipline is not acknowledged, being apparently unknown or unrecognised. Instead, there is (metaphorically) a meeting with a brick wall on contextual linguistic questions. This reluctance to contradict the ‘objective’ view of Biblical interpretation despite recognising its limitations, is illustrated by Manus’ wavering comment: while “the purely objective character of Biblical scholarship ... must remain ... there cannot be interpretation without some presuppositions.”⁸

Fish’s hermeneutic endeavours perhaps came the closest to realising the hegemony of pragmatics in the derivation of meaning.⁹ The ‘objective’ base from which he identifies meaning, comes to be ‘community’.¹⁰ According to Fish, “There is no single way of reading what is correct or natural, only ‘ways of reading’ that are extensions of community perspectives” so that “the entities that were once seen as competing for the right to constrain interpretation (text, reader, author) are now all seen to be the products of interpretation.”¹¹ Fish comes close to pragmatics when he suggests the “replacing of one question – what does this mean? – by another – what does this do?”¹² Fish’s

that calls for an epistemological break in theological reflection.” (DEDJI, VALENTIN, 2003, *Reconstruction and Renewal in African Christian Theology*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, p263.) What has remained elusive, is “a properly biblically grounded reformulation of African thought from which a theology should naturally evolve.” (PUNT, JEREMY, 2004, ‘Value of Ubuntu for reading the Bible in Africa.’ 83-111 In: Mugambi, J.N.K., and Smit A., (eds.) 2004, *Text and Context in New Testament Hermeneutics*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, p96.) Punt has not considered that he may be expecting the impossible – for scholarly English to provide a ‘properly biblically grounded reformulation of African thought’ when it is by nature scientific and secular?

⁷ Wendland advocates being “doubly contextualised ... to both the source language and culture as well as that of a particular *receptor* or user group” (WENDLAND, ERNST R., 2004, ‘Contextualised Translations and Readings of the New Testament.’ 189-204 In: Yorke, Gosnell L.O.R., & Renju, Peter M., (eds.) 2004, *Bible translation and African Languages*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, p189.) but with no mention of pragmatics.

⁸ Manus, *Intercultural*. p29.

⁹ See Chapter 2.

¹⁰ FISH, STANLEY, 1980, *Is There a Text in This Class? the authority of interpretive communities*. London: Harvard University Press, p14.

¹¹ Fish, *Is There a Text?* p16.

¹² Fish, *Is There a Text?* p3.

proposal that meaning is constructed entirely in the course of reading has been too unpleasant a prospect for many to swallow.

Punt accepts *Ubuntu* as the pragmatic key needed to unlock the Scriptures for the African people.¹³ Yet he considers *ubuntu* to be “a cliché to denote an often *poorly defined*, yet supposedly noble set of good behaviours that used to be typically African.” (my emphasis.)¹⁴ This is because he has not made the link between *ubuntu* and vital force.¹⁵ Punt has not realised the role of spiritual over-hearers (see Section 2.3.) in setting and maintaining *ubuntu*, and fails to define it using secular English, i.e. he fails to make reference to the spiritual plane of life.¹⁶ Punt’s ‘poorly defined’ behaviours that arise from the African people’s belief are such as a result of untranslatability.

7.2. Placid Tempels and African philosophy

I draw particularly heavily on some early scholars in the field of anthropology because their results were obtained before ‘acculturation’ resulted in a widespread knowledge of European languages in Africa. African people’s knowledge of these languages in more recent years has had various effects on scholarship, at least one of which has been to make it more difficult for Europeans to gain a deep understanding of African ways and

¹³ Punt, ‘Value of Ubuntu.’

¹⁴ Punt, ‘Value of Ubuntu.’ p86.

¹⁵ This link is made clear by Shutte. (SHUTTE, AUGUSTINE, 2001, *Ubuntu: an ethic for a new South Africa*. Peter Maritzburg: Cluster Publications. See Section 7.2 below.)

¹⁶ Punt, ‘Value of Ubuntu.’ pp86-90.

issues.¹⁷ By contrast, Tempels' learning environment in the course of priestly duties while interacting with people using their own language (before they knew foreign languages and cultures) resulted in his acquiring deep insights over a long period in a way akin to that of normal citizens, but unlike that of many later researchers.

While conceding that "Our terms [i.e. European languages] can furnish only an approximation to concepts and principles foreign to us,"¹⁸ Tempels tries to outline discoveries he has made among the Luba people¹⁹ and to suggest that these are more widely applicable to Bantu people as a whole. He tells us that the "Bantu speak, act, live as if for them, beings were forces."²⁰ These forces can be found in different creatures and objects as well as people. Bantu people are pre-occupied, according to Tempels, in stocking up on vital force at every opportunity, especially by "tapping the strength of other creatures."²¹ Ogot, from Gem in Kenya, discusses Tempels' work in some detail in relation to Luo peoples and concludes that they are also oriented to vital force which he refers to as *jok*.²² Shutte's *ubuntu* ethic is deeply rooted in his belief in such forces:

¹⁷ 1. African people knowing Western languages makes it more difficult and reduces the motivation for Western scholars to learn indigenous languages. This in turn makes it hard for them to acquire deep cultural insights. 2. African people's knowledge of English is increasingly (given the spreading of radio, telecommunications and the internet) giving them access to Western texts about them. They then exert a censoring / controlling role that severely restricts the freedom of Western journalism and academia. 3. Formal scholarship in Africa being almost universally in Western languages easily gives Westerners a false confidence; thinking they are understanding Africa when they are actually having their own culture reflected back onto them. (More restrictions could be added to this list.)

¹⁸ Tempels, *Bantu*. p39.

¹⁹ Whose language is very closely related to that of the Kaonde among whom I lived and worked in Zambia from 1988 – 1991.

²⁰ Tempels, *Bantu*. p51.

²¹ Tempels, *Bantu*. p49.

²² (Ogot, 'The Concept of Jok.' p6.) Belief in 'force' by African people is widely acknowledged. "The Ndembu, like the Azande, consider that calamities and adversities of all kinds are caused by mystical forces generated or evoked and directed by conscious agents" (Turner, *The Forest*. p300.) "... all things are felt to be charged with powers of various kinds ...". (p335.) See also Okengo-Okuda conceding that the Labwor religion arises from *Juok* (OKENGO-OKUGA, JACINTO B.A., 1972, 'Juok: the basis of Labwor traditional religion.' (page numbers not sequential) In: Byaruhanga-Akiiki, A.B. 1972, *Occasional Papers in African Traditional Religion*. Number V. Kampala: Makerere University, 1972. p9.) and that "there are many

“Everything that exists, stones and plants and animals, and persons as well, is the focus and expression of interacting forces ...”.²³ “My life is a progressive increase in vital force” said Shutte.²⁴ A leader in a Roho church agreed with him in explaining to me,²⁵ accompanied by nods of approval from colleagues, that fasting and praying is more effective outside than in a house or building, because when outside someone receives power from the winds coming from different objects and animals.

It should not surprise us for confession to the truth of the existence of these kinds of beliefs by African people to be rare. Those who have the ear of the West are generally the better educated, who have probably in many cases realised that such beliefs are in the West known as ‘primitive’, and so prefer to stay quiet in public to avoid being laughed at. This profound contextual interpretational framework, essential for correct understanding of African discourse, is therefore often ignored by Western scholars and laymen alike.

Tempels’ work “was the spark that ignited the debate about African philosophy.”²⁶ This despite the lingering question, as to whether it is philosophy at all.²⁷ It has been

similarities to the other Luo speaking peoples.” (p1.) Recent reluctance to write on ‘vital force’ appears to reflect an avoidance of acknowledging difference.

²³ Shutte, *Ubuntu*. p21.

²⁴ Shutte, *Ubuntu*. p24.

²⁵ In April 2005.

²⁶ (IMBO, SAMUEL OLUOCH, 1998, *An Introduction to African Philosophy*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Incorporated. p8.) Or as Bujo puts it, “Placide Tempels, whose studies were instrumental for the development of much of today’s African theology...”. (BUJO, BÉNÉZET, 1990, *African Christian Morality at the Age of Inculturation*. Nairobi: St. Paul Publications Africa. p121.)

²⁷ (Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*. p50.) Philosophers such as Kant who “divided the world of metaphysics from the world of the senses” (Walker, *Enemy*. p82.) have in using language that separates the person from the metaphysical enquiry put Western philosophy out of Africa’s reach. Wittgenstein’s critique supports the African case: “If these [insoluble Western philosophical] questions, claims and counter claims

rigorously debated and has been followed by numerous other philosophies such as Senghor's *negritude* that claims that African thinking is "based on emotion, not reason,"²⁸ Nkemnkia's *Vitalology*,²⁹ Oruka's *Sage Philosophy*³⁰ and others.³¹ Imbo laments that "Tempels succeeds in re-enforcing negative stereotypes about Africa ..." and uses "parameters not constructed by the Bantu and in terms whose meanings the Bantu do not determine or control."³² This response of Imbo (himself a Kenyan Luo (judging by his names)) illustrates Tempels' point. He does not suggest that Tempels is incorrect. That is neither his point or concern, as 'evidence' is anyway stacked up in Tempels' favour. Imbo's concern, true to form as an African, is that his personal force or power is being threatened. This is not an objective debate on abstract reality, but the meeting of two worlds and two worldviews – one interested in disconnected understanding, and perhaps power through understanding. The other concerned with the relational power of being.³³

Imbo recounts that discussions on African philosophy have revolved around defining terms for the last thirty years and suggests that it is time to move on. Chukwu³⁴ and others make the same point.³⁵ The translation of the title of Tempels' book being *Bantu*

are couched in abnormal language, using words out of their normal contexts and contrary to normal usage, then what – if anything – do they mean." (Hanfling, *Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy*. p53.)

²⁸ Imbo, *An Introduction*. p12.

²⁹ NKEMNKIA, MARTIN NKAFU, 1999, *African Vitalology: a step forward in African thinking*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa.

³⁰ Oruka, *Sage Philosophy*.

³¹ Philosophy is an extreme case in point of trying to squeeze African categories into English words.

³² (Imbo, *An Introduction*. p81.) But African people also perpetuate negative stereotypes (admittedly more spoken than written) about Europeans in terms whose meanings the Europeans do not control. So the term *Mzungu* for European (see glossary).

³³ Note my drawing on pragmatics here as throughout this chapter, by looking not at the *meaning* of words, but at how words are *used*.

³⁴ CHUKWU, CLETUS N., 1995, *Introduction to Philosophy in an African Perspective*. Eldoret, Kenya: Zapf Chancery, p319.

³⁵ Such issues with definitions should not be surprising given that this debate has occurred primarily in European languages. See Chapter 2. Dualistic languages cannot accurately describe monistic situations.

Philosophy has perhaps been misleading as it is more a description of African culture than philosophy, thus prompting Chukwu to write that: “Ethnophilosophy is therefore different from what African philosophy should be.”³⁶ Discussion of ‘African’ (Bantu) philosophy seems to have been a circular and painful introspective process. This need not surprise us. If Senghor is correct in identifying the uniqueness of African thinking as being “based on emotion, not reason”³⁷ then how could African authors possibly critique Tempels’ book, as Tempels being a European is presumably writing on the basis of the very ‘reason’ that Africans do not make use of?³⁸ (It should be clear that the ‘reason’ that Luo people use cannot be identical to British reason because they have not been raised in British culture.)³⁹ The failure by African scholars to ditch and discredit writers such as Senghor and Tempels shows that there is at least an element of truth in what they write. Meanwhile European writers seem to have backed off from this kind of subject matter, presumably through fear of being accused of being racist.⁴⁰

Our investigations in pragmatics give many reasons as to why intellectual debate between Europeans about Africans and Africans about themselves cannot tally. Meanings of words do not only arise from dictionaries, but from the contexts of their use. Considered semantically the African versions of English in use only approximate in terms of meaning to those in Europe. Considered pragmatically, they are in a different

³⁶ Chukwu, *Introduction*. p308.

³⁷ Cited in Imbo, *An Introduction*. p12.

³⁸ Preachers in Kinshasa: “... call upon emotions more than the adherence of intelligence and heart ...”. (JALUM’WECI, FERDINAND BANGA, 2005, ‘The Gospel and the Media in Kinshasa.’ 146-151 In: Loba-Mkole, Jean-Claude, and Wendland, Ernst R., (eds.) 2005, *Interacting with Scriptures in Africa*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, p147.)

³⁹ The high valuation of ‘reason’ in the West (GATES, HENRY LOUIS, (jr.) nd. ‘A Preliminary Response to Ali Mazrui’s Preliminary Critique of “Wonders of the African World”.’ http://WWW.ethioguide.com/aa-ethioguide/ethioguide/New-Archive/1199/gates_response.htm (accessed 29.03.02).) has prompted many attempts at countering the notion that Africans are without it. In reality African peoples have their reason, which cannot be identical to British reason.

world altogether.⁴¹ The difference is such as in effect to bring a constant tension between these two scholarly traditions. Hence it is not surprising that Africans using English which claims to be international in describing themselves should spend thirty years defining terms. Definitions will never satisfy both Continents.⁴² Imbo is not totally unaware of this: “At the heart of questions about uniqueness lies doubt about whether concepts such as truth and knowledge can be communicated across cultures, whether experience is translatable across different modes of knowing.”⁴³ African people have made it impossible to write legitimate philosophies through their use of European languages. When translations of Hindu or Confucian texts seem not to make sense, then the English speaking world (rightly) assumes mysteries to have been lost in the process of translation. No such allowance is made when the author of a philosophy uses a dictionary from Oxford.

Certain work on African philosophy has “produced speculative abortions that in the end so discredited the field that further attempts were discouraged” according to Hallen and Sodipo.⁴⁴ Outlaw tells us that discussions on African philosophy “convey the putrid stench of a wretchedness that fertilises the soil from which they grow”,⁴⁵ the ‘wretchedness’ here being the West’s image of the ‘rational man’.⁴⁶ Ndagwe in

⁴⁰ Although the secularist philosophy propounded in Europe is, I suggest, very generative of racism because unlike Christianity, it proves impossible for other races to follow.

⁴¹ As much as the cultures differ.

⁴² English being rooted in the West is grossly inaccurate when it describes areas of African life rooted in monism.

⁴³ Imbo, *An Introduction*. p76.

⁴⁴ HALLEN, BARRY and SODIPO, J.O., 1986, *Knowledge, Belief and Witchcraft: analytic experiments in African philosophy*. London: Ethnographica, p119.

⁴⁵ OUTLAW, LUCIUS T. (jr.), 1996, *On Race and Philosophy*. New York and London: Routledge, p51.

⁴⁶ As explained elsewhere in this thesis, my understanding of the problem of ‘rationality’ is the widely held assumption that a peculiarly parochial British (or Western) rationality is universal. This assumption is nowadays heavily value loaded, such that to suggest that non-Western people are ‘irrational’ or ‘non-rational’ is considered abusive. This has the unfortunate effect of wrongly presupposing the existence of something that is not there, which is actually a necessary corner-stone to the (British originated) Kenyan English-

searching for an African identity tells us that by accepting white person's culture "the black man helps to promote that which is used to degrade him".⁴⁷ While Oruka⁴⁸ tells us that "the problem in traditional Africa is not lack of logic, reason or scientific curiosity ..." he also tells us that "the invention of *homo rationalis* as a distinctive human type ... whose rotting corpse has caused such a choking scent ... continues to infect intellectual discourse ..." in Africa.⁴⁹ To counter all this Chepkwony tells us that: "Today, every speech by politicians, the clergy, teachers, lay persons, and even the youth themselves, point to *traditional way (sic) of thinking* and life as a possible way out" (my emphasis).⁵⁰ Oruka goes on to say that "one area which has, so far, not gained much attention from African philosophers ... is the central philosophical study of individual African languages ... this linguistic type of study is likely to establish a new school of thought in African philosophy – the hermeneutical school."⁵¹ Perhaps these are the very insights that I am trying to bring to this field.

African scholars are only going to be of limited help for Europeans trying to understand Africa, and vice versa, except in those rare cases where the scholar has had long and deep exposure on both sides, a position enjoyed by very few. I recognise the apparent racist undertones in this. In the UK whites have been accused of "have[ing] purported to know more about minority ethnic cultures than the minority ethnic groups

language educational system. The effective uptake of British education internationally would require the teaching of the British form of rationality. Although it is hard to see how this could be achieved, its being ignored is no solution.

⁴⁷ NDAGWE, F. OLWENDO, 1996, 'African Search for Identity: myth and reality; a milestone in the contribution to the question of African philosophy.' MA thesis, University of Nairobi, 1996. p7.

⁴⁸ Oruka, *Sage Philosophy*. p47.

⁴⁹ Hence situations such as described by Chepkwony: "To study African religion as an academic discipline, it should be presented in a scientific, well planned and directed manner in any institution of learning. This objective has not been accomplished in East African due to some problems." (Chepkwony, 'Teaching African.' p63.) Chepkwony does not elaborate on the nature of these problems.

⁵⁰ Chepkwony, 'Teaching African.' p69.

⁵¹ Oruka, *Trends*. pp154-155.

themselves.”⁵² Crozier realises the difficulties of translating or of not translating what she as a researcher is told by a Black Briton who has a poor grasp of British English usage. Mtetwa wants to “highlight the theological opportunism of most Western theologians and anthropologists who have arrogated to themselves the right to being authorities” on African religion.⁵³ Yet given the understanding of language pragmatics outlined in this thesis, we must recognise the sheer limitations of having African people explain their cultures and ways of life to Westerners. O’Dowd points out the stark difference between “cross-cultural contact” and “successful ... intercultural communication.”⁵⁴ (See Chapter 2 of this thesis.)

7.2.1. Is Tempels correct?

Tempels was not an academic employed by a university, but a priest serving the church in Congo. He does not claim to have used meticulous scientific research methodologies but learned the people’s language⁵⁵ and lived and worked closely with them. The insights expressed in his book came to him in the course of time. An accusing finger no doubt frequently pointed at Tempels, is his failure to provide quantitative data to support his conclusions. Yet circumstantial evidence is widespread and easy to find. Tempels is far from alone in having identified the hegemony of witchcraft beliefs in Africa. I have

⁵² CROZIER, GILL, 2003, ‘Researching Black Parents: making sense of the role of research and researcher.’ 79-94 In: *Qualitative Research*. Volume 3, Number 1, April 2003, p83.

⁵³ MTETWA, S., 1996, ‘African Spirituality in the Context of Modernity.’ In: *Bulletin for Contextual Theology African Theology*. Volume Three, No.2, 1996, <http://www.hs.unp.ac.za/theology/tonyb.htm> (accessed 29.09.04)

⁵⁴ O’Dowd, ‘In Search.’ WWW.

⁵⁵ Learning language while taking advantage of his singleness to live closely with the Luba people, Tempels will have been able to learn pragmatic as well as contextualised-semantic rules of conversation. His life will have been aligned to a greater degree than many with the suggestions that I make on research methodology in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

done what Tempels did sixty years ago, and asked people about their understanding of ‘being and force’. They agree with what Tempels suggests.⁵⁶

There are some things that even my ‘sensitive’ research (reported in chapters 4-6) did not record. That is, things that are done (or not done) but not spoken about. Going to someone’s home, picking up some soil and going away with it, is very suspect.⁵⁷ When visiting someone, if offered a cup of tea, it will always be poured in front of you at the same time as a cup is poured for someone of the home.⁵⁸ The ladies who have prepared food should pray for it⁵⁹ and the prayer is not of thanks but of cleansing.⁶⁰ A house built on the compound in which I am living could not be built at the preferred location, because there used to be a house there some years ago. If a dog dies on the road, no one will move it away, it will just rot and stink where it fell. A stray cow found wandering around will be handled carefully, in case someone has put some *dhoch* (‘a curse’) onto it.⁶¹ A child who has passed puberty must never sleep in their parents’ house. All those examples illustrate ways in which ‘things’ are considered to have force, capable of bringing bad.⁶²

Then we have the force of being. This can be easy to see from people’s behaviour, but hard to identify in scholarly or international discourse because the associated contextual

⁵⁶ I do not by this mean that they have agreed in a direct sense in responding to a direct question, but that in the course of discussion and with appropriate consideration of pragmatic factors, I take them as agreeing.

⁵⁷ The suspicion is that you will use the soil to bewitch the homestead.

⁵⁸ As otherwise you may suspect you are being *poisoned*.

⁵⁹ So that if they have done anything bad to it the effect should be on them.

⁶⁰ Of anything bad such as *poisons* (i.e. witchcraft poison) that may have got into the food.

⁶¹ That is, transferred a problem or disease to the cow then chased it away.

⁶² They also illustrate the limitations of interpretation of language without consideration of the environment of its use.

impacts are outside of the range of British English usage. A lady is expected to sit beside her dead child or husband for hour upon hour. People's response to a death or other disaster is to go to the site and spend time there. The force of their presence is more greatly aided if they also eat there. Being able to stay up and be awake with the corpse on the night before a burial, is considered important to pacify the spirit of the departed. After travelling a vast distance to visit someone, one can be simply left staying alone in a room with no one to talk to.⁶³ Meanwhile household members are preparing food and drink, while being glad for your *being* there. Many churches like to have their leaders *be* at the front (facing the congregation), even if they have no role in the service. Old men should not be involved in household duties, as their role is that of being. And so on.⁶⁴

Chapter 6 gives five major means of enhancing being so as to have more force for chasing away bad.⁶⁵ All of these are rooted in someone's being, and are intended to enhance 'being' by doing away with bad that would interfere with life.⁶⁶ In Chapter 5 I argued that all 'bad' is seen as originating from *jochiende* (ghosts) that operate through *chunje* (hearts). These are forces of bad that are resident in someone, to use Tempels'

⁶³ I have personally frequently observed this.

⁶⁴ Luce explains how Western ways of life have been profoundly influenced by Greek philosophers. "... activity is the essence of well-being" according to Aristotle (Luce, *Introduction*. p125.), quite contrary to the African love for inactivity described above. To examine the contribution of Greek thought to the difference between Western and African values and ways of life would be a valuable exercise for further research. The society to which the Greeks spoke having almost certainly been more similar to the current African one than the current Western one, translations of Greek philosophy into African languages could have a profound and meaningful impact. I certainly found this to be the case on the one occasion that I taught Greek philosophy (ethics) at KIST.

⁶⁵ 1. Calling on God. 2. Using particular words. 3. Keeping taboos. 4. Attending funerals and memorial services. 5. Prayer.

⁶⁶ "Life" in African languages is broader than in English, as it includes being healthy, wealthy, having a family etc. Hence African greetings often ask "are you alive?" which seems to be a ridiculous use of 'alive' or 'life' in British English. (*Ingima – Dholuo, Wewe mzima – Kiswahili, Mbweni – KiLuyia*, all ask 'are you alive? The responses are *angima, mzima* and *amulai* (in *Dholuo, Kiswahili* and *KiLuyia* respectively) being 'I am alive'.)

terminology. Hence to be bad, someone does not have to do something bad.⁶⁷ This is of course the essence of witchcraft and sorcery – the former being an inadvertent or unpremeditated ‘leaking’ of bad from someone, and the latter the wilful equivalent, that usually employs a medium⁶⁸ for the transmission of bad.

The ‘bad things’ identified in Chapter 4 are similarly related to being. The things listed, (the way you relate to God, modern things, ghosts/the devil, someone’s character, traditional laws, etc.) are not the bad things themselves, but assumed to be closely related to the occurrence of bad. The bad itself is whatever takes away from life.⁶⁹ As mentioned in Chapter 4, many modern things are seen as good, yet perhaps through people’s inability to handle them ‘correctly’, their net effect on life easily becomes ‘bad’. This has arisen particularly due to the view that it is technical knowledge that is desperately needed, and in many ways being widely promoted in Sub-Saharan African, yet “... what is lacking is not technical knowledge ... but theoretical knowledge which explains the technical knowledge... .”⁷⁰ Hill puts it like this: “Witchcraft worldviews ... prevents people from considering ... other aspects of the situation, such as personal responsibility, safety, skills, or appropriate medical intervention”⁷¹ to which we could add ‘technical knowledge, education’ ... etc. It is hard for the people of Gem in Kenya to imagine a way of life that is not oriented to the careful following of ancestrally prescribed laws that are designed to preserve the goodness of hearts, as the failure to do

⁶⁷ Mbiti tells us “something is evil because it is punished, it is not punished because it is evil.” (Mbiti, *African Religions*. p207.) “It may well happen that a man does not know he has done wrong till he suffers the consequences of the wrong.” (Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer Religion*. p20.)

⁶⁸ i.e. a substance such as leaves, bones, eggs, hair etc.

⁶⁹ Life as defined in footnote 66 above.

⁷⁰ JARVIS, I.C., 1970, ‘Explaining Cargo Cults.’ 51-59 In: Wilson, B.R., *Rationality. Key Concepts in the Social Sciences*. Oxford: Blackwell, p55.

⁷¹ HILL, HARRIET, 1996, ‘Witchcraft and the Gospel: insights from Africa.’ 323-344 In: *Missiology: an international review*. Vol. XXIV, No 3, July 1996, p328.

so would be courting disaster. So Balcomb writes of the assumption of African people that “the goods ... could be accessed by pre-modern means.”⁷²

The difference between Tempels⁷³ and Melland⁷⁴ is that what Melland refers to as ‘witchcraft’, Tempels refers to as ‘the force’.⁷⁵ I use the term ‘force’ as a synonym to witchcraft a number of times in this thesis, but consider that the ‘force’ has a number of advantages in communicating to my target audience.⁷⁶ In the same way that the use of ‘bad’, rather than ‘evil’, is more helpful in enabling us to understand what the Luo of Gem are chasing away, so also use of the term, ‘force’ opens avenues of understanding that ‘witchcraft’ doesn’t. ‘The force’ is in some respects equivalent to the ‘Holy Spirit’ in Christian circles,⁷⁷ it is like the FT index or money itself to the business world, or electricity that is harnessed to his advantage by a typical householder.⁷⁸ A very close association between ‘the force’ and ‘the dead’ should also be apparent to the reader. In some senses ‘the force’ is the dead, comes from the dead, and/or is under the control of the dead. ‘The force’ is not neutral like an amplifier that raises volume without changing words but it is biased, like someone reporting the words of a colleague in such a way as to favour their own interests.

⁷² That is, witchcraft or the manipulation of spiritual forces. (Balcomb, ‘Modernity.’ WWW.) For African people “the medicine men (i.e. specialists in utilisation of spiritual forces) symbolise the hopes of society ...”. (Mbiti, *African Religions*. p170.)

⁷³ Tempels, *Bantu*.

⁷⁴ MELLAND, F.H. 1923, *In Witch Bound Africa: an account of the primitive Kaonde tribe and their beliefs*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company.

⁷⁵ Witchcraft power is clearly a force, but the term ‘force’ is in English wider than witchcraft. Haule refers to witchcraft as a ‘mysterious power.’ (Cited in Magesa, *African Religion*. p166.)

⁷⁶ People brought up in Britain with an interest in Africa.

⁷⁷ “It is the power of Jesus Christ ‘dispensed’ through the Holy Spirit which heals ...”. (OMOYAJOWO, J.A., 1982, *Cherubim and Seraphim: the history of an African independent church*. London: Nok Publishers International, p173.)

⁷⁸ The possibility of cross identity goes both ways. So money and electricity can, often not very helpfully, be treated as if they are ‘the force’ by Luo people. For an example see comments on *harambee* in Section 6.5.3. Being connected to mains electricity is desirably because it puts people into possession of a powerful

7.3. Biblical Hermeneutics in the West – a Survey

The existence of straightforward or plain interpretation of texts, as assumed by sixteenth century church reformers, has since been profoundly questioned.⁷⁹ The field of hermeneutics has grown around the question of textual interpretation, the study of sacred texts having been a part of this focus. I here want to explore and critique major recent developments and trends in the field of hermeneutics, especially Biblical hermeneutics, in view of mission and pragmatics as explored in this thesis.

7.3.1. The Physical, the Spiritual, and the Meaningful

The debate on rationality and faith in Western nations concerns changing patterns and trends in Western worldviews. The invention and spread of Western rationalism has sought to incorporate the whole of people's lives, including their beliefs, into its sometimes rigid domain.⁸⁰ Being forced to defend itself against rationalism, what has become known as 'religion' in the West now often defines itself relative to this imposing and sometimes unfriendly structure.⁸¹ This is puzzling to other people around the

Western 'force'. (Ogot refers to Wright's reference to *jok* force being like electrical potential in Ogot. 'The Concept.' p4.)

⁷⁹ MURRAY, R., 1992, *The Cosmic Covenant* London: Sheed and Ward Ltd. p164.

⁸⁰ Schaeffer quotes Leonard de Vinci: "if you began with an autonomous rationality, what you come to is mathematics ... therefore you can never get beyond mechanics." (Schaeffer, *Escape*. p18.)

⁸¹ "The remarkable 'success' of the scientific enterprise since its modern origins ... has set the context for the intellectual and cultural problems in the modern world" (Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism*. p46.).

world⁸² who are perhaps quicker than the Westerners themselves in realizing that “rationalists ultimately commit themselves irrationally to the results of rational argument”⁸³ while “revelation, if true, would make greater sense of the world and of life than would any other worldview.”⁸⁴ Why rationality after all?⁸⁵

The religious / secular dichotomy underlying much if not all Western thinking, brings considerable confusion when attempts are made to appropriate it in Africa, including Gem. While not saying that the authors were necessarily aware of this, it becomes clear in reading a description such as that by Morgan on ‘literary study of the Bible’: “In a society whose rational norms are no longer grounded in religious belief, this dual responsibility of all theology to religion and to reason makes for tensions...”⁸⁶ Authors such as Morgan write for a Western (American / British) audience with little thought that their materials may be read outside of these cultural contexts. Even if this probability were recognised, one could hardly expect them to be able to perform the mental gymnastics required to enculturate or internationalise their writing, especially as they are constrained to the use of English and could hardly hope to grasp a deep understanding of a culture other than their own without investing many years, that most scholars frankly do not have. Much confusion arises when attempting to illuminate non-

⁸² To have apologetics in defense of the existence of God is a curious practice to those who have never deigned to consider that there might not be a god/God. Sanneh was puzzled by missionaries’ keeping “religious subjects from all ‘decent’ and ‘cultured’ conversation [because such practice] had no analogue in [his] culture.” (SANNEH, LAMIN, nd. ‘Christian Missions and the Western Guilt Complex.’ http://www.asu.edu/clas/religious_studies/home/cmig.html (accessed 21.03.02))

⁸³ Van Huysteen, *Theology*. p41.

⁸⁴ Hebblethwaite, *The Problems of Theology*. p83.

⁸⁵ The failure to find the foundation for ‘rational’ knowledge (Bernstein, *Beyond objectivism*. p4.) has not prevented the widespread use of the term ‘rational’ in meaningful ways in the British use of English. In Jenkins’ view the West will come to regard non-Western Christianity as so different from its own rationalised version as to be “alien and dangerous ... jungle religion.” (Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*. p162.)

⁸⁶ MORGAN, R and BARTON, J., 1988, *Biblical Interpretation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p204.

Anglo-American contextual effects using Anglo-American language and thought forms.⁸⁷

Western discussion on the interpretation and authority of Scripture often focuses on the presence or absence of ‘divine inspiration’. Such a focus clearly hinges on an assumption of a closed universe with occasional significant intrusions from the divine or supernatural realm ‘out there’. Hence Mitchell’s discussion⁸⁸ of the garden in the forest⁸⁹ finds a one-off discovery (the garden) departing from its natural course (the forest). Hence the Bible is perceived as a one-off extra-ordinary volume set apart from the rest of the world’s texts, that are mere human constructions. This is a world apart from the understanding in Gem that ancestors (through whom God himself may be speaking) are in constant communion with their living descendants.⁹⁰ Their being morally diverse means that ‘divinely inspired’ may or may not be ‘morally good’,⁹¹ and the absence of divine inspiration is a non-possibility. The test people will seek to apply to texts is not ‘is it divinely inspired’ as clearly it will be, but is one of power – will it heal / extend life or bring wealth?⁹²

⁸⁷ “Western missionary Christianity ... has created much confusion and anxiety in contemporary African society.” shares Waruta in the context of African marriage and family. (WARUTA, D.W., 2000, ‘Marriage and Family in Contemporary African Society: challenges in pastoral counseling.’ 101-119 In: Waruta, D.W., & Kinoti, Hannah W., (eds.) 2000, *Pastoral Care in African Christianity: challenging essays in pastoral theology* (second edition). Nairobi: Acton Publishers, p108.)

⁸⁸ MITCHELL B., and WILES, M., 1980, ‘Does Christianity Need a Revelation? A Discussion.’ 103-114 In: *Theology*. Vol. 83. No. 691, 1980.

⁸⁹ If one finds a carefully tended garden in a forest, is that sufficient evidence to assume the existence of a gardener?

⁹⁰ In contrast with the Western monotheistic worldview, the Luo people are implicitly monistic, meaning that God (*juok / Nyasaye*) is everything and in everything. (Ogot, ‘The Concept of Jok.’ p10.)

⁹¹ Many Westerners are shocked to discover this because in British English, at least in certain Christian circles, ‘spiritual’ is generally associated with ‘morally upright’. See Section 7.4.3.1 for details.

⁹² I report these Western peculiarities to encourage my readers to consider their implications when it comes to translation and comprehension on the part of those who do not share them.

Confusion around the understanding of miracle (as translated from the Greek *dunamis*; act of power, or *semeion* sign⁹³) is another example that illustrates the difficulty of translation from English into African languages. The growing domination of dualism in the Western worldview transformed ‘miracle’ into being something based on “faith-commitment” or counter-scientific.⁹⁴ The Greek terms, particularly *dunamis*, are relatively close to the *Dholuo* term *hono* or the *Kiswahili* *miujiza*. These describe merely a non-typical or greater-than-normal sequence of events, such as one might exclaim on seeing an *amazingly* large cabbage or cat. They can also express appreciation, so someone saying a healing is a miracle from God is expressing thanks to God for the healing – which is far from putting it into the category of super-natural. The understanding of miracle as being something super-natural is plainly nonsense in a worldview where natural does not form a distinct category.⁹⁵

Gunton⁹⁶ examines the logic of incarnation by considering whether the combined identity of Abraham’s visitors in Genesis 18 as man, angel and God could be a ‘type’ (my term) that is predictive of the incarnation of Christ, who is of two natures, both God and man. The mental image implicit in Gunton’s understanding (I suggest) is of the possibility of two types of creature (for example man and angel, physical and spiritual)

⁹³ Young, *Young’s Analytical*. p663.

⁹⁴ (Walker, *Enemy*. p200.) “‘I’ see no reason to quarrel with the definition of miracle as an ‘exception’ to the laws of nature.” (EVANS, C.S., 1982, *Philosophy of Religion: thinking about our faith*. Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, p109.)

⁹⁵ Debates about whether a particular ailment is due to a spiritual or a physical cause arise from a confusion of categories as “... it is not possible to give a diagnosis which distinguishes between sickness and possession ... they represent two possible aspects of the same event.” (HOLLENWEGER, WALTER J., 1976, ‘Theology of the New World III: the religion of the poor is not a poor religion.’ 228-232 In: *The Expository Times*. 87(8) May 1976, p231, citing Dr. W. Schulte.) “Medical and divine healings are complementary, not antithetical, and both are God given.” (Omoyajowo, *Cherubim and Seraphim*. p179.) In comparing demon and natural causation “... both/and is often a better medicine than either/or ...”. (PERRY, M., 1987, *Deliverance. Psychic disturbances and occult involvement*. London: SPCK, p105.) Imitation of Western language use has resulted in the invention of categories of causation called ‘natural’ or ‘physical’ in Africa which on close examination fall under ‘spiritual causation’ in British English. Purely material causation cannot exist in a monistic philosophy. See also Section 3.3.3.

⁹⁶ GUNTON, C.E., 1983, *Yesterday and Today: a study of continuities in Christology*. Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, p78.

inhabiting one space. Non-physical and physical are considered to be of a different order and non-interconvertible according to Newtonian physics.⁹⁷ Hence the Western mind has to concede ‘supernatural’ as it juggles the possibility of ‘word’ becoming ‘flesh’. The difference between physical and spiritual being blurred to the Luo people, implies (again as above) that the question of a person’s identity is one of power (or force in Tempels’ terms). The notion of ‘being’ equating to ‘force’ that is retained in the Western world in the realm of ‘supernatural’ is in Luoland after all ‘normal’.

A puzzle here is how a non-physical entity such as a word or issue, can become a physical (and of course spiritual) entity such as a human being. Davis’ description of the people on the Congo side of lake Tanganyika, which certainly also applies more widely to SSA including Luoland, demonstrates a conception of reality in which spiritual, physical and force intermingle. This is classically illustrated in SSA understandings of medicine that causes Davis to speak of “the eventfulness of things and the thingfulness of events ...”.⁹⁸ Davis goes on to say that “The overlap between events and things characteristic of the substantial world makes logical a continuity of bodily and circumstantial therapies.”⁹⁹ ‘Word becoming flesh’ holds a very different dynamic in the African as against the Western mind.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Einstein undermined this by giving $e=mc^2$ (energy equals mass times the speed of light squared.) Yet popular understanding and much of the scientific fraternity continues to operate on Newtonian presuppositions.

⁹⁸ (Davis, *Death in Abeyance*, p254.) Authors who twist English to try and accommodate African contextual impacts, such as here Davis, can end up inventing words.

⁹⁹ Davis, *Death in Abeyance*, p258.

¹⁰⁰ “With regard to the expression of the mystery of Christian faith, all the languages on earth are equal” (TSHIANDA, JOSÉE NGALULU, 2005, ‘Quest for Theological Lexicons in African Languages.’ 40-54 In: Loba-Mkole, Jean-Claude, and Wendland, Ernst R., (eds.) *Interacting with Scriptures in Africa*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, p48.) says Tshianda in defending African languages against allegations of poverty. Because a language cannot be separated from a people and culture, as meaning arises not from semantics but pragmatics, then surely we must accept that some languages are better than others at expressing Christian mysteries? Secularised (European) languages’ metaphysical vocabulary is associated with backwardness or primitivity. Parallel words in African languages implicitly suggest the activities of ancestors.

Polanyi's description of 'tacit knowledge' again suggests that a doctrine such as that of the incarnation must be affected by whether or not one accepts the existence of 'objective truth' that is 'out there' and unaffected by diverse ways of perceiving.¹⁰¹ Polanyi¹⁰² argues that "the act of knowing includes an appraisal; and this personal coefficient, which shapes all factual knowledge, bridges in doing so the disjunction between subjectivity and objectivity." Polanyi compares the process of learning with that of the use of an instrument such as a walking stick. The mind of the habitual user of a walking stick does not register varying levels of pressure on the palm of the hand by the stick being held. Instead the mind tacitly incorporates the stick, and thus is able to feel with the end of the stick. Polanyi explains that the stick becomes an extension to our body. In that sense we 'dwell in the stick' and so "it is not by looking at things, but by dwelling in them, that we understand their joint meaning."¹⁰³

To Polanyi, dwelling-in of our surroundings being an inherent part of the acquisition of new understanding, is "an indispensable part of all knowledge."¹⁰⁴ He goes on to say that therefore "the ideal of eliminating all personal elements of knowledge would, in effect, aim at the destruction of all knowledge."¹⁰⁵ Polanyi has his sights set on the objectivity claims of science. Theology beware – his being correct also puts a big question mark on the possibility of the transference of theological knowledge cross-culturally through the mere

¹⁰¹ "A positive conception of objectivity in particular has passed without notice into biblical criticism ...". (MEYER, B.F., 1989, *Critical Realism and the New Testament*. Pennsylvania: Pickwick Publications, p200.)

¹⁰² (Polanyi, *Personal*. p17.) As quoted in Section 3.2.12.

¹⁰³ POLANYI, Michael, 1983, *The Tacit Dimension*. Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, p18.

¹⁰⁴ (Polanyi, *The Tacit*. p20.) Described by Sanneh as "the unacknowledged background to the active foreground of formal discourse." (SANNEH, LAMIN, 1993, *Encountering the West: Christianity and the global cultural process*. New York: Orbis, p238.)

¹⁰⁵ Polanyi, *The Tacit*. p20.

use of language.¹⁰⁶ That human we see is more than meets the eye, as he has from birth learned to indwell the peculiar features of his surroundings in particular culturally guided ways, that are profoundly determining his abilities at acquiring, mulling over and divulging theological knowledge. In other words, to use linguistic terminology, the impact of words cannot be determined without consideration of the contexts of their use.

7.3.2. Assumptions that lead the Hermeneutical exercise astray from its very inception

The West seems to believe that the rest of the world has a functionally equivalent worldview to theirs.¹⁰⁷ Supposedly profound understandings of cultural differences are brushed aside when the ‘rubber hits the road’¹⁰⁸ and the economically – powerful West transfers its view of life onto the rest of the world in its, unfortunately, indecipherable code.¹⁰⁹ Inside and outside of theology, students are obliged to read and study texts written in a ‘language code’ totally different from theirs. With no translation being

¹⁰⁶ “theology ... is bound to be culturally conditioned in the questions it raises and answers and in the methodology and terminology it uses.” (TABER, C.R., 1978, ‘Is there more than one way to do Theology: anthropological comments on the doing of theology.’ 4-10 In: *Gospel in Context*. Volume 1, Number 7, January 1978, p5.)

¹⁰⁷ The assumption that language processed through a non-Western worldview will have an equivalent meaning as if it were processed through a Western worldview, forgetting that “the mind contributes the concepts with the help of which experience is interpreted.” (Gunton, ‘Knowledge and Culture.’ p90.)

¹⁰⁸ “Theory is all too often used to protect us from the awesome complexity of the world.” (Sparks, ‘Doing Cross Cultural.’ WWW.) Sparks’ writing is incredible, as she desperately seems to be searching for a theology, without considering God. That is, the questions that she is forced to ask by the lack of an objective base that she finds cross culturally, seem to me to be none other than questions of ‘well, what does God want ...’ except that she does not phrase them in that way.

¹⁰⁹ Newbigin telling us of Western politics being “reduced to a conflict of views about how to keep the cycle of production and consumption going. Questions of ultimate purpose [being] excluded from the public world” (NEWBIGIN, LESSLIE, 1986, *Foolishness to the Greeks: the Gospel and Western Culture*. London: SPCK, p30.) is incomprehensible to the Luo people. (Ogutu, ‘An Historical.’ p67.)

available, this results in a life of half-knowing and misunderstanding.¹¹⁰ I am not hereby disagreeing with Mudimbe.¹¹¹ Yes of course, as the West learned from the Greeks, so Africa can learn from the West. The difference that I perceive is that whereas the West translated a text whose author was dead, thus making it their own, Africa seems to think it (including its children in primary schools) can understand (living) Western English *without interpretation*.

Ngumi in discussing AICs, especially in Kenya, points out that church schism is sometimes an outcome of “misunderstanding on trivial matters to do with the imposition of Western culture as a pre-requisite to faith.”¹¹² Struggles that a Western author goes through in trying to decipher non-Western beliefs are well illustrated by Wink.¹¹³ Despite his attempt at unpacking the nature of ‘principalities and powers’ (such as found in Ephesians 1:21), Wink cannot bring himself to accept the possibility of there being spiritual powers that can act independently to bring about evil (bad). Instead, to please his Western readership, he confuses Biblical *daimons* with a Marxist perception of a domination system claiming that Jesus’ “assault was against the basic presuppositions and structure of *oppression* itself” (my emphasis).¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Someone brought up in as non-British a culture as the average Kenyan town or village cannot gain a sufficient grasp of a typical British text to be able to put into practice effectively what they are trying to learn. Yet the Kenyan education system being almost totally reliant on books written outside of Africa, and expertise devised in distant lands means that it will never fully enlighten a Kenyan person, but sometimes act as a damper or even block on his or her use of personal initiative.

¹¹¹ Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*. p79.

¹¹² NGUMI, GODFREY, 1996, ‘The African Initiated Churches – Affirming the Identity, Channelling the Power.’ In: *Bulletin for Contextual Theology African Theology* Volume Three, No.2, 1996, <http://www.hs.unp.ac.za/theology/aics.htm> (accessed 29.09.04)

¹¹³ WINK, WALTER, 1992, *Engaging the Powers: discernment and resistance in a world of domination* Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

¹¹⁴ (Wink, *Engaging*. p136.) See also O’Brien. (O’BRIEN, PETER, 1982, ‘Principalities and Powers and the Relationship to Structures.’ 50-61 In: *Evangelical Review of Theology*. Volume 6, Number 1, April 1982.) Wink seems to perceive the question of the presence of ‘powers’ in broader worldview terms in his later writings. (WINK, WALTER, 1998, *The Powers that Be: theology for a new millennium*. London: Doubleday pp13-36.)

Ferdinando suggests that the Bible makes very little mention of any effect of deceased persons on the living.¹¹⁵ He later concedes¹¹⁶ that a “biblical theme [may] ... not only [be] adopted but also readily transformed into traditional African categories.” Applying the latter to the former I suggest he would find that, given an African reading of the Bible in an African language,¹¹⁷ deceased persons are constantly in view. This point came home to me in listening to a *Maarifa Lecture* at KIST by (Bishop) Byrum Makhoha¹¹⁸ on the role of ancestors in the African church, in the course of which he found numerous Biblical references to the role of the dead. “Any departure from the ancestral faithful commitment to the only Lord resulted into perilous havoc and punitive misery (Judges 2:11-14, 2:17-21; Deuteronomy 32:16-26; Ezra 7:26; II Chronicles 21:10; 24:18)” shared Makokha.¹¹⁹ Makokha concludes that “Any departure by any generation from their ancestral cultural bequeathal ... leads to serious dysfunctionality in the society ...”.¹²⁰ Ferdinando does elsewhere concede the same in terms of African religion,¹²¹ perhaps only failing to realise the way in which someone’s language and culture is reflected back, through ‘tacit knowledge’ (see above), into their reading of Scripture.¹²²

¹¹⁵ Ferdinando, ‘Biblical Concepts.’ p275.

¹¹⁶ Ferdinando, ‘Biblical Concepts.’ p284.

¹¹⁷ In which category I would include English as used in Africa.

¹¹⁸ MAKOKHA, BYRUM AKHAHENDA, 2000, ‘Place of Ancestors in Scriptural Context.’ *Maarifa Lecture* presented on 7th June 2000, Kima International School of Theology. Unpublished.

¹¹⁹ Makokha, ‘Place of Ancestors.’ p7.

¹²⁰ Makokha, ‘Place of Ancestors.’ p9.

¹²¹ “...in the Bible, the spirit and occult world is effectively eclipsed by God, in African traditional religion the situation is reversed.” (Ferdinando, ‘Biblical Concepts.’ p269.)

¹²² Burkert encourages us to associate *daimon* (Greek) with *jochiende* (*Dholuo*) or *mizimu* (*Kiswahili*) which are words for ‘ghosts’ or ‘the dead who are still active among the living’ as he shares that: “Later in Hellenistic grave descriptions it became almost a matter of course to describe the dead person as a *daimon*.” (Burkert, *Greek Religion*. p181.) Not all authors agree on the importance of ‘forces’ at the time of Christ: “the concept of mighty forces that are hostile to man, from which he sought relief, was not prevalent in the thought world of the first century AD.” (CARR, WESLEY, 1981, *Angels and Principalities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p43.)

A further instance of transformation of contextual effect according to culture is in the use of sound amplification systems. “The electronic church pulsates with the secular energy of modernity” laments Walker¹²³ in his account of modernism versus Christianity in the modern world. While I find the word ‘modern’ is much used in Kenyan English, its contextual effect is transformed.¹²⁴ In Gem electronic sound systems complement or replace the drum and other loud musical instruments in performing a cleansing role of chasing away *jochiende* (ghosts) from an area.¹²⁵

Beyer’s study of ‘blessing’ in the Old Testament, concludes that at least later Old Testament uses clearly exclude “completely any magical or mystical understanding.” Is this not ‘eisigesis’? How can this be the case, say, in the *Dholuo* Bible in which the word used for ‘blessing’ (*gueth*) is implicitly magical / mystical?¹²⁶ Beyer’s conclusion may only apply when the Bible is written in a *language* that excludes “completely any

¹²³ Walker, *Enemy*. p109.

¹²⁴ The position of what is ‘modern’ in the society in Gem is very different from what it is in, say, Britain.

¹²⁵ Letting off guns at a Karamojong marriage celebration is producing “another impressive noise to add to the occasion, not a degeneration to the gun law of Western films.” (KNIGHTON, BEN, 2005, *The Vitality of Karamojong Religion: dying tradition or living faith?* Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p131.) Nürnberger laments “if we cannot make sense to modernity, our witness to traditionalism will produce misleading messages.” (NÜRNBERGER, KLAUS, 2004, ‘Orthodoxy as an Impediment to the Relevance of the Gospel Today.’ 210-232 In: *Missionalia*. 32:2 (August 2004) p215.) Presumably the reverse also applies, that Christian teaching designed to ‘make sense’ to what is ‘modern’ in the West will ‘produce misleading messages’ when it meets what is ‘modern’ in Kenya. The idea that the church must adjust to secularism or die, is certainly not true everywhere. (Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*. pp9-11.)

¹²⁶ For a close analysis of blessing in Greek and its Biblical use see Beyer. (BEYER, HERMANN W., 1964, εὐλογέω, εὐλογητός, εὐλογία, ἐνευλογέω 754-765 In: Kittel, Gerhard (ed.) 1964, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Volume II, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, p759.) “Israel delivered man from the magical concept of the world.” (MORIARTY, F.L., 1974, ‘Word as Power in the Ancient Near East.’ 345-374 In: Bream, H. et al (eds.) *Old Testament Studies in Honour of Jacob M. Myers*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, p360.) But could this be anachronism? Could it be that Western theologians who pride themselves on the advances achieved in expelling superstitious beliefs from their people, then read this back into the Scriptures?

magical or mystical understanding.”¹²⁷ Of how much Biblical scholarship can similar things be said?¹²⁸

7.3.3. Opening the Hermeneutical Can-of-Worms

A difficulty faced in education in SSA, is that available teaching materials are almost invariably from a Western origin. This has been particularly striking to me in teaching World Religions at Kima International School of Theology, in which African students are presented with a Western perspective of (among others) Eastern religions. While profoundly aware as to how differently I was describing these religions against how my students themselves would perceive them, I had no choice but to use a ‘Western filter’ in my teaching as this was the nature of all the available materials.¹²⁹ The same applies to the Bible. African students whose culture is in many respects much closer to the Scriptures than that in Britain are nevertheless required to interpret the Scriptures through a foreign lens.¹³⁰ “Unless you are deep in your tradition, you can’t understand the Scriptures” shares

¹²⁷ If the Scriptures were so effective at excluding magical beliefs, why are African people’s understanding of them frequently so ‘magical’? Biblical belief has at times in the past been ‘magical’. (KELLY, J.F., 1989, ‘The Bible in Early Medieval Ireland.’ 198-214 In: Hunter, D.G., (ed) *Preaching in the Patristic Age: Studies in Honour of Walter J. Burhardt*. S.J. New York: Paulist Press, p206.) The Venerable Bede’s writing on the basis of Biblical precedent shows that the English of his day did not discount miracles – he recorded many in his description of the history of Christianity. (James III, ‘Venerable Bede.’ pp101-102.) Are such not magic? It is only ‘modern English’ which has made it impossible to talk of miracles without seeming to be deceptive or fraudulent.

¹²⁸ Western Biblical scholars take Scriptural terms as having those contextual effects that arise out of their translation into Western words. There is a great danger that such themes, motifs and so on will be coming from the biblical text only through having originated in the community of the commentator. (“Ways of reading” are “extensions of community perspectives.” (Fish, *Is There a Text?* p16.))

¹²⁹ Plus of course for myself as a Westerner, the basis of my own instinctive approach. That “the riches of Eastern spirituality have great relevance for spirituality in Africa” suggests a closer relationship between the East and Africa than between the East and the West. (Healey, *A Fifth Gospel*. p xv.)

¹³⁰ “It should be understood that any tool of Biblical interpretation emerges out of a certain social cultural context and generally bears the imprint of that context.” (Manus, *Intercultural*. p52.)

Bediako.¹³¹ “... A cross cultural commentary is not an optional extra, but a necessity ...” for Western people as it is they who have moved away from ‘Biblical culture’.¹³² The Scriptures are of course themselves an interpretation of events intended to be read in a certain way. Its facts do not stand independently of interpretation¹³³ then a wrong interpretation of a (perhaps) correct interpretation is as wrong as a wrong interpretation of the original text.

Epistemological theories that hold sway in the West are sometimes of dubious philosophical foundation. John Locke’s notion that “mechanical matter (could) account for the rational activity involved in the having of ideas” was effectively critiqued by Berkeley¹³⁴ yet continues to hold much sway, particularly for the positivist school.¹³⁵ Such materialist ideals underlie the long running debate on the extent to which a text, such as that of the Scriptures carries meaning, with the constant risk that perhaps “our own interests, desires and self hood [are imposed] onto that which the biblical text proclaims.”¹³⁶ Many claims that objectivity in meaning resides in the text, through the humanness of the reader or the intention of the author etc., have come to be powerfully critiqued.¹³⁷

131 BEDIAKO, KWAME, 2006, Discussion following lecture presented at Annual School of Theology of the African Institute for Christian Mission and Research (AICMAR), Butere, Kenya, 1st to 4th August 2006.

132 Wierzbicka, ‘Jewish.’ p597.

133 Gunton, Yesterday and Today. p61.

134 GUNTON, C.E., 1985, Enlightenment and Alienation: an essay towards a Trinitarian theology. Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan and Scott, p29.

135 Secularism and modernism are as guilty as any other ‘religions’ of believing what they want to believe or what suits them. I question whether there is sufficient reason not to refer to ideologies such as the above as ‘religions’.

136 Holland, cited by Thiselton. (THISELTON, ANTHONY C., 1992, New Horizons in Hermeneutics. Glasgow: Harper Collins, p530.)

137 “... the notion that a text means only what its author intends is historically naïve.” (STEINMETZ, David C., 1986, ‘The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis’ 65-77 In: McKim, Donald K., (ed) A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: major trends in biblical interpretation. Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, p75.) It is also culturally naïve, and certainly naïve of the rules of pragmatic linguistics. Manus argues that hermeneutics must go “beyond the author’s initial intention.” (Manus, Intercultural. p32.)

A written text is, from a physical perspective “little dark marks.”¹³⁸ Thus it is ‘mechanical matter’, which (according to Berkeley above) cannot of itself produce ideas. Hence I suggest, along with Fish¹³⁹ that meaning resides in the reader. This does not mean that a text can mean anything a reader wants it to mean, as a reader is invariably a member of a community, and it is community interpretive strategies (that) exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read.¹⁴⁰ Any identification, recognition or guidance coming from the author will then be that found according to the particular individual reader’s variant of his community’s hermeneutic.¹⁴¹

Thiselton tackles Fish by claiming that a “trans-contextual frame of reference for meanings can be found in the common behaviour of mankind.”¹⁴² This assertion ignores the conclusion in Chapter 2 – that language *usage* can be determinative of meaning (contextual effect). The incredible variety of ways in which I have heard and seen texts used in crossing between the UK and Africa confirm to me that, especially given the infinite variety of possible contexts of human existence, the possibilities of interpretation of Scriptural texts are wide open. In concluding our discussion of Fish’s hermeneutic,

138 Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*. p1.

139 Fish, *Is There a Text?*

140 Fish, *Is There a Text?* p13.

141 Life context having an almost determinate impact on Scriptural interpretation may seem to be a threat to evangelical Christianity. It can also be taken as a challenge – for the need for Scriptural teaching to be carried out by those (missionaries) who have immersed themselves in the worldview of those they are reaching.

142 Thiselton, *New Horizons*. p541.

we can agree that a community is a key interpretive guide, but that mismatches in *context* can still result in widely varying interpretations *within* a given community.¹⁴³

While knowledge of an author can affect interpretation, differences between people in understanding of even simple commands should make us realise that authorial intention cannot be determinative.¹⁴⁴ Klein asks "... what value is an authoritative text if we cannot know if we have interpreted it correctly?"¹⁴⁵ One reason that this attempt at delineating a *sensus plenior* founders, is that the New Testament use of the Old Testament is often far from plain.¹⁴⁶ Klein considers the possibility that it may be someone's *response* to a text that varies rather than its meaning, but finds this an unfruitful avenue to follow. Klein concludes "Where sincere Christians come to two different interpretations, we must allow that both options are possible ...".¹⁴⁷

"... a critical method of Biblical interpretation can produce only Bible-critical propositions" says Maier in his book provocatively entitled *The End of Historical Critical Method*.¹⁴⁸ This method, at one-time promulgating much liberal theology, has been found to be generative of its own conclusions. It should not be surprising that

¹⁴³ Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*. p16.

¹⁴⁴ For example, you can tell someone to meet you at nine on Tuesday, but they will think you have said to meet them if its fine on Tuesday. Or asking someone to fetch a broom, can result in their mistakenly thinking that you want them to sweep up. See Hirsch (HIRSCH, E.D. Jr., 1967, *Validity in Interpretation*. London: Yale University Press.) for a defense of the author and Payne (PAYNE, PHILIP B., 1977, 'The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author's Intention.' 243-252 In: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. Vol. 20, No. 3, September 1977.) for a critique of Hirsch.

¹⁴⁵ KLEIN, W.W., BLOMBERG, C.L., and HUBBARD, R.L., 1993, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. London: Word Publishing, p145.

¹⁴⁶ See 1 Corinthians 9:9b-10 in which Paul explains an Old Testament reference to *dhok* (cattle) as being to people.

¹⁴⁷ Klein, *Introduction*. p157.

¹⁴⁸ MAIER, GERHARD, 1974, *The End of the Historical Critical Method*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, p11.

interpreting the scriptures with the starting assumption of a 'closed world' will reveal that God has had no role to play in the history recorded therein. Third World theologians, according to Harrington¹⁴⁹ suspect that historical critical method "continues to function ... as a legitimization of the capitalistic technocracy to which the enlightenment lead." Maier suggests that the historical–biblical method, that retains useful historical insights while recognising God's role in history, replace previous attention to historical criticism.¹⁵⁰

Literary approaches to hermeneutics can seem to offer a relief from the harshness of alternatives such as historical critical analysis. Yet they come with their own bias and peculiar perspectives illustrated by Morgan's admitting that literary approaches combine "a close study of the Hebrew text with the techniques and sensitivities developed in the study of *modern novels*" (my emphasis).¹⁵¹ A literary approach is no freer of language restraints than is any other. Van Hoozer has made a valiant attempt in a considerable

¹⁴⁹ HARRINGTON, D.J., 1986, 'Biblical Hermeneutics in Recent Discussion: New Testament.' 13-20 In: McKim, Donald K., (ed.) *A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: major trends in Biblical Interpretation*. Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, p16.

¹⁵⁰ (Maier, *The End of*. Chapter 4.) But should our faith rest upon "that [which] is confessed to have happened but about which we have to admit that it did not happen in that way." (Hesse, cited by HASEL, G., 1991, *Old Testament Theology: basic issues in the current debate*. (revised and expanded fourth edition) Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, p117.) Can historical truth be a necessary foundation stone to our faith if inter-cultural interpretation can so majorly transform its nature? "... theology is a historical affair" says Goldingay (GOLDINGAY, J., 1987, *Theological Diversity and the Authority of the Old Testament*. Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, p13.), apparently meaning this in more ways than one, including that the interpretation of theological texts always occurs within a specific historical context. Hasel critiques historical method as being rooted in 'godless' or secular principles and quotes Collins: "their value for theology lies in their function as myth or story rather than in their historical accuracy." (Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*. p138.) If secular history is no longer a foundation stone, then what is? Perhaps we must depend on God to give us the correct interpretations. Provence expresses this as: "prayer [places] our understanding at the mercy of the subject matter of the text." (PROVENCE, T.E., 1986, 'The sovereign subject matter: hermeneutics in the church dogmatics.' 241-262 In: McKim, Donald K., (ed.) *A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: major trends in Biblical Interpretation*. Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, p262.)

¹⁵¹ Morgan, *Biblical Interpretation*. p224.

volume to convince us that “meaning is independent of our attempts to interpret it.”¹⁵²

The very length of this volume unfortunately demonstrates the sheer number of bases he has had to cover to drive home his point. The task of explaining his arguments to a Luo person brought up in a Luo community in Gem would be the task of a lifetime – if not a sheer impossibility.¹⁵³

7.3.4. Biblical Hermeneutics’ Expanded Horizons

It would seem that as Grice for linguistics, so Polanyi for Biblical hermeneutics has forced a widening of the horizon that needs to be considered in achieving understanding. As semantics is grossly insufficient to explain meaning in language without pragmatics, so looking for a ‘plain meaning’ in the scriptures can be spurious unless the indwelling of the environment of the author and the reader are taken into account. Hermeneutics being constrained to specific techniques such as historical critical method, separation of exegesis from application or the study of Biblical languages, is arbitrary. Hermeneutics must be about the whole of life.

When a great deal in life is different, as in the contrast between African and European worldviews, then so must hermeneutics differ. As Kaufman expresses in his thesis V, the derivation of a theology requires a “continuous reference to contemporary forms of

¹⁵² VAN HOOZER, KEVIN J., 1998, *Is There a Meaning in this Text? The Bible, the reader and the morality of literary knowledge*. Leicester: Apollos (an imprint of Inter-Varsity Press) p9.

¹⁵³ Note the irony if I am right in saying that it would be impossible to explain the meaning of a book that claims that meaning is independent of interpretation.

experience and life.”¹⁵⁴ This is something often insufficiently realised by African Biblical scholars. Bediako¹⁵⁵ aims to create space for an African exegesis, but in doing so feels constrained to draw on Western writers, and those non-Western writers who are deeply steeped in the Western academy, thus creating a wide gap with African theology happening on the ground. I find myself struggling with similar issues as presumably Bediako. That is – the need to engage with Western scholarship to satisfy an international readership clashes with my desire to represent what is *not* Western. It is like having women demonstrate masculinity, or someone using a computer to argue that computers are not advantageous to society. Necessity forces apparently contradictory behaviour. Ekem wants to “re-interpret the Biblical message in the light of concrete realities within the contemporary African environment”¹⁵⁶ but instead of giving us in-context examples, he confines himself to scholarly discussion rooted in semantics. Laryea¹⁵⁷ appears to assume that the Scripture is interpreted in lecture halls and not crisis ridden noisy gatherings of sweating bodies. Laryea’s pointing out that ‘faith’ in the *Ga* language can mean “to take and eat” (as it is through sharing in food that agreements between *Ga* people are sealed) is a good example of a vagary of translation.

Laryea’s account gives us the impression that while *Ga* is a complex language peculiarly rooted in numerous myths and metaphors, the English that he uses to write to us is neutral, uncomplex and straight-forward. This widely accepted but extremely dubious

¹⁵⁴ (KAUFMAN, G., 1981, *The Theological Imagination*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, p274.) “Passages that seem mildly embarrassing for a Western audience read completely differently, and relevantly, in the new churches of Africa or Latin America.” (Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*. p128.)

¹⁵⁵ BEDIAKO, KWAME, 2003, ‘Biblical Exegesis in the African Context – the factor and impact of translated Scriptures.’ 15-23 In: *Journal of African Christian Thought*. Volume 6, No. 1 (June 2003).

¹⁵⁶ EKEM, JOHN D.K., 2003, ‘Biblical Exegesis in an African Pluralistic Context: some reflections.’ 31-43 In: *Journal of African Christian Thought*. Volume 6, number 1, June 2003. p31.

¹⁵⁷ LARYEA, PHILIP T., 2003, ‘A critical Examination of the Issues, Meanings and Interpretations Arising from Exegesis in the Mother Tongue.’ 35-43 *Journal of African Christian Thought*. Vol. 6, No. 1, June 2003.

presupposition, that the English language and the English speaking world is the simple and objective norm and the base from which everything else is to be evaluated, is extremely widespread. Westfield notes it in the self-understanding of whites: “For white people, their racial identity is ‘the great unsaid’. White people do not hesitate to make racial references to others, but they avoid making racial references to themselves and their community.”¹⁵⁸ Are native English speakers really so unique and so straightforward, or is this assumption of the ‘objectivity’ of English hiding things that would be significant if unveiled? What then is the nature of ‘international English’? Perhaps it: “is like a thin wash, marvelously fluid, but without adequate base.”¹⁵⁹ Does Laryea’s English hang in the ether, or if it must have roots then which ones is Laryea using?

Kato falls into the same trap, shown clearly by the fourth of his ten points for ‘safeguarding Biblical Christianity in Africa’, in which he says that we should “carefully study African traditional religions ... but only secondarily to the inductive study of God’s word.”¹⁶⁰ My question for Kato is in which language he is to do his study, and if it is an African language how is he going to be able to avoid being immersed in the African tradition in order to understand the very terms that he is using?¹⁶¹ If he is to do

¹⁵⁸ (WESTFIELD, NANCY LYNNE, 2004, ‘Teaching for Globalised consciousness: black professor, white student and shame.’ 73-83 In: *Black Theologian International Journal*. Volume 2, Number 1, January 2004, p80.) This is presumably why although much talked of in the West, ‘racism’ is not recognised for what it is in Africa, despite the aura with which Whites are often perceived.

¹⁵⁹ (Steiner, *After Babel*. p494.) Also quoted in footnote 113 in Chapter 8.

¹⁶⁰ (KATO, BYANG, H., 1975, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*. Kisumu: Evangel Publishing House, p183.) It is unfortunate that it has to be a European (Palmer) who comes out in Kato’s defense. (PALMER, TIMOTHY, 2004, ‘Byang Kato: a theological reappraisal’ 3-20 In: *African Journal of Evangelical Theology* Volume 23, 1, 2004.)

¹⁶¹ “... one should be cautious of reading African *ubuntu* into the Bible” says Punt. (Punt, ‘Value of Ubuntu.’ p95.) not realising that someone approaching the Bible from an *ubuntu* worldview, will *invariably* find the same in the Bible. The only way for a European to begin to understand how an African (invariably) reads the Bible is by (assuming that *ubuntu* really is a universal characteristic of African culture) “reading *ubuntu* into the Bible.” (See Section 3.3.2.)

his study in English, then he is unfortunately ‘rootless’ (see Section 8.4). We surely cannot agree with Lasor: “Finally, we must reject any notion that the *sensus plenior* comes from any mystical, spiritual or other source than the Scriptures.”¹⁶² Where does a language derive its contextual effects (‘meanings’) if not from outside of the Scripture? Words in a language into which the Bible has been translated are already known by a reader before he opens his Bible. Hence the Bible will always be read in subtly but profoundly different ways according to the particulars of a language (culture). In cultures such as those in Africa, word usages often arise from exactly the “mystical, spiritual” environment, which Lasor seems to oppose. For example, few terms are less mystical and spiritual than ‘*jachien*’, which is the Luo translation given in the New Testament for the Greek *daimon*.

Kato’s writing stakes the claim that African scholars, if genuine and honest in their Biblical exposition, will arrive at theological positions equivalent to those of current evangelical Western scholars.¹⁶³ This view has had a great stultifying effect on mission, especially in the late twentieth Century. If the careful African scholar will draw the ‘correct’ conclusion anyway, then why should Westerners trouble themselves with trying to get into the inside of the African worldviews?¹⁶⁴ If even top African Christian scholars are telling the West that they are absolutely right, and Africans ‘merely’ have to overcome their superstitious past in order to get to where the West is,¹⁶⁵ then that is no

¹⁶² LASOR, WILLIAM SANFORD, 1986, ‘The “Sensus Plenior” and Biblical Interpretation.’ 47-64 In: McKim, Donald K., (ed.) *A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: major trends in Biblical Interpretation*. Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, p64.

¹⁶³ But what remains elusive “... is a properly biblically grounded reformulation of African thought from which a theology should naturally evolve.” (Punt, ‘Value of Ubuntu.’ p96.)

¹⁶⁴ Hence mission to Africa is these days increasingly short-term, confined to support roles, and carried out in Western languages.

¹⁶⁵ Forgetting that superstition “could easily find a fit with older Christian ideas, and with the thought-world of the Bible itself.” (Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*. p123.) Forgetting also the “dichotomy between the

theological challenge but a panacea to paternalism. ‘Correct theology’ has become a rarified construct, arising by default through correct objective thinking, no longer requiring commitment, martyrdom, sacrifice, dedication, testimonies of Christian devotion or the crossing of cultural barriers.¹⁶⁶ Such a theology is now underpinned by magic. (A non-magical process easily becomes magical following translation.)¹⁶⁷ Proselytism by sharing in the lives of the people by missionaries, it would appear, has come to be of a bygone age.¹⁶⁸

Despite bringing some excellent insights, the above authors fall into the same trap of treating Biblical interpretation as an exercise in semantics in blissful ignorance of the fact that English words alone do not carry cultural presuppositions that are vital to achieving standardised interpretations. “Evangelicalism in Africa claims itself to be cultureless, timeless, and unhistorical in order to cover up the fact that it is American and conservative.”¹⁶⁹ The international English being used, has a great rootless mystical

formation of Christian conscience and the actual life experienced by Christians in modern Africa ...”. (Rwiza, *Formation*. p103.)

¹⁶⁶ “The *Book of Martyrs* ... has shaped the ethos and sensibility of English speaking Protestantism.” (WILLIAMS, DONALD T., 1995, ‘John Foxe.’ 117-138 In: Bauman, Michael and Klauber, Martin, I., *Historians of the Christian Tradition: their methodology and influence on Western thought*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman Publishers, p117.) Western theologians frequently accept the key role of martyrdom in the church of the past, while denying its place today. (Bright, *A History of Israel*. p425.) For an abridged edition of the *Book of Martyrs* see Foxe. (FOX, JOHN, nd. *Foxes Christian Martyrs of the World*. Chicago: Moody Press.)

¹⁶⁷ “Planting maize with fertiliser improves yields” could be translated as “*Kipidho oduma kod yath pokni obiro bedo maduong molo*” which translated back into English can be “if you plant maize together with magical substances you will receive more than ever.” “Believe in Jesus and you will be saved” can be translated as “*Yie kod Yesu mondo ochangi*” which can mean “agreeing with the white person brings healing”. (Translation on the basis of contextual effect.)

¹⁶⁸ The ‘Million Leaders Mandate’ president Hull tells us that “Presently in Asia and Africa we are training between 600,000 and 700,000 Christian leaders.” (CLINE, RICH, 2005, ‘One Leader at a Time.’ 10-11 In: *Idea*. January/February 2005, p10.) In the same article a Kenyan (Onesmus) is quoted extensively reporting great numerical success (p11.) with no guidance for readers on the pragmatic differences between Kenyan and Western English. (“We know truthfully that African people do not attend to a white man’s teachings so as to learn from him, but because he has things to give out.” (My translation from *Dholuo* of a comment by an old man at a Siaya Theological Centre gathering on 19th March 2005.))

¹⁶⁹ Shares Njoya. (Cited in Bediako, *Theology and identity*. p387.)

vagueness. Readers filling the gaps using pragmatic content from their own cultural-community perspective draw their own conclusions.

7.4. Aspects of Luo Hermeneutics

The above gives us an indication of the state of the art of Biblical and general hermeneutics in Western scholarly circles. I now attempt to link the above with how Biblical hermeneutics is carried out by the Luo people of Gem.

7.4.1. Worldview as Reflected in Language

Differences in hermeneutical practice, whether semantic or pragmatic, may be hidden in the process of translation to English.¹⁷⁰ In other words, scholars studying hermeneutics (such as Pickens in writing on Matthews Ajuoga,¹⁷¹ John Padwick¹⁷² writing on the neighbouring Luyia people, and Moreau writing on the world of spirits in Africa¹⁷³ and others) using primarily non-mother-tongue languages are likely to be missing a great deal of what is going on. I have heard translation of *jachien mar homa* ('the ghost of the common cold') as 'cold'. Deep and complex cultural terms such as *dala*¹⁷⁴ may be translated simply as 'home.' *Ter* as 'levirate', thus ignoring its many specifically African

¹⁷⁰ Venuti, *The Scandals*. p5.

¹⁷¹ Pickens, *African Christian*.

¹⁷² Padwick, 'Spirit, Desire.'

¹⁷³ Moreau, *The World*.

characteristics. *Dhako* can be given as ‘woman’, as if she behaves like a typical American or British lady. People going to *ywakne* someone who has died, with all that this implies for the Luo, is translated as to mourn, which for a mind informed of both cultures brings up a totally different image. *Hawi* (luck, good fortune, vital force, god) when used by the Luo frequently disappears completely in translation.

The same also happens in reverse, ‘business’ with all its implication of calculation of profit and loss and economics, is given as *hala*, a name describing what someone does in selling oranges on the roadside. ‘Education’, something deeply a part of the understanding of life in the UK, is given as *elimu* – a foreign product in a foreign language that children are forced to pass through in Kenya. A ‘house’, something which has by law to have numerous safety features, electricity, running-water, indoor bathroom, insulation and glass windows, becomes *ot*, that may be a mud thatched structure as little as ten foot square following no technical regulatory systems and with none of the above facilities or possibly even windows. Maranz explains how financial and ‘friendship’ systems in Africa differ from those in the West¹⁷⁵ and in his book writes separate sections for Western as against African understandings for many of the issues that he considers.¹⁷⁶ Yet being constrained to write in English, he uses the same words to label both. All the above illustrate how the use of one international language hides differences, and hence my preference in this thesis for an African language to be used in African scholarship to avoid such confusion.

¹⁷⁴ In brief ‘ancestral home’, where activities and the way of life are determined by numerous rules that are unknown to the Western world.

¹⁷⁵ Maranz, *African Friends*. p1.

I suspect that the above paragraphs are arousing a variety of emotions on the part of my reader. Some pride on the part of a Luo and confusion on the part of a Westerner on reading the above paragraph but one. Some consternation on the part of a Westerner that the above paragraph seems to be belittling and despising the Luo people, and thoughts on the part of the Luo person to the effect that I am being selective and making out that they are all 'poor', when they are not. I have passed the limit of where 'objective' academic writing should go and touched on sensitivities related to feelings of inferiority on the part of the Luo, and guilt on the part of the Westerner. The above can serve only as illustrations of the sheer pragmatic complexity of what goes on under the heading of 'translation'. The issues involved being as deep and wide as the difference between cultures makes it hard to know where to go from here.¹⁷⁷

Another basic linguistic association is worth mentioning because of its importance in churches, and in the relationship between modern times, Christianity and Luo (African) tradition. I have mentioned¹⁷⁸ that some scholars “ ... have not realised to what an extent in peoples understanding disease and suffering are synonymous with bewitchment and curse.”¹⁷⁹ Therefore saying 'I have a cold', while a morally neutral statement in British English, in *Dholuo* or Kenyan English carries strong implications that someone has been bewitched, has broken some taboo, otherwise been cursed or has 'lost their salvation'. Thus whole reams of meaning can be carried, that the person of British-cultural-origin may be totally unaware of.

¹⁷⁶ For example see pages 99-101.

¹⁷⁷ Tshianda suggests that 'theological lexicons' should be developed in various African languages (Tshianda, 'Quest.' 2005.) but fails to consider the impact of pragmatics. Theological lexicons are valuable but need be no panacea to us in the current age in which Western technically-based cultures dominate and distort what may once have been smooth semantic transitions.

¹⁷⁸ Harries, 'The Magical.' p497.

This is related to the understanding well explained by Davis as “the eventfulness of things and the thingfulness of events”.¹⁸⁰ A ‘thing’ is not usually ‘just a thing’ in Luoland. Someone coming into your house and leaving a stone on the table is not likely to be interpreted as forgetfulness, but as a purposeful activity, typically oriented to bringing some bad. Hills are not ‘just hills’, but places of meeting with ancestors or gods. Rivers are not ‘just’ rivers, but places at which troublesome spirits gather.¹⁸¹ Again, examples could be multiplied.

7.4.2. An Interpretive Example

Another means of investigating the peculiarities of Luo hermeneutics, would be to follow Ekem’s suggestion and to: “re-interpret the Biblical message in the light of concrete realities within the contemporary African environment”¹⁸² by making a comparative study of a particular Bible passage.¹⁸³ I have taken John 3:16, being well known by Evangelicals in the West, and part of the liturgy in a number of indigenous churches with which I am familiar. The passage is recorded below in *Dholuo* with a literal English translation (a) then in English from the NIV with a literal *Dholuo* translation (b) and then from a Greek and English interlinear Bible (c).

¹⁷⁹ “Nuer may speak, as we have seen, of the consequences of a sin by the same word ... as they use when they speak of the sin itself.” (Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer Religion*. p191.)

¹⁸⁰ (Davis, *Death in Abeyance*. p257.) Already quoted in Section 7.3.1. above.

¹⁸¹ In Luo belief there are certain *juogi* (spirits) that are commonly found in *nembe* (lakes/rivers).

¹⁸² Ekem, ‘Biblical Exegesis.’ p31.

¹⁸³ Manus’ approach of using a particular incident or story to act as a culturally specific interpretive context for a Biblical text could be an alternative. (Manus, *Intercultural*. p76.)

a. *Nyasaye nohero piny ahinya kama, omiyo nochiwo wuode ma miderma*

God loved the world a lot like this, it made him to give his son of alone

mondo ng'ama oyie kuome kik lal, to obed gi ngima ma

in order that whoever agrees with him not get lost, but be with life of

Nyaka chieng'.¹⁸⁴

up to the end (together).

b. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and

Nikech Nyasaye nohero piny kamano niya ochiwo makende

only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but

wuode ma miderma, mondo ng'at ang'ata ma doyie kuome kik otho to

have eternal life.¹⁸⁵

bedo kod mochwere ng'ima.

c. Οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον ὥστε

For thus loved – God the world, so as

Kuom kamano ohero – Nyasaye piny, mondo

τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων

the son the only begotten he gave that everyone believing

¹⁸⁴ Bible, *Muma Maler*. John 3:16.

¹⁸⁵ Bible, *New International*. John 3:16.

wuode mar miderma no chiwo mondo ng'at ang'ata moyie

εἰς αὐτόν μή ἀπόληται ἀλλ' εἴχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον.¹⁸⁶

in him may not perish but may have life eternal

*kuom e kik olal to bed kod ng'ima mochwere.*¹⁸⁷

Below are a few of the explanations I feel would be required of the Luo language version to a typical – Brit; and of the NIV to a typical Luo from Gem:

7.4.2.1. Explaining the *Dholuo* Version to Someone from Britain The term *hera* (love) is of little importance to the Luo as life is rather governed by *lour* (fear/respect)¹⁸⁸ making the love of God for humankind to be incredible and perhaps unfathomable. *Piny* (for the world) carries contextual effects of ‘down’ and even ‘the place of the dead’, making it particularly amazing that God should be concerned for such. *Nochiwo* (he gave) is more of ‘volunteered’ than simply to pass over, which would be *golo*. *Wuode* (his son) raises the question as to whether this is a classificatory son, or ‘actual’ son.¹⁸⁹ *Miderma* (only living) referring to Jesus I am told is only used for Jesus in Christian circles.¹⁹⁰ *Yie* (to agree) is here used to translate ‘belief’, this presenting considerable

¹⁸⁶ MARSHALL, ALFRED, 1993, *The Interlinear NRSV-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English*. Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, p26.

¹⁸⁷ I have here written the Luo from my knowledge of English and not from a knowledge of the original Greek.

¹⁸⁸ “in the daily lives of African peoples ... it is rare to hear people talking about love.” (Mbiti, *African Religions*. p38.)

¹⁸⁹ See Wilson. (Wilson, *Luo Customary*. p48.) To distinguish an actual from a classificatory son the Luo would add something like *monyuolo* (who he gave birth to). This was presumably considered too cumbersome and potentially misleading to be included here.

¹⁹⁰ I was told by a Luo person on 5th December 2003.

problems, especially given the Luo peoples proclivity to being in agreement with things – without this being subsequently demonstrated by their actions. *Kuome* is more like ‘to him’ than ‘in him.’ *Kik lal* (‘not get lost’) is used for ‘not punish’. *Kik* is an imperative subjunctive and therefore strong. *Lal* is to be lost. Closer to perish in a sense would be *kethore*, which is akin to being destroyed. *To* is weaker and used more generically than ‘but’ so is more akin to ‘and’. Because there is no word for have, *bed gi* is used, being to ‘be with’ or ‘stay with’. *Nyaka chieng* (everlasting) is somewhat ambiguous. It implies ‘up to the day’ or ‘up to the sun’. It is hard to believe that the Luo people seriously acknowledge that dead Christians go to eternal life with God, given their many and widely practiced funeral rituals. They are rather looking forward to being united with their dead ancestors, live colleagues, and yet un-born followers in a very African way. Nkemnkia suggests that in fact: “The Supreme Being of the West corresponds to what is eternal life for the Africans, conceived as a whole in the unity of the parts.”¹⁹¹ *Ng’ima* (life) is more like ‘force’ than ‘life’ itself.

7.4.2.2. Explaining the English version to Someone from Luoland God is often identified with an old bearded father figure. The way a father relates to his children is vastly different in the Western world to that found in Gem. Love has become a deeply rooted concept that many people see should be the guiding principle for the whole of life. The ‘world’ is clearly perceived of as a spherical structure on which we all live, many facets of which are under human control.¹⁹² To have an only son would not in Britain be taken as being bad luck or due to a curse. Whosoever, implies that the Gospel is universal and for all people in the world. To ‘believe’ is not only to agree, but to act

¹⁹¹ Nkemnkia, *African Vitalology*. p169.

according to that agreement in a rational way.¹⁹³ The use of ‘shall’ here is stronger than had ‘will’ been used, suggesting that God will actively ensure that this happens. Instead of to be ‘lost’ the English uses ‘perish’, which implies that someone dies in a bad way and comes to cease to exist. The use of ‘but’ here implies that the second alternative should be taken instead of the first. Everlasting brings to mind an overcoming of the dimension of time, this bringing a logical puzzle as to how existence can even be possible without time. Various notions of science-fiction may come to mind. Life is a quality of existence that is either present or absent, rather than being measurable in quantity.

7.4.2.3. Discussion of the above Commentaries Section 7.4.2.2. should of course be written in *Dholuo*, although that would not be helpful to many of the readers of this thesis. Much of the English used in part (b) as it is, would in turn need to be translated into Kenyan (or Luo) English – a difficult task in itself. It is easy in an exercise such as the above to get tangled up in semantic issues. Some of the issues mentioned are more purely semantic, and some more closely related to culture. They do leave us agreeing with Mojola: “ ... there is no way a belief system can be defined without taking into account the language in which it is defined.”¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Concepts like these are in effect untranslatable to people accustomed to having trust that is ‘fatalistic’ or divinely controlled.

¹⁹³ This is again untranslatable into Luo language and culture.

¹⁹⁴ (MOJOLA, ALOO OSOTSI, 1983, ‘Knowledge and Belief Systems.’ PhD thesis, University of Nairobi, 1983. p179.) Language and culture being indistinguishable “... their experiences and resources offer us other ways to read ... This is the real challenge of vernacular hermeneutics” says West. (WEST, GERALD D., 1999, ‘Local is Lekker, but Ubuntu is Best: indigenous reading resources from a South African perspective.’ 37-51 In: Sugirtharajah, A.S., 1999, *Vernacular Hermeneutics*. Sheffield: Academic Press, p49.)

7.4.2.4. Pragmatic Application The way John 3:16 will be used by a believing community will vary considerably between Gem and Britain. A British Christian may well use John 3:16 as a proof-text to make a point. The text may be read once and then explained to elucidate its meaning. It will be understood as attaining information and giving insight from the past into the present, enabling a reasoned understanding.¹⁹⁵ In Gem this text is more likely to be used as power-words – said repeatedly to enable the power in the words to take effect.¹⁹⁶ Rather than being something from the past, the words are cleansing in the present so as to bring some positive outcome in the future. The words contain power that will be sought as help in solving problems, or as Whisson explained religion for the Luo as being “tools ... [used to] bring back into order whatever part of the world is out of joint.”¹⁹⁷

It is this application to the use (i.e. pragmatic understanding) of Scripture rather than the studying of its meaning that is perhaps the most revealing of cultural differences. Adamo demonstrates this clearly in his consideration of the use of the Bible in indigenous churches in West Africa. These churches use the Scriptures as ‘potent words’ “for protection as a result of [people’s beliefs in] enemies [attributable to] witches, wizards and evil spirits that fill African forests.”¹⁹⁸ Adamo explains how the reading of Psalms is advocated for the cure of diverse ills.¹⁹⁹ What a Brit. may say for the purpose of imparting knowledge, can easily be received in terms of chasing away ghosts. What the

¹⁹⁵ Even if this reasoning is not on a reasoned ‘foundation’. (PLANTINGA, ALVIN, 1983, ‘Reason and Belief in God.’ 16-93 In: Plantinga, A., and Wolterstorff N., (eds.) *Faith and rationality: reason and belief in God*. London: University of Notre Dame Press, p62.) British Christianity is built on a foundation that cannot be ‘reasoned’, but is developed and articulated using ‘reason’.

¹⁹⁶ The ‘effect’ of course being to remove *jochiende* / devils.

¹⁹⁷ Whisson, ‘The Will.’ p2.

¹⁹⁸ Adamo, *Reading and Interpreting*. p73.

¹⁹⁹ “Because of the supreme importance attached to the Bible, there is a tendency to use passages, especially the Psalms, in magical ways.” (Omoyajowo, *Cherubim and Seraphim*. p92.)

Luo says so as to remove bad powers, can be mistaken by the Brit. as an effort at communicating information. Davis explains that amongst Bantu people that which is often translated into English as ‘medicine’ is used to ‘mean’ things and not to ‘do’ things.²⁰⁰ It appears that in healing, medicine does the meaning, and words the doing.²⁰¹ Such differences in language use are basic and widespread.

Related to the above is a common practice in churches in Gem whereby a preacher or teacher has someone read a passage phrase by phrase, and then repeat the phrase that was read, with emphasis, and with or without additional comment.

7.4.3. Hermeneutics & Power

The Luo person’s interest in spiritual matters rather than ‘understanding’ in his search for power, guides his hermeneutical method.

7.4.3.1. Hermeneutics & Morality The use of Scripture for power, somewhat explains Ferdinando’s concern as to the “failure to appreciate the essentially moral nature of the New Testament salvation” by African Christians.²⁰² Such concern is not

²⁰⁰ Davis, *Death in Abeyance*. p254.

²⁰¹ “Meaning mends. Study meaning and we can learn about mending.” (MOERMAN, D.E., 1983, ‘Physiology and Symbols: the anthropological implications of the placebo effect.’ 156-167 In: Romanucci-Ross et al (eds.) *The Anthropology of Medicine: from culture to method*. Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey Publishing Incorporated, p165.)

²⁰² Ferdinando, ‘Biblical Concepts.’ p284.

new. Tylor according to Bediako²⁰³ considered animistic religions to be not immoral but unmoral. Wiredu explains that “In regard to this notion of the dependence of morality on religion, we encounter a rather striking contrast, for it does not even make sense in the Akan Context.”²⁰⁴ Evans-Pritchard tells us that: “Morals and the notion of a Supreme Being are not directly associated in Zande culture.”²⁰⁵ “Even the most regular church-goers among the younger people do not regard it as wrong to indulge in sexual relations provided that they can avoid conception” shares Schapera referring to Christians in Botswana.²⁰⁶

This apparent ‘failure in morality’ is not to say that the Gospel has “little impact”, as claimed by Jalum’weci for Kinshasa.²⁰⁷ He has not considered the ‘counterfactual.’ He does not consider an *alternative* to Christianity. How can Jalum’weci say that the Word of God has had ‘little impact’ on Kinshasa, without knowing what would be happening if the Word of God had not been there for people to call upon, for example if colonialists coming to African had not been accompanied by missionaries? He has presumably not considered, for example, that if Kinshasa were not so Christian it might be very Islamic, with all that this implies.

Returning to our discussion on ‘unmorality’, we may consider the English term ‘morality’, presumably coming from ‘*more*’; being something that is done customarily.

²⁰³ Bediako, *Theology and identity*. p233.

²⁰⁴ WIREDU, KWESI, 1995, ‘Custom and Morality: a comparative analysis of some African and Western conceptions of morals.’ 389-406 In: Moseley, Albert G. 1995, *African Philosophy: selected readings*. London: Prentice-Hall International (UK) Ltd., p403.

²⁰⁵ Evans-Pritchard, ‘Zande Theology.’ p44.

²⁰⁶ SCHAPER, ISAAC, 1971, *Married Life in an African Tribe*. Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., p241.

²⁰⁷ Jalum’weci, ‘The Gospel.’ p149.

What is right as against wrong is for much of mankind that which is done habitually.²⁰⁸ It was the Greek Philosophers who began to put ethics onto a humanistic footing.²⁰⁹ We need not be surprised that people outside of the Western world²¹⁰ do not have such a reasoned, non-theological, ethics. For the Luo, as many African people, what is good and right is that which results in the maximisation of power or force.²¹¹ For the Luo of Gem, the allocation of this force is in the hands of their departed predecessors²¹² and it is to a large extent acquired by following the customs and laws laid down by previous generations.²¹³

If education about God is not bringing about anticipated behaviour changes in Africa today, this may be because the God who is being taught is not the most important influence on someone's behaviour, or because what is taught about 'God' does not connect with the people's perception of 'God'. Great theoretical knowledge of God's grace may not alter the behaviour of one who lives in constant fear of ghosts (gods / ancestors). Someone needs to be convicted to put such theoretical knowledge into effect. Conviction is often borne out of challenging testimonies. That is, a life lived that demonstrates good morals is a necessary part of having ones theoretical teachings taken seriously. This of course requires cultural knowledge – as morals are culturally specific.

While to an extent true that Western nations also follow a moral code that maximises power, I suggest that the key difference is in the perception of the connection between

²⁰⁸ i.e. passed on by previous generations who are now departed.

²⁰⁹ (JOHNSON, OLIVER A., 1978, *Ethics. Selections from Classical and Contemporary Writers* (fourth edition). London: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, p15.) Socrates was arguing with Euthyphro "in defense of a view affirming the independence of ethics from theology."

²¹⁰ i.e. those whose history has not been profoundly influenced by Greek Philosophy over many years.

²¹¹ Tempels, *Bantu*. and see also Magesa, *African Religion*. p77.

²¹² Ogot, 'The Concept of Jok.' p7.

the action and the effect that is wrought. For the Luo of Gem it is through Luo reason and the medium of their ancestors, whereas for the Western Brit., it is through British reason.²¹⁴ African Christians, then, value highly what Christ can do for them: "... virtually all church goers revere the Christ of faith far more than the historical Jesus ...”²¹⁵

7.4.3.2. Power Relations – Is ‘bad’ that which Counters ‘Vital Force’ in Gem? “ ...

the worst evil – and indeed the only real injustice – is the harm done to the vital force” says Tempels.²¹⁶ Was Tempels correct, for the Luo?²¹⁷ Do the research results that I have obtained (above) support Tempels’ conclusions? Yes they do. The vital force that Tempels identifies with good arises according to my research by default,²¹⁸ leaving the Luo people pre-occupied with keeping away the bad. This understanding is in line with Section 7.4.3.5. recognising how African traditions as African gods have nowadays become ‘devils’.

Tempels tells us ‘being is force’.²¹⁹ It is through their ‘being’ that the Luo people seek to counter bad (i.e. ‘harm done to vital force’). Funerals are a classic example where the importance of ‘being’ is seen. People flock to funerals. Some are active in looking after guests etc., but it is people’s presence that helps to keep bad forces at bay. The way that

²¹³ Hence Mboya (Mboya, *Richo ema kelo Chira.*) points out that it is *richo*, here interpreted as breaking of ancient laws or taboo, that brings *chira* – severe loss of personal force that culminates in death.

²¹⁴ Western Christians interpret Jesus’ miracles to have particular historically interpreted meanings relevant to their culture. African Christians consider them to show that Jesus wants to continue to do miracles today.

²¹⁵ Manus, *Intercultural.* p197. “...Jesus’ activity in ministry are [in Africa] depicted in functional than in ontological terms.” (Nigerian English, Manus, *Intercultural.* p210.) (See also Section 7.4.3.4.)

²¹⁶ Tempels, *Bantu.* p144.

²¹⁷ Ogot accepts that Tempels’ description of the Bantu fits broadly also with the Luo. (Section 7.2.)

²¹⁸ Harries, ‘Good-by-Default.’ p162.

²¹⁹ Tempels, *Bantu.* p51.

the dead desire to have people gather and eat on their behalf was explained to me.²²⁰ My research has shown that the Luo people live their lives oriented to a deterring of ‘bad’ spiritual (i.e. esoteric, superstitious, occultic etc.) forces. The wider literature supports such: “African hermeneutics can be typified as a hermeneutics of protest against factors crippling its people” says Toit.²²¹ “Every other ethnic group in America, a ‘nation of nations’, has accepted the fact of its separateness and used it to its own social advantage. But the negro’s conditioning has steered him into that perpetual state of suspended tension wherein 95 per cent of his time and energy is expended on fighting prejudice in whites” explains Cruse.²²² This orientation to doing away with bad and the absence of bad resulting in good by default is sometimes much more subtle. So Mapunda’s description of the ending of the slave trade by White activists cannot entertain the notion that they might have done it for ‘good’, but argues instead that they only took action to avoid some ‘bad’ influence of the slave trade on them.²²³ Whites are assumed by Mapunda to have the same orientation to the deterring of bad as his fellow Africans.

Many visitors to Africa notice how much people (especially men) tend to ‘hang out’. Time after time on having my bicycle repaired in the ‘informal sector’, I will find three to six or so men sitting and watching one man working. Rather than their being an impediment or distraction it seems to be understood that their presence helps or empowers the one working. *Gueth* (blessing) has already been mentioned in Section 6.3.3. I was told at a certain funeral at a Christian home, that the disco arranged the night

²²⁰ On 19th July 2003. (See Section 3.4.2.)

²²¹ TOIT, COMEL DU, 1998, 'African Hermeneutics.' 373-398 In: Maimela, Simon, and König, Adrio (ed.) *Initiation Into Theology: the rich variety of theology and hermeneutics*. Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik Publishers. p382.

²²² CRUSE, HAROLD, 1967, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: from its origins to the present*. New York: William Morro and Company Incorporated, p364.

after the burial that seemed to be encouraging immorality, was justified on the basis that it would attract young people to *be* at the homestead, which would itself bring blessing. Having a visitor in one's home, especially if s/he eats and drinks, is thought to bring blessing (*gueth*).²²⁴

The emphasis on being becomes very apparent in Christian circles. African church services are known to be long. Prayer, fasting and dancing which are ways of enhancing being²²⁵ are very popular or at least widely spoken of and advocated. Respectability is generally found in what is other than productive activity, as vouched for by Senghor: "Technical activities ... are here always tied to cultural and religious activities: to art and magic, if not to the mystical. *The latter activities are always given precedence over the former, and especially over productive labour*"²²⁶ (my emphasis). The physically productive person is the junior in status. Hence the white person earned the name of *Mzungu* in much of East/Central/Southern Africa. This is a person who *zunguka*, (*Kiswahili*) being to constantly move back and forth – behaviour that was striking to the African who prefers to be more sedentary.²²⁷

²²³ MAPUNDA, H., 1976, *Historia ya Mapambano ya Mwafrika*. Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, p89.

²²⁴ *Gueth* (blessing) disables forces that distract from vital force. In other words, it is a defense against ghosts (*jochiende*).

²²⁵ SENGHOR, LEOPOLD SEDAR, 1995, 'On Negrohood: psychology of the African Negro.' 116-117 In: Moseley, Albert G. 1995, *African Philosophy: selected readings*. London: Prentice-Hall International (UK) Ltd. p120.

²²⁶ Senghor, 'On Negrohood.' p126.

²²⁷ *Mzungu* also has a contextual impact of "something wonderful, startling, surprising, ingenuity, cleverness ... any device or expedient for getting out of a difficulty." (JOHNSON, FREDERICK, 1939, *A Standard Swahili-English Dictionary*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press, p326.)

This observation of the ‘power of being’²²⁸ is a classic example of a quality that the African people are unlikely to be able to identify themselves. This is partly because such behaviour is easily condemned as lazy by the international community²²⁹ and also because such a degree of self-observation is difficult. My observations should be understood as clearly from a Western / European linguistic contextual perspective. An Indian Buddhist engrossed in meditation may find the Luo people to be hyper-active. Yet we can boldly support Tempels in saying that for the Bantu (and Luo) people, being is force, and whatever interferes with the up-building and maintenance of ‘being force’, is bad.

7.4.3.3. Things are Power The above has already begun to show how ‘things are power’. Household items such as radios, chairs, tables, lamps, cupboards – while they are obtained with money, are also considered generative of money.²³⁰ Hence things (i.e. gifts) are not to be refused even if they will never be of any *use* or even if having them will bring problems. For example, I have known pastors to fill their bookshelves (that they have built for the purpose) with free books from the West, that they have no time to read, can hardly read, and make little sense anyway. The books themselves are powerful. Clothing is another example of this, as are almost all sorts of possessions. The people engaging in these means to acquire power are not wrong or lost. Far from it – in the present age they can achieve great success. Outside donors of many kinds within and

²²⁸ That “ person is what he is because of what he does, rather than he does what he does because of what he is.” (Mbiti, *African Religions*. p214.) I take Mbiti as here meaning that because in Africa any moral offense harms the rest of the society, doing bad that does not do harm means one remains good. (Mbiti, *African Religions*. p271.) In the Western value system someone who has brought harm can still be considered to be good.

²²⁹ Conceding the ongoing power of ancestors over him can be embarrassing for an African through the condescending amazement that may result on the part of Europeans.

²³⁰ Comparable to Western businessmen’s having new expensive cars to give an aura of success, that will instill confidence in others to do business with him.

without the church are impressed by such things,²³¹ in this age of African dependency on Western economies, he who has things gets funded.

As shrines and particular sacred objects (such as, certain chairs, trees, rocks etc.) were considered powerful because of the presence of ancestors with them, so today 'modern' things are considered 'powerful' due to divine backing. The difference is that now the 'gods' are the white people. Ironically, the aid and donor industry is hence perpetuating a kind of 'superstition' (by proving peoples notions of the power in being and in things to be correct) that undercut its long term aims (encouraging people to be active, industrious, educated (i.e. in control of their environment rather than subject to it)) so perpetuating more and more economic dependence, despite official rhetoric to the contrary.

7.4.3.4. Pragmatics and the Power of Things and of Being Meaning of words is largely derived from context (see Chapter 2). We have (above) described a 'being is power' context. How does this affect perception of meaning? Radically! If things are force, then the reason certain 'things' are mentioned in the Scriptures, must be related to the force that is in them. If the Scriptures are a model for us to follow, then by implication our use of the same things and imitation of the same behaviour (i.e. way of being with things) will accord to us power of Biblical magnitude.

²³¹ A potential donor will be impressed by a shelf full of books, regardless of whether the owner can understand them. Someone with their own vehicle can please a foreign visitor by providing familiar (to a Western visitor) comfort levels and in the process develop a relationship that will result in further financial aid.

For the Legio Maria and other African churches, this association extends beyond the words of Scriptural texts, to the illustrations that accompany them. Hence the dress-code for the Legio Maria indigenous church is based on pictures that have accompanied Catholic books with which they were familiar. This extends to objects carried – typically wooden crosses, wooden swords or even wooden (imitation) guns. Far from being seen as signs to help us to understand Christ’s Messianic mission, Christ’s miracles are taken as models to imitate.²³² As Jesus *nokwero* (rebuked) the *jachien* (ghost) in Mark 1:25, so verbal means of removing troublesome ancestors have become common. As Jesus stretched out his hand to heal the leper in Mark 1:41, so we acknowledge the power of laying on of hands to heal today. In Mark 3:11 we find that *jochiende* (ancestral spirits) would fall before Jesus and cry out, as is expected to happen up to today. In Mark 3:13 Jesus went up a mountain, so many indigenous churches like to pray on mountains.²³³ As in Mark 4:39 Jesus commanded the storm to cease by saying *ling thi* (‘be still’ or ‘quieten down’)²³⁴ so someone may rebuke the rain that threatens to spoil an outdoor crusade. As her faith in Jesus’ power healed the woman in Mark 5:25-29, so we are expected to be healed if we have the same faith. So many join African churches as a result of being healed.²³⁵ And so on.

Something like ‘superstition’ (of British English), is widespread in Luoland. Omari describes *ushirikina* (*Kiswahili*) as having the following effects: “because this belief exists, fear takes hold of people that finishes their strength, their life, time and resources

²³² Miracles are regarded as “confirmation of the divine authority of the performer”, as in New Testament times. (KEE, H.C., 1986, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in the New Testament Times*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p80.)

²³³ *Dholuo* does not distinguish ‘mountains’ from ‘hills’.

²³⁴ Be still, quieten down, Bible, *Muma Manyien*. 2003.

²³⁵ West, *Bishops*. p91.

... as they constantly suffer the expense of protecting, themselves from bad forces.”²³⁶ It seems that belief in the positive force of being must go hand in hand with belief in negative forces (witchcraft/sorcery), or how else would one explain ‘bad things’ or low force levels, death, disease or suffering?²³⁷ This implicit belief in negative forces clearly has a major impact on hermeneutics, as such a force is assumed to underlie any ‘bad’ event in the Scriptures, or in life in general.

One of the most harmful affects of widespread aid to Africa (Luoland) as mentioned above has been and continues to be its underpinning of the system of belief in forces.²³⁸ Aid-resources do not reward hard work or rational effort, but come haphazardly often by corruption, and typically reward people who are known as having high force levels – i.e. charismatic personalities, who have also acquired education (particularly knowledge of English).²³⁹ African talent is increasingly oriented to finding ways of draining the Western economy in their direction.²⁴⁰ The Western charitable ethic that is rooted in its enormous economic machine is part of the cause of more and more churches becoming Pentecostal – that is, oriented to acquiring force in the Pentecostal way. Such churches by implication must also be active against witchcraft.²⁴¹ In being active against it, they

²³⁶ (My translation.) (Omari, *Uchawi na Ushirikina*. p19.)

²³⁷ Hence my equating belief in ‘the force’ with witchcraft in Section 7.2.1. above.

²³⁸ Harmful that is in terms of the aid and development people’s declared aim of fostering self-sufficiency, independence and local initiative.

²³⁹ Causing society to be organised on the basis of “wealth accumulation, rather than in relation to the productive process.” (Haynes, ‘Popular Religion.’ p25.)

²⁴⁰ “Where once the community felt responsibility to care for the needs of people in the community, now they look to relief and development organisations to care for those needs. Where once communities sought to improve their lot through their own work and resources, now they think that the only way to develop is to get money from someone else. Why do the work yourself when there are development agencies with more money than you will ever see in a lifetime looking for places to give it away? ... African individuals, communities, and countries become dependent on donations.” (MUCHENA, OLIVIA, N., 1996, ‘Sociological and Anthropological Reflections.’ 169-180 In: Tetsunao Yamamori, Bryant L. Myers, Kwame Bediako, and Larry Reed (eds.) *Serving with the Poor in Africa*. Monrovia, California: MARC. pp177.)

²⁴¹ Note that witchcraft is these days often referred to as *Shaitani*. (See Section 2.2.3.)

support belief in it, which in turn empowers it. This takes us into a broader examination of – the effect of the impact of the West on Luo hermeneutics.

7.4.3.5. The Impact of the West on Luo Hermeneutics Recent advances in the ease of international communication, plus the ever increasing growth of Western economies, are multiplying the quantity and penetration of Western influence in Gem. The increasingly widespread orphan care and feeding programmes are a classic example of this. The increasing role of the West in Luoland means that it must be recognised as an over-hearer. As discussed in Section 2.3., over-hearers have an impact on what is said and how it is said. More and more of what is ‘said’ in Luoland in any public sense, is intended to move the West in a certain direction.

The key but difficult task in a donor-dependent society is not accumulation but dispersion. Wealth comes in large lumps and needs to be spread out. The failure to do this effectively is known as corruption. Even more ‘damaging’ though perhaps, is the mind set that it builds.

One may ask how teaching and preaching on grace as unmerited favour is received in this context? People’s response very often is: “Yes, we should have these things (aid), give them to us!” Missionaries (who are the same colour as pictures of Jesus) who come in the name of Jesus being so heavily engaged in distributing aid, presumably means that Jesus did the same. The chances are that he had a four-wheel drive vehicle, computer and mobile phone. When Jesus went to visit people’s churches, he almost certainly did

so with the aim of giving them money or setting up some project for them. Of course he spoke English and would sooner or later have gone back to America, if he hadn't been killed on the cross. There we have a profound contextual effect on hermeneutics.²⁴²

Implicitly and explicitly (i.e. by their example and through their teaching) the Western missionary force advocates a life that is dependent on money – not realising that the African way of life does not result in accumulation of a financial surplus.²⁴³ Frustration levels run high when what was once 'normal' comes to be known as 'poverty'. Add to this teaching on human rights,²⁴⁴ for those who understand it, frustration can become anger at their being denied what they 'should' have.²⁴⁵ Personal initiative and motivation to 'help oneself' is diminished in favour of 'begging' for things. All these things enter Christian churches. Requests for help that were once directed towards ancestors are now oriented to the Western world.

Such a presuppositional context can occlude from view entirely an understanding in which, according to Plank's description of Paul's theology, "weakness no longer

²⁴² On similar lines, "I think that the phrase 'holistic evangelism' tempts its users to bypass important theological questions" shares Newbiggin. (NEWBIGGIN, LESSLIE, 1982, 'Cross-currents in Ecumenical and Evangelical Understandings of Mission.' 146-151 In: Anderson, Gerald H., (ed.) *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. 6:4 October 1982, p149.)

²⁴³ Maranz. *African Friends*. p16.

²⁴⁴ Englund, 'The Dead Hand.' p580.

²⁴⁵ Stocking (given as the director of Oxfam) blames the failure of rich nations to give for the death of 45 million children over the next 10 years. (STOCKING, BARBARA, 2004, as quoted In: Anon, 2004, 'Ahadi Zaua Watoto: 45 milioni watakufa kwa kuwa mataifa tajiri hawatoi fedha.' 10 In: *Taifa Leo*. December 7th 2004, p10.) "There is a sense in which [Western] Christians are to blame for the persistence of the present disastrous state of affairs." (BARRET, DAVID B., 1983, 'Silver and God have I None: church of the poor, or church of the rich?' 146-151 In: Anderson, Gerald H., (ed.) *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. 7:4 October 1983. (electronic edition))

signifies powerlessness or the absence of God, but the presence of divine power.”²⁴⁶ The constant pre-occupation of the West (Christians included) in providing Africa with a better life on earth, prevents the development of such a theology, which adds to the view that suffering arises from *Shaitani* and must be driven away at all costs.²⁴⁷ The repercussions of having a theology that cannot deal with suffering are many. Few of the great Christian Luo men maintain their Christianity into their old age, a colleague told me. A reason one such old man gave him for this was *chich piny*, that the old curses of the Luo are still effective and had to be dealt with according to the old Luo wisdom.²⁴⁸

Unless and until the Luo people are enabled to produce an economy, development aid and advice from the West are creating dependence and confusion. I suggest that the “radical re-orientation to a modern and industrial, global society”²⁴⁹ purported to arise from non-Western Pentecostalism needs to be considered very carefully. Such ‘re-orientation’ is usually rooted in magic / belief in vital force.²⁵⁰ Not being a movement towards Western rationality, means that its resemblance to Western forms is illusionary. The West runs on money,²⁵¹ so what it advocates is the same. Meanwhile the development of an indigenous economy is constantly hampered and not assisted. The

²⁴⁶ (PLANK, KARL A., 1987, *Paul and the Irony of Affliction*. Georgia: Scholars Press, p92.) “The capacity to suffer, therefore, is by definition good in that it is part of the nature of God.” (STAFFORD, G.W., 1996, *Theology for Disciples*. Anderson: Warner Press Inc., p372.)

²⁴⁷ Ayugi addresses this issue “I will show them that the cross also symbolises suffering ... so a Christian should also be ready to suffer at the hands of Satan, ...” (Ayugi, ‘Reconciling.’ WWW.) Mitchell suggests “... it may be the case that people who are accustomed to regard pain and death simply as evils to be avoided and controlled will find life less satisfying than those who take it for granted that such obstacles will be encountered and should be borne with fortitude.” (MITCHELL, B., 1970, *Law, Morality and Religion in a Secular Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1970, p111.) The West is trying to deny African people of this latter option.

²⁴⁸ Okech, Omondi, in conversation 20th September 2004. (*Chich piny* could be translated as ‘curses arising from the world’.)

²⁴⁹ Anderson, ‘The Pentecostal Gospel.’ WWW.

²⁵⁰ “African occult beliefs have kept pace with Africa’s particular forms of modernity.” (Blunt, ‘Satan is an imitator.’ p304.)

²⁵¹ “The economy has become the principle pre-occupation of the nation.” (Piper, *The Christian*. p17.)

Europeans' abhorrence at so much of what s/he has seen in 'traditional' Africa, has prompted him/her to condemn it. In a cosmology that has come to be one of God versus the devil, African traditions have fallen on the side of the devil. Ancestral spirits that have helped and supported people for generations have in the new cosmology become demons.²⁵² White people have become the gods in their place. Such is the 'establishment' of today. "Jesus cannot but seem politically dangerous to the establishment"²⁵³ so perhaps he has something contrary to say?

7.5. Conclusion

Application of prior findings in this thesis to the field of hermeneutics has in this chapter shown that the latter is not independent of language and culture. The notion that 'being' is force' and the discovery that the belief in 'vital force' guides the whole of life for African people is clearly perceived only with the help of pragmatic theory. A result is a revision of conventional assumptions about epistemology that call into question some views on the mutual understanding between Western and African Christians. The discipline of hermeneutics as applied to Biblical interpretation in Western nations is found to be culturally specific and partly inoperable in communities which give active roles to ancestors and to witches. Down to earth examples of comparative interpretation have here been interspersed with detailed discussion on African philosophy and culture that impacts on hermeneutics, leading to practical suggestions for cross cultural

²⁵² "The god of the Lele had become the Satan of Christian traditions." (DOUGLAS, MARY, 1999, 'Sorcery Accusations Unleashed: the Lele revisited, 1987.' 177-193 In: *Africa: journal of the international Africa institute*. 69 (2) 1999 (PDF) <http://links.jstor.org/sici=0001-9720%281999%2969%3A2%3c177%3asautlr%3E2.0.co%3b2-V> (accessed 21.10.05) p178.)

communication and aids in Biblical interpretation that are further developed in Chapter 8.

²⁵³ BOSCH, D.J., 1991, *Transforming Mission: paradigm shifts in theology of mission*. New York: Orbis Books, p34.

CHAPTER 8. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PRAGMATICS FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

“May the [spiritual] hunger for leaders in the church be satisfied. May the leaders of the church set an example by their wise and humble self-giving. May all who care for Africa pray for the training of a multitude of leaders for this priceless church.”¹

8.1. Introduction

Careful consideration of the parameters of this thesis to this stage reveal an orientation of the Luo of Gem to a deterring of ‘bad’ in the interests of protecting ‘vital forces’, which are the basis of life and prosperity. Pragmatic theory continues to be the major tool employed in this chapter, now to see how the ‘rubber hits the road’ in exploring the means by which a Biblical theology can most effectively become a part of the Luo, Gem community. I consider issues of translation and language choice alongside questions of intra-lingual pragmatics, to take account of culturally specific uses of language in the course of translation. English being rooted in a dualistic and secular worldview creates numerous translation issues for monistic language-users in Africa. Foreign theological insights in strange languages, being backed by significant finance entering a complex linguistic system dominated by spirits and witches with their own particular and influential agendas, easily become bulls in china shops. Theological education

¹ HOLLAND, GRACE, 1992, ‘Theological Education by Extension Study Materials: which way for a changing Africa?’ Doctor of Missiology thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School 1992, p133.

programmes based on what may seem to Western donors to be obvious common-sense principles can be seriously lacking.

My focus in drawing recommendations is especially on YTC (Yala Theological Centre), with which I have been closely involved since its inception in 1993. I have outlined some of the background to YTC in Section 1.3. Section 2.6.4. explains how a wealthy ignorant (i.e. foreign) donor can act as a damper on local initiative. This has been avoided by YTC. Not being heavily involved in finance has precluded us from some of the “strategising and gamesmanship”² that this would entail. It has released us from the system by which according to Maranz “merit is not merely ignored, it is penalised.”³ Not appearing greatly ‘successful’ means that we do not attract those people who are primarily interested in money. We are less likely to be accused of using ‘occult power’ to our own ends⁴ and as a result are not spreading belief in mystical powers (vital force) but rather, I hope, in the God of the Bible.

On the other hand, because friendships often revolve around financial interdependency and a search for a patron,⁵ YTC’s not having finance to hand out makes us relatively inconsequential in the eyes of the local community. Our relative ‘poverty’ could be thought by local people as arising due to ‘sin’ (*richo* or *ketho kwer*) (see Section 5.3.3.) on our part, or because we are (or some of us are) witches (*gitiyo kod juok*). This would appear not to work in our favour, but would have us in good company, as Jesus himself

² Maranz, *African Friends*. p138.

³ Maranz, *African Friends*. p136.

⁴ “... success is believed to have its origins in spiritual, esoteric (that is occult) power.” (Maranz, *African Friends*. p135.)

⁵ Maranz, *African Friends*. p65.

was of course accused of casting out demons by the power of “Beelzebub.”⁶ Many people ignore us, to a degree that they would not normally do to a project with a white man involved. All of the above means in turn that:

1. Those who would come to tell us their stories with the hope of obtaining financial help, tend to stay away.
2. We are not under pressure to provide a foreign curriculum for the sake of its esoteric content.⁷
3. Our students only include those who genuinely want to hear God’s Word applied to their own situation.
4. As a result, our curriculum can develop according to local need instead of either foreign pressure or local pressure in favour of what is esoteric.

The above context enables the words (teaching) we give in Yala to strike home, illustrating again the importance of consideration of pragmatics (i.e. linguistic *context*), in designing theological education programmes.

For reasons mentioned above and others such as our use of local languages, YTC is at the forefront of the struggle to ensure the relevance of theological education in the African context. The Directorship of YTC has from the beginning been in African

⁶ Bible. Matthew 12:24.

hands, so that the African Director (Pastor Abraham Omayya) is not trying to follow the example of a Westerner who previously occupied his seat. In a day in Sub-Saharan Africa when the marriage of theological education and Western culture has been almost complete,⁸ YTC's 'single-status' has at times been a struggle to bear.⁹ What is the way forward for YTC, and how can other theological education initiatives benefit from its experience?

8.2. Countering TEE (Theological Education by Extension) Critics

Steyn¹⁰ writing, from experience at none other than 'The TEE College' in South Africa, seems to be in a strong position to critique TEE programmes. He points out ten weaknesses, which I list in Table 8.1.

⁷ Teaching from the West to Africa is often received as esoteric, i.e. difficult to understand, mysterious or even mystical. Such is thought to unlock access to the white man's wealth. (see Section 5.4.1.1.)

⁸ Omulokoli advocates such marriage in quoting Sawyer: "Africa should try to endeavour to hold within the ranks of her ministry men of the requisite standard of education and training who can stand cheek by jowl with the nuclear and theoretical physicist, the biochemists, the eminent jurists, the economist...". (OMULOKOLI, WATSON, 2002, 'The Challenge of Leadership Training for Churches in Post Independence Africa.' 46-60 In: *AICMAR Bulletin. An Evangelical Christian Journal of Contemporary Mission and Research in Africa*. Volume 1, 2002, p48.) I suggest theological education should encourage such men to put aside their Western learning so as to hear God speak to their hearts.

⁹ Being under pressure to comply with other colleges and become an arm of the West.

¹⁰ STEYN, GERT J., 2004, 'The Future of Theological Education by Extension in Africa.' 3-22 In: *Missionalia*. 32:1, April 2004.

Table 8.1 Ten Weaknesses of the TEE Movement in Africa according to Steyn¹¹

1. Credibility: content inferior or not contextual
2. Lack of resources
3. Isolation and exclusivism
4. Failing in ecumenical cooperation
5. Empire building, power hunger and egocentrism
6. Lack of church support
7. Lack of tutor training
8. Lack of technology
9. Redefining the role of TEE in the twenty-first Century
10. Negative attitude

Unfortunately Steyn’s position is deeply coloured by his implicit belief in the ‘marriage’ with the West mentioned above.¹² In fact *every one of the above points reflects apparent weaknesses that arise only by comparison with alternative residential programmes.*

Numbers 1-4, 6, 7 and 8 are very clearly comparative, so TEE programmes are here thought to be *less* credible and having *fewer* resources, etc. It is hard to believe that 5 and 10 cannot also trouble residential institutions. Number 9 suggests that TEE programmes are not good at adapting to new situations, which I take as meaning that they do not become sufficiently ‘modern’. That may be an advantage rather than a drawback in the

¹¹ Steyn, ‘The Future.’

¹² Hence Steyn’s critique of TEE programmes parallels those of secular adult literacy programmes: “...weaknesses ... included low staff morale and commitment, low enrollments, short period of illiteracy elimination, poor teaching methods, inadequate evaluation and coordination.” (AYOT, ROBERT MINYAFU, 1995, ‘A Study of Effectiveness and Processes of Adult Literacy Education Programme in Kenya: a case study of Kisumu and Siaya districts of Nyanza Province.’ PhD thesis, Kenyatta University, 1995, p vii.) The church assumed to be part of the West’s project of developing (Westernising) Africa.

light of this thesis. Points made by Wendland are strikingly similar to Steyn's.¹³

Wendland's seven suggestions¹⁴ put European skills and finance at the core of what is needed for the future of the church in Africa, thus implying that Africans will get nowhere by themselves, as well as adding to the notion of the 'divinity' of whites. (See Section 8.4.) The command of Christ in the Scriptures to 'go and do'¹⁵ and not 'wait, and someone will do for you' seems to be ignored. Wendland has not realised that the African support which he gets for thus making European people the key necessity for the progress of the church in Africa, may be more related to its economic dependence than its spiritual needs. TEE will not set people free from dependence on heavy Western financial and academic support unless it allows them to interpret and express Christianity from their own hearts.

The possibility of the Christian mission being carried out without vast financial resources or an elite corps of highly paid professional Western missionaries is not merely a theoretical possibility. For the major part of the church's existence it has been a necessity, and as the twentieth century draws to a close, it is increasingly clear that most missionary endeavor has been, is being, and must continue to be undertaken by missionaries from the poorer churches.¹⁶

Some may express concern over the orthodoxy of such 'freely expressed' Christianity, if released from Western domination. I suggest that such concern is not well grounded because:

¹³ (Wendland, 'Contextualised.' pp200-204.) and also (WENDLAND, ERNST R., 2005, 'Notes on a Lyricised version of the Lord's Prayer in Chichewa.' 81-101 In: Loba-Mkole, Jean-Claude, and Wendland, Ernst R., (eds.) 2005, *Interacting with Scriptures in Africa*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, p97.)

¹⁴ Wendland, 'Contextualised.' pp200-204.

¹⁵ Bible. Matthew 28:18.

¹⁶ Bonk, 'Missions and Mammon.'

- A. Teaching in a foreign ‘rootless’ little-known language is what *threatens* orthodoxy by bringing confusion and half-learning.
- B. Reversing the current condemnation of indigenous theological thought in local languages, could release an explosion of theological activity, some of it written, which through God’s guidance and the inter-correction of scholars will tend to orthodoxy.¹⁷
- C. The independent strength of non-aligned movements (for example in Gem Legio Maria and Nomiya churches) shows how strong they can become¹⁸ when freed from a constant misguided Western critical eye.

In relation to C. above, I observe that non-aligned indigenous churches often have strengths arising from factors such as:

- A. Their not constantly being troubled by divisory tactics (intentional or otherwise) of aid provision by foreign churches.
- B. Not being dependent on unpredictable financial inputs from little known sources makes them less ‘magical’ in outlook.

¹⁷ The Scriptural Christ deals with demonic forces, and does not pretend that they do not exist. How can the latter be considered more orthodox than the former today? Here are parallels with accusations made to Coptic Christians for many years over particularities of Greek that had them isolated from other orthodox churches: “the niceties of the doctrine would not have been clear to them [the Copts] since they were expressed in Greek.” (WATTERSON, BARBARA, 1988, *Coptic Egypt*. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, p46.)

¹⁸ The Kimbanguist church, one of the three major churches in the Congo, of dubious orthodoxy, was “the first self supportive Christian community in the DRC” (Democratic Republic of Congo). (Loba-Mkole, ‘Notes on Holy Spirit.’ p70.)

- C. The extent to which they rhyme with the indigenous culture minimises confusion that would otherwise arise in church leadership styles and administration.
- D. They do not follow interpretations of their beliefs and practices such as ‘deliverance’ that can cause wholesale rejection (demonisation) of their own cultures.¹⁹

I take Steyn’s article as being typical of writing from a Western perspective on the fortunes of theological education in Africa that is rooted in false presuppositions about language and that can destroy what it should be building, and build what is unhelpful. For the African church to have a theological education that is truly its own, requires a recognition of the key role of pragmatics in communication. This will lead to a changes in current thinking. Ironically, those needing to hear this message are *not* primarily African Christians. The latter find themselves with little room for maneuver in the trap of economic dependence. The responsibility for sensitivity to and initiation of major transformation rests with the West.²⁰

¹⁹ Onyinah, ‘Contemporary.’ p342-3.

²⁰ Often “... difficulties ... are ... compounded [if] ... one of the speakers is monolingual and cannot imagine that the intentions of their speaking partner may be different than his or her own would be if s/he were to use a form or expression the other uses.” (Pohl, ‘Cross-cultural.’ WWW.) Westerners, many of whom especially if from Britain or the USA are monolingual, must learn to discern the pragmatic content of African texts and discourses.

8.3. Barriers to Progress

In this Section I portray indigenous theological education as a 'good thing' facing opposition and oppression from numerous quarters.²¹ Note that indicating that something is constraining TEE programmes, may require a more carefully considered response than simply its removal given the complexities of human life, local realities and the increasingly globalised world.

The failure on the part of the West to recognise and respond to the barriers I mention here is clearly attributable to an ignorance of pragmatics. These days African people are given increasingly high profile roles in theological education. Their language usage takes centre stage in the debates going on,²² thus ignoring their profound ignorance of the pragmatic presuppositions made by their Western readership who are attempting to interpret what they say so as to form mission policy. The fear and reluctance of the Westerner to share in the life of those he so dominates by his budgetary decisions is, I suggest, inexcusable. Pretending to be able to make wise decisions on the basis of what is said by Africans, scholars or otherwise who happen to speak English without knowing the pragmatics underlying that (Western) English, is not wise.

²¹ While aware of some weakness(es) of such an approach, it seems justified in the current African-Christian climate. This approach is clearly akin to that arising from the Luo worldview described in this thesis, of good being the default position, threatened by bad things from its surroundings.

²² i.e. their words and writings are taken very seriously.

It is ironic that it is the hegemony of the West that we at YTC find ourselves struggling against. Western education leaving indigenous belief largely unchallenged²³ means that these beliefs can also remain out of our reach at YTC. This is not because the Gospel is not an effective challenge to indigenous belief, but to the degree that the Gospel has been overpowered by secularism.

In other words:

1. Let us say that YTC has an effective Gospel message.
2. But because the true gospel is considered to be Western²⁴ (and is weakened by its contact with secularism)
3. and YTC is not very Western
4. then the Gospel presented by YTC can become unacceptable to the church.
5. Hence the barrier to the progress of the 'true Gospel' can be the 'Western Gospel'.²⁵

"You know nothing my dear friend ... with your BA" KIST students were told by the administrative secretary of the church which most of them were hoping to enter.²⁶

²³ Discussions conducted in a foreign language with results translated into mother-tongue, allows the latter merely to bend and twist to accommodate the 'new'. Discussion occurring in mother tongue threatens and alters meanings. Hence on translating the Bible *into* the Iraqw language, the Iraqw for unclean is avoided. (MOJOLA, ALOO OSOTSI, 2003, 'Holiness and Purity in the Book of Leviticus – a problem in the Luyia dialects.' A paper presented at AICMAR – AST, Butere, Kenya on August 12-15, 2003. pp2-3.) Formative theological debate in the Iraqw language could engage and challenge the Iraqw understanding of *their* term.

²⁴ A Gospel without English, white men in charge, being linked in with Western education, projects and health etc. is in much of Africa barely understood as the Gospel at all.

²⁵ "A host of other new competing cults ... reassert the primacy of mystical experience in the face of the dreary progress of secularism." (LEWIS, I.M., 1989, *Ecstatic Religion: a study of shamanism and spirit possession* (second edition). London: Routledge, p17.) Certainly in Gem Roho churches are constantly springing up. These churches reacting against secularism (or globalisation to use Padwick's (Padwick, 'Spirit, Desire.' 2003.) terminology) would benefit from a non-secularised programme of theological education.

“Fried BAs” he called them, in Kenyan English. Such is just one instance of verbal attack against the formal theological education system from within the African church. Such attacks are frequent.²⁷ A major reason for this, I suggest, is the failure to incorporate the means to learn from the African church within college curricula. Instead, theological institutions which are economically independent of local churches, with flamboyant budgets and libraries full of books written by Westerners and Westernised Africans, continue regardless of local relevance. These become the role model that other programmes imitate – hence promoting ignorance (though their use of foreign languages, syllabi and concepts) wherever there is an indigenous move towards promoting education in theology.²⁸ A vicious cycle of semi-relevancy being thus set up, hinders the forward movement of the church.

Some suggestions as to the way forward for such institutions would be as below:

1. Christian theology being transplanted to Africa to be divorced from the secularism which so deeply influences it in the West.²⁹
2. There is a need for a serious engagement with language issues.³⁰ My own experience of mission work in Africa tells me that language learning by Western missionaries,

²⁶ OBUNDE, JAMES, 2001, ‘Church Administration in Africa: overcoming the pitfalls.’ *Maarifa Lecture* given at Kima International School of Theology on 31st January 2001. Unpublished.

²⁷ Holders of academic degrees in theology are frequently disparaged by those I meet with on visiting churches in Gem.

²⁸ Models of theological education visible to indigenous movements are often wholly inappropriate. For example, dependence on English limits the depth of theological education as well as restricting its spread beyond those with a certain level of formal education.

²⁹ Moving away from Western languages may achieve this by default.

³⁰ Unless Africans invest in their mother-tongue, says Tshehla, “we shall always be on the receiving end of the theological insights of others.” (Tshehla, ‘Can Anything.’ p22.) A “...mentor [should] be fluent in all the

while there in theory in Commonwealth-Africa, is very rare in practice. Professional missionary teachers taking the easy way out and using their mother tongue even though thousands of miles from home is leaving the most difficult task of translation to African students.³¹ Proficiency in a local language needs to be mandatory before a missionary engages in theological ministry.³² Theological education outside of the West should not be engaged in using a Western language.³³

3. A serious engagement with the local culture is required. This means:

(a) a disengagement with aid/development thinking that comes with pre-packaged solutions.³⁴

(b) a major rethinking of short-term mission – either by protecting long term from short term mission or otherwise discouraging the latter.³⁵

languages and cultures represented at any given time in a given learning situation” shares Tshela. (Tshela, ‘Can Anything.’ p22-23.)

³¹ “The way to respond to these problems” (of the excessive unhelpful incursion of foreign theology) “is linked inextricably to facing squarely the challenge posed by mother-tongue Scriptures” says Quarshie. (QUARSHIE, B.Y., 2002, ‘Doing Biblical Studies in the African Context: the challenge of mother tongue Scriptures.’ 4 -14 In: *Journal of African Christian Thought*. Vol. 5, No. 1 June 2002, p7.)

³² Knowledge of pragmatics is particularly important for effective intercultural communication. (WHITE, RON, 1997, ‘Going Round in Circles: English as an international language and cross-cultural capability.’ *Cross Cultural Capability Conference*. ‘97 Leeds Metropolitan University 1997, <http://www.rdg.ac.uk/slals/circles.htm> (accessed 21.01.03)) Aggressively pursuing language is vital. (Brewster and Brewster, ‘Language Learning.’ (electronic edition)) Once fluent a missionary can assist a native person to develop an indigenous theology and escape from the Tshela’s dilemma: “as long as I make it my goal to reflect and write in English ... my greatest achievement would be to become merely a perennial protégé or understudy of English-speaking theologisers.” (Tshela, ‘Can Anything.’ p19.)

³³ Scholarship in other than English would minimise the ‘brain drain’.

³⁴ (Harries, ‘Heart-led Development.’ WWW.) (ADAMO, Rev. Prof. D.T., and ERUWOSA Dr. J., 2004, ‘Missionaries go Home: the Integrity of Mission in Africa.’ Paper for the *IAMS assembly* in Malaysia 2004, (PDF) www.missionstudies.org/conference Dept. of Religious Studies, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria (accessed 28.07.04) p15.)

³⁵ An additional concern is that “the desire for ‘hands on’ involvement is very strong.” (PIERSON, PAUL E., 1998, ‘Local Churches in Mission: what’s behind the impatience with traditional mission agencies?’ 146-150 In: Anderson, Gerald H., (ed.) *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. 22:4 October 1998, (electronic edition)) “The assumption that one should hit the ground running produces an over eager, often overbearing posture.” (Ward, ‘Repositioning.’ (electronic edition)) Quick ‘hands on’ involvement funded and empowered by Western finance engages in ways contrary to local wisdom.

- (c) an emphasis on the advantages of singleness, and other means of ensuring vulnerability to people being reached.
- (d) a commitment to working from a position of relative poverty, for at least a section of the Western mission force.
- (e) a movement from reasoning in which a missionary is evaluated by the quantity of his results, towards qualitative assessments.

Barriers to the implementation of the above are legion in the world as it is. Yet where there is a will, the means to overcome them can be sought after. It seems better to state what is required even if it appears difficult, than to remain silent and thus implicitly to be in support of an unhelpful status quo.

Statements such as that “poverty is at the heart of all problems in Africa”³⁶ not only reduce the self-respect of the poor³⁷ but can be unhelpful to the mission task. Such is all too easily taken as implying the need to put aside all other concerns in life, even including people’s faith in God while working on the ‘problem’ of poverty until it is ‘solved’, totally ignoring the possibility that faith in God may be one of the means of solving the very problem.³⁸ The implicit link between Christianity and prosperity in

³⁶ (ADEYEMO, TOKUNBOH, 2001, ‘Africa’s Enigma.’ *Maarifa Lecture* given at Kima International School of Theology on 23rd February 2001. Unpublished.) ‘Africans are so poor’, emphasises Jenkins in a similar vein. (Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*. p216.)

³⁷ By suggesting that self-respect is dispensed on the basis of achievement. (GOULET, D., 1971, *The Cruel Choice: a new concept in the theory of development*. New York: Atheneum, p89.)

³⁸ Ojo’s stating that: “ ... it is impossible to carry on missions in a politically unstable and depressed social-economic environment while failing to take care of the socio-economic needs of the people” (OJO, MATTHEWS A., 1997, ‘The Dynamics of Indigenous Charismatic Missionary Enterprises in West Africa.’ 537-561 In: *Missionalia*. 25:4 (December 1997) p560.) seems even more extreme. I suggest underlying it could be either 1. The desire to ensure perpetuation of Western aid to indigenous mission or 2. The

Africa is generally strengthened by an understanding of g(G)od as ‘vital force’, then the latter being confused with ‘money’. Little is it realised that poverty “is the invention of civilisation”,³⁹ due in part at least to people simply not working hard,⁴⁰ or how wealthy (in material terms) many African people have become relative to their position one hundred years ago. Yet wealthy sectors of African communities frequently do little to assist their own poor according to Laitin.⁴¹

Goulet tells us that “a prevalent view ... that needs for poetry, play, leisure, contemplation and celebration can only be met after primary needs have been satisfied ... is wrong, ...”.⁴² Better is happy to find that “Sauri’s story [of aid distribution] shows how direct aid can largely bypass governments ...”.⁴³ This demonstrates a tendency amongst donors to think that the African people are innocent victims of their governments’ chronic corruption. This encourages people to work less hard or be less innovative as they wait for donors to solve or bypass the corruption issues. Maranz reminds us that “the highest levels of society operate this way because the lowest levels, and those in-between, also do.”⁴⁴ That is, the tendency to corruption is not confined to ‘big men’ in governments. Functioning in Western languages while in privileged positions denies the international community insight into many such issues.

understanding of the Gospel in ‘prosperity’ terms, in which wealth from the outside is needed to provide evidence for the genuine Christian character of what is happening.

³⁹ SAHLINS, M., 1974, *Stone Age Economics*. London: Tavistock Publications Ltd. p37.

⁴⁰ Sahlins, *Stone*. p17.

⁴¹ See (LAITIN, D.D., 1986, *Hegemony and Culture: politics and religious change among the Yoruba*. London: The University of Chicago Press, p70.), (Healey, *A Fifth Gospel*. p122.), (BARRET, DAVID B., 1983, ‘Silver and God have I None: church of the poor, or church of the rich?’ 146-151 In: Anderson, Gerald H., (ed.) *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. 7:4, October 1983, p148.) Perhaps there are good reasons for leaving the West to deal with ‘poverty issues’?

⁴² Goulet, *The Cruel Choice*. p95.

⁴³ Sauri is a village in Gem near Yala. (BETTER, 2005, ‘A Better Way to Fight Poverty.’ *New York Times*, (published May 5th, 2005) (PDF) <http://www.umbc.edu/llc/PDFfiles/languagechoice.pdf> (accessed 09.11.05))

⁴⁴ Maranz, *African Friends*. p92.

It is widely understood that we these days have “*ukoloni mambo leo*” a translation of ‘neo-colonialism’ in English.⁴⁵ Foreign bodies are focusing increasingly on micro-managing their investments into Africa, ostensibly for purposes of accountability, creating a dynamic that perpetuates the notion that African leaders cannot be trusted.⁴⁶ I suggest that donors need to carefully consider this negative impact on levels of trust and corruption that result from their activities. Failure in trust and increases in corruption may more than cancel out a donation’s intended positive impact.

It is amazing how major a role Western biomedicine continues to have in Christian mission given that “the use of medicine is blasphemy” by many African people.⁴⁷ A movement in ‘philosophy’ apparently rooted among the Luo of Kenya, presumably influenced among others by missionary emphasis on the advantages of secularism and science, would appear to a British reader to be a total rejection of metaphysics in favour of reason.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Lumumba, *Mhhh Afrika*. p4.

⁴⁶ Note that what seems to mean one thing when said in the West about ‘the poor’ can have a very different contextual impact when heard by ‘the poor’ themselves. For example “it is practically an impossibility for Westerners to understand that Africans might lose face if required to provide careful accounting.” (Maranz, *African Friends*. p104.)

⁴⁷ Many of the churches with which I am familiar discourage their members from using bio-medical services. Jansen (JANSEN, GERARD, 1997, ‘Western Medicine – secularized and secularising: a medical missiological problem.’ 344-359 In: *Missionalia*. 25:3 November 1997.) explains what one would suppose to be an additional problem to medical missions: the secularising impact of Western medicine.

⁴⁸ Philosophy promoted by the late Oruka is very ‘secular’ in its foundation – his student goes so far as to appeal to ‘reason only.’ (Nyarwath, ‘Philosophy and Rationality.’ p243.) That such apparent ‘philosophy’ finds any room at all given the way the Luo people’s way of life revolves around the activities of their ancestors is incredible. It appears to be a reaction against post colonial missionary paternalism. (Oruka, *Sage Philosophy*. p16.) (‘Philosophy’ and ‘secular’ are in inverted commas, in the light of the ongoing debate as to their nature in Africa, for which see Section 7.2.)

Many of YTC's struggles for legitimacy arise from parallel theological education initiatives which are heavily subsidised, initiated from the West and promoting what is foreign and of limited relevance.⁴⁹ That coupled with the even broader link between the Gospel and neo-colonialism⁵⁰ – result in it being a struggle for culturally-sensitive and locally based initiatives such as YTC to take off. Ukpong tells us of the determination of African theologians to "... make a contribution to global biblical research."⁵¹ This unfortunately acts as a further disincentive to facing up to local issues because international debate occurs on Western terms.⁵²

Not all opposition of course arises from the West. There are also local battles to be fought. I now want to consider how YTC meets its competition from the indigenous culture.

The interest of the Luo people in power in various forms has already been discussed in this thesis. The people of Gem are engaged in a constant battle with offensive ancestral spirits. They are interested in that which will help them in this battle,⁵³ and relatively

⁴⁹ While relevant to the 'modern sector' and in terms of giving opportunities for obtaining finances from the West, its relevance to indigenous theological thought is limited. (This is an area requiring pragmatic research, as comments such as 'that was very helpful' in response to inputs of Western theology into Africa, given the wealth and power of the West, may be with funds and power as underlying motivation.)

⁵⁰ West, 'African Biblical.' p3.

⁵¹ UKPONG, JUSTIN S., 2004, 'Contextual Hermeneutics: challenges and possibilities.' 22-55 In: Mugambi, J.N.K., and Smit A., (eds.) 2004, *Text and Context in New Testament Hermeneutics*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, p50.

⁵² See also Ukpong, 'Contextual.' p49.

⁵³ This affects the orientation of many African churches, such as the Kimbanguists of whom we are told that, "more stress is put on charismatic ministry than on education." (MARTIN, MARIE LOUISE, 1978, 'Kimbanguism. A Prophet and his church.' 41-64 In: Hesselgrave, D.J., (ed.) *Dynamic Religious Movements*. Michigan: Baker Book House, p56.)

impartial to what is irrelevant to it.⁵⁴ YTC along with Gem's churches are evaluated according to the assistance they give in overcoming those dead who have the intent to do what is bad.⁵⁵ The only churches not overtly battling against and exorcising the dead are perhaps those (such as Anglican and other mission churches) that demonstrate their power over the dead by imitating whites and through the introduction of Western wealth.⁵⁶ Indigenous and Pentecostal churches acquire their legitimacy through being more overtly active against *jochiende* (ghosts).

If YTC is not to show its capability against *jochiende* through being wealthy, then a question arises as to the basis of its legitimacy? Must its teachings then be strongly oriented to cleansing and exorcism?⁵⁷ This raises a host of questions that go beyond the scope of this thesis.⁵⁸ Yet in not being a part of or a doorway into Western life, YTC is forced to address the questions that other theological institutions dodge. I suggest that these are important questions. Yet again, in tackling issues of Spirit possession and witchcraft on a level playing field, it is extremely difficult not to begin to use the 'same

⁵⁴ Hence a Luo colleague of mine has frequently advised me that to be relevant to the Luo people in Gem my preaching / teaching should always link in with the theme of *lweny* (battle/war/fight.)

⁵⁵ According to Atieno-Odhiambo such focus on doing away with *jochiende* (ghosts) has rendered belief in the Supreme Being "irrelevant" to the Luo, at least in the area of Luo fishing rites. (ATIENO-ODHIAMBO, E.S., 1971, 'Some Aspects of Religious Activity among the Fishermen of Uyoma Katweng'a: the rites connected with the launching of a fishing vessel.' Occasional paper 1. 1-6 In: Byaruhanga-Akiiki, A.B.T., (ed.) *Occasional Papers in African Traditional Religion*. Kampala: Makerere University, July 1971, p2.)

⁵⁶ Someone who has acquired great wealth, has been healed or is otherwise prosperous is by default considered to have succeeded in defeating bad spirits, even if the means used to do this are not evident. "Development for many Africans is copying how the Europeans do things." (my translation from *Kiswahili*). (OLUOCH, NYAGORI M.J., 2001, *Kosa la Wazazi*. np, p40.) YTC again falls short as its only white man (myself) often does not behave like a white man, i.e. doesn't use a European language, drive a car etc.

⁵⁷ As Gifford finds is a key tactic of the famous African mass evangelist Bonnke. (Gifford, 'Reinhard Bonnke's Mission.') Douglas describes how a "Belgian priest ... was completely outclassed" when a young Congolese priest began to engage in anti-witchcraft activities (i.e. removal of spirits) in Congo. (Douglas, 'Sorcery Accusations.' p184.)

⁵⁸ The key issue here is perhaps that engaging traditional beliefs in the origin of bad on their own terms is in some respects encouraging and perpetuating the very beliefs, as showing oneself as having the required knowledge to fight a witch, of necessity makes one suspect of being a witch. Perhaps unlike Bonnke, my conscience prevents me from following this route. My belief in the relationship between prosperity and

means as the enemy' and be accused of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub.⁵⁹ This is indeed the rocky theological ground in which many indigenous churches find themselves.⁶⁰ Finding a route through this theological minefield may be dangerous, but may be the a vital challenge facing the African church today.⁶¹

Funerals and memorial services provide a clear demonstration of the state of battle of YTC. These are vitality important in ensuring that ghosts not become vengeful or aggressive; and are typically attended by large groups of people often over long periods of time.⁶² YTC attendance easily drops to zero when a funeral service in the locality coincides with a YTC class. Hundreds of people will spend many hours doing very little at funerals, whereas it is hard for even a handful to find a couple of hours to spare for YTC. Christians and non-Christians alike flock to funerals, that are so frequent as to be almost constant.⁶³ This strongly suggests that for the residents of Gem as a whole, defense against the dead is more important than adding to one's Christian understanding.

rationality is sufficiently strong that to tell people that Westerners' wealth arises from a successful exorcism of demons in the name of Jesus, would be deceptive.

⁵⁹ Bible, Matthew 10:24.

⁶⁰ Hence the criticism that AICs often find themselves under. Compare Murray (Murray, 'Inter-relationships.' p2.) who points out that missionaries and often new churches started in Africa are "witchcraft eradication movements" perhaps such as "Kamcape" as described by Willis. (WILLIS, R.G., 1968, 'Kamcape: an anti-sorcery movement in South-West Tanzania' 1-15 In: *Africa. Journal of the International African Institute*. Vol. XXXVIII, January 1968, Number 1, 1968.) which restores sorcerers into 'respected elders.' (p12.) (See also Bible, *NewInternational*. Acts 19:17-20, which describes the destruction of Greek magical papyri, containing secrets to ancient Greek magic. (NOCK, ARTHUR DARBY, 1929, 'Greek Magical Papyri.' 219-235 In: *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*. 15 (1929).) A solution for this that does not depend heavily on economic subsidy from the West is hard to find.

⁶¹ Mary Douglas would agree telling us that Congo's theologians and philosophers had not "worked out the supporting doctrines" to deal with sorcery, despite sorcery being "the most enduring part of their pagan system." (Douglas, 'Sorcery Accusations.' pp190 and 182.)

⁶² These often involve at least one all-night meeting, or half or a full day. Close family may cease other activities for a week or more. Attendance at funerals guards against accusations of causing death by witchcraft.

⁶³ Note that rural communities in Western Kenya are responsible for burial of all relatives living elsewhere as well as local residents.

Wasonga tells us that we need to “..... challenge their religious and social philosophies from within ...”.⁶⁴ In practice this often means preaching at funerals. This provides a large captive although sometimes less than totally attentive audience. Funeral-teaching unfortunately gives none of the educational advantages of discussion and exchange that are achieved in a YTC class. In its competition with funerals, YTC can easily appear to be the loser.⁶⁵

Another complex situation arises from the status of ‘visitor’. The people of Gem have a powerful and deeply ingrained belief that receiving a visitor is akin to receiving a god to your home.⁶⁶ Visitors are considered to leave behind a large dose of blessing (*gueth*), especially if they eat at their host’s. While this has Scriptural parallels⁶⁷ it does beg the question of the relative importance of what someone may actually share verbally when visiting, if the hosts are so fixated on the blessing brought by their presence. Such thinking is both friend and foe as YTC visits people in their homes with the aim of promoting our teaching or sharing the Gospel. Homes being open and welcoming, does not in itself mean that what is being shared is attended to.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Wasonga, ‘How the Gospel.’

⁶⁵ Few students does not necessarily indicate weakness or defeat. Hence “where two or three people gather in my name then I am with them there” (translated from Bible, *Muma Manyien*. 2003. Matthew 18:20.) is frequently quoted when any Christian gathering is weak on numbers. “The whole Bible demonstrates the power of a few who are deeply committed to God in bringing about impressive cultural change.” (Kraft, *Christianity in Culture*. p377.)

⁶⁶ Mboya, *Luo Kitgi*. p191.

⁶⁷ Bible, Hebrews 13:2.

⁶⁸ Such linkage of *gueth* (blessing) with visitors seems to exceed Biblical precedent in which at least in Pentateuchal theology according to McConville: “... blessing is unthinkable without righteousness or obedience ...”. (MCCONVILLE, J.G., 1984, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*. Supplement Series 33, Sheffield: JSOT Press, p15.)

As Christians we believe in presenting God's powerful word. We believe that its sharing and appropriation transforms someone's life from the inside. The struggle is not all uphill, and even the power of the dead has been and is being compromised by the Gospel. Yet the above illustrates the nature of the spiritual battles being fought. These, to me, are the right battles; bringing the love of God to a people who haven't known him is better than 'civil war' with those who always combine Gospel with financial provision.⁶⁹

8.4. Educational Theories

"A problem of some profundity ... is how far my intensive field experience can possibly have the same, or any complementary, meaning to an African scholar" wrote Southall⁷⁰ perhaps realising with Kelly that "though [language] appears to disclose reality, it does nothing of the kind ...".⁷¹ Southall discovered that the 'great insights' he was achieving about the Ugandan Luo, may not be so communicable to the Luo themselves. "You cannot speak English and teach your child the African culture" said Makokha A.⁷² expressing a parallel point.⁷³ There is, frankly, no clear and open bridge of

⁶⁹ Not perceiving the holistic/monistic basis of language use of Gem curtails understanding of this. Bonk considers affluence a Western missionary problem. (BONK, JONATHAN J., 1991, *Mission and Money: affluence as a Western missionary problem*. New York: Orbis Press) The distinction between 'Gospel' and 'money' is blurred in Africa, at least Gem. See also Green. (Green, 'Why Christianity.') Western Christians' lives being "...based, not on the gospel of Christ, but on Scriptures of acquisition and wealth." further contributes. (Mullin, *The Wealth*. p214.)

⁷⁰ Southall, 'Social Anthropology.' p56.

⁷¹ Kelly, *Language*. p38.

⁷² MAKOKHA, ADAVA, 2001, 'Education in Africa: where are we heading? What is the role of the church in the 21st Century?' *Maarifa Lecture* given at Kima International School of Theology on 14th March 2001. Unpublished.

⁷³ See also Bediako (BEDIAKO, KWAME, 2002, 'Guest Editorial.' 1-3 In: *Journal of African Christian Thought*. Volume 5, No. 1, June 2002, p1.) who points out that using English for describing Africa can only ever be second best.

communication between the great civilisations arising from Europe and those of Africa.⁷⁴

Designers of theological education materials easily get unstuck in this area. Holland tells us that “Needs that should be handled more deeply are, first, those related to African culture, especially the problems of dealing with the spirit world and African Traditional Religion.”⁷⁵ Does she realise that when translated to *Dholuo* this could easily become *Dwaro marwa ema dwaro kony mang’eny molooyo gin mokwongo ma wuoyo kar kit gi timbewa, molooyo geno marwa kod ngimawa* which in turn easily becomes *Dwaro marwa ema joracharego biro konyowa molooyo gin, mokwongo, gin mowuoyo gi kit dakwa, molooyo chandruok moa ka kwerewa kod ngimawa*. Hence translating according to the principle of contextual effect into *Dholuo*, and then back into English one can get: “Those of the things that we want that the whites will now help us with especially are, first about the way we live, the difficulties we have relating to our ancestors and our lives.” Need one say more?⁷⁶

Mugambi telling us “that Christianity ... has been the largest single factor which has contributed to the disruption of the social order and religious heritage of African peoples”⁷⁷ should result in a mixed response from missiologists. On the one hand,

⁷⁴ That “A theory of knowledge that contains an explanation of the process whereby one system of thought encounters and discovers another is needed”, (Jules-Rosette, ‘The Veil of Objectivity.’ p553.) is doubtless, but what this theory will be or whether it will ever enable true mutual understanding between cultures, is another issue. King’s claim that Luo tribes have nowadays “produced their own indigenous scholars who can translate the wisdom of the elders into the terms of Western learning” (KING, NOEL, 1986, *African Cosmos. An Introduction to Religion in Africa*. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, p50.) is doubtful if not intellectual madness if we take account of the role of pragmatics in acquisition of language meaning.

⁷⁵ Holland, ‘Theological Education.’ p132.

⁷⁶ Dependence is again promoted.

⁷⁷ Mugambi, *Critiques*. p154.

Christianity has penetrated to a depth that government and secular activities never could.⁷⁸ On the other hand, its impact has been disruptive.⁷⁹ Something of which the initial impact is destructive, it would seem, needs to stay around long enough to rebuild what it has destroyed. Hence the need for a 'second touch'⁸⁰ or an on-going guiding hand from Christianity. But reconstruction being a sensitive and delicate process this must be a local and cannot be a foreign 'missionary' Christianity. Rather, the indigenous church needs support in an indigenous way. Without care whites can be deified and African people convinced that others should solve their problems because, in part at least, of differences in pragmatics.

The continuing domination of English in Kenya contributes to dependence on ill-fitted foreign theological inputs.⁸¹ Such has not been Kenyan government policy, as theoretically "... all Kenyans were to speak *Kiswahili* at all times with fellow Kenyans ... that government business was to be conducted in *Kiswahili*, that all civil servants were to be required to pass an examination in the language and that *Kiswahili* would be

⁷⁸ Christianity may penetrate into non-Western cultures, without the notice or attention of missionaries: "the Melanesians could hear authentic notes in the Christian faith to which the missionaries, conditioned by Western culture, were tone death." (SHENK, Wilbert R., 1990, 'The Contribution of the Study of New Religious Movements to Missiology.' 179-206 In: Walls, A.F., and Shenk, R.W., (eds.) *Exploring New Religious Movements*. Elkhart, USA: Mission Focus Publications, p185.)

⁷⁹ Christianity's impact being disruptive is not new, as "even ... Paul had to face the accusation that his teaching was immoral or at least opened the door to immorality." (ZIESLER, J., 1989, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*. London: SCM Press, p99.) This is easy to see from a Kantian perspective of a morally worthy act being done from duty. (KANT, EMMANUEL, 1778, 'Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals.' 227-249 In: Johnson, Oliver A., *Ethics: selections from classical and contemporary writers* (fourth edition). London: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, p234.) When law is threatened, by Christianity coming alongside people who were previously guided by custom, questions of morality arise.

⁸⁰ KARNGA, ABBA A., 1994, *A Need of Second Touch Upon Christianity in Africa*. Unpublished manuscript 1994, p9.

⁸¹ While "Theological education curriculum should ... be informed by the socio-cultural milieu in which the education takes place to ensure it is answering questions that are really being asked" (Molyneux, 'African Christian Theology.' pp378-379.), using English often prevents this. Even in the Kenyan press, *Kiswahili* language newspapers can be more honest about African realities than can English ones. (Blunt, 'Satan is an imitator.' p310.)

given greater prominence than English in the School.”⁸² That such prominence of *Kiswahili* has not occurred shows that attempts at ‘linguistic emancipation’ in the past have failed,⁸³ presumably through pressure from wealthy influences outside of Kenya, and those wanting ‘quick fixes’ also on the inside because English is thought to attract development.⁸⁴ Civil society⁸⁵ could benefit greatly from the removal of the stranglehold of English over Kenya; including Gem.

“No society in the contemporary world which is scientifically and technologically advancing, is achieving this on the basis of a language foreign to its people” shares Bediako.⁸⁶ “South East Asian countries were part of the Third World countries until mid 1960s when they changed the medium of education from English to their indigenous languages. Today they are becoming part of the First World ... there is a need, therefore, for policy change in the whole of Africa towards using African languages as a media of education in order to bring about development” adds Qorro.⁸⁷ One perhaps little

⁸² BAMBGOSE, AYO, 1991, *Language and the Nation: the language quest in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p113.

⁸³ The current situation of English being the official language “will pertain for a long time.” (AKONG’A, JOSHUA J., 2001, ‘Cultural engineering and human development in Africa.’ 1-13 In: Bahemuka, Judith Mbula and Brockington, Joseph L., (eds.) *East African in Transition: communities, cultures and change*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers 2001, p10.) “Unlike *Kiswahili*, a knowledge of English shows that someone is well educated.” (My translation from *Kiswahili*.) (MUKHWANA, AYUB, 1990, ‘Siasa na Uimarikaji wa Kiswahili.’ MA thesis, University of Nairobi, 1990, p60.)

⁸⁴ (Mukhwana, ‘Siasa na Uimarikaji.’ p77.) “The language question is all about power” (Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir, ‘Language Policies.’ p80.) “English enjoys a prestigious place in Kenyan society ...”. (MUGAMBI, HANNAH MWERU, nd, *Language Choice and Shift in Kenya: a look at the changing roles of English, Kiswahili and indigenous languages*. (PDF) <http://www.umbc.edu/llc/PDFfiles/languagechoice.pdf> (accessed 09.11.05) p15.) Kenyans cherish English despite official advice to the contrary (LAITIN, D.D., and EASTMAN, CAROL M., 1989, ‘Language Conflict: Transactions and Games in Kenya.’ 51-72 *Cultural Anthropology*. Volume 4, Issue 1, (February 1989) (PDF) <http://www.jstor.org/journals/08867356.html> (accessed 09.11.05) p60.) and despite dependence on foreign languages being seen as “a symptom of underdevelopment.” (OWINO, FRANCIS, R., 2000, ‘Recreation of Africa through Language, Culture and Education.’ 41-55 In: Okoth, Godfrey, p., 2000, *Africa at the Beginning of the 21st Century*. Nairobi: Nairobi University Press, p42.)

⁸⁵ Including the church.

⁸⁶ Bediako, ‘Guest Editorial.’ p2.

⁸⁷ (QORRO, MARTHA, A.S., 2003, ‘Unlocking Language Forts: language of instruction in post-primary education in Africa – with special reference to Tanzania.’ 187-196 In: Brock-Utne, Birgit and Desai, Zubeida and Qorro, Martha, 2003, *Language of Instruction in Tanzania and South Africa (LOITASA)*. Dar-es-Salaam:

appreciated reason for this not being realised is the implicit African belief that progress comes through the manipulation of ‘forces’, and that this manipulation can these days often be done more effectively in a foreign than a home language. (i.e. the use of English provides quick results by linking in with foreign aid etc. that has many similarities in character to ‘vital forces’, as mentioned above.) *Kiswahili*, being already widely known and highly developed,⁸⁸ is the prime candidate for taking over from English.⁸⁹ An interesting alternative suggestion by Owino is that mutually intelligible languages (such as *Dholuo* spoken in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Congo and Sudan⁹⁰) “be harmonised ... to develop standard varieties to be used for wider communication in the regions.”⁹¹

The future for theological education in Gem as in Africa on the whole, could be great – if it would only turn to address genuinely African issues in African languages.⁹² We have heard from Ogot that education in Kenya has no roots.⁹³ It is Christian theological

E and D Limited, p194.) Although I cannot agree that use of one’s own language is *alone* sufficient to bring about development, certainly it could be a major prerequisite. Tshianda emphasises that “... using a dead language [which English of course is in effect in the non-native English speaking world] for ... religious technical terms distorts the process of communicating the faith ...” (Tshianda, ‘Quest.’ p47.) and “celebrating the liturgy in dead languages [is] against the process of communicating the Christian faith ...”. (p52.)

⁸⁸ Blommaert’s suggest that development by ‘copying the West’ linguistically is not helpful: “The sources of *Kiswahili* linguistic discourse prevent innovation in more than one way, because the idea of development implies a foreign model to be copied as accurately as possible.” (BLOMMAERT, JAN, 1999, *State Ideology and Language in Tanzania*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, p119.)

⁸⁹ Having 90 million speakers plus, throughout the East African region. (ONWONGA, YABESH, 2004, ‘Ni wajibu wa viongozi Afrika kueneza lugha.’ 9 In: *Taifa Leo*. December 13th 2004, p9.) *Kiswahili* is by far the most widely spread and international of African languages. Not being associated with a particular ethnic group, it spreads without suspicions of tribalism.

⁹⁰ Owino, ‘Recreation of Africa.’ p46.

⁹¹ Owino, ‘Recreation of Africa.’ p43.

⁹² (Magesa, *African Religion*. p39.) “... the vernaculars ... are the means which finally guarantee an active contribution by the simple faithful to a more genuine African theology, outside the academic ivory towers.” (Bujo, *African Christian*. p128.) Using an African language ensures doing “biblical interpretation that does not succumb to colonization and the various forms of international injustice.” (DUBE, MUSA W., 2002, *Villagising, globalising and Biblical Studies* 41-64 In: Ukpong, Justins, et al, *Reading the Bible in the Global Village*: Cape Town.Leiden.Boston.Köln: Brill, p53.)

⁹³ Matundura, ‘Je, Elimu?’ p9.

education, I suggest, that can provide the missing roots, as it has elsewhere in the past.⁹⁴ We find that "...Protestantism made for Democracy."⁹⁵ Durkheim attributed a key role to 'religion' in development of thought⁹⁶ and the church in the development of education.⁹⁷ I do not claim that the regenerative power of the Gospel will propel a society by the same path of economic, political and technological 'progress' as Britain followed⁹⁸ but agree with Stanley citing Steven Neill that "There has never yet been a great culture which did not have deep roots in a [great] religion."⁹⁹

What I am claiming here is no less than that – an indigenous Christian theological tradition is an important prerequisite to Kenyans having a formal education system in the foreseeable future that is not a foundationless imitation of what is foreign.¹⁰⁰

Theology can provide the missing groundwork. The work of YTC in promoting theological study in Mother Tongue and *Kiswahili* could be making a key contribution to the future of Gem. A "dynamic, living, growing interpretation of the faith in response to a changing environment ..." (is required according to Shenk).¹⁰¹ "The use of Western theological and anthropological categories in articulating African rituals and philosophies has to discontinue, precisely for their capacity to distort and confuse."¹⁰²

"Cultural freedom and African emancipation therefore cannot be cultivated, expanded or

⁹⁴ WEBER, MAX, 1930, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd. p89.

⁹⁵ LATOURETTE, KENNETH SCOTT, 1975, *A History of Christianity. Volume II. Reformation to the Present* (revised edition). London: Harper Collins Publishers, p977.

⁹⁶ DURKHEIM, EMILE, 1972, *Selected Writings*. London: Cambridge University Press, p18.

⁹⁷ DURKHEIM, EMILE, 1977, *The Evolution of Educational Thought*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. Chapters 2 and 3.

⁹⁸ Stanley, *The Bible*.

⁹⁹ Stanley, *The Bible*. p170.

¹⁰⁰ African life traditionally had no formal schooling. Dreams and revelations by ancestors forming the basis for all valued knowledge did not warrant it. Introducing written Scriptures was a starting point out of which a truly indigenous educational system could have arisen.

¹⁰¹ Shenk, 'The Contribution.' p194.

¹⁰² Mtetwa, 'African Spirituality.' WWW.

developed where the LOI [language of instruction] is different from the languages or language that people normally speak in their everyday lives.”¹⁰³ “...development will not be forthcoming until we start using our languages as LOI from the beginning to the end of the education process” suggests Prah.¹⁰⁴

Fortes shows how vital the ancestors are in African societies as “a safeguard for anyone in authority to show that he is himself the servant of higher authority.”¹⁰⁵ Authority structures in SSA work because existing authorities are backed up by higher ‘spiritual’ authorities. Secularism has little to offer to such a social structure, whereas words from God, being of the same spiritual-order, have everything to offer.¹⁰⁶

The notion that a classroom-experience makes a student to be equivalent to his teacher (who is a foreigner and emerging from a vastly different culture) has resulted in displacing foreign teachers from Kenyan schools.¹⁰⁷ Students who have only half-grasped what is going on, have become teachers, and the European initiators and perpetrators of the whole process have been left further and further out of the loop. An education system oriented to perpetuating dependence on the West, is as a result

¹⁰³ PRAH, KWESI KWAA, 2003, ‘Going native: language of instruction for education development and African emancipation.’ 14-34 In: Brock-Utne, Birgit and Desai, Zubeida and Qorro, Martha, 2003, *Language of Instruction in Tanzania and South Africa (LOITASA)*. Dar-es-Salaam: E and D Limited, p17.

¹⁰⁴ Prah, ‘Going Native.’ p24.

¹⁰⁵ FORTES, MEYER, 1960, ‘Pietas in Ancestor Worship.’ *The Henry Myers Lecture*, 1960.

<http://www.afrikaworld.net/afrel/fortes1.html> (accessed 09.11.05).

¹⁰⁶ This has not always been evident because secularism that is transplanted to the African Continent is backed by funds and foreign power structures. Modernism in Africa is not ‘modern’, as it is in, say, Britain. (Comaroff and Comaroff, ‘Notes on Afromodernity.’ p331.)

¹⁰⁷ i.e. in early colonial days Europeans were primary school teachers, now many teach only at post-graduate level because locally trained teachers it was thought could do the same job just as effectively at the lower levels. Those in the higher echelons are like people building roofs who do not check the design of foundations and walls. Being told ‘the walls are good’, it should be clear from this thesis, is far from adequate.

becoming less effective even in this.¹⁰⁸ Advocating something akin to a revolution in Kenyan education seems unrealistic in the present climate, yet it is hard to see an alternative route to freedom and development.¹⁰⁹ Lingering doubts remain as to the capability of African people, if they were given more freedom from foreign domination.¹¹⁰ Would we have wars, slavery and even mass killings as occurred in Rwanda in the 1990s if the West pulled out its directive hand? If these are an inevitable part of ‘progress’, then that is nasty medicine.

Evidence in this thesis suggests that removed from Western control and influence the African church would turn more and more overtly to dealing with the dead. Yet a church oriented to dealing with its people’s dead whom they understand, may still be more open to transformation than a church oriented to pleasing foreigners who they don’t. The former will be a deep entrenchment of the Gospel, contrary to the current theology that merely “superimposes itself upon pre-existing religious structures.”¹¹¹ Presuming an equivalence between *jochiende* in Africa and *daimons* in the Scriptures – having the church engrossed in removing demons will put it onto a more Scriptural basis than does

¹⁰⁸ Blunt talks of “counterfeit signs of modernity” that render “even the most ordinary of activities ambiguous in meaning and moral implication.” (Blunt, ‘Satan is an imitator.’ p301.) Some would argue that ‘corruption’ effectively mediates between Africa and the West, ensuring continued dependence even in the light of reduced understanding. (“A civil service may be so badly paid that bribery within limits is officially tolerated.” (Hollis, *Trust Within Reason*. p12.))

¹⁰⁹ Comaroff and Comaroff recognised a “deep ambivalence about the classroom as a gateway to prosperity” in rural communities of East Cape Province, South Africa. (Comaroff and Comaroff, ‘Notes on Afro-modernity.’ p342.) The International Labour Office asks: “How long can Kenya go on offering a system of education which promises one thing but rewards the hopes of so many with disillusion.” (INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE, 1972, *Employment Incomes and Equality: a strategy for increasing productive employment in Kenya*. Geneva: ILO (International Labour Office) p252.) Perhaps for as long as Kenya continues to receive subsidy for this foreign education.

¹¹⁰ Which includes forcing (by subsidy) African countries to have educational systems strongly oriented to the West.

¹¹¹ HOPKINS, D.N., 1989, *Black Theology USA and South Africa: politics, culture and liberation*. Orbis: Maryknoll, p75.

the ‘super-imposed’ theology. Protestant churches’ refusal to entertain any role in the church for the dead may have to change.¹¹²

Relevance theory tells us that people will understand communication expressed to them in ways that seem relevant to them. The choice of which theologies to teach in Kenya would seem to be relevant more in the financial and prestige rewards it has to offer than in its fit to local conditions. Locating the locus of relevance that will make Scriptures meaningful will clearly depend on mother tongue (heart language) usage. Hence in order to be relevant a TEE programme must not be in English.¹¹³ Maximising cognitive effect requires interaction with issues of cognitive importance to the people concerned. An important question is what these are for the Luo of Gem in Kenya?

Issues of the heart include concerns about death, the activities of the dead (*jochiende / juogi*), home life (*ng’ima mag dala*), *chira* (the taking hold of a debilitating curse) and so on. A good place to begin to find those topics, would be chapters 4-6 of this thesis. Once identified, the position of these in the Scriptures and then God’s approach to them become vital. A frequent approach to initiating theological education is to adopt tested teachings from the West. It is here proposed that a better root starting point would be the realities of life for the people of Gem. Conservative theologians who object to such, please bear in mind that I am writing to a British audience. ‘Taking account of the realities of life in Gem’ needs to be a conscious act for typical Brits, to take them only to

¹¹² The dead do already have a role in Protestant churches in SSA, but hidden to Westerners through language use.

¹¹³ “... there is no way a belief system can be defined without taking into account the language in which it is defined.” (Mojola ‘Knowledge.’ p179.) Because English internationally: “is like a thin wash, marvelously

where Gem's people already are – enwrapped in their own view of the world. This is not a first step into heresy or to 'going native', but an attempt to recognise a reality.¹¹⁴

Neither is this a romantic claim that popular religion will result in liberation.¹¹⁵ Neither is this 'African Renaissance' claiming that "Africa is supposed to solve its crisis ... by reviving her cultures" in the way that Maundeni seems to have in mind.¹¹⁶ To 'go back to' their cultures is a necessary step for African theologians (as perhaps also politicians) because the suggestion that they have ever left them is a pretense, that while good at arousing the sympathy of the West¹¹⁷ results in confusion when something is being built on a foundation that is only imaginary.¹¹⁸

A philosophical study of the nature of African languages is badly needed.¹¹⁹ Study of African culture and religion, having recently grown enormously, need to be matched by study of African languages. As with culture, far from being a blank slate, a passive recipient of everything new, the influence of African languages continues to be felt in the church, and in African people's use even of English.

fluid, but without adequate base" (Steiner, *After Babel*. p494.) it is hardly the right language for deep discussions on heart issues.

¹¹⁴ This reality *must* be recognised in order to open clear lines of communication.

¹¹⁵ Niles, 'How the study.' p211.

¹¹⁶ Niles, 'How the study.' p191.

¹¹⁷ As they then seem to be 'one of us' in the West.

¹¹⁸ Saying we need to "purge and suppress these state elite's that are embedded in pre-colonial non-developmental state cultures" (MAUNDENI, ZIBANI, 2004, 'Why the African renaissance is likely to fail: the case of Zimbabwe.' 189-212 In: *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*. 22, 2, May 2004, p191.) to bring development to Africa is unhelpful. Despising "going back to the oral archives to discover ... the past" (Akong'a, 'Cultural engineering.' p13.) will leave no epistemological foundation from which to "find out what makes the West, Israel and the East tick, and do likewise." (Akong'a, 'Cultural Engineering.' p13.) "... if our scholarship is to have any hope of being liberating scholarship, our primary sources must come from our subjects in their own tongue and terms." (TSHEHLA, MAARMA SAMUEL, 2004, 'A Plea for indigenous written sources in South African Theological Discourse: Basotho as test case.' 19-33 In: *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*. 120 (November 2004) p27-28.)

¹¹⁹ See Section 7.2.

8.5. What to do?

Scholar of ancient Mesopotamia Parpola claims that "... against all appearances, Mesopotamian religion and philosophy are not dead but still very much alive in Jewish Christian and Oriental mysticism and philosophies."¹²⁰ From ancient times ongoing divine revelation has not abolished but adapted pre-existing ways of life. The same will presumably apply to Africa of the future. Musopole's suggestion that "... even witchcraft terminology can throw light on biblical passages ..." ¹²¹ and is "analogically and hermeneutically relevant meaningful and useful"¹²² suffers from gross apologetic understatement. For a people like the Luo of Gem in Kenya whose language and traditions are steeped in 'witchcraft' and 'superstition' (*juok*) one has no choice but to use these concepts in communicating with them.¹²³ Parkin's suggestion that "traditional medical practices be regarded as the most likely media by which new ideas can be successfully introduced"¹²⁴ is not an obscure idea, but a basic necessity.¹²⁵ Doing so in a local language will avoid the deceptive impression that medicine can be thought of in pure scientific terms.

¹²⁰ (PARPOLA, SIMO, 1993, 'The Assyrian Tree of Life: tracing the origins of Jewish monotheism and Greek philosophy.' 161-208 In: *Journal for Near Eastern Studies*. 1993, Vol. 52, p199.) "The Canaanite character of Israelite culture largely shaped the many ways ancient Israelites communicated their religious understanding of Yahweh." (SMITH, MARK S., 1990, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the other deities in ancient Israel*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, p4.)

¹²¹ MUSOPOLE, A.C., 1993, "Witchcraft Terminology, the Bible and African Christian Theology: an exercise in hermeneutics.' 347-354 In: *Journal of Religion in Africa*. XXIII, 4 (1993) p353.

¹²² Musopole, "Witchcraft Terminology.' p351.

¹²³ Using an alternative language is no escape, as new terms will continue to be implicit translations of old ones.

¹²⁴ PARKIN, DAVID, 1972, 'The Luo Living in Kampala, Uganda, Nairobi and Central Nyanza Kenya: innovation and communication.' 281-287 In: Molness, Angela, 1972, *Cultural Source Materials for Population Planning in East Africa*. Volume 2 Nairobi: East African Publishing House, p282.

¹²⁵ While supposedly being in three distinct streams (ethno-medicine, scientific medicine and the healing ministry of AICs), medical pluralism in Africa is a 'labyrinth' . No clear linguistic / cultural means keep the

So also Christian priests can be understood to be diviners.¹²⁶ Schoffeleers tells us that established churches try to avoid issues concerning witchcraft.¹²⁷ I suggest that such a practice leaves their teaching incomplete resulting in people continuing to move to diviners or indigenous churches for help,¹²⁸ and a stultification of their theology that as a result fails to get beyond imitation of what is Western (see Section 4.3.2.). Anyone engaging in theology with the Luo of Gem is engaging with witchcraft,¹²⁹ it is only that some are more aware of this than others.¹³⁰ We thus arrive at H. Richard Niebuhr's vision of 'the Christ of culture' where because people find Jesus expressed in their own religious language they "hail Jesus as the Messiah of their society, the fulfiller of its hopes and aspirations, the perfecter of its true faith, the source of its holiest spirit."¹³¹

"We insisted that the Luo religious concepts be used as necessary vehicles to transmit the revealed one" shares Ongong'a.¹³² Ojore's case study of 'levirate unions' illustrates again the outcome of linguistic blunders of a church attempting to function in European languages while in Africa. A 'levirate union' is neither marriage, adultery or concubinage, Ojore tells us.¹³³ "Perception of the Luo levirate custom as immoral is

three distinct. (JANSEN, GERARD, 2001, 'The Labyrinth of Medical Pluralism in Africa: a missiological appraisal AD 2000.' 69-91 In: *Missionalia*. 29(1) April 2001.)

¹²⁶ KIRWEN, MICHAEL, C., 1987, *The Missionary and the Diviner: contending theologies of Christian and African religions*. New York: Maryknoll, p106.

¹²⁷ SCHOFFELEERS, M., 1989, 'Syncretism and Healing: a pastoral dilemma in Southern Africa.' 114-121 In: Gort, J.D., et al (eds.) *Dialogue and Syncretism: an interdisciplinary Approach*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, p116.

¹²⁸ After all, in Africa divination is the normal context for giving religious advice and for reconciliation. (KIRBY, JON P., 1992, 'Anthropology of Knowledge and Christian Dialogue.' 323-342 In: *Missiology. An international review*. Vol. XX No. 3, p337.)

¹²⁹ i.e. vital forces.

¹³⁰ That translators have at times gone to great lengths to try to avoid making Jesus to appear as a witchdoctor or shaman is illustrated by Louw and Nida. (Louw and Nida, *Greek English*. p270.) (See *loko dhoch* in Section 2.3.1.)

¹³¹ NIEBUHR, H.R., 1952, *Christ and Culture*. London: Harper Torchbooks, p83.

¹³² ONGONG'A, JUDE J., 1983, *Life and Death – a Christian Luo Dialogue*. Eldoret: Gaba Publications (Spearhead number 78) p64.

¹³³ OJORE, ALOYS OTIENO, 1995, 'Levirate Unions Among the Luo: a case study in Kisumu district.' MA thesis, The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, 1995. p158.

naïve. The Luo are yet to be convinced of this” he adds.¹³⁴ “... a simple substitution of what in effect would have been a Western form of Christian marriage for Luo marriage was not possible”, Southall concluded after a careful study of the Kenyan Luo.¹³⁵

An understanding of the *pim* is clearly important according to Whisson. This is a lady who has passed menopause. Intercourse with her was “ranked with sodomy as being unnatural, an abuse of the creative function”¹³⁶ on the basis that intercourse should be connected with reproduction, which is clearly no longer possible with a *pim*. While not necessarily claiming to know the solution to this sticky issue, it should be clear that a Christian teacher using a distant language and failing to grasp local thought forms¹³⁷ can easily teach on ‘marriage’ in such a way as to provide no solution to, or even add to the Luo peoples difficulties. Finding a solution is left to the uneducated laity.¹³⁸

“... the society is currently in disarray” says Owuor “due to lack of appreciation of the Luo culture ... by the Christian missionaries.”¹³⁹ Admittedly writing as a Catholic, but reaching a conclusion from which churches under the label ‘Protestant’ will struggle to escape, Owuor goes on to tell us that “... the church should develop a liturgy [this could

¹³⁴ (Ojore, ‘Levirate Unions.’ p158.) It is “a lawful sexual union based on the covenant of [the widow’s] original marriage.” (KIRWEN, MICHAEL, C., 1979, *African Widows*. New York: Orbis Books, p205.)

¹³⁵ SOUTHALL, AIDAN W., 1973, ‘The Luo of South Nyanza, Western Kenya.’ 340-351 In: Molnos, Angela, 1973, *Cultural Source Materials for Population Planning in East Africa*. Volume 3, Nairobi: East African Publishing House, p350.

¹³⁶ Whisson, ‘The Will.’ p19.

¹³⁷ That is, failing to consider the pragmatic nature of language.

¹³⁸ The most difficult task of translating what is new into one’s own life style is left to those least capable of doing so – students and not teachers, children and not adults, the laity and not the priesthood.

¹³⁹ Owuor, ‘The Impact.’ p xv.

be expressed differently for Protestant churches] which brings out¹⁴⁰ the role of ancestors, the presence of the dead person and his preparation for the journey concept.”¹⁴¹ Not making reference to the dead in a Christian context, would be like a preacher in the UK who never alluded to education, motor vehicles, office or industry,¹⁴² even though the latter are the constant pre-occupation of his congregation. It would show that he was behind the times, and tending to irrelevancy. Theological education for the Luo of Gem must be open to address the issue of the dead. Ignoring the dead risks leaving them to continue going from strength to strength.¹⁴³

If for this reason alone, (and many other reasons have been given in the course of this thesis) the use of distant and unrelated languages should be avoided by Protestant missionaries and evangelists.¹⁴⁴ Local or ‘relatively local’ (the East African example

¹⁴⁰ Owuor’s writing ‘brings out’ suggests a revealing of something hidden. The role of ancestors is hidden by the Western liturgy. Certain contextual impacts remain invisible to non-locals (Westerners). Christian liturgy can be used to ‘worship’ ancestors who are never overtly mentioned.

¹⁴¹ (Owuor, ‘The Impact.’ p215.) Mtetwa suggests that: “The most contextual alternative to this impasse is to use the original and indigenous categories ... and only provide the approximate meaning of the ritual/event in question.” (Mtetwa, ‘African Spirituality.’ np.) Ochola agrees that it is at funerals that “... feelings necessary for healing are aroused.” (OCHOLA, CHALTON SILVAN, 1995, ‘Funeral Rites and Belief in Afterlife among the Luo people of Western Kenya: implications for the mission of the church.’ MA thesis, University of Birmingham, 1995, p35.) Waliggo advocates a “concern for the ancestors as part and parcel of the living church.” (WALIGGO, JOHN MARY, 1998, ‘The African Clan as the True Model of the African Church.’ 111-128 In: Mugambi, J.N.K., and Magera, Laurenti (eds.) *The Church in African Christianity: innovative essays in Ecclesiology*. (second edition). Nairobi: Acton Publisher’s, p119.) Zulu shares that: “The Ngoni worldview for example, upholds the ancestors in high esteem and to cut it away from them will create chaos as it will break down the structures of an African community ...”. (ZULU, EDWIN, 1998, ‘An Njoni Assessment of the Role of Ancestor within Ancient Israelite Worldviews and Religion in Genesis 11:28-50:26.’ PhD thesis, University of Stellenbosch 1998, p198.)

¹⁴² In other words, someone using language not in use by those addressed, such as Victorian English to England of the 21st Century, as is of course the use of 21st Century Western British English in Africa.

¹⁴³ West, ‘African Biblical.’ p21-23.

¹⁴⁴ “Mission by *lingua franca* needs to be questioned.” (SENAVOE, JULIANA, 2002, ‘The Effects of the Non-Translation of the Scriptures among the Guan of Southern Ghana – some preliminary findings.’ 48-60 In: *Journal of African Christian Thought*. Volume 5, No. 1, June 2002, p56.)

being *Kiswahili*) languages need to be utilised in theological education.¹⁴⁵ “We have no choice” says Bediako, as language is “a theological category in its own right.”¹⁴⁶

Investigations not having been done in African languages has left lacunae in theological treatise. Key African terms have often been left out of translated Scriptures¹⁴⁷ perhaps with good intent but questionable consequences. For a Christian to live a godly life in all circumstances, such omissions from the Christian realm require careful consideration. I suggest that the following (and similar) terms form the basis of focal study in YTC and other serious theological schools (an indication of an equivalent English meaning is given in each case).

Chira (wasting disease brought about by behaving contrary to tradition)

Ter (receiving and looking after the wife of a deceased brother/cousin)

Kend (initiation of a living-together relationship between a man and a woman)

Kitundu (what remains of a person who has ceased to breathe)

¹⁴⁵ Thus avoiding the picture of “... many small congregations, led by teachers and convening in school buildings, while the pagan power structures of the tribe, composed of the mature men, remained intact.” (MCGAVRAN, D.A., 1990, *Understanding Church Growth* (third edition). Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, p13.) (See also Donovan (*Christianity Rediscovered*. p7.): “... the school became the missionary method of East Africa.”) African languages only being *translated into* in preaching / teaching, leaves their depths untroubled (MCGAVRAN, D.A., 1980, *Understanding Church Growth* (fully revised). Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company pp217-220.) while “the use of English as the educational medium ... blocks opportunities for students’ acquisition of knowledge ... because it makes students tongue-tied and therefore unable to participate actively in learning.” (ROY-CAMPBELL, ZALINE M., and QORRO, MARTHA A.S., 1997, *Language Crisis in Tanzania: the myth of English verses education*. Dar es Salaam: Mkuki wa Nyota publishers, p81.)

¹⁴⁶ BEDIAKO, KWAME, 2006, ‘ “Missionaries did not bring Christ to Africa – Christ brought them.” Why Africa needs Jesus Christ.’ Lecture presented at Annual School of Theology of the African Institute for Christian Mission and Research (AICMAR), Butere, Kenya, 1st to 4th August 2006.

¹⁴⁷ “The Iraqw translators with whom I worked seemed unwilling to admit that their concept of the impure or the unclean could have any point of contact with the Biblical one”, (Mojola, ‘Holiness and Purity.’ p1.) presumably through having realised how distant their word is from the *English* equivalent, even though “the Iraqw/Gorwa understanding of ritual purity/impurity provides a fine basis for understanding the Biblical one.” (p1.) “I have observed that for reasons not known to us translators of the Ga Bible tended to shy away from using words from the pre-Christian religious tradition ...”. (Laryea, ‘A critical Examination.’ p41.)

Kuong' (difficulties that follow family lines arising from prior breaks with tradition)

Muma (living under a state of oath – now also the name for the Luo Bible).

Ruoth (lord)

Gak (a ritual state that is unacceptable to society)

Hawi (a theological state of blessing)

Nyasaye (word used for God, also the respectful one (or ones) who are our providers)

Ler (holy, clean, or bright etc.)

Juok (god, or spirit, returned ancestor, determiner of blessing)

Jachien (ghost, haunter, vengeful spirit, nowadays also the devil / Shaitani)

Ot (house, marriage, symbol of procreation and prestige)

This list could easily grow much longer.¹⁴⁸

Not all theological institutions in Africa are as able as YTC to adopt indigenous language instructions so easily. At YTC itself we still continue to struggle as most of our courses are written in English even if taught in *Dholuo*, and our teachers seem to think that the English version must be the correct one that is easily corrupted in the course of translation. A key requirement for many may be to examine and improve on their learning-potential. What mechanisms are in place to enable even our residential institutions to be guided by the African context?¹⁴⁹ I have already suggested the replacement of Western with African languages as being a key step. Until this step is taken:

¹⁴⁸ Since originally writing this in 2004, a course fitting this description has been written and used in Yala and Siaya classes, with great effect. (HARRIES, JIM, 2004, 'Weche mag Joluo 1.' http://www.jim-mission.org.uk/articles/weche_mag_joluo.htm (accessed 10.05.05))

1. All teaching staff to have learned and make regular use of at least one African language.
2. Student residential periods to be short, alternating with long periods on the field (for example five months out for every three months in class).¹⁵⁰
3. Utilising local church leaders in teaching, in local languages (with translation if needed). Preferably those church leaders who have not had a great deal of formal English language education.¹⁵¹

Gichimu asks where the successful current leaders of African churches got their training, if they are to train others?¹⁵² The answer will hopefully be from God, through their language and traditions as found in translated Scriptures and from their church. This may be a better starting point for theological training in Africa than are Western curricula in use today.

¹⁴⁹ “There is no precision in African biblical scholarship as to the interpretive interests of ordinary African readers of the Bible ...”. (West, ‘African Biblical.’ p15.)

¹⁵⁰ This is the schedule followed by YTC teachers who teach alternate terms being themselves students at a regular residential theological college for the other terms.

¹⁵¹ See Appendix 1 for details of how this is done at KIST.

¹⁵² GICHIMU, JOHN NJERI, 2002/3 ‘An analysis of Theological Education by Extension in the Organisation of African Instituted Churches in Kenya.’ MA thesis, Birmingham University, 2002/3, p21.

Conclusion

Sophisticated but specialised technology and methodologies applied by outsiders to bolster theological education for the church in Africa are perpetuating the hegemony of comparative irrelevancy. Insights gained in prior chapters through careful consideration of pragmatics (the contextual dependence of language) demonstrate that helpful progress necessitates building on indigenous foundations and encouraging linguistic, economic and theoretical advances on African and not European positions. The tendency for quick application of finance and technology but little cultural and linguistic sensitivity has all too frequently resulted in theological education as a route to the West, with a complementary ignoring of pressing local concerns. Provision of a false substitute for a critical process is a serious error requiring urgent rectification through a re-orientation of the current status quo in theological education.

CHAPTER 9. CONCLUSION

Overt recognition of pragmatics as part of communication sets the direction for this thesis about Christian mission in Africa. I outline ways in which pragmatics affects understanding and how this is anticipated in this approach to research. A case study on the Luo people's understanding of bad, what it is, where it comes from, and how to get rid of it, demonstrates application of pragmatics to grassroots situations. I make further application to the realm of theological education and the hermeneutics of Scripture in relation to life amongst African people. The methodology demonstrated has wider consequences, some of which are explored in this conclusion.

Considering use of language in varying contexts, rather than the static meaning of words – especially in relation to translation, opens up new worlds of discovery in cross-cultural exploration. Widespread ignorance in this area is found to underlie frequent failure in practice to achieve mutual understanding between the West and Africa. Such failure to understand is a very serious problem in today's shrinking 'globalised' world in which great power over the population of Gem, Africa (that is, Sub-Saharan Africa) in general and elsewhere in the world is held by Western people. 'Western' people's history, including as it does reformations, enlightenments and rule of a type of reason that Africa in particular has not shared, has severely limited deep mutual comprehension of language use.

Basic differences in life-orientation of the people of Gem, many of which I take as also applying much more widely across Africa, are unveiled using pragmatic theory in language comprehension. The case study on perception of and responses to 'bad' is particularly penetrating as it considers a pre-occupation that dominates life in Africa. I show how shielding one-self from 'bad', while a universal human trait, is very dependent on culture in its particular outworking. That the origin of bad is in ghosts (*jochiende*) and implicitly linked to prior generations' ongoing influence on the present, governs the means used to ensure a successful, happy and prosperous life for the Luo and other related people. Such emphasises attention to ritual (especially funerals and memorial services), sacrifice, keeping taboos and an orientation to the heart of a person. This in contrast to Western approaches to 'bad' which emphasise Western reason, planning, foresight, a materialist view of history and orientation not to the 'heart' but to various methodologies.

The nature and existence of this ontological gap between the West and Africa, the focus of much debate worldwide, is addressed in this thesis. This gap is all too often ignored, telescoped, and assumed to be shrunk into great obscurity, largely due to ignorance of the effect of language *uses* (as against 'meaning') mentioned above. This occurs especially when modern technological advances rob language of its wider cultural and even geographic and social context. That is when through a temporary displacement of people (such as short-term mission), or via print or electronic media language is used to communicate without having a social context or a human face. As a result I have found that African people adopt Western language usages and give them indigenous interpretations. At the same time African uses of words, when expressed in familiar

Western languages, easily deceive Western people. Strikingly, perhaps particularly to British and American people (many of whom are monolingual and monocultural), such mixing of peoples and cultures results in the invention in imagination of new interim worlds located in a kind of ethereal space on the edges of existing civilisations. People use these invented realities to make decisions in supposedly cross-cultural interaction.

I balance the deconstructive parts of this thesis, particularly found in Chapters 2 and 7, with reconstruction in Chapter 8 taking theological education by extension in Africa, a concern very familiar to me, as case study. I demonstrate the need not for the West to disengage with the non-West, but for it to engage on a culturally sensitive basis, as set out in detail in Section 2.6. While the need for cultural sensitivity is widely advocated in the missions' literature it is more difficult to find the means to achieve it. Such means are often inadequately realised because insufficient attention is paid to power (i.e. 'political') dynamics in human communities. This results in Christian mission practitioners taking power positions that are offensive or that through their magnitude (what seems to be a little money in the West is a lot in much of Africa) obstruct subsequent clear action and communication. The current dominant strong orientation to combining compassionate ministries (i.e. various donor driven projects) with the work of mission is a culprit. Because they use a lot of finance and unfamiliar procedures and resources these 'compassionate ministries' are often culturally isolated, unsustainable and generative of corruption. In addition they perpetuate the 'prosperity Gospel' which has become the bane of Christian mission in Africa, and beyond.

I advocate the rooting of mission in the culture of the target people. This means that mission should function in local languages. English as currently used in Kenya is excluded from this category because its meanings and usages are strongly rooted in unfamiliar Western categories, so cause confusion and an increased faith in 'vital forces' in places like Gem. (Note that English itself is not the problem, but rather its ongoing linkage to the Western world.) *Kiswahili*, being culturally much closer to the Luo, and the Luo people's own language *Dholuo* are much better options. I do not advocate a Western missionary moratorium, but would strongly encourage Western missionaries not to fund their own projects, but to concentrate on learning to function as insiders. I believe that the West does have something of value to offer to the world and that this is primarily the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This and Western technological know-how should be communicated using local languages, thus challenging and enabling local thought forms instead of making local people dependent on what they do not understand.

The above position could appear to be a distant ideal in light of dominant current practice. I do not advocate an adversarial position against current missiological wisdom, but rather a promoting of 'vulnerable' mission as an alternative paradigm. The latter paradigm will, in my understanding, so reveal the weaknesses of current practice as in due course to result in adjustment. This is a matter of urgency because of the damage currently being done by mission and development agencies, which is reducing African people's autonomy in relation to their own problems, and perpetuating corrupt and superstitious practices. The African worldview being holistic results in the whole of life in Africa falling under the category in the West known as 'religion'. That is, for African people secular and missions

organisations are not clearly differentiable, so I include so-called ‘secular’ organisations in my consideration of what is needed for good missiological practice.

I expose the veneer of respect and acceptability of so-called ‘secular’ practices engaged in by the West in Africa in discussion in this thesis. Secularism, being supposedly founded in a positivist worldview, is received differently in the ‘very religious’ African scene. Its being understood in Africa as spiritually-based is one of the inventions occurring in translation mentioned in this thesis. The people in Gem, as in Africa as a whole, having a worldview rooted in a belief in vital force(s) or powers means that systems that are not explicable on the basis of understanding of such forces (i.e. theologically based) can be distractions from more pressing questions. One urgent prescription arising from this work in relation to the input of the West into Africa is for prime of place to be given to theological debate and concerns. This has widespread implications for Western global visions of what the ‘better world’ of the future will be and how such vision is to be achieved.

Research into ‘African philosophy’ explored in this thesis has shown how a materially-rooted language (English) cannot contain a holistic philosophy such as is constantly articulated in Africa, to the satisfaction of native English speakers. So I am meeting constraints in my use of academic English in making a case on other than secular foundations for Western mission and international relations. Advocated in this thesis is not a sideways-shift in an existing paradigm, but a paradigm renewal that takes a serious reconsideration of God’s necessary inputs into human life, which I believe to be revealed through the Christian Scriptures.

Appendix 1. Elders' Counsel – a Course at Kima International School of Theology

A Step in the Solution of the Indigenous-Western divide

The Problem Theological and Bible training institutions in Africa originate from and are strongly rooted in the West. When the curriculum and syllabi are also foreign, the relevance of what one is teaching is limited. Yet we find that the churches for whom we are training our pastors are largely illiterate and it is particularly difficult to get well written materials from them. Some of the material that is there, even when written by African scholars, seems to have been so deeply and profoundly influenced by Western academia to be distant from the kind of church experiences African people are encountering.

Our Experience at KIST (Kima International School of Theology, Kenya) We have tried various means to get around the above problem. One such has been to invite local church leaders to give lectures to our students. The papers coming with the lectures are then given pride of place in our library. This has been good and has already given us many valuable contributions to our library. But this system has also brought its problems. We have only been able to invite the very educated people amongst local church leaders as others are likely to become embarrassed and could be mocked by our students should they make mistakes in English or display ignorance of the things our students are learning. Despite encouragement to the contrary, many of these guest speakers have based their talks on material drawn from published sources that are clearly based in Western thinking. Many of these more educated church leaders have also been educated overseas. They like to talk of their overseas experiences and thus implicitly encourage the concept that until someone has studied in the West they have not yet 'made it'! This is not a notion we are seeking to encourage or propagate amongst our students.

It became apparent that we needed to find a way of drawing on local experience in Christian leadership and discipleship. Those who have this experience on the whole do not have a great mastery of English or high levels of educational achievement.

Elders Counsel We have come up with a course called 'Elders' Counsel' to meet that need. This is at the moment a final year BA course, although the principles underlying it have possibilities of much wider application.

Our aim in this course is to bring experienced local pastors and church leaders into an environment in which they are able to share freely with students from their own experience and views of the work of the church. We do this as follows:

- (i) We *insist* that our visitor use only his mother-tongue. This is the language in which pastoral church affairs are conducted. It is the language in which he is most at home. It is up to us as a school to attempt the difficult task of translating what is happening in an African environment into English. We should not be leaving this to the visitor. In this way we harvest the rich reward of vernacular vocabulary and all that this implies.
- (ii) Asking a visitor to speak on a particular topic is likely to make him nervous, and prompt him to look for material to share with our students from books originating from the West. An alternative means of deriving information must be found. We have achieved this by only informing our potential visitor of the broad area of our investigation and specifically telling him not to prepare to give any kind of talk. Then we have our students prepare a list of questions around that topic in advance to be used to question the visitor. When these questions relate to practical ministry and are asked in their own language, then our visitors are enabled to share deeply from their own experience.
- (iii) Making a visitor feel confident and at home is a vital part of all this process. Using his own language is a part of this. We also provide a meal and tea for our visitor. Writing questions in advance and giving our students strict instructions to ask only those written questions ensures that the visitor is not threatened or belittled by contentious or proud students. We have students who act as translators, those who take detailed notes of what our visitor is saying, and those who ask the pre-planned questions. Where possible we translate into *Kiswahili* (the regional trade language that is widely known and also very often used in churches in addition to mother tongue). If we have students who do not know *Kiswahili* we translate into English. The latter results in greater loss of the original meaning.
- (iv) After first spending class time preparing for these meetings with visitors from the church, I then spend a lot of time with students going through what we have heard subsequent to our speaker's visit. In these discussions we look back at key terms that our visitor used, their detailed meaning in his vernacular and the way in which they were translated. We consider the environment of our discussion such as the perspective that visitors were taking and their non-verbal signals. We focus especially on their use of the Bible. We discuss what hypotheses or tentative conclusions we can draw as to the understanding or beliefs of the visitor regarding the topic concerned.

By this means we acquire genuinely local and thereby locally-relevant input into our courses by means of a kind of 'qualitative' research methodology.

Future Development of this Methodology

We have now run this course four times in four consecutive years. It has been successful. We are encouraging the application of the same principles into the running of other courses. So for example our course on Holiness and the Holy Spirit has for two consecutive years invited outsiders to come and respond to pre-planned student questions, asked in their mother tongue, on the topic above, in front of the whole class.

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